

# BOOKS *in* CANADA

a national review of books

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 1

JANUARY, 1976



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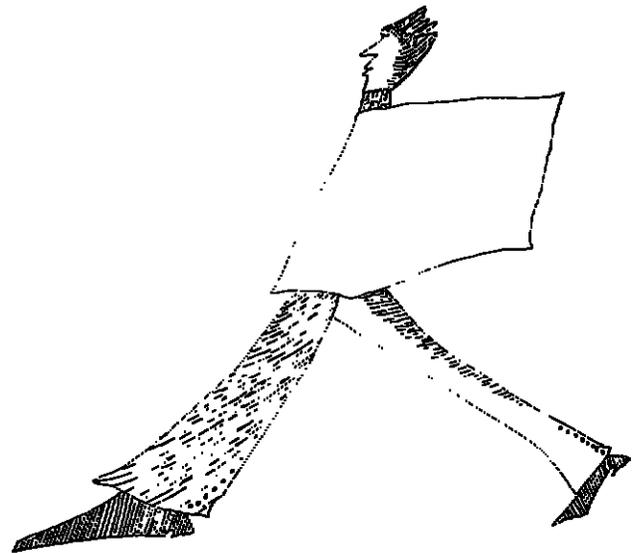
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## BOOKS in CANADA

Vol. 5 No. 1

January, 1976

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# GIVING IT FOR GRANTED

How two reluctant Fairy Godfathers got into the business of keeping Canadian publishing alive

By PAUL STUEWE

THE HISTORY OF government support for writing and publishing in Canada is a tale of late beginnings, high enthusiasms, and the slow adjustment of idealistic hopes to inexorable realities. Unlike the area of communications and mass media, which has been officially identified as a "key sector" in the struggle for Canadian independence, our literary culture is still relegated to the domain of "art"; and as the conventional wisdom has it, art is a marginal activity of limited appeal that can at best expect a few leftover coins from the public purse. The pioneer ethic dies hard, while the emphasis of a moribund romantic tradition on the mystical origins of artistic creation farther cripples our ability to decide just what sort of practical help we should offer to our people of letters.

This is an immensely complicated question, and I don't propose to supply a completely satisfactory answer in the space of a magazine article. But there are people who deal with the issues involved as part of their daily lives, and they have been given short shrift in the seemingly endless controversies over government's responsibility to literary endeavour. While phlegmatic ministers and wild-eyed writers and publishers savage each other in the media spotlight, a less newsworthy breed of cultural administrator has been saddled with the task of apportioning existing monies to those who claim to need them; and on the grounds that experience is usually preferable to even the most wittily phrased invective, let's listen to two of the people who do the flak-catching for both their employers and their clients.

NAIM KATTAN, head of the Writing and Publication Section of the Canada Council, is in the rather odd position of combining an active career as a writer (including several books and a regular column in *Le Devoir*) with his work as an employee of the federal government. This dual role has its disadvantages — Kattan must be particularly judicious when he writes about Canadian literature, and he may well be our only writer of note who is ineligible for a Canada Council grant — but it also provides him with an unusual degree of empathy for those authors and publishing houses whose needs he must evaluate.

Kattan sees as the most significant development of the last 10 years the new interest that Canadians have in themselves, which has resulted in a sort of "complicity" between writers and their public that assumes the necessity of a literary culture. For the first time in our history, he believes, there is a sense that the action is here, that our traditional American and European models are no longer adequate for a society that has finally decided to accept responsibility for its own development. The "new nationalisms" of French and English Canada, while obviously antagonistic in many respects, have both emphasized the importance of understanding life as it is lived in the here

and now, and as a consequence Canadian literature has never been in healthier condition.

Kattan immediately qualifies this, however, with the observation that "the improved psychological climate makes it evident that structural problems are at the root of our difficulties." He points out that Canada is in the spheres of influence of the three largest publishing countries in the world — the United States, Britain, and France — and that their books come to us as "inputs" over which we have little control. Thus Canadian writers must compete with the best that these cultures have to offer, in the same way that Quebec's film-makers must compete with Godard and Truffaut rather than with the more tepid fare that constitutes the chief diet of French filmgoers.

It does indeed seem obvious now that this can only be accomplished through a strong publishing industry that produces, promotes, and distributes Canadian books with the same efficiency and sophistication as its foreign counterparts. But for the first 10 years or so of the Canada Council's existence, from 1957 to 1967, publishers were quite reluctant to ask for its assistance — to be fair, partly because there wasn't that much money available to them — and almost all council funds earmarked for literature went directly to individual writers.

Then some interesting things started to happen. Many of the new publishing houses that sprang up after 1967 were founded by writer-publishers who were accustomed to dealing with the Canada Council, and they were not shy about asking for grants when they ran into trouble. As Kattan puts it: "Since we were already giving money to writers for writing books, it seemed reasonable to give publishers



Naim Kattan

money to publish them. **There** was a natural change in emphasis during **this** period that reflected everyone's increased **awareness** of the relationship between high-quality literature and a healthy publishing industry."

Thus the "project grant," an allocation of council funds for the publishing of a specific book, was born, and there evolved a time-consuming process of **selection based upon literary** excellence as well as economic factors. Although the project-grant system was unwieldy, it was ideally suited to the leisurely contemplation of individual manuscripts. But in 1970 a series of shocks to the publishing world — **W. J. Gage and Ryerson Press** were sold to American firms. and **McClelland & Stewart** publicly **flirted** with bankruptcy — brought about a **further re-examination** of council policy in **terms** of its practical effectiveness.

The result was a new program of "bloc grants" that represented a radical **departure from** the genteel tradition of support for the deserving few. The bloc grant is based on the number of books a publisher plans to bring out during one calendar year, and in effect substitutes a quantitative standard for a qualitative one. While publishers still have the option of applying for specific project grants, the latter **now** are primarily intended for either **very** small presses or obviously non-commercial publishing ventures. Although in theory it is possible for a publisher to receive maximum subsidy by applying for a project grant for each **book, in** practice a certain number of project grants will be rejected — since qualitative criteria **still apply here** — and the bloc grant will **almost** certainly **amount to an** absolutely **larger sum** of money.

This transition has not been achieved without a good deal of conflict. The Canada Council was **internally** divided over the issue of support for commercial **presses**, and **more** **literarily** inclined publishers such as **Sono Nis's** J. Michael **Yates** have criticized it for tending to "quantify art" (see "So Long **Sono Nis?**," October issue). But there **appears to** be no going back: "We know that the bloc-grant system results in more junk being published." **Kattan** says, "but it

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***"We know that the bloc-grant system results in junk being published, but it also helps to build a publishing industry that may eventually stand on its own two feet."***

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also helps to build a publishing industry that may eventually be able to stand on its own two feet."

The **irony** is, of course, that while the **Canada Council** has been taken to task for **deviating** from its original mandate to support "art," others have **belaboured** it for not doing enough to deal with the hard economic realities of **trying** to survive as a publisher in Canada. **To a** gnat extent this reflects the confusion as to who is **in** charge **when** we ponder the regulation of the book industry. James **Lorimer's** perceptive essay, "A Bookmaker's Lament," in the **July-August** issue of **This Magazine** points out that it **is** the federal government that defines the **rules** of the publishing game through its **control** over copyright, tariffs, **postal** service, and foreign ownership, with a lesser **role** being played by the provincial governments in their formulation of educational and **library** policy. The Canada Council simply does not have the **sort** of control over the book industry that the Canadian Radio-Television Commission **exercised** over broadcasting with **its** licensing **powers**. And in a sense the council has already stepped out on a limb by **becoming** so heavily involved in **commercial** publishing.



Ron Evans

In the future, the **Canada Council** will probably be stepping out even further. **Kattan** indicates that much more support will be provided for the promotion and distribution of books, with particular stress **on** increasing **international access** to Canadian writing. Public Lending Rights, a system of reimbursing writers (and **possibly** publishers) for the use of their books in public libraries, will **receive** a close look — "In principle, an interesting idea," is **Kattan's** non-committal observation — and the "Business and the **Arts**" program should be shifting into high gear in its attempt to improve the spotty **record** of **corporate** assistance to the arts in Canada. But most important, the council will continue in its **role** as the **often** **unloved**, sometimes maligned, but as things are **presently** structured, **absolutely necessary** Godfather of **Canadian** literature. **And you can always refuse** if's offer.

**WHILE** **THE** Canada Council garners **most** of the attention when the issue of whether **government** should subsidize the arts is raised, there are a number of provincial and municipal bodies that have moved into this area with minimal **fanfare**. One of the largest is the Ontario **Arts Council**, which **has** **grown** since 1963 from a tiny operation dispensing \$300,000 per year to a substantial enterprise **with** \$9.5 million to distribute in **1975-76**.

Ron Evans, Film and Literary Officer for the OAC, believes that "the only people you can really credit with a **desire** for excellence **are** the **writers** — which of course includes many publishers — themselves. **Bureaucrats**, academics and critics all have their respective functions, but in the final analysis it is only the writer's respect for his own creativity that **produces good** work." Thus **Evans** joined the OAC in **1969** expecting to be **primarily concerned** with helping individual authors, and indeed much of his effort has been centered here. The "Creative Artists in Schools" program now provides **immediate subsidies** to writers, as **does** Evans' innovative idea of allocating each book and magazine publisher a **sum** of money to be used for the **support of literary** work. The publishers simply apply in the

name of the writer, who then receives the OAC grant automatically without being put through a lengthy process of bureaucratic adjudication.

But like Kattan, Evans discovered that "you can't have writers without some means of getting them published," and soon became enmeshed in the problems of the Ontario publishing industry. The stimulus for OAC assistance to publishers was provided by the Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing, whose 1973 report recommended that a separate Ontario Book Publishing Board be created to encourage a revival of the industry. The OAC admitted that it had not done much in this area, but argued that it could do so if given adequate funds. The Ontario government agreed, and earmarked \$500,000 for aid to publishers in the OAC's 1973-7-1 budget.

While Ontario may be one of the "have" provinces, its publishers are all-Canadian in terms of their precarious economic situation. Evans estimates that no more than five (out of about 45 Canadian-owned houses) would survive the elimination of all government support, even though the available monies are so meagre that many limp along from day to day as it is. While some would argue that we should ruthlessly weed out the weaker publishers, this would constitute exactly the sort of State interference that might set a dangerous precedent. As Evans says: "We have no choice but to support every existing publisher in Ontario, even though this means that our money is spread terribly thinly."

The OAC's use of the bloc-grant system, which actually pre-dates the Canada Council's, stems from the days when the organization was primarily concerned with the performing arts. A theatre company, for example, would apply for money saying: "We did x number of plays during the last year and we'd like to do some more this year." The OAC would say: "Fine, hem's some money, good luck and let us know next year how you did." The theatre company already knew how to perform plays, and merely needed money to put them on: in the same way, the OAC presumes that publishers already know how to produce books, and merely need the wherewithal to be able to do so.

This is a somewhat simplified explanation of the granting process, but it does express the degree of trust involved in the relationship between the OAC and the people it subsidizes. Another advantage, says Evans, is that the absence of any qualitative standard for the books supported removes the possibility of either aesthetic or political bias: "Since adjudicators would tend to be members of the establishment, one would assume that there is always the danger that they might be prejudiced against 'radical' books." The OAC's grants to World Wide and NC Press, both on the far left of the political spectrum, demonstrate that the bloc-grant system avoids this sort of problem.

As we noted with regard to the Canada Council, however, the bloc grants put the OAC in the position of subsidizing publishing without having any meaningful regulatory power over it. Evans notes: "It is a legitimate concern of government — although not, one would assume, of an arts council — to establish an industry; but since governments are not doing this, arts councils by default have to deal with it." Thus the OAC has supplemented its assistance to individual writers and publishers with grants to such industry associations as the Writers' Union of Canada and the Independent Publishers' Association, and also supports several co-operative publishing projects in the areas of book promotion and marketing.

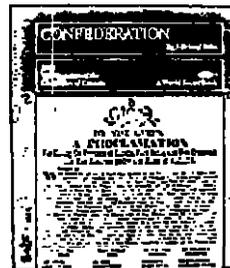
In Ontario, there is a provincial development corporation that makes guaranteed loans to publishers, and a Learning

Materials Development Fund that is supposed to assist textbook publishers (with few results so far). But there is no discernible overall policy with respect to the publishing industry as a whole, and thus the OAC finds itself having to make up the rules as it goes along. And while it seems to have done a reasonable job to date, there is no reason why it should be stuck with a task it was never intended to discharge.

IF THERE IS one thing that stands out from our overview of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, it is that each has found itself assuming a sort of *ad hoc* authority over matters of publishing industry development and direction. Although these policies have developed through a process of natural evolution, and have claimed considerable thought and expenditure of energy, they have also involved the assumption of duties that art councils are not necessarily ideally suited to fulfill.

The responsibility for all this rests squarely on the shoulders of government — on a federal government that annually proclaims "new initiatives" in publishing without providing anything more than a few dollars here and a shuffling of departmental accountabilities there; and on provincial governments that often seem to be even more adept at side-stepping the difficult issues. The situation at present is one in which the arts councils have been given the ball and told to run with it; and if they have not scored a brace of razzle-dazzle touchdowns, at least they have continued to make slow progress down the field. With a little blocking, a new play-book and a full-time coach, they'd likely do even better. □

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# REVOLUTIONARIES ON THE ROPES

For Riel, a martyr's noose; for Dumont, the real hero, the crueller fate of a carnival lasso

Gabriel Dumont, by George Woodcock, **Hurtig**, 256 pages. **\$8.95 cloth.**

The Life of Louis **Riel**, by Peter Charlebois, NC Press. **255 pages**, \$14.95 cloth and \$7.95 paper.

BY DOUG FETHERLING

TWO OF THE recent books by and about John Diefenbaker contain different versions of an anecdote, important only in a broader context, about Gabriel Dumont, the great Métis hunter and leader of Louis Riel's forces in the Saskatchewan uprising of 1885. It seems that around the turn of the century, the Diefenbaker homestead was a stopping off place for talkative locals and for various strangers to that pan of Saskatchewan. Among the visitors were Mounties or former Mounties who were veterans of the Métis battles. Another visitor was Dumont himself, whom Diefenbaker remembers meeting and being very impressed with. The year was 1905. Diefenbaker was a precocious 10-year-old. Dumont, at 68, was one year from the grave.

The meeting is significant, if only symbolically, because it shows one of those curious overlappings of history. There, caught together for a moment in time, was Dumont, who had taken part in the buffalo hunts of another age, and Diefenbaker, who would spend his career in the technological epoch, pining away for that earlier era. There was Dumont, the noble warrior and completely instinctual man; a fellow of great loyalty, courage and wisdom; an illiterate who had no need to be otherwise, since he lived by actions instead of by words. There he was meeting Diefenbaker, the heir to his triumphs and follies, who would grow up to live by words alone — great torrents of them — often unsustained by either action or thought. Two ends of the same civilization met that day, two symbols for past and present. It was a thin symbol. Riel, who bridges their two worlds and sets them in perspective. Riel was a man with one foot in Dumont's world and the other in Diefenbaker's, which is also our own. Unlike Dumont, he became a martyr, and he still comes down to us with a martyr's perpetual timeliness.

