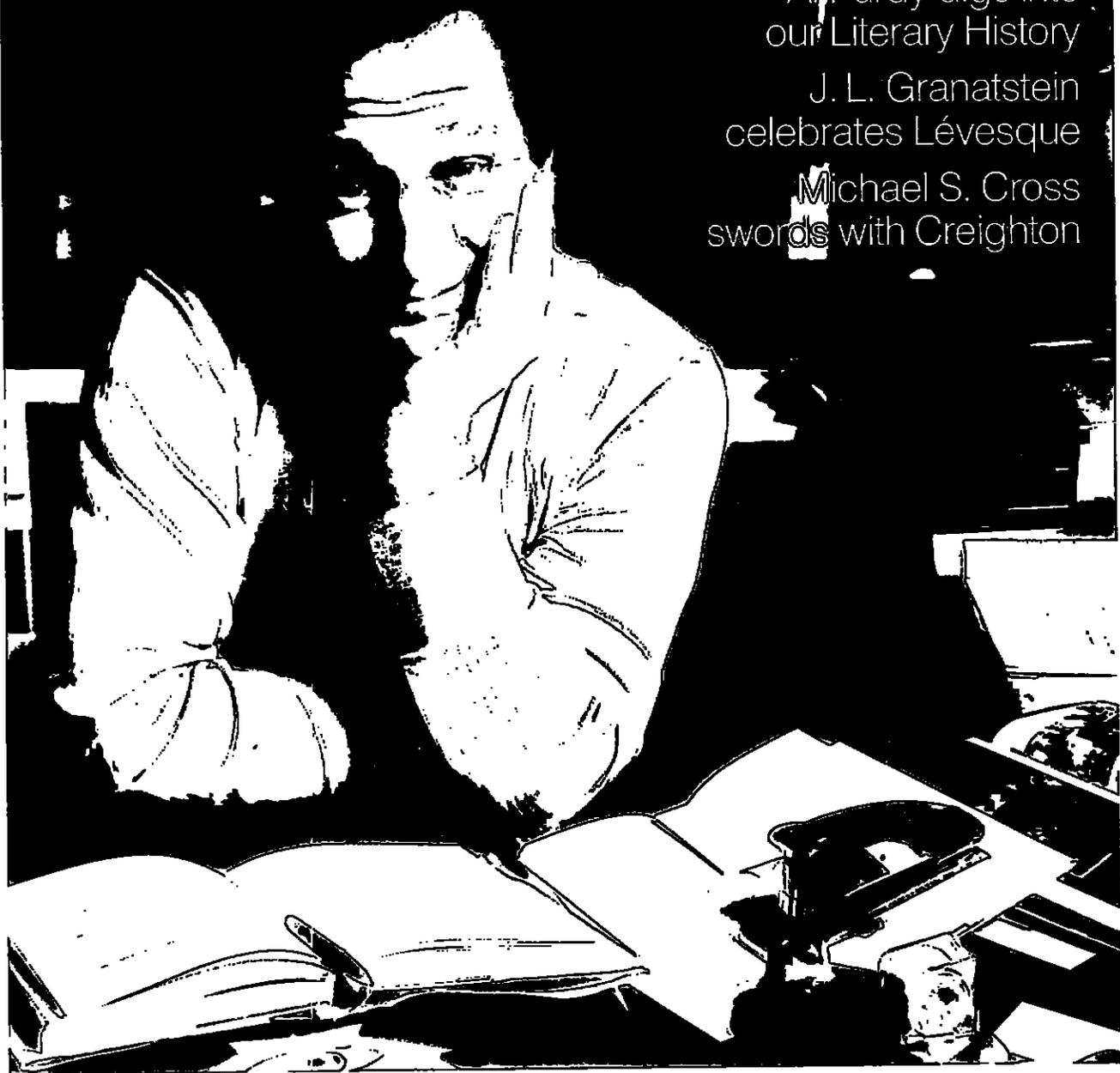


Hugh Garner relishes COLOMBO

Al Purdy digs into
our Literary History

J. L. Granatstein
celebrates Lévesque

Michael S. Cross
swords with Creighton



ARTICLES AND REVIEWS

Hugh Garner: <i>Quote and Digger Man. Colombo's Concise Canadian Quotations and Colombo's Canadian References.</i> both by John Robert Colombo	3	Bryan Newson: <i>The Noronic is Burning!</i> , by John Craig; <i>Final Approach</i> , by Spencer Dunmore; <i>Northlight, Lovelight</i> , by Jacques Folch-Ribas	18
Keith Garebian: <i>Of Pyx and Pans.</i> A profile of thriller-writer John Buell	6	Janet Lunn: <i>When I was a Boy</i> , by David Trumble, edited by Glen Ellis	19
Al Purdy: <i>Scribal Drums. Literary History of Canada: Canadian Literature in English. Second Edition, Volumes I, II, and III;</i> general editor, Carl F. Klink	9	I. M. Owen: <i>The Wild Life I've Led</i> , by Stuart Trueman; <i>The Wit & Wisdom of Bob Edwards; The Golden Age of B.S.</i> , by Fred C. Dobbs; <i>The Rise and Fall of the Peanut Party</i> , by John Mitchell and Vincent Trasov; <i>This is the Law?</i> , by Nigel Napier-Andrews	20
John Hofsess: <i>Do Send a Shrink to Leo. Just Looking, Thank You</i> , by Philip Marchand	II	Alan Edmonds: <i>Ben Wicks' Canada</i> , by Ben Wicks	21
J. L. Granatstein: <i>René, Vide, Vici. René: A Canadian in Search of His Country</i> , by Peter Desbants	13	John Oughton: <i>Declining Gracefully</i> , by John Sandman; <i>O Master Caliban!</i> , by Phillis Gotlieb	22
Michael S. Cross: <i>Once Upon a Time ... The Forked Road: Canada, 1939-1957</i> , by Donald Creighton	16	James Lorimer: <i>Language of Fire: Poems of Love and Struggle</i> , by Robin Mathews	23
		Terrence N. Hill: <i>E. P. Taylor: A Horseman & His Horses</i> , by Muriel Lennox	23

DEPARTMENTS

The Browser by Morris Wolfe. <i>The Short Happy Walks of Max MacPherson</i> , by Harry Bruce; <i>Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada</i> , by M. James Denton; <i>The Belgians in Manitoba</i> , by Keith Wilson and James B. Wyndels; <i>Wings of Progress</i> , by David Collins:		<i>Murrican. Huh?</i> , by Mark Orkin; <i>Still More "It Happened in Canada"</i> , by Gordon Johnston	24, 25
		Letters to the Editor	25
		CanWit No. 19	26

ILLUSTRATIONS

Photographs of John Robert Colombo and Hugh Garner by Ellen Tolmie	1, 3, 5	Drawing by Joe Rosenblatt	4
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EDITOR: Douglas Marshall. MANAGING EDITOR: Peter Such. ART DIRECTOR: Mary Lu Toms. GENERAL MANAGER and ADVERTISING MANAGER: Susan Traer. CIRCULATION MANAGER and ASSISTANT EDITOR: Pier Giorgio Di Cicco. BUSINESS MANAGER: Robert Farrelly. CONSULTANT: Jack Jensen.