George Woodcock begins his biography of Dumont with the proposition that while Riel may indeed be the better symbol for the Métis struggle it is Dumont who deserves most of the praise for his military skills and pity for his fate. "It is not Riel we admire," he writes, "for in many ways he was a man impossible to admire, and from all accounts we have. Dumont was a far more likeable and estimable human being. It is Riel the symbol who catches our imaginations and what he symbolises is our inner condition, our consciousness of deprivation and alienation from meaningful existence, our sense of rebellion without hope."

This is true enough, of course. But in another, similarly subconscious sense, we admire Riel for a contrary reason — because part of him is so close to us materially and culturally, while Dumont is so remote. It takes Woodcock's considerable narrative and reportorial skills to bring alive the now completely lost world of nomadic hunters and traders.

Unlike Dumont, Riel was well-educated and also well-rehearsed in the theatrical sense. Despite his racial ties and commitments to the Métis world, he, like the Diefenbakers then in ascent, was conditioned to translate his compassion into mere emotion. It is this fact, I believe, as much as the one Woodcock presents, that accounts for the sweet purgatory of Riel's reputation and also, naturally, for the means of that continued martyrdom: the literary cottage industry that has grown up around his name.

Several biographies of Riel have been written over the years. There have also been innumerable articles and essays, several plays (one of them by Woodcock), at least one opera, and any number of poem sequences and individual poems, including one by, of all people, Joaquin Miller, the 19th-century "Byron of Oregon." Even Cecil B. De Mille, in his own kitschy way, had a hand in Riel's legend. In Canada, these past few years especially, the publishing side of Riel has been an important minor enterprise.

The latest publication is Peter Charlebois' book, which features more than 200 half-tones from some 500 Charlebois gathered together. In fact, the project began as a mere picture-book but has ended as an excellent pictorial account of Riel and his struggles. Part of the book, though, is a quarrelsome and somewhat eccentric text. It includes some scraps of new information, mainly about Riel being in contact with survivors of the Papineau uprising; but the whole is almost as much anti-politics as it is pro-Riel. This puts Charlebois in contrast with Woodcock, whose libertarianism manifests itself as a sort of parapolitical humanism. It is a quality that allows him to describe "the ordered anarchy" of the hunting expeditions in which Dumont learned the tactics he would use later against Middleton's troops. Just about the only points on which the two authors agree strenuously are that Dumont is much neglected and that Sir John A. Macdonald (in Woodcock's words) "seems always to have preferred a devious to a straightforward solution to any political problem." Both men, in fact, think Macdonald was "something of a scoundrel generally."

Woodcock's biography is a fine book, shrewd in its analysis of Dumont particularly and the Métis collectively. It's forceful without being emotional, and it tells what is at times a frankly exciting story. Woodcock has relied upon primary sources. He has also revealed Dumont's personality slowly and in three stages, as though it were a photographic print in the darkroom going through developer, hypo, and stopper. The first stage lays the groundwork from his birth in St. Boniface, probably in 1837, through his family's return to Saskatchewan. It was then in early adulthood that Dumont showed himself a leader, in the fights against hostile Indians and also against receding prosperity generally.

The second stage comes with Riel's first rebellion, when Dumont journeyed to Manitoba to offer his services but was largely rebuffed. This precedes Woodcock's canny, assessment of the later developments in Saskatchewan:



Gabriel Dumont

For all the rebel leaders with any vision, whether Poundmaker and Big Bear among the Indians, or Dumont and Riel (in his less exalted moments) among the Métis, recognized that the day when they could sweep the white man from the prairies had gone, if it had ever existed. What they hoped was that a strong alliance of the native peoples, willing to take decisive action, could force the Dominion government to negotiate, could assure the Métis a fair position in the new order of the prairies, and could gain the Indians something better than the starvation which by 1883 had in many areas been the result of treaties [with the government] that had cut down the expenditures of the Indian Department on rations at the very time when the full effects of the disappearance of the buffalo were being felt.

The third and most dramatic revelation comes when Dumont's style is contrasted with that of Riel, whom Dumont visited in exile in the U.S. and helped persuade to return. The fact that he could not further persuade Riel to take his military advice meant the end of any dream of unifying the native peoples. It was this failure to allow Dumont free reign at Duck Lake (where Riel stood among whizzing bullets, holding aloft his crucifix) that made the battle less of a victory than it ought to have been. It wasn't until Fish Creek that Dumont reluctantly went against Riel's scheme. But the move was too late, and there resulted another of those victories that was largely a forestalling of a great inevitable defeat. The defeat, of course, was the defence of Batoche. Following that engagement Riel was captured and subsequently hanged. Dumont, by an even crueller twist of historical fate, fled to the U.S. where he earned a living performing with Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West shows.

Had Dumont enforced from the beginning a division of the military and the messianic, the whole Blackfoot Confederacy, plus the English-speaking half-breeds and various other groups, would have joined in one massive and possibly decisive confrontation with the police and militia. Instead, though, Dumont, believing in the power of Riel's charisma (if not fully in Riel's leadership), deferred. The rest is not only history, it's also geography.

Woodcock is excellent at the small details that illustrate the differences between the two men and their respective alienation from and hostility towards the enemy. Dumont, for instance, who spoke French and six native languages but hardly any English, always referred to the Canadian soldiers as "policemen." This was because they wore red tunics similar to those worn by the policemen who had fought in Manitoba. Conversely, Riel, with an astuteness that made him no less a Métis but more of an outsider from the whites, referred to the settlers as "Orangemen." He knew enough of the whites to maintain this fine-line nomenclature; knew them better than Dumont but also knew less how to combat them.

This is a small anecdote, but perhaps it is as symbolic as the one from Diefenbaker's recollections. Dumont was a Métis totally and, as Woodcock states, the greatest leader and hem of his people. Riel, with his seminary training, Eastern clothes and skilful pen, was a Métis in whom the two cultures were more distinct and less in accord. Part of him was native, part was European. Although he tried to align himself completely with the former part, the two halves may have waged within him a war every bit as virulent as that which — foolhardily at times, always sincerely and literally to the last measure of his breath — he waged against the circumstances that had brought about the division in the first place.

There is now a curious irony in the whole situation. Riel became no temporary martyr but rather a posthumous victor. He has become in fact too much a victor, too much a mythological toad for Woodcock the anarchist and champion of the doomed. By writing this, the first full biography of Dumont, Woodcock may have built the foundation on which a rival Métis saint will ultimately be erected — at least in the minds of the whites who are doing all this writing. □

### ON COMPLETING A LIFE OF DUMONT

*A year I have lived in the most of my mind with you,  
Acting your deeds as best I can. thinking your thoughts,  
and  
Now I stand back, take your dark presence in my view.  
And realize that though we say goodbye, easy hand  
In hand, like companions ending a long hard journey,  
We are still strangers, you from your world where  
Violence is what happens in the natural doily way  
Between animals and between men, I from the rare  
Interlude of a time where peace has been a fragile  
Possibility in a few favoured places for a few.  
But what is the echo I hear compellingly ring  
In my ear as you bow sardonically into your defile  
Of dark death? What does it tell me I share with you?  
Is it, fierce stranger, that freedom is a word our hearts both  
sing?*

(From Notes on *Visitations*, by George Woodcock, House of Anansi, 101 pages, \$9.95 cloth.)

# A PALADIN OF HIS RACE

Amid a doomed people huddled on the white roof of the world, there once burned a bonfire of a man

By PETER SUCH

PETER PITSEOLAK, who was named, he tells us, after the first Cape Dorset interpreter. was born in 1902, was the leading influence among his people for decades. and died on Sept. 30, 1973. He was described in 1939 by Lord Tweedsmuir (John Buchan), whose portrait he painted at that time, as "the paladin of his race; a skilful trapper and hunter, the best carver of walrus ivory on the coast." Pitseolak remembers the day he was born. His acute memory for detail, names, and relationships is one of the fascinating aspects of *People from Our Side* (Hurtig, 159 pages. \$8.95 paper), his history of the Inuit of Baffin Island. He was one of those rare individuals who revelled in the rub of change — his vision and awareness polished by it like a sled-runner in the snow. He even remembers talk of the people who may have been the last remnant of the Cape Dorsets who disappeared in the 15th century and whose survivors seemed to have inherited a characteristic messiness with blubber. "You're too neat, too neat." complains one of these people's descendents, who has come to live in Cape Dorset with the Inuit. At the other end of time's marching column is his view of "the left-handed one" Sowmik (James Huston) with whom the elderly Pitseolak comes into conflict:

Sowmik: had asked me to work for him but my muscles used to get sore so I refused. ... Then when I wanted to take a second wife, Sowmik said, "Do that and you'll go to jail." I thought, why? Why pick on me? Because the people around me — the white men too — were doing the same thing.

Between these times we are led by the late Peter Pitseolak on an epic hunt to track the ghosts and gods of his dying Cape Dorset culture. criss-crossing and doubling-back, roaming from one terrain to another, the only constant the skilful instinct of his guiding voice. "I am telling a story but it is not one thing after another. ... I am not telling about everything, just what I remember from early times of the doings of the Eskimo people. There are so many things I know." This is no slick exotica of the *White Dawn* variety; only Flaherty, the great documentary film-maker, and Edmund Carpenter (both mentioned in his story) have come close to conveying the taste and texture of Eskimo life as we find it in this marvellous and poignant book that has been carefully edited and produced by Dorothy Eber. Let the subject speak for itself; how true appears this maxim that distinguishes so much Canadian from American art, with the publication of *People from our Side*, illustrated as it is by the incredible photographs taken by Pitseolak during the last 40 years and developed by him. ("Once someone gave me a thermometer to test the water but my finger was always best.") Dorothy Eber describes Peter as an amateur, but for me he is a true professional. The amateur thrives on his product, redolent with ego, and his private obsessions. (How many photographers of our times operate with these rules?)

Peter is interested in the process, the joy of engaging with his medium and his subjects. His dead and forgotten people

stare at us barefaced and real, hauntingly religious in their natural but epic stances, the things made by their hands like talismans around them; or else they trek with sled or kayak across the world's white roof, whole groups of them sometimes bent to their tasks hauling walrus or raising snow houses.

Pitseolak professes his Christianity, but still the shamans of his youth haunt his mind along with ancient stories of his people, chanted in "beautiful sentences"; stories that not many now understand, and which originally littered his first manuscript. One suspects that Pitseolak, like many of his kindred souls in Repulse Bay, Baker Lake, and elsewhere, is saying what he thought the editors with their tape-recorders wanted to hear. Why would the first third of his book dwell so long on the craziness that Christianity brought to his people in the early days? Pitseolak recalls Annoyak, who took the name Keegak (the leader), dancing in a naked frenzy in a hugh roofless igloo-church because he thought he and his people could ascend into heaven. "Of course, nobody got up. Finally Keegak had to go home because he got too cold. His penis had goose pimples." And in the same pragmatic and ironic tone he tells of how a brother who was mentally retarded was "thought to have the devil in him," and so was put out to die by the camp's two "saints": "He was staring at those two people who were to throw him away as if he were studying their faces. His grandmother put him in the wrappers. He could not speak a word at all as if he were crazy. 'Suddenly, so clearly, he said, 'Amen, Amen, Amen.' When he was about to be left in the snow blocks he said again, 'Amen, Amen, Amen.' ..."

The texture of Pitseolak's history is often biblical, particularly in those parts he wrote himself (translated from syllabics by Ann Hanson — the recorded material was interpolated later). We can only suppose that he has been influenced by the only model of a people's history he knew of, so that we have paragraphs of genealogies ringing out the changes of his times, complicated by the practice of wife-exchange (*aveeliak*) and adoption. As with his photography, Pitseolak began his history long before the whites thought to ask it of him. Similarly Pitseolak is careful to let the reader know that the Eskimo had his own musical instruments and knew how to draw well before the white people "brought" these ideas. As in the case of their traditional ivory sculpture, which was often carelessly discarded by the carver after the joyful process of bringing the spirit that was within it to life was completed, their drawing was similarly produced. Pitseolak tells us that their pictures were "done with a jack-knife and a spoon on the windows ... We would put the spoon in our mouths to make it warm; then we would draw. That was how it was done when we were real Eskimos. We were not told by the white men to draw; we did it by ourselves."

Gradually we realize the genealogies are becoming shorter and shorter, "the only people" dying from disease or becoming white-men? bedmates whose children depart their

camp and posts forever. Similarly, the caribou no longer speckle the endless snowplains but are found only in the difficult rockhills. The beautiful lady under the sea, "around whom the animals were thick as flies," is no longer visited by the shaman and persuaded to send some of them in the hunter's way. Attrition besets the camps. Laplanders come with reindeer but the experiment fails. In all this, though, Pitseolak says "I know of only two people who died from starvation." The Hudson's Bay people begin to control Inuit movements to keep them trapping foxes close to the settlements, and by 1922 the concept of "work" begins to enter the lives of Pitseolak and his people. "We were working on the gravel outside the houses which were being built. We also built houses; we worked hard. And we worked on the Bay skins. That was the first time I really worked for the white man." In 1929 he had to assert his independence: "Our boss in Toojak thought he was the boss to end all bosses. . . . I was not scared of him but he was scolding too much. I did not want to do bad things; I went off to camp. I did not want to have bad things to think about. Working for him was not the only way to make a living." But sadly that soon ceases to be true. The Eskimos are locked into a symbiosis with white people:

When they thought they were rich in the white man's way they started to ignore the riches of Eskimo life. So much was available to them from the white man. Later it turned out we were not as wealthy as we thought.

Ironically it is Pitseolak who is put into the position of deciding whether to have nurses and teachers for his people. "I had to think it out. I did not want to give any rush answers. . . . Since I knew the white people were coming anyway. I thought to myself, if there are no teachers in

Cape Dorset and there are teachers in other places, then Cape Dorset will be left behind." He agreed, but knew "it would be the beginning of difficult times." The school, too, adds to the magnetism of the post settlement. Before long, out of fear their children will freeze going there, or will be scolded and head blindly for the comfort of their home, the camp-people move to the settlement in larger numbers. He comments: "When the Eskimo people were teaching each other there were fewer troubles. The old Eskimo people were very smart; very intelligent."