Books in Canada is published 12 times a year, with the assistance of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, by the Canadian Review of Books Ltd., 366 Adelaide Street East, Suite 432, Toronto, Ont. M5A 1N4. Telephone: (416) 363-5426. Available free in participating bookstores, schools, and libraries. Individual subscription rate: \$9.95 a year (\$15 overseas). Back issues available on microfilm from: McLaren Micropublishing, P.O. Box 972, Station F, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2N9. Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index. The editors cannot be held responsible for unsolicited material. Second Class Mail — Registration No. 2593. Contents © 1977. Printed by Heritage Press Co. Ltd. ISSN 0045-2564



QUOTE AND DIGGER MAN

In the annals of Canadiana, the name Colombo will endure long after John Robert is forgotten

by Hugh Garner

Colombo's Concise Canadian Quotations, by John Robed Colombo. Huaig. 280 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0-88830-111-1) and 54.95 paper (ISBN 0-88830-110-3).

Colombo's Canadian References. by John Robert Colombo. Oxford University Press, 576 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0-19-540253-7).

I FIRST MET John Colombo. in 1961 I suppose it was. when he was one of the book editors at The Ryerson Press. At the behest of a mutual friend, Robert Weaver, I took a book of short stories in to him in the hopes that Ryerson would print them. It was my seventh book. and had already been turned down by McClelland & Stewart (who had done badly with a novel of mine, *Silence On The Shore*). Macmillan, Clarke Irwin, William Collins. Doubleday, and Longmans. John Colombo was friendly. gracious and cautiously enthusiastic. but so had been the other editors who had read the stories. There were 12 stories in the book, and over lunch at a Hungarian restaurant where I faced a phalanx of Ryerson editors and company officers some weeks later, it was suggested to me that they would publish the book if I allowed them to include some stories from a previous William Collins collection titled *The Yellow Swearer*. By this time. fed up with hying., cap-in-hand, to interest anyone in the book's publication, I agreed. One of the Ryerson people suggested that it be titled *Hugh Garner's Best Stories*, and I. unfortunately. gave my okay. Hell, by that time I was so Fed up I wouldn't have cared if they called it *Tom Swift And His Wonderful Publishing Friends*.

Anyhow; my reason for writing that verbose opening paragraph is that Colombo has been giving people the impression that he either discovered Hugh Garner, or had something to do with *Hugh Garner's Best Stories* winning the Governor General's Award for Fiction, which it did. I'd like to put his first claim to rest by reminding him or anyone else that he didn't even meet me until I'd published six books. and that he only became a member of the Canada Council's Arts Advisory Panel in 1968, the group that I presume votes on which author should receive the Governor

General's awards. With that off my chest. let us now praise famous men!

In a nutshell, I think that *Colombo's Concise Canadian Quotations*, despite Colombo's and Mel Hurtig's denials, is just a cut-down paperback (to 280 from 735 pages) of *Colombo's Canadian Quotations*, *published by Hurtig in 1974. This observation is not a criticism. for I believe its hard-cover elder brother carried enough minutiae to overburden an army mule. Besides, the concise paperback. its format reduced in height, width, and thickness, is exactly the size to fit the housebricks-and-plank bookcases of renovated slum-row houses. bachelor pads, and suburban condominiums.

Colombo's Canadian References, on the other hand, is a large durable good-looking 576-page hard-cover volume worthy of joining its English and U.S. relatives on every library, school, and home-reference shelf, not only in Canada but also throughout the world. John Robert Colombo. Canada's very own and probably first quotation-finder, Canadian facts-compiler, lexicographer, and bibliographer, is a name that deserves equal billing with Johnson, Webster, Fowler, Roget, and Bartlett.

The works of the above-named giants in their respective fields have an historical half-life and English-language tenacity that is the envy of Nobel laureates in literature. though their authors lose their first names through the erosion of time. Confess now, can you recall without

Congenital sneak that I am, I first search such works as Colombo's for my own name.... This is not a personal or egoistic trait; those authors who claim not to read their book reviews are liars.

looking them up the Christian names of the compiler of *Roger's Thesaurus*?

Congenital sneak that I am. I first search such works as Colombo's for my own name, and am delighted to say that

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it has appeared in all three of his reference books. This is not a personal or egoistic trait: those authors who claim not to read their book reviews are liars. Secondly, I look up my own short list of Canadianisms such as "chesterfield" meaning a couch or sofa, "concession" as in "a concession road," "pogey," now meaning unemployment insurance but previously having a much different meaning, and "Sally Ann." The Salvation Army, which was shortened to Sally Ann by transients and mission stiffs, being an English institution. caimot be found in what's-his-name's *Canadian References*, and I searched in vain for it between Percy Saltzman and George Salverson, both TV acquaintances. Chesterfield, concession, and pogey are in the book, however*.

Did you know that the "Polar Bear Express" serves only Doran's Northern Alé on its journey between Cochrane and Moosonee, or that the "Newfie Bullet" on its circuitous route between St. John's, Nfld., and Port-aux-Basques, is affectionately known as "the slowest train in North America"? Have you ever wanted to find out the secrets of the new Canadian postal code, where "mackinaw" got its name, the leading companies in-Canada from No. 1 to No. 100, or which side won the Battle of Oswego? Tell me, in 50 seconds, where the "Other Place" is situated. Was your curiosity ever whetted by Halifax's "Point Pleasure Park," which I think is really named Point Pleasant? Have you ever heard of Gabriel Sagard-Théodat, the Woolsey Family, Roy MacSkimming, Alexis Contant, John Metcalf, or Reginald Aubrey Fessenden? Did you ever want to? Name the whereabouts or location of the "Spaced Out Library," the "Ostrich fem." "Punkydoodles Comers," the "Salina Sea," "Cabbagetown," "Britannia Heights," "Fair-weather Mountain," or for that matter two old friends, Norman DePoe and Larry Zolf?

Once upon a time, grandchildren, when your old grandad was a sailor, he used to drink at a famous upper-tow? Quebec City pub called *Le Chien d'or*, a fait leeward spit from the Chateau Frontenac. ("Listen, Johnny, if you don't shut up I'll send you down into the cellar to polish my medals.") Anyhow, I just learned from *Colombo's Canadian References* that the pub probably took its name from a carved stone block above the main post office building entrance across the street, which bears the gilded figure of a dog gnawing a bone.

And speaking nostalgically of World War Two (see Second World War) the Canadian Armed Forces is given six paragraphs in the *References*, but nothing is said about the dingbat Parliamentary Bill that sank the Royal Canadian Navy, shot down the Royal Canadian Air Force, and killed off so many splendid regiments of the Canadian Army. Or why today's Canadian sailors, soldiers, and airmen wear anonymously look-alike uniforms that are as distinguished-looking as those worn by Toronto-Dominion bank messengers.