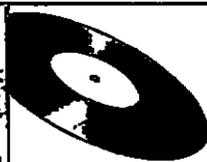
But Pitseolak is incapable of seeing in stereotypes, as the whites so often did. He insists on seeing people as people, humanistically taking them for who they are, ordinary white and Eskimo alike, for their deeds of charity, bravery, and fairness. He even tries to have a good word for Sowmik. The most touching portions of the book are those in which Pitseolak's mother is mentioned. One day, while he was a little boy in their camp on the trail, his fully grown brother dies from a lung ailment. By this time they are few in number and his father is old and sick. It is left to his mother to carry the body and bury it. "Whenever I think of my mother I always remember her carrying her dead son and I love her." Life has flowed through Pitseolak and he has relished every happiness and sadness it has had to offer. He concludes his sad litany of the passing of his people by saying, "I am not tired of living or tired of people." Hurtig has done us a great service with the publication of *People From Our Side*; buy it, put it on courses in schools. It is as close to the real experience of Cape Dorset Inuit as the eye can glean from print and picture. And as close to the experience of meeting a human heart as any novel you might have read. □

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# Full centuries five our Fathers lied

**Prison of Grass: Canada from the Native Point of View**, by Howard Adams, New Prep, 238 pages, \$12.95 cloth.

**The Harrowing of Eden: White Attitudes Toward North American Natives**, by J. E. Chamberlin, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 248 pages, \$10.95 cloth.

**Success and Failure: Indians in Urban Society**, by W.T. Stanbury with Jay H. Siegel, University of British Columbia Press, 415 pages, \$17.95 cloth.

**Ethnics and Indians: Social Relations in a Northwestern Ontario Town**, by David H. Stymeist, Peter Martin Associates, 98 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

By EDWARD S. ROGERS

THE AUTHORS OF these four books, while approaching the study of the American Indians (primarily those of Canada) along different academic routes, have produced, quite by accident, works that complement each other. Adams, a Métis and a professor of education, recounts with emotion something of his life experiences and his views of his people's history here in Canada, concluding that to improve their lot a program for "radical nationalism" must be formulated. Chamberlin, an English professor with sensitivity, perception, and a sure grasp of history, has reviewed the abrasive relationships that have existed between the Indians and the Europeans, owing in large measure to the policies and philosophies of the latter, from the time that the two races first met. Stanbury, from commerce and business administration, assisted by Jay Siegel in social science, has statistically blitzed the urban Indians of British Columbia in an attempt to determine their social and economic status as of 1971. Stymeist, as an anthropology student, undertook in 1971-2, an investigation of the interaction between the Indians and "ethnic" groups (plus an analysis of "ethnicity") in a small northwestern Ontario town, named by the author

"Cmw Lake" (in fact, it is transparently Sioux Lookout).

Although one may quarrel with points made by each author (and this reviewer does), and criticize methodology and interpretations, all works are 'scholarly, generally well-written, and welcome additions to the growing literature on the North American Indians. Native people may not appreciate the fact, but Canada's Indians are increasingly being subject to the same intensive scrutiny that their brothers south of the border have been experiencing for decades.

Chamberlin's study, *The Harrowing of Eden*, is one of those unique volumes that brings to bear on the subject of Indians a depth of understanding and breadth of knowledge rarely encountered. This is clearly indicated by his willingness to admit that he has no magic solution to the problems inherent in Indian-white relationships; he's refreshingly honest at a time when almost everyone, it seems, has a remedy for the "Indian problem." Chamberlin does not consider Native cultures ethnographically but he does compare and contrast the treatment by Europeans of the Indians of Canada and of the United States. Although pointing out that the two countries, on occasion, differed in their manner of dealing with the Indians, he writes:

The general policy, in both Canada and the United States, was one of enforced change for the native people, a change which would be discontinuous with native values and beliefs but continuous with the civil and religious progress which was earnestly felt to be indispensable for eventual native assimilation to the social and economic standards of non-native society, of education in habits of industry and thrift and individual responsibility.

At the same time, Chamberlin isolates various areas of friction between the two people, as well as inconsistencies in the application of policies by Europeans. As he notes so aptly:

The client departments of Indian affairs in Canada and the United States forgot to attend to their reason for existing, and their clients went without services to which they were entitled as citizens (and as human beings) as well as those which they had been especially promised as Indians in exchange for the cession of the lands which were their traditional resource and heritage.

Other aspects of this dilemma are considered, such as incompatibility of "the idea of the noble savage" with "the idea of progress":

Between native and non-native culture there was a discontinuity which was partly the product of that mannerist, dialectical tension between the seductions of primitivism and the compulsions of progressivism, and

partly the product of sheer, satisfying ignorance.

Throughout his book, Chamberlin examines problems of this type: the full and proper utilization of the land, by hunting or farming; the continuous encouragement of the Indians to be self-sufficient, while at the same time throwing up mad-blocks to prevent its realization; the pitfalls of assimilation and enfranchisement; and the governments' need for Native organizations and local Native governments, and in turn the Natives' need for the Europeans' political structures. Chamberlin has amply documented the fact that after centuries of contact between the Indians and the Europeans, the latter have learned little and accomplished practically nothing in attempting to arrive at an amicable relationship with the Indians.

The other books demonstrate the validity of Chamberlin's contentions. Adams has done so in *Prison of Grass* with a degree of suppressed fury at the

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*"As the native movement develops [says Adams] there may come a time when guerilla violence will be necessary and appropriate, and we must not hesitate to use it."*

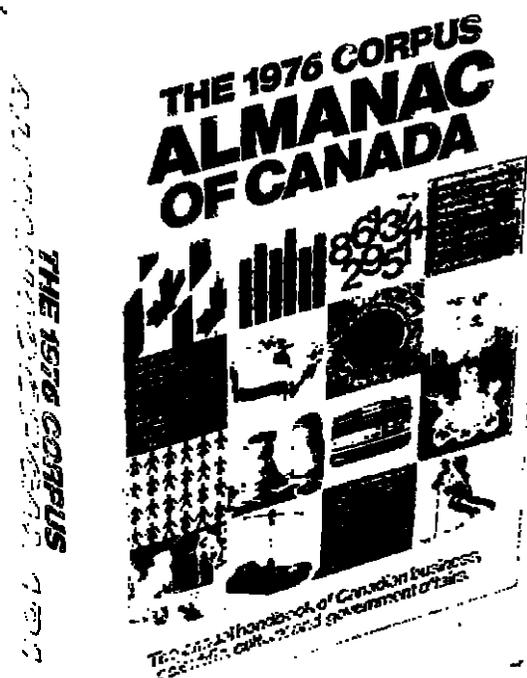
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treatment that he and his people have received at the hands of the Europeans. Racism and discrimination form the main thrust of Adams' book, although in contrast to Chamberlin, he advances a scheme by which the Métis and Indians can escape, he believes, from their present state and past injustices, real or perceived. According to Adams, "racism . . . arose from economic factors inherent in capitalism." To remedy the situation, Adams contends' that:

Liberation can take place only within a true socialist society . . . We need to liberate ourselves from the courts, ballot boxes, school system, church, and all other agencies that command us to stay in "our colonized place" . . . Only when the native people have been politically awakened to a new socialist society will the struggle expand to a full revolutionary movement. The support of the masses is, an absolute necessity before a complete transformation of society can be made . . . As the native movement develops . . . there may come a time when guerilla violence will be necessary and appropriate, and we must not, hesitate to use it.

But Europeans are not the only ones to come under attack by Adams. Native leaders and Native organizations are also condemned: "The two national

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organizations ... are typical middle-class bureaucracies that are not at all representative of the native masses." And the leaders of such groups "often appear to be militant and progressive, but inside the native communities they are reactionaries and 'sellouts'."

Adams reveals himself as a most complex person, made more so by the trauma of growing up a Métis in Saskatchewan, then rejecting his family and heritage for mainstream life, and finally returning to a recognition of himself. Having arrived at this point in life, Adams bitterly perceives the Métis situation and advocates a radical solution to the grievances voiced by the Native people. His approach, though, is mostly negative, whether in practice or theory, since he does not fully appreciate the unique and amorphous character of Native socio-political organization.

Adams is not alone in his view that the Native people are rejected. Stymeist states in *Ethnic and Indians that* during the course of his field work, he discovered that the "Indians suffer intense discrimination in Crow Lake and are regarded with prejudice." He therefore "... hoped to discover, at least in part, why such prejudice and discrimination exists, how it operates and toward what ends it functions." Few new insights, if any, have been

uncovered or perceived, in spite of his adoption of "a traditional anthropological method: that of participant observation." Yet having stated this as his methodology, and rejecting a statistical approach, he attempts to validate his observations with Charts, tables, and figures, with no humanistic presentation of the attitudes and perceptions of the Native people. From this one can only surmise that Stymeist, although no doubt having had contact with Indians, really never got to know any of them. If he had, he would not have referred to their "culture of poverty" and "political and social disorganization," phrases that have become little more than fashionable clichés and provide no insight into the real world of the India&

But one should not be too critical of Stymeist's work because of his superficial treatment of the Indians of Northern Ontario. As he says:

This investigation of the ethnic factor in Crow Lake recognizes two forms: the ethnic dimension as it exists among non-Native residents of the town, i.e., "white" ethnicity; and those social relationships and structures that pertain to the distinction between whites and Indians.

It was the "ethnic dimension" that he investigated most folly, and to which he devotes the better part of his book.

When dealing with this topic, he seems to be on somewhat firmer ground.

A final comment is in order. Stymeist has employed pseudonyms for most of the places he mentions in northwestern Ontario, a technique of dubious value, since any resident of the area would quickly see through the deception. If Stymeist believed that by this ruse he could escape the wrath of the local inhabitants, he has failed.

While Stymeist professed to ignore statistical data, Stanbury, in *Success and Failure*, took an opposite point of view regarding such a methodology. He "... concentrates on 'hard data' in contrast to a number of recent popular books on Canadian Indians. By hard data we mean a wide range of quantifiable information ... needed to measure the social and economic conditions of Indians in relation to the dominant society."

Yet after presenting more than 100 tables and more than 200 pages of analysis of the "hard data," the author could only conclude that:

Looking across a considerable number of indices, we believe it is fair to conclude that the social and economic positions of B.C. Indians, particularly in urban centres, have improved over the past decade. There remains, however, a significant gap between their position in the social spectrum and that of the vast majority of non-Indians.

Although it is perhaps unfair to judge this work solely on the basis of the author's use of "hard data," yet by this technique he fails to convey to the reader what it really means to be a Native person, unlike Adams' portrayal of what it is like to be a Métis. Furthermore, one might question the validity of the "hard data," data collected in a matter of weeks by teams who sped through the urban centres of British Columbia filling out questionnaires. Do people anywhere, investigated by such tactics, respond with accuracy and enthusiasm — especially Indians who are fed-up with social scientists continuously dissecting them? Stymeist, after 16 months in one small community, did not convey any depth of understanding of the Native people and their plight.

In spite of the above comments, the authors of these four books, taken together, do reveal something about the depressing Indian situation as it exists today, some of the causes that have contributed to this situation, and the different disciplines that are now turning their attention to studies of the Native people in an attempt to better understand them and find ways (as yet unproven) to ameliorate their lot. □

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# The Devil and René Fumoleau

As Long as This Land Shall Last, by René Fumoleau, McClelland & Stewart, 415 pages, \$5.95 paper.

The White Man's Laws, by Christine Daniels and Ron Christiansen, Hurtig, 136 pages, \$8.95 cloth and \$3.95 paper.

By HUGH McCULLUM

WHEN YOU DROP in on René Fumoleau's little mission house at the end of the toad on Latham Island near Yellowknife, N.W.T., he'll quickly offer you tea at the kitchen table. And it won't be long before he'll turn the conversation towards his friends, the Indian people of the Mackenzie Valley with whom he's lived for nearly 25 years. The informal Father Fumoleau speaks their language and knows them well; but of much greater importance, he likes them and the way they live and think. This French-born Oblate missionary has turned historian in this book about Indian treaties in the Northwest Territories. He has packed the pages with exhaustive research about the events in the North from 1870 to 1940, and produced a definitive book on the subject.

It's first-hand history, too. Interviews with Indians still living who remember the treaty signings in 1890 and again in 1921 substantiate the records in government, church, and RCMP archives. Says Fumoleau:

"There was no radio, TV, or newspapers in those days, no barrage of news like we have today. So when an event as new and important as the treaty came along, these people remembered. They remember the old stories and the old days as well as they do the trails in the bush."

But for a man so deeply immersed in the lives of the native people and so committed to their future, Father Fumoleau treats his subject with the objectivity of a professional historian, which he is not.

The book, which was originally to be called "The Blackest Blot" after a remark in a letter from Bishop Joseph Breynat to the federal government about the treatment of northern Indians, took almost four years of preparation and research. Fumoleau started off after a meeting of brother Oblates (all the Roman Catholic missions in the

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PETER MARTIN ASSOCIATE'S  
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Northwest Territories are manned by (Oblates) with some of the local chiefs to discuss Indian land claims. Inevitably the subject of Treaties Eight and Eleven came up. The 48-year-old priest took on the assignment of finding out more and preparing a modest position paper on the subject. Treaties Eight and Eleven were the agreements signed by the Federal government and the Indian tribes of the Mackenzie and Northern Alberta at the end of the last century.

The position paper became his second vocation while ministering to the Dogrib Indians around Yellowknife. He found, in four trips to Ottawa and the Indian Affairs archives, along with intensive work in the Anglican and Roman Catholic archives, RCMP records, and elsewhere, that the white man had been less than honest with the Indians. In fact, he had been downright dishonest. Forged signatures, misleading promises, lack of witnesses, poor translations, and outright bribery were among the more common strategies employed by whites in an effort to conclude the treaties before the snow came and settle the "Indian problem" once and for all. For years the government had refused the pleas of the churches to make treaties while poverty, hunger, and disease stalked the North. Yet when gold was discovered in the Yukon in 1898 and oil at Fort Norman in 1920, suddenly the need for treaties became urgent. Little has changed. Oil, natural gas, and hydro-electricity now make land-claim settlements imperative whereas benign neglect had been the policy for decades.

The book does more than record the policies behind treaty-making; it establishes the atmosphere of the days between 1870 and 1940. The fur traders, the churches, and the police come in for serious examination and reflection. On what basis did the Hudson's Bay Company, the mining firms, and now the oil and gas companies take to themselves the privileges of ownership of a land occupied "since time immemorial" by natives? Why were treaties signed that were never fulfilled and promises made that were never honoured ("as long as the sun rises, as long as the river flows, as long as this land shall last")? The documents, the forgeries, the maps, and the photographs tell it all. Compassion shows through, but this is no rhetorical treatise on injustice. Fumoleau passes no judgment. The reader is left to do that himself.

Christine Daniel and Ron Christiansen's book, filled with lively coloured illustrations, demonstrates a

native interpretation of the laws of the white man's society. It also shows the degradation and hardship these laws can wreak on the lives of native people. An old man talking to his grandson traces his ancestry back to the days before the white men arrived and tells him about the traditional Indian laws that existed then, illustrating the stark contrasts between white attitudes and those of native people.

This is an excellent little book for those who wish to understand Indian difficulties within a white legal system. It is one of the most devastating systems that natives in this country have to face. □

## ○ Arctic shape! Fair attitude!

Dorset 75: Cape Dorset- Annual Graphics Collection, 1975, M. F. Fehely Publishers (5 Drumsnab Road, Toronto), illustrated, 83 pages, \$12.50 cloth and \$10 paper.

By MARVIN GOODY

BY NOW NEARLY everyone interested in Canadian art must know the story of the Canadian Eastern Arctic graphics: how James Houston, in the late 1950s, having earlier been instrumental in initiating the creation and marketing of soapstone sculpture on a large scale, introduced the Eskimos to techniques of print-making, adapted from Japanese sources but using native materials as much as possible; and how, beginning at Cape Dorset on Baffin Island, then Povungnituk on Hudson's Bay, a remarkable series of stone-cut and stencil prints began to appear, introducing a galaxy of unfamiliar new names to the Canadian art scene — Niviaksiak, Kenojuak, Sheouak, Parr, Mungituk, Nepachee, and many others.

In the decade and a half since, print-making has spread to a number of other Arctic localities — Baker Lake, Holman Island. Pangnirtung — but Cape Dorset, where it all began, maintains a certain pre-eminence. Dorset has pioneered new techniques and most of the names that have become familiar to collectors today are those of Dorset artists.

Now, in another innovation, the catalogue of the annual Dorset collec-

lion. previously produced in an austere black-sad-white magazine format, has been upgraded to a full-fledged coffee-table volume. And a very attractive production it is, with a trilingual introduction and foreword (the rest of the text is bilingual). descriptions of the print-making techniques (this year lithography has been added to the repertoire). brief biographies of the artists. and a concluding photo-essay. All data on the individual prints are contained on a fold-out sheet so that the illustrations are left uncluttered. Nearly one half of the 76 prints are reproduced in colour.

And the prints themselves? They remain a continuing miracle. an exuberant evocation of a people and a way of life. and a celebration of life itself. The artists of Cape Dorset are unspoiled by success, their creative energy and invention as yet undiminished by the gradually encroaching culture of snowmobile and TV satellite. How long this can continue is uncertain, but for the present the community seems to be firmly in control of its artistic destiny.

The individuality displayed by the Dorset print-makers is notable, and even within the work of a single artist remarkable variety can often be discerned. The grace and technical sophistication of Kananginak's "Sitjariak," each wing-feather meticulously defined. and his "Enraged Caribou" and "Muskoxen and Wolves" (studies respectively in kinetic and potential energy) contrast with the same artist's "All That We Own" (rendered in a more primitive style reminiscent of the old scrimshaw work). in which the artifacts of the traditional hunting culture are spread out across the sheet, even the harpoon disassembled to show its structure.

Equally fascinating is the contrast in treatment of the same or similar subjects by different artists. "Igloos at Ilkaserak" by Pitseolak and "Fox in Camp" by Pudlo each depict an encampment of igloos with people and an animal: Pitseolak's as if looking down from above at a 45-degree angle, and quite naturalistic; Pudlo's as if from directly ahead without perspective, with an enormous and unlikely bright yellow fox straddling three igloos and looking rather like the Cheshire cat, while little blue and green men. only their upper parts visible, wander about with raised clubs, presumably hunting him. (Clearly he's going to elude them.)

The editors appear to have taken some care to provide a number of such

interesting juxtapositions, but I'll let you have the fun finding the others.

The photographs, by Tessa MacIntosh of Cape Dorset, are also superb. Here we see Pitseolak, sitting up in bed. drawing, in a room that looks truly spartan, not even a curtain on the window; while a little farther on Pauta and Pitaloosee and their children relax comfortably on a well-staffed sofa, the shelves behind them bearing a modem stereo receiver flanked by kitschy ceramic ducks from down south. (No Eskimo art for them!) Here, on one page, is Ningeona, an old woman peering appraisingly at us over her glasses, a long lifetime of suffering and hardship in her eyes; opposite is Itee, a long-haired youth in dungarees, looking with his would-be enigmatic smile and elaborately casual pose as "cod" as any of his southern counterparts. The two are linked by their half-smoked cigarettes — a complete essay on change in two pictures.

In this foreword, Iyola Kingwatsiak, president of the Dorset co-op, concludes: "I have a lot more to say yet, but I think I will stop now." I'll echo that. □

## They can't go home again

**The People's Land**, by Hugh Bmdy, Penguin, 240 pages, \$2.95 paper.

**Lutiapik**, by Betty Lee, McClelland & Stewart, 237 pages, \$10 cloth.

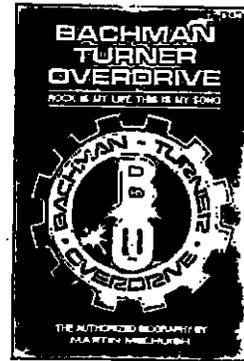
**Shadows**, by Armand Tagoona, Oberon Press, illustrated, 58 Pages, \$17.50 cloth.

By JANET LUNN

AS ESKIMOS become more and more dependent on our civilization for survival. a pervasive longing grows among them to be innumarik — "a genuine Eskimo or real person." as they were before the white men came. In fact, says Hugh Brody in *The People's Land*. innumarik may be an illusion even for Eskimos. The distinctive culture usually thought of as traditional goes back probably only 200 years at most, so that "the culture and personality of pre-contact Eskimo life may be too far removed from us to be known." Nor, he insists, can it be the concern of either Eskimos or whites in the Arctic today.

The crying need now is to make some kind of sense of the mess our last

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frontier has brought its unhappy victims. Brody describes a bewildered, debilitated people, living in Arctic slums, dependent on the civilization that has taken away their identity along with their livelihood and brought, in exchange, alcohol, sporadic welfare, and overseers operating in a transplanted suburban society that has no room in it for the natives. As he sees it, the only possibility is to offer the Eskimos a genuine Eskimo alternative to the southern community life they are being forced to serve.

Brody spent three years with the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development travelling and working in the Eastern Arctic. He learned two Eskimo dialects and spent a great deal of time getting to know the people whose problems he was studying. His book is a clear, well-reasoned, well-documented indictment of our development in the North. He sees little hope for a change in our entrenched attitude of exploitation and colonialism and his outrage is obviously born not only of his sense of justice, but also of his affection for the *innumarik* displaced in their own land.

Betty Lee's book is an account of the year nurse Dorothy Knight spent in the

settlement of Lake Harbour in Hudson Strait. An Arctic nurse's rounds (sometimes several hundred miles between camps) make interesting telling and Ms. Knight, who was given the name Lutiapik, "the little one who cares for us" (for her small stature as well as her job), is a bright, attractive subject. Her compassion for the Eskimos and her frustration with how her job had to be done are made clear. All the same, in this easier, more journalistic description of a personal experience, Betty Lee unwillingly corroborates Hugh Brody's thesis by her portrait of white society in Lake Harbour — a rigid, determinedly companionable society where drink and parties are essential and paternalism toward the Eskimos is kindly but never questioned.

*Shadows* is a deeper, more poignant realization of the Eskimo tragedy. Armand Tagoona is a Baker Lake Eskimo artist who has had one show at the Robertson Galleries in Ottawa. The book is a collection of pictures accompanied by his own writing about his life and his work. A half-white, Tagoona is concerned that his art be the work of an *innumarik* and not "a lie just to make people interested . . . to get a high price. . ."

The pictures are primitives: beautiful, clear, full of life and movement. They are pen and crayon drawings, mostly, and more realistic than Eskimo drawings generally are. They tell of dreams, legends, stories, or incidents that have made a strong impression on the artist, and a few are thoughts translated into abstract lines. The pictures are so direct and so strongly felt, they make not only the Arctic, but Tagoona's personal landscape an instant part of one's own experience. Perhaps, though, it's the strong, slightly awkward prose that makes this book so important to us right now. Everything that so enraged Hugh Brody and shows so clearly in *Lutiapik seams* can be summed up in four short sentences in *Shadows*. Writing about tractors making the ground ready for the white settlement at Baker Lake, Tagoona says:

Where there were growing things scraped off it was like a person skinned. Where the houses are now, the ground has no skin anymore. It's all dead ground, no longer smelling of growing things. Instead there's the smell of stones, a dead smell.

Can there be much hope for the Eskimos to keep for themselves anything that is truly *innumarik* if this is what we're doing to them? □



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# There's a mammoth close & hide-us

They Shared to **Survive: The Native Peoples of Canada**, by Selwyn Dewdney and Franklin Arbuckle, Macmillan, illustrated, 210 pages, \$10.95 cloth.

By DONALD MacLEOD

**MONDAY MORNINGS I never sleep in. I lie awake for hours** fighting a sincere and concerned subconscious that is exploring 'me to be my own free man instead of jumping, cowering, and playing dead in the Ontario government ministry where I work. Wilfred Pelletier agrees with my subconscious: "You have an organization within which there is no communication; there is simply a passing down of orders from the various levels and this is no longer a society- this is a machine."

Wilfred is an Ottawa- a native person or "Indian" from **Manitoulin Island**, whose gut statement about our urban white man's society is chosen by Selwyn Dewdney as a fulcrum for his urgent questions to all of us: Can we survive in our fool's paradise? Is it too late to learn from our native peoples the meaning of co-operation instead of competition? He illustrated book *They Shared to Survive* is an adventure narrative that is both educational and entertaining. Selwyn poured a lot of himself into it — from his boyhood 60 years ago in **Prince Albert**, to his journeys into every corner of Canada's North and down the sleeping millennia of struggle and **pride** that are the heritage of our native peoples. He modestly denies this to be a scholarly work, although in the broadest sense it is. His archaeological, ecological, ethnographic, and historical data are from the best current sources, and he gives a vivid and concise summary of native Canadian life and history. **Franklin Arbuckle's** excellent black-and-white drawings complement the text perfectly with simple eloquence and accurate detail.

The same graphic qualities are in the writing. Here's an interpretation of a mammoth hunt about **15,000 years ago**: "The black muck was too shallow to hold the great beast for more than a few lance thrusts. Stubbornly, the youth has followed the blood-stained trail ...."

Or take this excerpt from **Samuel Heame's diary** describing the raid of an Athapaskan band on an Eskimo camp: "The murderers made no reply till they had stuck both their spears through her body. [They] paid not the slightest regard to the shrieks and agony of the poor wretch; who was twining round their spears like a eel."

We need to know about a way of life where the quest for food is the largest single economic and political fact of existence. We need to know why individual initiative, pride, and courage are essential to a complete human being. We need to know how we could share a spiritual unity with the people whose country this was, long before we arrived.

Our record of sharing has been bad so far. We have shared glass beads, white flour, Coca Cola, and whisky with them, in return for beaver skins, pumpkins, maple syrup and tobacco — an exchange of vanity, carbohydrates, tooth decay, and cirrhosis for vanity, carbohydrates, tooth decay and lung cancer. Now we dump mercury into their food and welfare cheques into their hands. And still, we chide the Yanks for their 'Wounded Knees and Little Big Horns. Dewdney believes, however, that there really is a Canadian identity, and that we have inherited our unconscious self-awareness partly from the aboriginal cultures and their adaption to the Canadian environment. He is still optimistic that we have a chance to improve ourselves and survive as a nation by fostering this inheritance. I hope he's right.

Like another Prince Albert son, whose boyhood led him to politics instead of art and anthropology, Selwyn speaks always with personal conviction and utter lack of pretense. Much of this book reads like an explorer's diary, for he talks of real places where he was personally involved. His sense of mission unites the story from general historical inference to conclusions that are in fact a serious social essay. Unlike strictly academic scholars, Dewdney wears no quasi-academic fetters when it comes to making those things called "value judgments" that are so vilified by the inmates of the academic incubator. Like a 19th-century empiricist, in the days when mere quantification did not pose as truth, Selwynevaluates his facts responsibly.