At last, thanks to good old Colombo, I've discovered that there isn't one Northwest Passage linking the Atlantic with the Pacific through the Arctic islands, but two. Don't ask me; look it up yourself.

Cheddar cheese is an English immigrant that has become a Canadian gourmet specialty, but I dam you to name "The Cheese Poet." Zena Cherry is the socialite Toronto *Globe and Mail* columnist, but what, when or where will you find the "Canadian Labour Defence League," "Chemical Valley," or the "Chenier Cell?" And what, except a few inches of type, joins together Michael Maclear, Gene MacLellan, Hugh MacLennan, and Marshall McLuhan?

Do you know the name of the black slave who smuggled his family over the underground railway from Kentucky to near what is now Dresden, Ont., and who later became the prototype for Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*? Read Colombo.

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Hugh Garner

But enough word games for now.

A couple of years ago I was chatting with John Colombo at some publisher's bash-cum-book salesmen's picnic and he told me that for two years he and his family had been forced to live near the poverty line while he compiled, researched, and edited his 1974 book, *Colombo's Canadian Quotations*. I believed him, for in general Canadian book publishers are a tight-fisted lot. or as we used to say during my halcyon days riding the freights, "They'd skin a louse for its hide." Having bought his book, I sympathized with him much more than when he was a poet, a "found poet" (not in the *References*). or a youthful book editor. The sheer brain-numbing bull labour that must go into fompiling and editing a dictionary, reference work, book of quotations or a thesaurus just scrambles my few remaining brain cells. To isolate oneself at a desk and juggle facts; figures, names, discarding some and adding others, deciding what will please the publisher, his editors, and the reading public, and not even being paid the creative writer's ego-soothing knowledge that -bad or good — he is creating a work of art, is a form of dedicated masochism that most of us will luckily avoid.

I assure John Colombo that I will spend many hours with my eyes scanning his pages, my ears listening to my arteries harden, and my voice stilled, in admiration as I consult or browse through his works of reference. Colombo, you've driven a hole-in-one, beaten Bobby Riggs at tennis, and scored a four-second winning goal in hockey. But, John, just between you and me, didn't Jim Foley, the originator of the literary Canada Day at Port Colborne High School in 1970, attend the University of Toronto rather than (or before going on to) Columbia? I know such quibbling is like committing a nuisance on John A. Macdonald's statue, but what the hell, even you can make a mistake, and I didn't want to swell your head any further.

If your interests lie in politics, economics, government, fine arts, literature, geographical names, historical dates, the stage, movie stars, or even the Grey Cup winners from 1909 to 1975, Colombo's your man, provided of course that your quarry is Canadian.

Every Canadian magazine I've ever heard about is included in Colombo's *Canadian References*, including *Books in Canada*. That's lucky for me or you might have to read this review in the *Sally Ann War Cry*, which isn't mentioned at all.

What bird painting illustrated a 1970 six-cent postage stamp? Don't ask me, just look it up in Colombo! □

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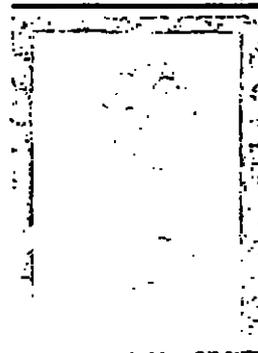


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OF PYX AND PANS

John Buell writes thrillers
about evil that leave
readers uncomfortable
and some critics cold

by Keith Garebign

IN *O Canada* (1964). American critic Edmund Wilson called John Buell one of the most interesting of the younger Canadian novelists. Wilson devoted several pages to a consideration of Buell's first two novels, *The Pyx* (1959) and *Four Days* (1962), noting in these stories more than the shock of horror and crime. But his valuable comments have perhaps been in vain, for John Buell of Montreal is very much an unknown in Canada. His books have been translated into French, German, and Dutch, and there are film versions of *The Pyx* and *The Shrewsdale Exit* (1972), but Buell still feels a bit of a foreigner at home.

Buell must fault himself, in part, for this local neglect. He has never been a self-promoting salesman. It would be inconceivable for him to stand in a public park — as Irving Layton once did in Kingston — and distribute free copies of his work with a prophecy of international recognition. It would also be inconceivable for him to appear on radio and television talk shows to make small talk.

His work is therefore left to speak for itself — and it does so in a strong, confident voice, well modulated and precise. For all its economy, Buell's craft is a subtle one. It likes to

Buell declines to drum up his own business or tackle critics who misrepresent him. He is stoical: "Nobody has to read anything you write."

begin with a sense of the ordinary that gradually reveals a depth of human motive, action, and consequence.

Buell's first three books deal with different types and consequences of evil, and show how a protagonist can be released from his involvement with evil in society. His latest

book, *Playground* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 247 pages, \$8.95), moves from a concern with survival in a society to a survival in nature. The question here is not so much one of evil as it is one of innocence and ignorance, of the illusion of certitude and safety. The story opens with Spence Morison, a middle-aged executive embarking on a vacation in a wilderness "playground." The humdrum details of the opening shift into tense drama when Morison's Cessna nuts into turbulence and crashes into a lake. After a ballet-like underwater sequence, Morison surfaces and begins a hard lesson in the strategies and implications of survival. The plot is chiefly an internal one and moves slowly, its protraction intense enough to put off those readers eager for gimmicks and fast pacing. Morison is at first a captive of, technology, deeply committed to the routines of his life. But when the plane crashes, Morison's calculated way of life is upset. It forces Spence to re-evaluate his notion of the environment. In nature's wilderness, he is only a small being whose fear is an environment in itself.

Buell's tale approaches myth — the myth of knowledge in which man is virtually a primitive imploring the gods for rescue. In his chronic hunger, fear, and disorientation, Morison realizes that there are no gods, no futures to calculate, no fantasies of clock and calendar. Stripped of technological comforts, false assumptions of human power, and the illusion of certitude, his return to society is a problem of re-adapting to a once-familiar environment.

Its wealth of detail and symbolism makes *Playground* heavy going. It is a grim closeup of a single character, dotted with flashes of black comedy and an uncompromising interior drama. For these very reasons it is a reader's book. Its subtlety demands close attention and creative collaboration; its mimesis of fear and illusion would arouse any reader's discomfort.

Without concessions to popular taste, however, the book will probably not sell well in Canada. No matter, Buell declines to drum up his own business or tackle critics who misrepresent him; He is stoical: "Nobody has to read anything you write."

Buell simply goes on teaching at the Loyola campus of Concordia University where he is Professor of Communication Arts and considered a "good hand" by most of his students. In a faculty where theory rules over practice, he is an accessible professor whose demands are tempered by a recognition of human nature. His esteem for standards doesn't give itself over to abstraction. He once started a course by declaring: "Literature is not life" and then went on to teach about life through literature.

The irony is that Buell became a teacher through stark circumstances. Freshly graduated from Loyola in 1949, he trudged the streets of Montreal looking desperately for work. Just as he was about to give up and return disconsolately to his family, he was rescued by his literary mentor, Father Gerald MacGuigan, a Jesuit teacher from Loyola (to whom Buell dedicated *Four Days*). MacGuigan had helped him get started in the university drama group and had appreciated his literary talent from the time of his first composition as a freshman. He always considered Buell a polished craftsman, and describes him as Ezra Pound described T. S. Eliot: "Here is a man you don't have to tell, 'Wipe your feet before you come in'."

Since Father MacGuigan's help, Buell has learned to stop worrying about reality and start accepting it. He is full of optimism and keeps his eyes open to anything. His sense of humour reflects his positive view of life, and he is loquacious with friends, especially if their interests are as broad as his.

He is a tall, wiry, balding man — not a little rugged — and though he is now pushing 50, there is a virility about him that charges his crisp voice and confident manner. He lives with his wife, Audrey, and their four children in Notre Dame de Grace, a district that sometimes resembles an old lady with too much rouge. But when summer comes, he takes off for his 150-acre farm in the Eastern Townships, halfway between Drummondville and Sherbrooke. The pine farmhouse is secluded on a knoll circled by ancient evergreens. Though it is far from elegant, it is comfortable. About a hundred yards away is John's cabane, a single, prefab room, just out of earshot from the house and close enough for beer and the toilet. The summer home is his great retreat. It is far enough from the city to make cocktail society seem distant, and rural enough to bring him close to nature.

It's a long way from the Depression-poor Montreal of his boyhood in an Irish parish, and it's a long way from that anxious summer nagged by unemployment. All of which testifies to his modest commercial success as a writer.

But is he a commercial writer? To the Canadians who have read his novels before *Playground*, he might be. Some claim that reading *The Pyx* or *Four Days* or *The Shrewsdale Exit* is like watching *Cannon* on TV. You keep hearing background music and you expect commercials to pop up regularly. But this view is surely wide of the mark and it distracts us from the essential Buell craft. His books read easily and show that Buell, if he so wished, could chum out escapist literature at the mere flutter of a dollar bill. When *Four Days* first appeared, Sister Scott of the English faculty at Marianopolis College remarked: "Now I know that Buell is a man of integrity. It is obvious he could write a book every six weeks, but he doesn't."

It's customary for critics to consider most stories with detectives or criminal investigators in them to be inferior popular literature — the sort of stuff that simply fills the spare time of tired presidents, harried businessmen, and those in search of harmless pastimes. Of course, much of this stereotyping is caused by those writers whose sleuths

speak the language of the people, or as Leslie Fiedler calls it, "the sophisticated counterfeit of simplicity turned cliché." But Buell's style is rungs above that of the typical detective story or mystery thriller. True, it has no memorable similes in the mode of Raymond Chandler ("He looked about as inconspicuous as a tarantula on a slice of angel food"), but it has that touch of craftsmanship that gives a reader confidence in the writer's authority. Like Graham Greene, Buell writes "entertainments" that explore the human condition in its immediate environment, but he does so economically and with texture uncorrupted by the didactic. Consider *The Shrewsdale Exit*, for instance, where a man's soul is healed after violence has had its effect. This

"Someone reading most of Shakespeare ... will somehow get closer to reality. It's amazing. One must dream of reality. One can't dream of dreams."

story passes through three phases tanging from psychotic violence and hate to a pastoral of subdued tension and healing. Critics were disappointed, expecting the central character to take his revenge on the thugs who taped and killed his wife and daughter. But the quiet ending is not one of error in craft; rather, it is a deliberate stroke, underlining the man's growing acceptance of reality.

And yet the doubts persist. Many readers regard *The Pyx* as something of a cult novel because it deals with a diabolical theme. But they conveniently forget that this book appeared years before Charles Manson and his helter-skelter gang of drug-crazed criminals, and more than a decade before *The Exorcist* sent audiences retching out of movie theatres. *The Pyx* is beyond the imagination of a second-rate sensational-

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ist. It is instead a clever metaphysical drama about the puzzle of human evil.

Buell believes that suspenseful writing is the most enjoyable sort of serious writing. And by this he means not simply the work of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Agatha Christie, or Georges Simenon but also that of Sophocles and Shakespeare. Existence is exciting, he maintains, and coming to know something about existence is thrilling. The ancient Greeks had some of this excitement, as Buell points out: “The whole Oedipus thing is coming to know. He happens to know something awful and it’s pleasurable to the theatrical spectator, but in life it is either exciting to the point of pain to come to know something or simply exciting to come to know something so that it has no personal reference to you.”

Part of the fun of fiction, Buell says, is that one knows one is experiencing a *post factum* thing in a very immediate way. And he has tried to write all his stories in the active present. Always the focus is on the real — good and evil, innocence and corruption, revenge and grace — but as enterprises that take us deeper into reality rather than into escapist fantasy in the mode of James Bond or Matt Helm.

The whole purpose of imagining things, Buell says, is to introduce one to reality. “Someone reading most of Shakespeare — not the potboilers like *Titus Andronicus* — will somehow get closer to reality. It’s amazing. One must dream of reality. One can’t dream of dreams.”

Yet Buell rarely researches his subjects in depth. He invents everything. True, *The Pyx* specifies Montreal as the setting, but place names were added only after the American publisher requested them. When Harvey Hart came to direct the film version (starring Karen Black and Christopher Plummer) he asked Buell what research he had done on the Montreal police and callgirls. Hart was amazed to discover that Buell hadn’t done any; meanwhile Hart’s research confirmed those backgrounds created by Buell. “In vain could I explain that it is imagination,” chuckles Buell. “But nonetheless, there it is. People don’t believe me when I say this. At first you acquire a kind of reputation as a necromancer or a Black Masser or this or that or another thing, not realizing the thing is purely imaginative. It’s fun.”

What about the knowledge of aeronautics in *Playground*? Was that invented too? Buell lets me in on a secret; a friend of his, an aeronautics expert, helped him out with information about flying. This friend answered Buell’s questions without knowing anything about the story. Buell never discusses work in progress — not even with his wife, who types his finished copy. The rule is one borrowed from Raymond Chandler; never take advice and never answer a critic.

Buell is serious about these rules. For all his folksy humour he has a steel will that defines the quality of his craft. He doesn’t nag himself about which of various ways to go about writing a book. He simply decides he’ll go a certain way and does it. Once he has psychologically prepared himself to begin a book, he sits down and writes the whole story out. It is this wilfulness that is the backbone of Buell’s craft — through all the early mornings during the university year when he has to get up and write, through the many distractions of urban life, through the strange neglect of local critics, through all the bias against his genre.

What’s he expecting in return? Neither fame nor posterity. The whole business of reputation doesn’t appear to mean much to him: “I’d like to sell a lot of books because the more money I have, the more leisure I have. . . . About the only thing I can see happening is that after I’m dead, my children are going to have on their hands a bunch of books they won’t know what the hell to do with. That’s about the size of it.”