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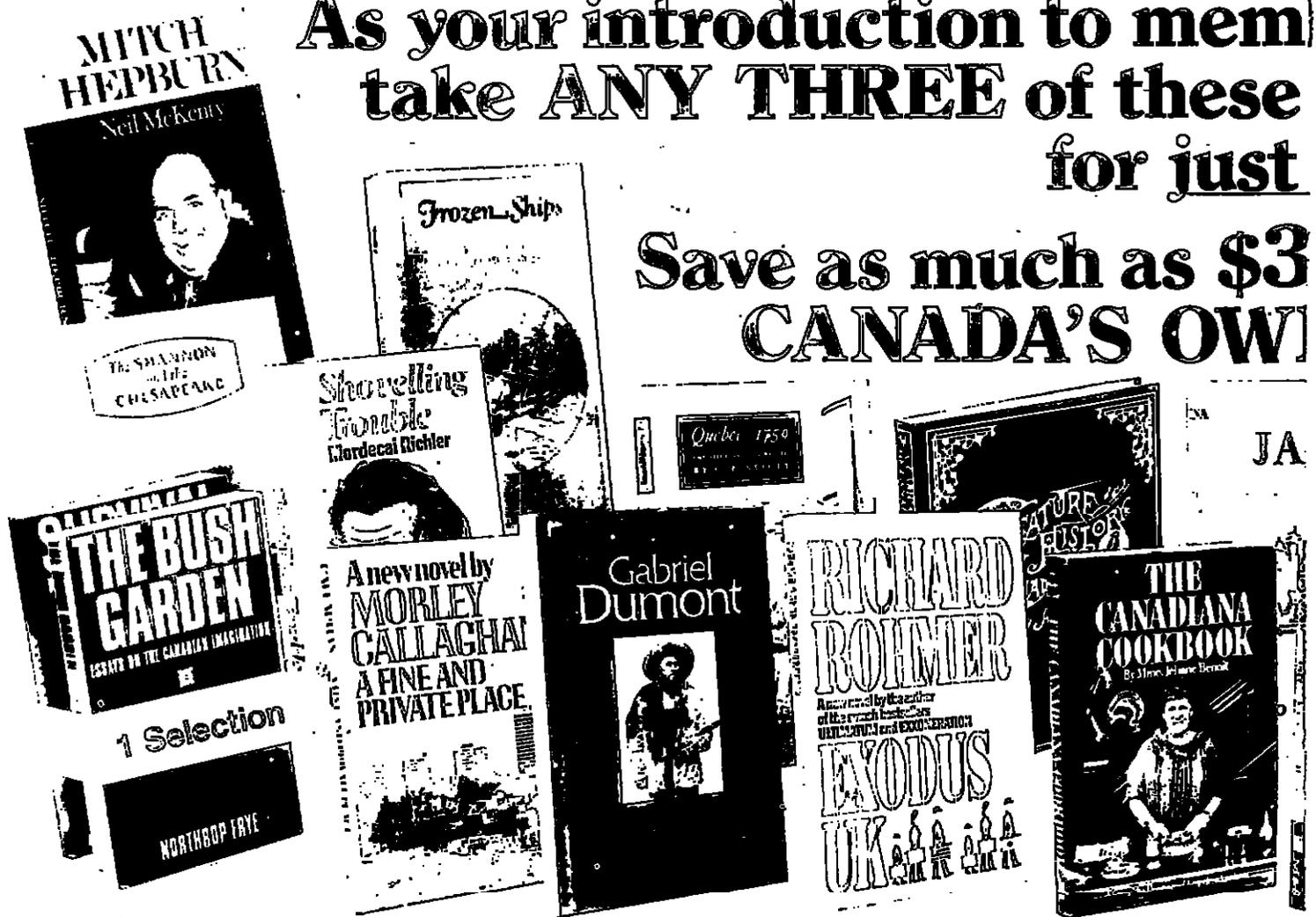
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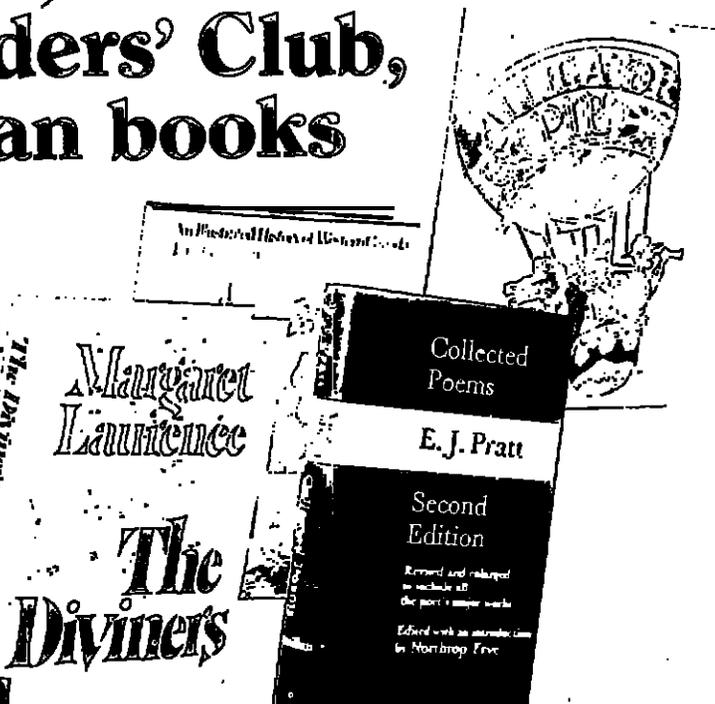
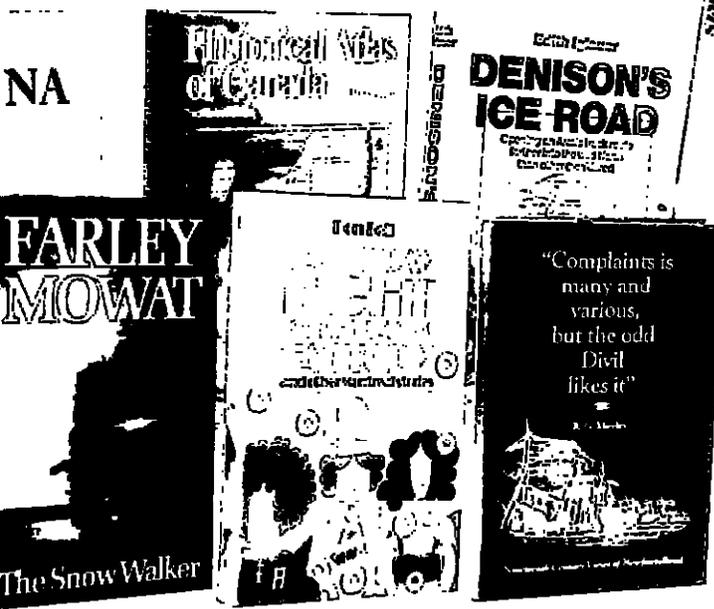
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Academics are notoriously uncommunicative, except in their own small circle. But one would think that, with all the brain power and special knowledge festering away in our universities, museums, and other publicly supported institutions, at least a little simple learning would have leaked out by now. There have been a few sincere attempts to inform the public about the first 20,000 years of our Canadian heritage (as distinct from the last 200 or so), but all have their shortcomings. For instance, Diamond Jenness's *Indians of Canada*, first printed in the 1920s, is still going strong as a basic ethnographic catalogue of "how and where they used to live," but it stops there. J. V. Wright's Ontario *Prehistory* is a creditable outline of archaeological traditions through time, but despite an effort at popularization it bears a heavy, North American academic stamp. Peter Such's *River-run*, a moving poetic tragedy based on the historic murder of an entire native people — the Beothuck of Newfoundland — is provoking but pessimistic and somewhat of a literary experiment.

*They Shared to Survive*, by contrast, is in plain English, factual and enjoyable. It is a palatable presentation of native Canadian heritage much needed in primary and secondary schools, where it would make an excellent text. Its social comment is for everybody. □

## Black Bear's loreless band

**Frog Lake Massacre**, by Harold Fryer, Frontier Books, 55 pages, \$1.75 paper.

By JAMES B. EVANS

FOR SOME YEARS NOW Vancouver-based Frontier books have been issuing books about events in Canadian history. All the titles in the series share the same format and valued. The reports are always well-researched and presented in a clear and concise manner. Better still, they are rooted more deeply in fact than in lore. It's a welcome relief from the prevailing tradition that fiction is stranger than fact — or at least more saleable in the frontier marketplace.

Each of the volumes is staple-bound and amply illustrated with photographs, sketches, and hand-drawn maps. Their only major flaw, apart

from typographical errors, seems to be the unmistakably plain covers.

*Frog Lake, Massacre* is the 32nd volume in this on-going series and possesses all the qualities mentioned above. It recounts the story of Black Bear and his band of Crees who, being stirred by the spirit of the Riel Rebellion and injustices done them, overtook the settlement of Frog Lake, Alta., and proceeded to slaughter first one and then all of the townspeople.

Though history now vindicates Black Bear and places the guilt more squarely on the shoulders of the more radical Wandering Spirit, Little Bear, and Poundmaker, the whole event seems to have been an exercise in futility. Both sides were guilty and both sides unforgiving. On this count *Frog Lake Massacre* seems to have its finger on the pulse of history. □

## Heil, Heil, the gang was here

The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties, by Lila-Rose Betcherman, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, illustrated, 167 pages, \$9.95 cloth.

By NEVILLE THOMPSON

IN THAT LOW, dishonourable decade before the Second World War, democracy was everywhere in retreat and dictatorship in the ascendant. Even in those countries where democracy was most firmly tooted, the economic depression and the seeming inability of governments to do much about it led people to idealize the achievements of authoritarian governments, making them susceptible to those who claimed that the same means would produce beneficial economic and social results in their own country. Still worse was the fact that the treatment of the Jews in Germany was seized on as a justification for similar conduct elsewhere.

Lila-Rose Betcherman's book is a blow to Canadian complacency that such things happened only in Europe. a salutary reminder of the attraction that fascism and, even more, anti-Semitism held for Canadians in the 1930s. She points out that propaganda attacks on the Jews and demands for a strong corporate and nationalist government were well under way in Quebec before Hitler came to power. The political program

owed much to the example of Mussolini, sanctified in the eyes of the clergy and the faithful by the Pope's endorsement of his regime. By 1934, **Adrien Arcand**, the leading Canadian fascist, had created a National Social Christian Party in the Nazi style, complete with **swastika** emblems and **blue-uniformed** followers. Similar organizations sprang up in other parts of Canada: Swastika Clubs in Ontario; and in the West the **Nationalist** Party (whose members wore brown uniforms), **which** became the Canadian Union of Fascists. There was some territorial overlap between **these** groups **and** some organizational **links**, but **a true** national fascist movement was never established — partly because **Hitler's seizure** of Austria at the very moment it was to be launched caused a change in public attitudes, but also because such a task **was** probably far beyond the modest capacities of the Canadian leaders at the most propitious times.

These fascist movements appealed to a wide spectrum: French-Canadian nationalists: many members of the **Italian** community who admired what Mussolini was doing for Italy; other ethnic groups who brought age-old anti-Jewish feelings with them, from Europe: and British-Canadians whose anti-Semitism could be legitimized by the example of Sir Oswald **Mosley**, the British fascist leader, a baronet twice married into the aristocracy.

The common element in all these fascist groups was **anti-Semitism** and Dr. Betcherman shows in much detail the great amount **there** was of it at all levels of society in this country in the 1930s. Genuine **fear** of Communism, which is here too **easily** dismissed as unfounded and a convenient excuse to support fascism, **was also** used to advantage. The **great** strength of this book, despite its title, is its discussion of discrimination and attacks on the Jews. Dr. **Betcherman** has consulted a wide range of sources but perhaps the tawdry Canadian fascist leaders did not leave the kind of material necessary for **a more coherent** study of their organizations.

Authoritarianism and anti-Semitism **are**, of course, no laughing matter; but the unrelenting earnestness of this book **would** have benefited **from** an injection of **irony**. **There** is, for example, a photograph of the fascist leaders in uniform gathered around a table studying a map. What can they be doing? Planning a blitzkrieg on Ottawa? More likely **they** had no **idea** what they were doing, **other** than absurdly posturing in imitation of

pictures they had seen of Hitler and his generals. Irony could safely be risked in this case because Canadian fascism never posed a serious threat. No major politician outside Quebec supported it, **though** many were willing to capitalize on the feelings it amused.

Dr. **Betcherman** maintains that the fascist movement **was** suppressed only because Canada went to war against Germany and that fascism and racism merely **withdrew** to await a more welcoming climate. **Absit omen**. Despite her **account** of the shame of the 1930s, decency did prevail. Canada did take part in the just war against Nazism and after the horrors of the concentration camps were revealed it **was** not so easy to discriminate against Jews as it had been before 1939. But the price of freedom is eternal vigilance and **Lita-Rose** Betcherman has performed a useful **public** service in pointing out how far this **country** lapsed from **democratic** ideals, only a generation ago. □

## Jack was every inch a saviour

**My Years with Louis St. Laurent:**  
A Political Memoir, by J. W. Pickersgill, U of T Press, illustrated, 333 pages, \$17.50 cloth.

By DOUGLAS MARSHALL

**JACK PICKERSGILL** did not invent "Uncle Louis." That nickname for St. Laurent, he tells us modestly, was coined by a "friendly newspaper man" in **Edson, Alta.**, just before the new Prime Minister led the Liberals to a landslide victory in the 1949 election. However, if Pickersgill didn't actually invent the phrase that conferred warm **gules** of **avuncular** wisdom on a **grey**, unexciting, and essentially remote **68-year-old** Quebec corporation lawyer, he certainly did everything in his considerable power to propagate it. **For after** reading this **entertaining** and artful memoir, we are **left** in little doubt that a large **part** of the public performance St. Laurent gave for **8½** years as a political leader was a Pickersgill **production**.

The artfulness is implied in the title, *My Years with Louis St. Laurent*, with its subtle stress on the possessive **pronoun**. What has the self-appointed chief 'revisionist for successive Grit administrations **attempted** here? Is it biography, **hagiography**, or **autobiog-**

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# Faces of Myth



by Robert Livesey

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raphy? There are elements of all three but the first-person voice predominates. These are the neatly laundered confessions of an ebullient political power-broker. Their entertainment value is that they tell us a lot more about Jack Pickersgill than they do about either St. Laurent or the issues of the day.

It is Pickersgill's conclusion that St. Laurent, with his quiet authority and determination to seek compromise solutions, was the only Canadian PM who made the great task of governing this country "seem easy and effortless." The underlying premise, seeping like back-mom cigar smoke through the partisan cracks in every paragraph, is that St. Laurent was indeed fortunate in being able to rely on his good and ingenious friend Jack to keep the machinery of state running smoothly.

Theirs was an unusually cosy relationship and Pickersgill clearly revelled in it. As the PM's chief assistant, and later as a cabinet minister, he never forgot that "my first obligation was to be useful to the Rime Minister." He was delighted to discover that his office as Secretary of State in the West Block was directly opposite the PMO in the East Block:

It was a short walk across to St. Laurent's office when he wanted to see me. As the days grew shorter in the fall of 1953, we found there was another advantage. When the lights were on, each of us could look across the lawn to see when the other was alone and we could then talk freely on the telephone.

And what did these two chums talk about? Problem-solving, mostly. When it came to manipulating cabinet posts, digging up parliamentary precedents, planning fool-proof strategies that even a C. D. Howe couldn't bungle, or finding judicious ways to dispense patronage, Jack was the man with all the answers.

For example, one of the minor duties delegated to him by the PM was to ration out invitations to Queen Elizabeth's coronation. So ruthless was Pickersgill in rejecting importunities from prominent Canadians that he wound up with a surplus. What to do? "The idea occurred to me of offering two invitations to each university in Canada and hinting to their heads that they might bestow them on potential benefactors . . . . I believe several universities added something to their endowments as a result." Thus did the Crown unwittingly further the cause of advanced education in Canada.

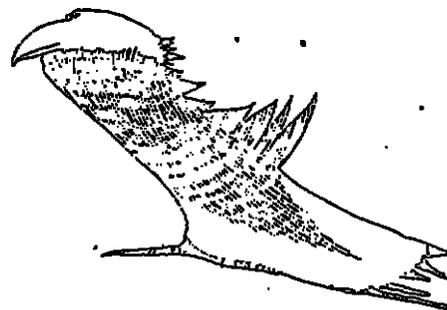
Not all his solutions were so happy. Pickersgill concedes the government

made "every imaginable mistake" in its handling of the 1955 filibuster on the Defence Production Bill. He pinpoints that episode, rather than the pipeline debate, as the key to the Liberal downfall. Moreover, Howe's apparent central role in those debates was an illusion. It was St. Laurent, Pickersgill, and Walter Harris who called the shots. And although Jack cites the PM's repeated bouts of depression as a major factor in the farce, he is man enough to take his sham of the blame.

He also credits himself with "the bright idea of combining public and private stations to form the CBC-TV network. That we have Jock Pickersgill to thank for the only commercially run public broadcasting system in the world somehow comes as no surprise. That he remains immensely proud of saddling us with this monstrous bastard of an institution somehow commands our admiration.

The truth is Pickersgill's charming capacity for self-congratulation becomes infectious. Anyone who can sustain a subdued chortle for more than 300 pages tends to disarm his critics. We must accept him as he is, a man who believes with a convert's zeal that the Liberal Party was divinely ordained to rule Canada, that it must be allowed to do so in as much secrecy as is possible, and that all opponents are either pompous Tory asses (George Drew) or poor misguided Liberals in a hurry (Stanley Knowles).

In manner and appearance, Pickersgill bears a strange resemblance to Edgar Bergen's Charlie McCarthy. The point of these memoirs is to inform us that he was no dummy as he sat there on Uncle Louis's knee. He actually wrote most of script. Give him his due. And when the iniquitous 30-year limit has expired, allowing historians the same access to the Public Archives that Jock has enjoyed, we'll know better just how far he has also rewritten the script. □



# Those who Kahn't imitate

**The Leafs in Autumn**, by Jack Batten, Macmillan, 143 pages, \$10.95 cloth.

By **BILL BOYD**

WHEN I CAME across *The Leafs in Autumn*, I was reminded of a couple of days last year when, by coincidence, I read Philip Roth's *The Great American Novel* and Harry Boyle's *The Great Canadian Novel* back to back. I can't remember which book was published first, but that doesn't matter. Accepting that the books are completely different, that in Roth's case the title is hyperbolic and ironic and in Boyle's case sentimental. Roth writes a helluva lot better than Boyle does. Well, Roger Kahn, who wrote *The Boys of Summer*, about the old Brooklyn Dodgers, writes a helluva lot better than Jack Batten does. And when you have two non-fiction books about former and elderly professional athletes, with titles so similar, comparisons are just. Batten acknowledges—Kahn, but it's not

enough. *The Leafs* is a bad imitation, rushed into print to try to catch onto Kahn's sportstales.