It’s a slice of reality, and it seals John Buell as an authentic realist both in craft and in style of life. It is what makes him refreshingly honest and a good man to know. □

SCRIBAL DRUMS

The writers who are mapping our future
now have a long-playing record of our past

by Al Purdy .

Literary History of Canada: **Canadian Literature** in English, Second Edition: general editor. Carl F. Klink: editors. Alfred G. Bailey, Claude Bissell, Roy Daniells, Northrop Frye. Desmond Pacey; U of T Press:

Volume I. 540 Pages. \$25 cloth (ISBN 0-8020-221 J-J) and \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0-8020-6276-S);

Volume II. 460 pages. \$25 cloth (ISBN 0-8020-2213-81) and \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0-8020-6277-6);

Volume III, 350 pages, \$20 cloth (ISBN 0-8020-2213-6) and \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0-8020-6278-4);

Boxed Set. \$35 paper (ISBN 0-8020-6265-2).

BEFORE I READ this *Literary History*, a novelist I know told me it was dull. I think most pntising writers — novelists and poets. that is — would tend to feel the same way, perhaps from scorn of dusty encyclopaedias, or else being forced by their mothers to read a dozen volumes of the *Book of Knowledge* as a child. Such massive tomes have a tendency to scare off any but "serious" or "scholarly" readers.

That would be a great pity. These books are, quite literally, a history of Canada, the country's life und thought since irs beginning. Every country in the world sooner or later comes up wiith such an historic record, some countries with many of them. There's no reason why Canada should be any exception to this rule. And in fact the books ore sometimes dull, but then in turn fascinating, & pending on who's writing about what. In other words, the *History* should be judged primarily on its merits as a collection of writings about Canadian literature; only secondarily as a necessary and valuable reference book, which it certainly is.

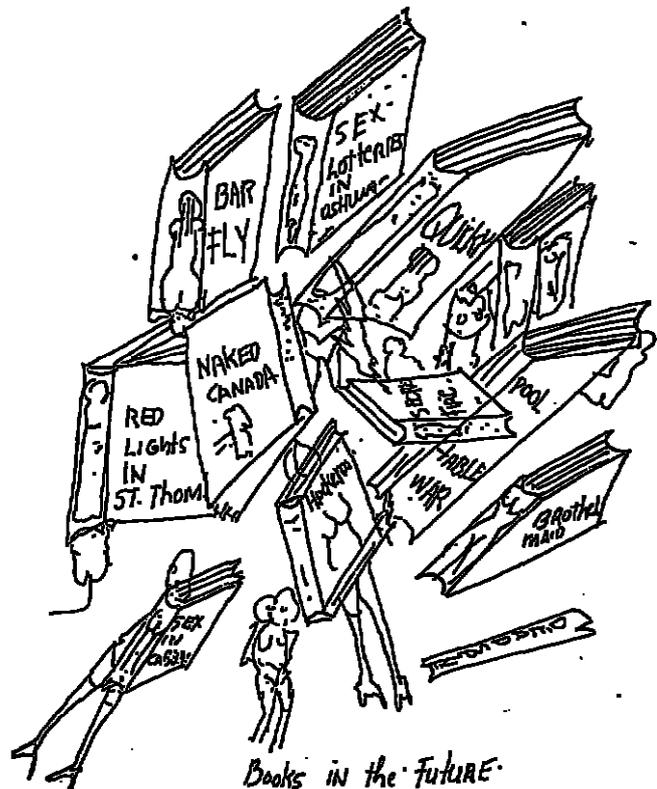
The *History* was first published in 1965 in one volume. Now it is reissued, the earlier sections largely revised, and with an additional volume included to cover the years 1960 to 1974. This added book, dealing with an explosion of wiring in Canada during that 14-year period, is the main reason for this enlarged second edition being published.

However, all three volumes are integral to an understanding of writing in Canada -English writing only, I hasten to add — since Wolfe and Montcalm. The Arst volume deals with actual military and political history, explorers and voyagers West; also stirrings of literary activity in the Maritimes during the 19th century, the Upper and Lower Canadas, Haliburton and Howe. D'Arcy McGee, the Moodies, Stricklands and Traills, transplanted Englishmen, writers suddenly or gradually aware that they were Canadians — such as Roberts, Corman, and Lampman. It also deals with "forces." "grow,h," and many varieties of writing.

The second volume adds the sciences, drama, essays, literary scholarship, religion, autobiognphy, travel, history, as well as the novel and poetry. Then are a few more chapter-headings, but I don't want to make this a catalogue

of a catalogue. The new third book repeals rhe second one's subjects with some new writers added. And as binder twine to tie things together, we have such chapters as "The Writer and his Public, Politics and Literature in the 1960s," with a conclusion by Northrop Frye, for both the original edition in 1965 and its 1976 successor.

In fact, Northrop Frye is omnipresent throughout the entire History: being quoted by the other writers; given credit or discredit for a critical climate of thinking (the mythopoeic); and sometimes answering his own critics to explain what he really meant. I'm not complaining about this, since like many other people I find Frye's analytical writing interesting; although somerimes I wonder if the striking images he uses (likening the Gulf of St. Lawrence to "an inconceivably large whale" for instance) don't occasionally detract from more intensive examination of the actual thesis his image embellishes. I find him so interesting that I feel rather suspicious (a reaction I'm sure he would call typically Canadian), even while agreeing when he says: "Canada has always been a cool climate for heroes." (Trudeau was an obvious exception eight years ago.) In some-ways Frye himself has been a cultural hem for other



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scholars, and this *History* demonstrates to just what extent.

The dullest part of the book — and that is obviously what my novelist friend meant — is the critical listing of writers. But one of the most interesting chapters is the treatment of Canadian history-writing in Volume II by William Kilbourn. Here we have an account of scholarly disagreements between environmentalists (proponents of the importance of landscape in history) versus the advocates of cities (who maintain that large metropolitan centres now supersede landscape). We encounter the Laurentians, Harold Innis and

French and English are, in some odd way, necessary antagonists to each other. Each would miss the other badly if an Ontario-Quebec wall were erected on the boundary and would feel like a man with an amputated leg that still aches in cold weather,

Donald Creighton, who believed that "Canada existed not in spite of geography, but because of it." And Kilbourn explicating Creighton, refers to explorers like Cartier and Champlain on the St. Lawrence River: "In the hem's act of penetration and possession of the land of the St. Lawrence there lay the central secret of Canadian history." It sounds like a vivid adventure story, with later literary detectives adding motives and making obviously erotic parallels. Of course, much more is added by Michael Cross in Volume III.

Jay Macpherson, in her chapter on autobiographies, says they "generally offer more of historical or social than literary interest." But she mentions Frederick Philip Grove as having committed the most deliberate attempt to portray the artist as such, the hem of *In Search of Myself* playing out Grove's favourite drama, "that of the strong man with a wound that will take his whole lifetime to kill him." Since Douglas Spettigue's admirable detective work in Europe of tracking down pseudo-Grove's real identity as Felix Paul Greve, an obscure German novelist, the Greve-Grove persona has acquired a relation to the Canadian identity trauma that hasn't been adequately touched, let alone explored.

The late Desmond Pacey's chapter on Canadian criticism in Volume III pays due respect to Northrop Frye and others, such as A. J. M. Smith and E. K. Brown. But he disagrees with Frye's "theoretical views that criticism is not and should not be concerned with evaluation, and that literature owes more to other works of literature than to the writer's own life and times." (I happen to agree with that disagreement — with trepidation, to be sure.) And Pacey comes up with an interesting quote from A. J. M. Smith for young writers: "Send your work to the best English and American magazines. Until you are sure that your work is acceptable there, leave the Canadian magazines alone." Would Smith also advise Canadian writers to pay attention only to English and American critics, and leave Canadian critics alone? Since he has himself long been an American citizen, perhaps his advice should be heeded. In any case, as Pacey points out: "The influence of criticism upon creative writers is at best indirect, at worst quite irrelevant." And yet, paradoxically, I think writers have much to learn from people like Frye and Smith, even if indirectly.

Malcolm Ross, in his chapter on critical theory, discusses some of the same things as Pacey, but carries it a few steps further. He gets to the basic questions: "Do we have a recognizable cultural identity? Do we indeed have a culture, a literature, our own moment or place in the larger imaginative order?" Regarding any of these questions, one can only point to the literary and artistic works that exist in this country as evidence for or against. And that's all that can be done in any country. However, Ross's outline of critical theory is one of the most interesting in this massive history.

There isn't space here to deal with other chapters on different sub-species of literature, therefore I'll go direct to fiction in Volume III (discussed by William New) and poetry (whose overseer is George Woodcock). During the period between 1960 and 1973, "some 1.125 books of verse, not counting anthologies," had been published, Woodcock says. A slightly lesser explosion occurred in fiction, during the same period. However, "nowadays poetry is not merely — in numbers of titles — the most published of all genres in Canada; it sells more reliably than fiction.. ." (Woodcock!). That being the case, one wonders why fiction receives so much more space in newspaper and magazine reviews, and also more space in this literary history (SO pages in Volume III for fiction, as compared to 33 for poetry)?

It's also a matter for some amazement, even among Foreign literary critics such as England's William Walsh, that poetry should be so dominant in Canada and maintain its generally high level of quality—something that doesn't happen in other Commonwealth countries. In a letter to Claude Bissell, Walsh said: "I must say I did find this question fascinating. infinitely more so than agitation about identities and images in Canada. The question, that is, first why Canadians should be such good poets, or more precisely that there should be so many good Canadian poets." (Quoted from the Toronto Star, Oct. 16.)

The chapters on fiction and poetry both discuss individual writers briefly: better-known novelists such as Laurence, Richler, MacLennan, and so on receive slightly more space than others from New. He also mentions that, during this time, "vital fiction became the accomplishment of many writers and remained no longer the preserve of a select few." If fiction actually was "the preserve of a select few," then I suppose the recent proliferation of small publishers offered them a wider outlet. But conversely, these small

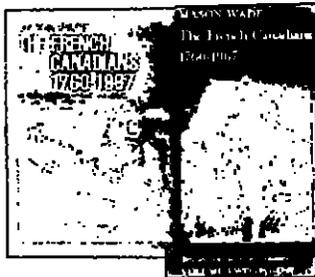
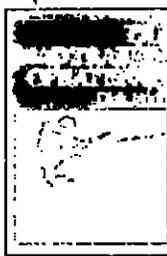
publishers have generally concentrated on poetry, leaving fiction to larger commercial giants such as McGraw-Hill Ryerson and others. In any case, the novel and short story did gain increasing national momentum during the past dozen years.

George Woodcock, in the limited space allotted him, prefaces his poetry essay with a general outline of what has happened inside his time period. Poetry magazines sprout like mushrooms: phonograph records of verse are out: cross-country readings; listening audiences of up to 500 (this reviewer had one of 500 when a folksinger was advertised, but didn't show); many small publishers, a few spending their own money when they can't get a grant from the Canada Council. A time of long-shot gamblers in literature, showdown at the O.K. poetry corral; an ominous Black Mountain appears on the Vancouver skyline. Heard of poets are heard of: the miracle of Atwood; MacEwen astounds; Wayman exhibits; Layman shouts: Cohen might be said to sing; Bimey Falls from a tree in Toronto, and publishes three books since the fall. In short, fiesta and CanLit carnival. a situation of poem popularity certain Montreal academics view with considerable suspicion.

The formidable presence of Northrop Frye is encountered at the ends of both Volume II and Volume III. As mentioned. Frye permeates all three volumes, and it is rare that anyone disagrees with his major premises. Desmond Pacey has done so on two of those premises; but Pacey is safe in so doing for obvious reasons. And I can't help agreeing when Frye ends all three sections of the history with this sentence: "This book is about what has been created, in words and in Canada, during the present age, and the whole body of that creation will be the main reason for whatever interest posterity may take in us." My only comment would be that we are our own future; that is, Canadian writers now are

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mapping the **country**, both psychologically and physically. It has not been done before. despite the evidence of this **History**. and I am bound to think the job **important**.

Among more **percipient utterances** of the Frye-oracle is this one: "It seems to me that a **very curious** and significant **exchange** of identities between Canada and the United States has taken place since then [1967]. The latter, **traditionally** so **buoyant**, extroverted, and forward-looking. **appears** to be **entering** a prolonged period of **self-examination**." Whereas Canada, always in the past a narcissistic navel-watcher, has gained something remarkably like a certainty of its own existence, even if 'for no obvious purpose other than survival.

Frye also says: "It seems to me that the decisive **cultural event** in **English** Canada during the past fifteen years has been the impact of French Canada and its new sense of identity." I think he's right again, and that both **French** and **English** are, in some odd way, **necessary antagonists** to each other. Each would miss the other badly if an **Ontario-Quebec** wall were erected on the boundary and **would** feel like a man with an amputated leg that still aches in cold weather.

What this **History** fails to indicate, and which is not entirely in its field, is that the existence of Canada as a unified country has never been so precarious. The provinces are fighting against Ottawa; Quebec, as I write this, may be about to separate.; the weight of **American investment** finally threatens to tip the country southward so that whatever wealth is left automatically **streams** willy-nilly into the vaults of the Chase-Manhattan Bank, and finally, foreign landlords control **80** per cent of so-called Canadian publishing (Toronto **Star**, Oct. 19, 1976).