*The Leafs* is nine profiles of men who played for the Toronto Maple Leafs in the late 1940s and early 1950s and their coach, Hap Day. And the subject itself is the book's biggest shortcoming. The Maple Leafs of that period were a very successful team, winning several Stanley Cups; but they were dull. Only three of the nine players interviewed qualify as exciting—Syl Apps, Max Bentley, and Bill Ezinicki. Apps retired in 1948 and is identified more with the Leaf teams of the late 1930s and early 1940s; Batten does a sensitive portrait of Bentley, but even these most of Bentley's fondest memories are from his days with the Chicago Black Hawks. Ezinicki was never a star. He is Batten's answer to Kahn's Billy Cox.

But where's the Jackie Robinson of the Leafs? The Roy Campanella? Snider? Reese? Those Dodgers, I believe, won only a single World Series. On paper they were not as successful as Batten's Leafs; they were simply the most-loved team in baseball.

One part of the Cal Gardner story interested me. He told Batten that

Kenny Reardon never got over the stick-swinging fight the two had at Maple Leaf Gardens. He mentions the then-famous magazine article in which Reardon said he'd ram a stick down Gardner's throat. "The bad blood between us wouldn't go away," Gardner says. "I never talked to him after the fight and I never will."

Three years ago I ran into Reardon in Montreal, in a bar that he and his cronies had taken over for the night because it was closing the next day for renovations. Reardon threatened to beat me up if I didn't leave, then threw a glass against the wall behind me. I left. I agree with Gardner.

Batten tells us he saw his team play from the Red seats, the most expensive seats in the Gardens. He tells us he was "upper middle class" (whatever that means) and thus so were the Leafs because of their following from the Reds. Batten uses the word "tacky" to describe the east-end curling club where he met Sid Smith; he doesn't like arborite either; he seems pleased that Ted Kennedy's wife teaches at a private girls' school in Toronto. Perhaps, if the book were to be written at all, the author should have watched his heroes from the Greys. □

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# Funny we should ask him

The **Best of Bob Edwards**, edited by **Hugh A. Dempsey, Hurtig**, 279 pages, \$0.95 cloth.

Columbo's **Little Books of Canadian Proverbs, Graffiti, Limericks & other Vital Matters**, by John Robert Columbo, **Hurtig**, 143 pap, \$3.95 paper.

The **Canadian Limerick Book**, by Hugh Oliver and Keith Macmillan, **General Publishing**, 127 pages, \$4.95 paper.

**French Canajan, Hé?**, by Mark M. Orkin, **Lester & Orpen**, 127 pages, \$3.95 cloth.

**Inside from the Outside's Good Buy Canada!**, edited by Murray Soupcoff, **James Lorimer & Company**, unpaginated, \$5.95 paper.

By **RICHARD LUBBOCK**

**LAUGHTER, HUMOUR**, end fun are the life-enhancing emotions, challenging death and enemies. The antithesis of humour is narrow-mindedness, and the nadir of narrow-mindedness is nationalism.

The disease of nationalism now rages pandemic throughout the world. It withers the life-spirit, whichever country it infests, and strangles all joy end celebration. It attacks the nervous system, bringing on the violent and destructive convulsions of xenophobia. It also brings on the publication of magazines such as **Books in Canada**. Signs of the secondary and tertiary forms of this deadly affliction appear when the patient becomes quite unable to ingest ideas and influences originating outside his own body politic. Canada has already advanced deep into these terminal stages, as evidenced by the anti-American tetanics of the Canadian Radio-Television Commission, which is hell-bent on shutting out all forms of external contamination. Soon, I have no doubt, Canada will reach the endpoint achieved by that Third World paradise, which shall remain nameless, where nowadays all the best jokes are told by crocodiles.

These forebodings and observations are prompted by the appearance on my desk of Eve self-consciously Canadian humour books. I have been invited to

give my opinions on them, so here they are.

**The Best of Bob Edwards** anthologizes some of the writings of a man who must have been a fellow after my own heart. A late-19th-century Scottish immigrant, he settled in a small town near Edmonton after 13 years in the United States. Here he founded a satiric magazine. "The management has decided on the name **Eye Opener**," said Edwards, "because few people will resist taking it." That deceptively insouciant line gives us a glimpse into the inner life of a gifted writer. dry-witted in everything except his drinking habits, who detested the pompous and the mighty:

Society note — Bishop Pinkham, of the Calgary diocese, was down in Okotoks the early part of the week holding confirmation services. Superintendent Horrigan of the mounted police says he is unable to connect his lordship with the bank robbery.

• • •

Premier Sifton continues to take himself seriously, which shows how useless it is for anybody to teach him anything.

Editor Hugh Dempsey's selections present Bob Edwards in a good light, and I speculate with glee how Edwards might have knifed the hypocrisies of Canadian nationalism, had that scourge existed in his day.

So much for the good news; now I must turn to John Robert Columbo's **Little Book of Canadian Proverbs**. . . . Columbo seems to have launched himself successfully as the pseudo-Bartlett of our land. His book consists of a miscellany of headlines, jokes, graffiti, and so on that would serve well as reading matter for hospital patients recovering from major surgery, in that none of it makes you laugh very much:

**NECROPHILIA MEANS NEVER  
HAVING TO SAY YOU'RE SORRY**

Columbo rates this graffiti as Canadian content because it was found in a men's washroom in Grossman's Tavern, Toronto. It would be unpatriotic for me to suggest that this bit of "Canadian" culture could equally well have originated in Chicago, Ill., or London, England.

**The Canadian Limerick Book** is also a suitable gift for hospitalized Canadian nationalists, for there is absolutely no danger that any of the limericks in this collection will cause pain through laughter, and each limerick contains at least one heart-warming nationalistic name or reference — such as **Calgary, Toronna**, and so on. This is basically a

rhyming gazeteer, eminently suited for the humblest duty in the smallest room in the house.

**French Canajan, Hé?** is a compendium of sneering jibes at the way French Canadians are supposed to mangle English and French. Every self-respecting citizen should demand that it be officially designated a national embarrassment and prohibited from leaving the country. If it were not for Isaac Bickerstaff's excellent illustrations, my copy of the book would suffer that fate worse than not being read at all.

To conclude on a lighter note, I can commend **Inside From the Outside's Good Buy Canada!**, prepared by the folk who did the CBC-Radio show. Apart from such lapses as the attack on foreign capitalism implied in the tide, **Good Buy Canada manages to** land some deft and witty hits on many of its targets, which include (praise be!) Canadian nationalism itself, not to mention Beaver Tii Co. and **People magazine**. The latter item, is notably non-Canadian, which seems to hint that the titers of this book are less tunnel-visioned than most of their colleagues.

Which brings me to my conclusion: Canadian nationalist would-be humourists must learn that a jest is never funny because it is Canadian; it is funny only because it is funny. Here endeth my diatribe. □

## Harry, Clover, and saint Pat

**The Luck of the Irish: A Canadian Fable**, by Harry J. Boyle, **Macmillan**, 160 pages, \$9.95 cloth.

By **ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH**

AH, **THE IRISH!** What a bunch of inspired liars they are! And yet out of those lies, myths emerge. As **Cyrano de Bergerac** says: "A lie is a myth and a myth is a kind of truth."

Anyhow **The Lack of the Irish**, Harry Boyle's new novel, is subtitled **A Canadian Fable** and tries to create a myth out of the innocence, the religious superstition, and general **joie de vivre** that has typified the rural Irish in Canada.

His story is simple. A young girl and her even younger brother are left orphans on the family farm in St.

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Patrick's parish near that well-established village (well-established in Boyle country) of Clover.

With the independence of the Irish, they work the farm themselves but, of course, their lack of savvy leads to grave mistakes. The gravest is putting green hay into a barn, hay that then spontaneously combusts and burns the barn down. Their fellow-parishioners would like to rebuild the barn (Irish generosity) but they don't quite have the resources (Irish poverty).

So the Irish priest tells the youngsters to go to the shrine of St. Marie-among-the-Hurons at Midland (Jesuit, not Irish) and pray for a miracle. Then the boy falls into a pedlar's hands, buys some genuine relics of a saint's hair and, through shenanigans too complicated to unravel here, produces a miracle, dumps his sister, gets a wife, a new barn, and the farm.

The story is too simple, however, even for the rural Ontario Irish and the characters are unduly subordinated to Boyle's myth. What makes the book enjoyable at a relaxed, undemanding level is what has made Boyle's previous semi-autobiographical books enjoyable: an eye for detail: a warm and overwhelming sense of nostalgia for a youthful paradise lost: and a compassionate humanity for the rural poor.

It's pleasant to feel that in between dreary (and I know just how dreary) sittings of the Canadian Radio-Television Commission, Harry Boyle can get back to his typewriter, light his pipe, and spin this kind of unpretentious yarn to amuse us all.

I read it in an evening and recommend it as a tale for the winter fireside, especially for those who have themselves lived once in Arcady — or Clover. □



## LUCY in the sky with ashes

The Wheel of Things: A Biography of L. M. Montgomery, by Mollie Gillen, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 256 pages, \$9.95 cloth.

By AVIVA LAYTON

"BIOGRAPHY is a screaming farce" wrote Lucy Maud Montgomery in a letter to a close friend who had gently broached the subject. "No man or woman was ever truly depicted." (To be fair all round, she also wrote: "I gave up trying to fathom the mentality of reviewers years ago.") Luckily for those who are interested in the person Maud Montgomery was — unluckily for the author herself, since it is certain she would have been horrified at her inner life being revealed — her biographer Mollie Gillen was able to track down a cache of revealing letters that had been sent during a period of 40 years to her Scottish pen-friend George MacMillan, and which had been locked away in a trunk in Scotland. These, added to the letters she wrote over the same period to her Canadian pen-friend Ephraim Weber, provide the main source of information out of which Mollie Gillen tries to "truly depict" her subject.

Not an easy task, it appears, as Maud (she loathed being called Lucy) did everything possible to obscure her true self from the world; there was a public Maud and a private Maud and the two were most often diametrically opposed. Her deepest feelings were revealed only through the letters to the two men with whom she corresponded (and even then she withheld, till the end of her life, the agonies she had suffered in her marriage) and, partially, through the rebelliousness and sensitivity of her girl characters. To her adoring public, her husband, her two sons, her parishioners, she strove always to appear as the very model of a modest, poised, controlled, and constantly cheerful well-bred lady.

Yet what a seething mass of contradictions her life was. Here was a woman who rebelled against Calvinist morality and yet married a depressive Presbyterian minister; who continued to write for money and to churn out what was, for her, repugnant hack-work when she was no longer under any financial duress to do so; and who was a



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romantic yet married a man she was not in love with, who despised convention yet bowed to it, and who craved solitude yet allowed the demands of ladies' auxiliaries, church bazaars, and amateur drama groups to erode her privacy far beyond the bounds of the necessary. She revered excellence and yet continued to be lost in admiration for Lytton's *Zanoni*, continued to write the *Anne* books even though she called Anne herself "detestable" and claimed that she weighed on her "like an incubus." and in the middle of her outwardly bustling life as the model minister's wife wrote: "I have lost the art of living entirely."

It's true that Mollie Gillen sets forth all the known facts of her subject's life with a painstaking regard for accuracy. What emerges, however, is a curiously old-fashioned biography. Nowadays there is often an excess of psychologizing in biographies. This one suffers from a lack of it. Maud's inability to write the "mature novels" for "mature people" she always passionately craved to do, is never connected with her hatred for "latrine or pig-sty" realism, which she saw as an "uglification" of literature. (Gillen in fact seems tacitly to approve of her stand.) Nor does the biographer even so much as hint that sexual repression might just possibly be the underlying cause of the sick headaches, nervous spells, and morbid moods that were to mar most of Maud's adult life. Instead she says, with unconscious humour, "Perhaps she should never have married a minister." This after reporting that Maud wrote 16 years after her marriage: "Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they make ministers' wives."

The style too often leans towards the purple prose of which L.M. Montgomery herself was so often guilty: "Maud took possession of earth's beadier and made them her own. Beauty ravished her soul"; Maud's activities are described as "this busy round": at the end of her life she was "glad to lay down the terrible burden of her living." And litotes — my least favourite literary mannerism — abound: "It was nevertheless a vignette not wholly unworthy": "one could find less interesting character studies than. . ."

What the biography ultimately lacks, for me, is any attempt to explain Maud's conflicts and contradictions. The facts are revealed to us but Gillen never properly comes to grips with them. What results is a genteel flatness. □

## Bring the good old Breughel, boys

Gabriel, by Harry Pollock,  
McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 295 pages,  
\$8.95, cloth.

By MICHAEL FUHRMAN

TORONTO, A CITY where nearly 2.5 million people see their symbol of progress in the highest free-standing structure in the world, was once (about 40 years ago) a charming little burg of 600,000 simpler, less-sophisticated people who saw their collective self-image in edifices of a humbler nature — places like the Roxy Burlesque on Queen Street, for example. At least, nostalgic fiction would have it that way. Harry Pollock's first novel fondly reviews the Depression period and the identity it gave Toronto in a manner that will make many disenchant hearts glow.

The idea that Gabriel is just a trashy piece of nostalgia must be dispelled at once, for it is saved from that unhappy fate by . . . well, quite simply, by its author's fine literary skills. The novel is, though, a nostalgic look at the "good old days" (when fish and chips cost you 15 cents and two pennies bought a newspaper) and contains an essentially romantic view that not even the squalor and ugliness of Hogtown can diminish. And in fact, interestingly enough, this romantic view hinges on precisely those qualities that turned the Queen City into Hogtown — and gave the place its characteristic flavour and colour — qualities which, some would say, have since been displaced by grey concrete piled 1,800 feet high.

So if, according to the myth, during the Depression Toronto basked in a sort of youthful innocence and exuberance, then Pollock's use of a child as his central character is most appropriate. Gabriel — who is actually the author himself, growing up on Leonard Street, west of Kensington Market — is as innocent and unsophisticated as, supposedly, Toronto was in that period. And by not giving him the ability to consider seriously the meaning of circumstances around him, Pollock has avoided the pitfall of artificiality into which any fictional child character will tumble if allowed impossibly mature

thoughts. Indeed, some readers will think Pollock has gone too far and landed in a deeper pitfall, that of superficiality. For without a doubt, Gabriel lacks depth — but then, so does the novel's picture of Depression life as a whole. The point is that Pollock simply isn't interested in revealing depth of character or in analyzing the nature of the times. His novel captures the surface of Toronto in the 1930s, a surface that sparkles with life and activity, and with that mythical "flavour" and "colour" the city once had.