All of the foregoing is a lead-in to the **repeated** question: Why the outburst of Canadian literary **works** over the past dozen years — **in fact** in all the creative arts? Seemingly, **culture has never been** more healthy; although the same can't be said **economically**. The present **Literary History** does not **satisfactorily** provide an **answer**. (Why more babies during a war?) What it **does** do is **provide** a valuable critical literary record **over** the fairly brief period of **Canadian** existence as a nation, which **will be** of decided historical interest **in** times to come. •1

Do send a shrink to Leo

by John Hofsess

Just Looking, Thank You, by Philip Marchand, Macmillan: 208 pages. \$10.95 cloth (ISBN 0-7705-1434-0).

DOES ANYONE connected with publication of this book take Philip Marchand's writing **seriously**?

Forget the **title**, which suggest **superficial** browsing-around, scarcely worth the **5.26 cents** per page it costs to buy a collection of **16** articles (half of them previously published — five in **Saturday Night**, two in **Miss Chateleine**, one in **The Canadian** magazine). Ignore the jacket copy, which **pants** with **false** excitement: "Whee! Move over, Tom Wolfe, here come's Canada's own Philip **Marchand**, roaring down the track **dropping** off reports on the social scene. Like your stuff, Tom, it's **well-researched** journalism, dramatically written and **funny** and, yes, a little **wicked**." A few breathless sentences later we are assured that it is "wickedly **accurate** and wickedly funny."

The prospective book-buyer may not know that that "Canada's own" in this **case** refers to a writer **born** and raised in the U.S. until the late 1960s when he **came** here to avoid the draft. But that reference to "roaring down the track" certainly sounds odd. Is he a subway **commuter** or a **Mosport** racer? Which **fast** circle does he move in? The dust-jacket is obviously **not** to be taken **seriously**, which may lead the shrewd **buyer** to put the book back knowing that come January-clearance sales, Philip **Marchand** will be on sale "wickedly cheap."

The organizing theme of **Just Looking, Thank You** is that there are many

new "lifestyles" and "subcultures" in Canada that need to be **interpreted** for the rest of us so that we can **all** feel we have **come to grips** with the radical and the **strange**, through **Marchand's** tap-dancing **prose** and feathery **wit**, without otherwise sully our middle-class virtue or greatly inconveniencing our minds. His main appeal, in short, is to those readers who don't know what he's talking about and who are willing to accept his jazz word that, baby, this is really the scene.

In "You Lied to Us, Hugh Hefner," he depicts a **succession** of miserably hollow affairs in the **life** of a "swinging single" **called** Wyatt, who finally decides "there might be mote to chastity than he has previously **suspected**." In "Mating Dances Beneath the Basketball Hoop," Bill and Linda, a **couple** in their mid-teens, ate destined, we are told, to "wind up like an old married **couple** with nothing to say to each other, **clumping** along from day today just like — like mom and dad, and **aunt** and uncle, and all the old boring couples who lived in the past ages before they heard of sexual liberation." In "That Old Family Feeling" a **commune** of "freespirits" is shown to be **disintegrating** because its members **can't** escape **archetypal** "family roles," sexual **jealousy**, and the like. "Sunset Strip" is about growing old in **Victoria** ("... people examine their **bank accounts** and their budgets and think-please, don't let me live to be eighty. Please, God, don't let me live to be eighty-five. Please, oh please, whatever You do, don't let me live to be **ninety!**" (The

elderly, according to **Marchand**, are not **encouraged** "to **get** their share of the action in **our** on-going society-wide sexual free-for-all," which may, be the reason why "Sunset Strip" is his least **snobbish** story. His favourite device is to **have us judge** the merits of what may be a fairly complex "lifestyle" through the **responses** and **behaviour** of a cretin or two (or seven in the **case** of the commune) whom **he** claims to be **representative** of their kind. **Not surprisingly**, since his samples usually **turn out** to be abysmally stupid, they **discredit** the lifestyle being depicted, and the **reader** is **comfortably reassured** that nothing much, after **all**, is happening.

Consider his story "Out of the Closet and Into the Gay Bar" (published in **Saturday Night** as "Send No Psychiatrists to Leo"). The subject of the story is a W-year-old virgin.

Leo's life has consisted of **masturbation fantasies**, and these have not **centred** OR **women**. **Not exactly**. Leo is **rather** the type of **person** who can get sentimental over Johnny Weismuller in **Be old Tarzan flicks**. (No intellectual, that Johnny, but there's something **sympathetic** in his face, after all, on **unmistakeable** trace of a subdued **sorrow**, a touch of niceness, even as he prepares for a dive into the **crocodile-infested** waters.)

If you read **Marchand** fast and don't ask any **questions**, he may seem convincing. Leaving aside the maddening **imprecision** of his style (that "not exactly," and "rather the type of," and the busy bit of parenthetical blather at the end), where in a character like Leo is the "well-researched ... and **wicked** accuracy" we were promised? Here he

is. 24 years old in 1972 (when the story was first published), yet his most notable erotic stimulant is Johnny Weismuller! This in an age with pouting androgynous rock stars in glittery jump-suits unzipped to their pubics!

Many psychological false-notes later. Leo visits a "gay bar" on Toronto's Yonge Street, and meets another young man ("pleasant-faced ... with eyeglasses"), and after some "bland but not boring" conversation, Leo decides, "Yes, it's time." But since Leo lives with his parents and his new-found friend lives with his sister, the problem — we have a ho-ho-ho paragraph of sweaty desperation — is where:

They are too far into this thing, however, to give up easily. As it happens they drive out of the city a bit in Leo's car, ending up in a reasonably secluded suburban lane as one could hope for. It is, by any measure, a wondrous moment, the payoff of a lifetime when countless fantasies are to be redeemed, yes, any time now, by a few minutes of reality, and Leo hasn't a clue what to do. Not a clue. The unhappy truth of the matter is that he has never quite been able to imagine in any explicit terms what homosexuals actually do with each other when they make love.

If you've been busy studying real-estate values in New Guinea for the past 15 years, you may never have heard that line before. This chapter, remember, is being offered as the quintessential truth about gay lifestyles: there's nothing in the jacket copy or introduction to say that we're just making expensive fun about some individual nitwit. More irony: Leo's friend is all thumbs too. "Leo is brought to sexual climax by this

man doing what he, Leo, has always had to do by himself." For the next few days, Leo is "practically a nervous wreck." He can't eat. He can't concentrate on work. "Leo is not completely aware of it but he is in the process of what is called in gay liberation circles 'coming out'." (Marchand's wrong: coming out is the public declaration of homosexuality which Leo has no intention of doing.) And so it goes. Our last look at Leo is that of an unemployed dodo who sits around in guilty agony at the St. Charles bar, a view of gay people that is about as modern and unsteriotyped as *The Well of Loneliness* (circa 1928). Despite Marchand's last line of fake cheer ("One day, though, he'll find his true love. In the meantime send no psychiatrist to Leo, recent recruit to the growing ranks of gay liberationists"), a psychiatrist is exactly what this sadsack character needs, and a tough-minded editor is what Marchand needs:

The problem with this book is that while Marchand takes a rare and commendable interest in the lives of "outsiders" — the Canadian Unestablishment — and could write about them with integrity and sensitivity, he constantly short-circuits, as if caring about such people was not "really cool" and serves them up as Polish jokes instead. The sad thing is he's been allowed, maybe even encouraged, to become shallow and flippant, and psychologically untrustworthy, by editors who prefer to publish this kind of smart-ass rubbish rather than give a place to authentic voices of gay culture and other minorities. Marchand has his niche-but he has little right to much self-respect. □

Prime hlttister of the day was Liberal or Conservative. English- or French-speaking. No politician hopeful of another term could resist the demands of the majority.