Pollock depicts in a series of short, quite unrelated sketches, numerous scenes of community life, mostly humorous and vividly realized, all of which combine in a richly variegated canvas — not unlike a Breughel painting — chaotic in its diversification, impressive in its attention to individuals and detail. Jostling each other all over this canvas are whores, pimps, bookies, beggars, drunkards, and ruffians, as well as more everyday characters of diverse national origins and religious persuasions. And all of these create the milieu through which Gabriel daily travels. None of his experiences occur apart from this crowd; and by stressing this fact, Pollock implies that for any boy growing up in Toronto a factor of critical importance is the influence of contact with a myriad of human types.

Although the novel has absolutely no formal shape or structure — not even the chronological thread is given enough emphasis to provide links or continuity in the narrative — it does present a definite and fairly coherent vision of what Depression life was like. Pollock's images emphasize the raw texture of urban life, where the distinction between humanity and animality is frequently and deliberately blurred. Gabriel's own sexuality reflects this and is a recurrent topic in the novel. On a larger scale, the entire city is involved in one way or another in a kind of vulgar circus sideshow. The movie houses and burlesque joints, parades and political rallies, plays and exhibitions, where Gabriel spends much of his time, are fused together in a carnival atmosphere in which cheap entertainment serves as an escape from the distresses of joblessness and poverty. Politicians, social reformers, and even Christian evangelists become part of this carnival and are identified as showmen who proffer phony comfort in simplistic and inadequate solutions.

All this adds up to a cultural identity (one that is perhaps unflattering, but

certainly "colourful") that, in *Gabriel*, is a pleasure to rediscover. And if it is our longing for an identity that feeds our current nostalgia, then by supplying the one, Pollock effectively satisfies the other. □

## Whyfore art thou, cameo?

Selected Stories, by Norman Levine, Oberon Press, 116 pages. \$5.95 cloth and \$3.50 paper.

Love & the Waiting Game, by David Watmough, Oberon Press, 160 pages, \$7.95 cloth and \$3.95 paper.

Replay, by Don Bailey. Oberon Press, 149 pages, \$6.95 cloth and \$3.50 paper.

75: New Canadian Stories, edited by David Helwig and Joan Harcourt, Oberon Press, \$6.95 cloth and \$3.95 paper.

By MARK WITTEN

IMAGINE A DUSTY old photograph, smudged over by countless curious fingers until the image is all but lost behind the superfluous accretions of time. Now, play back the reel of your memory and watch closely as the image sharpens into focus and the smudges mysteriously disappear. Detail comes into play once more as features, objects, colours, smells, sounds, and sights of the past begin to take on a meaning far greater than before in the wake of a Proustian compulsion to recover things nearly forgotten but refusing to be lost:

This is what you will find as you flip through the pages of these four volumes of short stories from Oberon. Personalized fictions you might call them. More often than not, a personal experience or incident, remembered and direct, is reconstructed image by image through layer upon layer of the intervening years until transformed into a short story long on emotion and diltanced only by time. Perhaps not formula fiction as we commonly identify it: nevertheless, many of these stories, nicely written as they often are, bear an almost fatal stamp of familiarity.

Norman Levine's *Selected Stories* is a collection of gentle browsings through the personal graffiti of Canada's wandering Jew gone astray to England — and, inevitably, asking himself why. But what remains for

Levine a deliberately low-key rendering of wistful memorabilia, becomes in David Watmough's *Love & the Waiting Game* a mining of the past for the most precious jewels of experience. Master of his craft, Watmough shapes an imaginative reconstruction that is not so much reflection of the past as n-creation of it — language seeking to express what youth once could not. (This is undoubtedly the richest find of the group.) Unlike his two counterparts, Don Bailey has little use for the delicacy and form of cameo. A loosely organized collection of psychological debris, *Replay re-enacts*, in a waking stream of nightmare flashbacks, the psychological braising experienced by a man swallowed into the "belly of a whale" (prison of the State and spirit) once he is spewed out into the world again.

Each of these three writers lingers — through the convenience of a first-person narrator, usually to tell a once-upon-a-time tale of himself, his yearnings and learnings. Surprisingly enough, 75: *New Canadian Stories*, an anthology of 11 stories, each by a different writer, often displays similar tendencies. So often, the highly personal and nostalgic strains converge in a fictional space circumscribed by the borders of one mind contemplating its own image, stretched out over time.

Consider Joyce Marshall's "Summer," typical of a genre that Alice Munro's stories have now made into an admirable if overdone Canadian literary institution. Summer: a voice speaks out from a time when the friendship of two pubescent girls flowers into a conspiracy of forbidden discoveries and sudden awareness. But swept away in an undertow of evanescent emotion, the story's dénouement features the unspoken betrayal of friendship, of the season and of youth as now only the echoes of distant memory linger on. Robert Delattin Wear's "Happy Soon and the Itinerant Muralist" offers a far more palatable mix of reverence for that which was good with irreverence for nostalgia. The narrator recounts a tale of the rise and fall of the Hero Café and its proprietor, Happy Soon. In working up the image of the café as the hub of small-town life, Wear effectively re-creates the atmosphere and character of a place like Wainwright, Alta. But an intruding alien, the itinerant muralist, paints up gaudy the walls of the café and alters it irrevocably. It did, and, as implied, so too does a way of life that once predominated in the country.

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Watmough's stories are a group of rarified reminiscences in which physical and psychological space seem to converge. Setting is a highly charged landscape of mingled sensations and feeling. Every story but the final one, "Fathers and Sons," is set back in a faraway rime in the land of his birth — Cornwall. And Cornwall is rendered in marvellous detail as a place far richer than and different from any other — a function of the psychological truth that the place best known to a man means more than any other possibly can. Yet even the final story begins with an association, the scent of wildflowers, that compels us to follow the narrator back into "an avenue of memory which leads to a specific Comish lane" and a particular experience.

Suffused with recollections of a personal and private nature, this is a fictional world that by its very insularity demands a sensitivity to the subtlest emotional nuance. "All Kinds of Harvesting," the first of Watmough's II stories, hints at what is perhaps the strongest impetus for memory. The story celebrates the child's penchant for secrecy, for the experience that is precious because it is his own and the kernel from which he ripens. This is what

he later remembers. This is the germ of his identity.

Levine's stories are pervaded by a less hallucinatory calm. The long arm of the past moves in strange ways, however. When not musing upon a photograph of his father, the narrator is apt to be confronted unawares by a spectre from the past. Mona, the sister, flies in like a Yemenite Santa Claus (Scrooge?) to drop on the doorstep of his London flat as he and his wife (of another persuasion) are in, the midst of dressing up the Christmas tree. Taking it in stride, once again the perennial question is forced upon him (as the title of this fine story goes), "Why Do You Live So Far Away?" Rhetorical perhaps?

For Doe Bailey, the past is no refuge, only a prison. What others seek to preserve, his hem cannot ye! must des- wy. But prison walls press beyond the walls of the Kingston Penitentiary and this and-hem is unable to break out from confines of his own consciousness of himself and the past. Which brings us to the heart of the matter: When does self-conscious groping for a past and identity become obsessive and stifling? When does introspection become myopic?

Old clocks have their charm, but let us hope that the pendulum will swing forward again and that 1976 stories will bring us not more vintage memories but germination's fruit. Is the short story in Canada now about to turn outward and grow up? Perhaps rocking chairs and cradles have had their day. Bring on fresh air and space to breathe. □

## The long feet of the law

Poet Cop, by Hans Jewinski, Simon & Shuster, 122 pages. \$1.95 paper.

By JOHN OUGHTON

THE IDEA OF a Toronto policeman also existing as a worthwhile poet is irresistible. Constable Hans Jewinski should be a familiar six-foot, three-inch figure to anyone even remotely connected with recent poetry in Toronto. Proprietor of the mimeographed and sporadic Missing Link Press, frequent contributor to little magazines and



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inner-city Toronto readings, and your man on the two-beats-to-a-line precinct of Cabbagetown. Hans would probably tell the present writer to move along now and finish up this sentence.

But the command would be delivered with a twinkle in the eyes below the silver-badged hat. A police officer in this society is generally someone who is expected to deliver functional (if often unpleasant) service uncoloured by extra-legal emotions. The poems in *Poet Cop* make it obvious that Hans Jewinski feels for the people (whores, junkies, saintly old bums) and ironies his job throws at him.

The selections are pared close to function here. cut down like a detective's .38 (thank you, Mr. Chandler) to deliver their message with the minimum of ornamentation. His choice of form is blameless, for one can hardly poeticize aside of Toronto tougher than Raymond Souster's by means of apostrophes, conceits, and hendiadys. When the poems try fancy footwork they sometimes slip, as in the pun that weakens these otherwise fine lines on an elderly, cultured deceased:

*this is a perfect specimen  
for the quick inference  
the subtle trap  
the forecast of coming  
events for the justification  
or derision of  
a life's work.*

He sums a similar poem with the unimprovable:

*death as it comes to these men?  
alone.  
found by stench or unpaid rent*

The book is cheaply priced, has attractive high-contrast photos of Hans and relevant Toronto scenes, and should sell extremely well for a first book of poems. It is a pity that a Canadian-owned publisher did not choose to set these poems in bold face and bind them. "Rimed in U.S.A.," says its addenda. A book so redolent of the streets and faces of Toronto still could not (apparently) find support from a generous Canadian publisher.

But honestly officer, quibbles aside, all I wanted to do is slip in an anecdote. Having heard Hans speak of night courses offered unindictable-but-nasty offenders on Cherry Beach and police-station stairs, or the possible fate of unfriendly editors found in his squad car. I recognize the distinctive Jewinski brand of humour. But at a marathon reading in an avant-god downtown gallery one night, there were liberal quantities of cannabooze being passed about

to help the paragraphs flow by. It was therefore a shock to many fans when fully uniformed two-metre Hans walked in to deliver a summons to the Muse and forgot to arrest the room, other than poetically. □

## NOTES & COMMENTS

'TIS THE SEASON for reflections and resolutions. As we write, the six-week postal strike has reached its unsatisfactory resolution and normal literary communications have been restored — until the next time. Meanwhile the Canadian book-publishing industry is winding up its most hectic autumn in recent history. By our rough estimate, more than 400 new English-language titles from Canadian houses were scheduled to fight their way into bookstores between September and, Christmas. Many arrived late because of the strike and other complications and some never made it at all.

The strike brought the second major disruption of mail service, and hence of regular distribution facilities, in nine months. So devastating have been the effects in the publishing world at large that we feel almost churlish in mentioning two minor editorial difficulties encountered by this particular monthly magazine.

First, our national complexion has been blemished. In recent issues, including this one, we have been forced to rely in the main on our excellent pool of Toronto reviewers, thus perhaps aggravating old regional resentments. We would like to reassure readers and reviewers alike that we remain firmly committed to the policy (never easy in the best of times) of trying to maintain a broad geographic balance in terms of contributions.

Second, reviews of a few important pm-Christmas books will be appearing in these pages later than they should. For this the strike is only partly to blame. The sheer volume of new fall titles, coupled with extensive delays in publication dates in some instances, would have made comprehensive coverage impossible in any event.

In fact, the postal strike merely served to underline the continuing creative and commercial absurdity of the book trade's fall season. A major reason publication dates were delayed, for example, is because the Canadian

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printing industry couldn't cope with the seasonal demands being made on it. Columnist William French in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* argues this may be grounds for changing a key Canada Council policy. At the moment publishers receiving grants must promise to have their books printed in Canada. Previously they could take advantage of cheap foreign printing deals and French thinks it might be a good idea to restore that option.

We think his suggestion is short-sighted. The real problem isn't printing congestion but marketing congestion. The perennial scramble by publishers for a hunk of the Christmas pudding makes some sense where children's books and coffee-table books are concerned. But the practice of further flooding a crowded season with the bulk of the year's general trade titles is a form of industrial suicide. Nobody wins. Under deadline pressures, the industry's harried and underpaid editors become more sloppy than ever. Promotion efforts are drowned out by the general roar. Retailers are panicked into pushing bad books and burying good ones. Review editors wilt, authors fume, publishers pale as precious investments vanish, and an overloaded public blows its literary fuses.

Printing more pm-Christmas books abroad won't improve that situation. It will make it worse. If anything, the strain on the printing industry should be viewed as a positive factor. It should force publishers to adopt saner publication schedules based on the year-round consumption of books. And if the publishers ignore the obvious and remain hell-bent on self-destruction, then the Canada Council might indeed consider a policy change. It might consider restricting its aid to books not only printed in Canada but also published between January and September.

\* \* 8

HARRY FACEY, comptroller of buildings for the Toronto Board of Education, tabled an interesting report recently. It showed that vandalism had cost the board \$324,488 in the first six months of 1975. Among the articles stolen: potted plants, tape recorders, typewriters, a violin, tools, gym equipment, candy, animal cages, golf balls, and cash.

And one book.

\* \* \*

WITH MAGAZINES, appearances deceive more often than in most fields. Our wonderful new glossy cover doesn't mean we're entertaining ideas

above our economic station. It actually represents a potential saving in production costs and clears the way for steady growth and improvement in the content, format, and distribution of *Books in Canada*. We're particularly proud of the subtle modifications in the cover design, which greatly enhance our display capacity. The changes were the work of Mary Lu Toms, the art director whose sure design talents have guided the magazine's evolution from our beginnings. □

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### 'SPITEFUL AND ARROGANT'

Sir:

I write concerning the review in October's *Books in Canada* by Leonard Gasparini of three volumes of poetry.

I do not complain that my book got "a bad review" — though I, is abundantly clear that Gasparini did not understand it at all — but about the way [Douglas] Barbour's book was treated. The whole review has an unfortunate tone of arrogance, but the words written about He & She are little short of contemptuous. There is no excuse for contempt in a good review, and I am surprised that you, as editor, would condone such a spiteful and arrogant review. There is no place for destructive reviewing in *Books in Canada* — you, sir, have a responsibility to see that such stuff does not appear.

May I say that I have only me, Barbour once and haven't read his collection — I argue only on principle. This review is, to say the least, contemptuous and bordering on the malicious. I ask you if you honestly feel that such a piece is likely to help the cause of Canadian literature. Standards are one thing; this way another.

Christopher Wiseman  
Department of English  
University of Calgary

### 'PSEUDO-RARIFIED CLIQUE'

Sir:

I have read with great interest in your November issue an article written by Forster Freed.

The subject of his writing was one which is somewhat close to my heart, since I am general editor of a set of books entitled *A Collection of Canadian Plays, Volumes I to IV*.

If one lives to some extent a public life, I, is obvious that one will be criticized. Indeed, without criticism, I, would be difficult to perform a, a satisfactory level. Constructive and intelligent criticism, even though negative, is just as helpful as the occasional encouragement.

It is, however, regrettable that largely due to the economic problems of our publishing industry, a person with very little qualification and for very little money gets space in periodicals such as yours, which surely could be filled with the words of someone who has other aims in life besides attempting to force his narrow little mind on your readers.

To date, I have no, become or been made aware of Mr. Freed's significant contributions to the theatrical life of Canada. It is my understanding that he is one of many rather promising students

of one of many universities in our country. His ignorance, therefore, is really not his fault. He has many years to learn and understand, and one can only hope that he will succeed, although I believe it was Shaw, or was it Mugggeridge who once mid that young bores have a frightening tendency to turn into old bores. I apologize if my quote is not accurate, but, I, is, undoubtedly, applicable.

I, is somewhat frightening to be accused of publishing the works of people who have written For the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, better known as the CBC. I, has become almost a standard requirement of semi-sophistication to criticize this organization. I happen to believe that without the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's vision, there would be very little theatre in Canada. Without people like Andrew Allen and the radio drama, the other forms of writing For the stage would hardly have developed.

I am no, at all convinced that your critic, Mr. Freed, is aware of this fact, but, perhaps you, as his editor, could discuss it with him. He also criticizes me for not using in our books such obvious names as Ryga, Reaney, French, Freeman, Herbert, Hardin, Bolt, and Simons. He was kind enough to give me the benefit of the doubt, and state that the reason for this is likely to be that these authors would not want their names to be associated with our books. The fact that later on he mentions that two of the authors are Carol Bolt and Dr. Reaney does sound somewhat strange, but the comment to that I would rather leave to your editorial judgment. As for the rest of the names, however, I feel that I should give some explanation.

I, is no, and new has been, my intention to call this set of books a definitive anthology. If Mr. Freed would have had the time or the intelligence to read the introductions I have written to each book, and he would have the guts to occasionally get out of his pseudo-rarified little clique, he would realize that there is very little money available to publish Canadian playwrights. As a result of that, duplication and competition are luxuries which we cannot afford. The heroic struggle that the now defunct New Press, the still existing Talonbooks, and a handful of others put up to publish Canadian plays, can only be understood by someone who actually does something for the Canadian playwright besides giving stupid criticism. This is not a competition. It is a very serious struggle for survival; therefore, duplication — authors already in print by other houses — would be an unforgivable luxury.

He also criticizes the fact that we illustrate our volumes. One begins to wonder whether he realizes that theatre is a somewhat visual art form.

Last, but certainly not least, he criticizes the, according to him, luxurious format of our books. There are some people in this world who feel that if you wash your face, more than twice a month, and even take the occasional shower, you immediately become "unartistic." If he means that all the Canadian playwright deserves is a ragged paperback, or a Xerox copy, he is obviously entitled to his opinion. Some of us think differently, and incidentally, so do most of the playwrights. The fact that all of our plays are also available in softcover edition individually, for less money than the above mentioned Xerox copy, is an insignificant fact which escaped your authoritative critic's attention.

Along with other publishers who take the suicidal financial risk to continue to print Canadian plays, the only compensation is to be proud to represent such names as Ryga, French, Freeman, and Herbert; we are, however, equally proud to represent Mavor Moors, Hugh Garner, Joseph

Schull, not even mentioning all the others, since our list is too long. Together, we may fill the miserable lack of Canadian plays in our libraries and in our schools, the fact which prompted me to establish Simon & Pierre Publishing Company Ltd. I worked twelve years on Toronto's waterfront as a longshoreman to get enough money together to lose in this venture. Marian M. Wilson, our publisher, will not even discuss with me any longer our financial situation.

But it is worth it because without personal sacrifices in this and many other areas, we will never have a country of our own. Maybe after some soul-searching, even such an uninformed person as Mr. Freed will realize that. This, however, is only a hope. Your judgment as editor of *Books in Canada* is a more vital matter.

Rolf Kalman  
General Editor  
Simon & Pierre Publishing Co.  
Toronto

Forster Freed replies: *It's said that there is no accounting for taste - and while I appreciate Mr. Kalman's enthusiasm for the Simon & Pierre playwrights, I am unable to share that enthusiasm. On the other hand, I have long been aware of, and in great sympathy with, the struggles faced by anyone involved in the publishing of Canadian plays. And it is precisely this awareness that suggests that an awful lot of time, energy, goodwill - and money - have been expended on a dubious project. If however, Mr. Kalman is convinced that these plays and these playwrights are best served by the Simon & Pierre collection, far be it from me to convince him otherwise.*

## 'AESTHETIC CRETINISM'

Sir:  
Aviva Blyton's review of my book *The Cage* (November issue) admirably displays precisely the kind of facetious, lazy, and pugnacious philistinism that the book itself had in part set, out to destroy. Why this narrow-minded hayseed was selected to appraise the book in the first place is a mystery, unless it was to reveal no, only how the Kookaburra go, his laugh, but also, and in the worst tradition of infantile onomatopoeia, what that particularly raucous and hysterical laugh sounds like-gobbledygook.

Predictably, Ma Blyton-Layton's umbrella is initially shaken no, at the book but at the notes on the flyleaf, in which I attempt that most avoided of tasks - a statement of intentions and beliefs. The gorge, rising visibly at such an affront, is suppressed momentarily in a whiff of sarcasm. The customary Fain, compliments are made about my ability to draw pictures, followed by a garbled shopping-list of the images, and a wildly ignorant stab at a visual erudition (the comparison with Escher, whose drawings, I will concede, are done, like my own, in ink on paper). At no time is any penetration of the narrative nature of these images attempted (which perhaps is just as well, considering the bulldozer she is trying to manoeuvre through the book) or any examination whatsoever made of the conceptual and structural basis for such a narrative; but all this is hardly surprising when she considers the strident anti-intellectualism of the rest of the review. All Ma Blyton's dull-witted provincialism and aesthetic cretinism rises like a lumbering straw beaver to the bait of the "promiscuous piling-on of mangled and meaningless imagery" which constitutes, in her mind, my accompanying text. That she can

perceive neither the nature nor the purpose of the text is undoubtedly her problem; that passages are decidedly lifted out of context (a context to which she remains blithely oblivious) and that a crucial word is misquoted are apparently matters of little consequence to a mind already blinded by resentment and stupidity.

This is neither the place nor the time to attempt a serious discussion of the complex relationships between meaning and form; suffice to say that it is painfully obvious that Ma Layton understands little or nothing of such contemporary problems, or their particular relationship to my own work, where they are further complicated by the inevitable interaction of the text with the images. Any suggestion of a conventional literary form for such idiosyncratic conditions is already absurd, but to propose, as Ma Layton does, that the text be abandoned altogether only serves to amplify her total lack of comprehension of the areas under exploration. The degree of success in solving these and other problems is of course always open to evaluation and debate, but since the reviewer in this instance meals no consciousness of the problems, her conclusions, such as they are, remain worthless (despite her suspect claim to have read carefully, and evidently with a closed mind, both the much-despised notes and the commentary by Rowan Shirkie, ivhii. she neglects to explain, was an independent survey not of *The Cage* but of all my visual-novels, written for an exhibition of my books at the An Gallery of Ontario).

Her attacks repeatedly take the form of unsubstantiated opinion, and, when the burden of thought becomes too heavy to bear, she quotes my own writings, as if this device somehow constitutes an argument. Unable or unwilling to confront the issues intelligently, she resorts to sub-

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born prejudice. presented of course in the hypocritical guise of "all fairness to the new form."

That the author of *How the Kookaburra Go*, His *Laugh* finds my text "appallingly bad." "mind-numbing, prolix, precious, hysterical, boring globblydook" is hardly distressing; but what is depressing is the irresponsibility of the editors of *Books in Canada* in presenting a book of this kind to such a person for review. If, on the other hand, Ma Layton is to persist in her messy and abortive attempts at reviewing books. I bluntly suggest that she stays within her obviously limited domain rather than recklessly flailing around in terrain whose most basic topography is obscured by the myopic fog of ha vain and mullish preconceptions.

Martin Vaughn-James  
Toronto

Aviva Layton replier: *Martin Vaughn-James should have learnt by now that ad hominem (or should I say ad mulierem) arguments will get him precisely nowhere. His entire letter seems to me to be an example of exactly the same sort of rambling, imprecise verbal wastage that I deplored in his text. In his first paragraph, nor content with rubbishing (a) motherhood and (b) poor old Enid Blyton (if Blyton-Layton, by the way, is not an example of infantile onomatopoeia, I'd like to know what is), he (c) commits the unforgivably callous act of rubbishing the laugh of the innocent kookaburra, a slander for which I'll not easily forgive him. Indeed, Vaughn-James seems to be unduly and disproportionately bothered by the supremely irrelevant fact that I have authored a children's book. Does he think, in his garbled fashion, that this somehow disqualifies me as a fit and proper person for evaluating "grown-up" literature or is he bothered by the rifle? If the latter be the case — and on weighty consideration I think it to be so — I should like to let him know that I am seriously considering changing the title to *How the Kookaburra Got His Gestalt*. What I, ... a substance — if any — there is in the rest of the letter (I only hope its author coo mix salads with as much bravado and gusto as he mixes metaphors) I shall attempt to answer. It is standard critical behaviour to support one's arguments with quotations from the text — in fact, I consider it grossly unfair not to do so. (The text I have quoted, by the way, accords exactly — word for word, dot for dot — with the text in my review copy.) It is also perfectly valid to take into account the author's statement of intention. What I had hoped to make clear to my review — what was, in fact, its main thrust — was the grotesque disparity between the intention and the execution ("Between the conception and the creation — Falls the Shadow"). I'd like to assure Mr. Vaughn-James that despite my "strident anti-intellectualism," I am not wholly unaware of the Nouveau Roman or of Barthes' critical theories concerning the roman au regard. Also, although my "dull-witted provincialism" does rather get in the way, I do maintain a more than nodding acquaintance with sock writers as Robbe-Grillet, Sarrate, Butor, Simon, and Duras. What I am objecting to in the text is not that the writing is intended to be experimental and complex or that the author intended it to be organically related to the drawings — neither of these facts is beyond my comprehension — but that the writing is bod. It is a rarity for an artist to excel both visually and verbally. Michelangelo did it. So did Bloke. So did Apollinaire. Vaughn-James, regrettably, does not.*



# CanWit No. 7

HERE LIES Calvinistic and dreary are most of the tombstone inscriptions of this land. (For confirmation, see Carole Hanks' *Early Ontario Gravestones, reviewed in the June-July, 1974, issue of Books in Canada.*) If Mordecai Richler is right in asserting that all writing is about death, then CanLit could use a little more sepulchral wit. The usual prize (see below) is offered for appropriate epitaphs on any prominent Canadian. The model is Dorothy Parker's "Excuse my dust." and *De mortuis* ... considerations obviously need not apply. Address entries to: CanWit No. 7, Books in Canada, 501- Yonge Street, Suite 23, Toronto M4Y 1Y4. The deadline is Jan. 30.

## RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 5

READERS WERE asked to compose good bad poems, in the manner of James McIntyre's 'celebration of the giant Ingersoll cheese, on any of the following subjects: CBC-TV's *Viewpoint*; Toronto's CN Tower; the Bricklin car; the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool; Bill C-58; and the Reid Pulp and Paper Company of Dryden, Ont. Despite the postal strike, entries trickled in by telegram and dogsled. The winner is Marvin Goody of Toronto, who receives a copy of the award-winning art book *John Fillion* by Dorothy Cameron and John Reeves (Martlet Press, \$19.50). He arrived in the office in person to type up these splendid efforts:

### TORONTO'S SKYPIERCER

*Eat your heart out, Mr. Eiffel,  
Our new tower is no trifle.*

*Soaring up into the void,  
It would gladden Dr. Freud.*

*At dizzy height you may revolve,  
Even this did CN solve.*

*If any dare it denigrate,  
Banished to Buffalo be his fate.*

### THE BRICKLINED COFFIN

*Woe, Oh woe, Oh woe to the car  
That outclassed all other autos by far;*

*With wing of gull and other features  
To appeal to gullible overcoachers;*

*Done in for a paltry twenty million,  
Would it have lived if it had a pillion?*

*Intriguing question — suggests a rumble!  
N.B. — this disaster should make you humble.*

### THE SASKATCHEWAN WHEAT POOL

*I certainly wouldn't say "It stinks,"  
Of the pool that buoyed up Sarah Binks.  
So what can I say about La Saskatchewan  
Wheat Pool*

*But "Boy o boy, is it ever a neat pool!"?  
I'm sure that Paul Hiebert would second  
this sediment,  
So. Wheat Pool, go on without impediment.  
Keep on promoting Prairie Lit.,  
And we'll all reach Parnassus bit by bit!*

### A MODEST OPINION

*"Viewpoint is a free expression of opinion."  
That's what old Earl says out across the  
Dominion.  
And up to this point I'm prepared to believe  
him.  
But when he adds in earnest and sincere  
tones:  
"I enjoy receiving your opinions," I hear  
groans.  
My comment on those words I'm sure  
would grieve him.  
For of all words that might describe his  
psychic state,  
"Enjoy" must be the least appropriate.*

### BILL C-58

*The government in its wisdom has decreed  
For Time and Reader's Digest we've no  
need,  
Indeed that from their bias we'll be freed,  
Unless they meet the rules that we've set  
out.  
It will not do them any good to pout,  
It's time they found out what we're all  
about.  
So Time and Reader's Digest hear the  
word:  
Amend your erring ways or be interred.*

### SOMETHING FISHY HERE

*At the Reid Pulp and Paper Company in  
Dryden  
The directors confer in the boardroom decidin'  
How many people to poison next year.  
Ecology is a word they don't want to hear,  
Profits is a word much more to their taste,  
And that means sending mercury out in the  
waste.  
So if you want to retain a pure heart,  
Boycott Reid paper\* and so do your part.  
\*Likewise pulp.*

### Honourable mentions:

#### THE BRICKLIN

*Bricklin with its daring form.  
Unaware of coming storm.  
Engine starts and revs are norm,  
But obsolete before it's warm.*

— Lawrence Hickman. Nanaimo, B.C.

#### THE CN TOWER

*Majestic, magnificent those mighty heights  
Who, shadows cast long strands of daylight  
nights  
With flashing signals warn the passing  
flights  
And wave a welcome to the lake of lights.  
Oh, solid steel cemented power —  
Hall, the glory of our CN Tower!*

— Lucinda Vardey, Toronto

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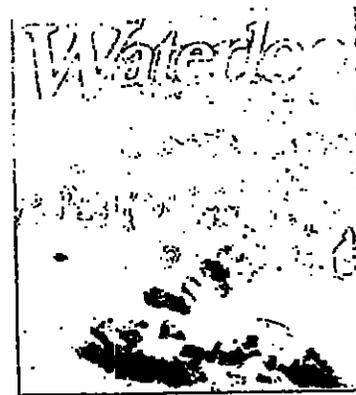
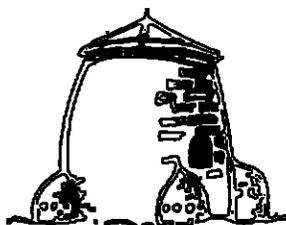


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