Perversely, English Canadians never saw events this way. Always it was the French pressing for more, more, more. In the 19th century it was the *Canadiens* seeking the revenge of the cradle; then in two was it a dark plot by Quebec to seize power after the sons of English Canada had been slaughtered while French Canadians stayed at home in a sullen safety: and finally it was Ottawa's attempt to ram French down our throats. It is to weep.

The Leonard Joneses, the James Richardsons, the bigots and the fools have had their way at last. Quebec has finally been driven (and skilfully led) to take the first step to political separation. Those boos at Maple Leaf Gardens cost dearly.

And René Lévesque is the man who guided the turnabout. It was Lévesque's superb electoral campaign! down-playing separatism by stressing a referendum, focusing on the manifold sins of the corrupt Liberal government, that brought the PQ victory. Calmly, rationally, he led the voters of Quebec — and not just the French-speaking ones — toward the realization that it was better to risk separatism than to continue under the thumb of scare-making parachuted boodlers. A political triumph of the first magnitude, let there be no doubt of that. And no one who watched Lévesque's skill in the election should too easily assume that a referendum will pronounce for Canada.

Peter Desbarats' book was published just a few months ago and seems both dated and timely. It is dated because Desbarats, a good journalist, assumed too easily that the PQ would be highly unlikely to form a government: it is timely, of course, because *Rent gives us* a good deal of information on this extraordinary man.

And yet the book is not entirely satisfactory. Too often, the sources seem to be pasted together with a rather slapdash air. This leads to a jerky style, which one can tolerate in newspapers but which is annoying in a book. The author's organizational principles, in addition, are virtually non-existent, and chapter follows chapter with little apparent direction. A diligent reader may become frustrated as well by the sloppy editing.

Still the book is worth the trouble. Lévesque is so engaging, even in print, that Desbarats cannot possibly spoil his subject. And Lévesque's career is an extraordinary one. Born in the Gaspé in 1922, he grew up speaking both languages. When the war broke out in 1939 he was a student in Quebec City and by 1943, apparently unaffected by the nationalist currents sweeping through

René, vide, vici

René: A Canadian in Search of His Country, by Peter Desbarats, McClelland & Stewart, 223 pages. \$10 (ISBN 0-7710-2691-9).

By J.L. GRANATSTEIN

NATIONS GET the leaders and governments they deserve. And if this old saw is true, then Quebec is fortunate indeed in its new Prime Minister. René Lévesque is without question the most dynamic and forceful leader in Canada today, a politician of great skid, personal honesty and integrity, and a rational man. To have these characteristics all wrapped up in a single package is unusual. But how terrible that such a man should be the one to bring Confederation toward its end.

The victory of Lévesque's Patti Québécois on Nov. 15 is the product of a historical process. The straight line of development begins at the Conquest and runs through a long succession of political defeats and humiliations imposed by the majority of English-speaking Canadians on the minority French-speaking group. Riel, Manitoba Schools, the Boer War, the Autonomy Bills of 1905, conscription in two world wars, the air traffic controller débâcle of the summer and fall of 1976 — the list is endless and ultimately depressing to anyone who had hoped that Canadians were capable of learning from their past. Every struggle became a replay of the Conquest with the majority insisting on imposing its will on Quebec yet again, and it made no difference whether the

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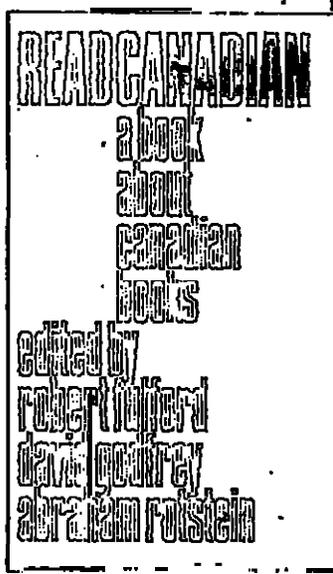
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the province at the time, he was seeking a post as a correspondent overseas — not for the Canadian press, but rather for the United States' Office of War Information. As such he spent time in London and on the continent, ragging along behind the Allied advance, reporting in French to Europe and North America.

After the war, he continued as a journalist, transferring to television shortly after Radio-Canada began operations in Quebec. His style is perfect for the media, in fact. His face, deeply lined, almost haggard, shows every emotion instantly and frankly. The cigarette always at hand is a prop. And the words — the words spew forth, compelling and urgent, persuasive, almost with a life of their own. The magnetism is there and when he was in the Lesage government, Lévesque seems effectively to have dominated it almost by the force of his personality and ideas. It was Lévesque who pushed to nationalize the power companies, who provided most of the reform thrust behind the quiet revolution of the early 1960s. And it was Lévesque who, once Daniel Johnson had led the Union Nationale to power, broke away from the Liberals to create an independentist party. For 10 years he was in the wilderness, building an uneasy coalition united less by ideology than his own personality and his credibility with

the public. And now he is in power. The ideas and the humanism will pour forth, the honesty and administrative skill will be apparent, and the Canadian nation will be lost.

Or will it? Lévesque in 1964 told the New York Times: "We could get along better without Canada than Canada could get along without us." Simply put, without Quebec Canada is a collection of imitation Americans trying

desperately to make Toronto and Winnipeg into Detroit. Lévesque was probably right then, and he is still right. If English Canadians can be mused by the salutary shock of Nov. 15 into examining their past and their present, then possibly, just possibly, the necessary compromises may be made. Deeds, not words. Ideas, not bigotry. Compromise, not the Conquest. We have a country to save. □

Once upon a time...

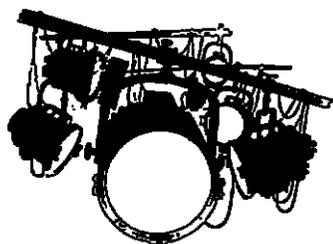
The Forked Road: Canada, 1939-1957, by Donald Creighton, The Canadian Centenary series, McClelland & Stewart, 319 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0-77 10-2360-x).

By MICHAEL S. CROSS

NEAR THE National Assembly in Quebec City stands the statue of F.-X. Garneau, father of Quebec history and conscience of his people. No historian is immortalized outside Queen's Park in Toronto, but if English Canadians were conscious enough of history to erect such a statue, it surely would be of Donald Creighton. For 40 years he has

enjoyed quasi-monumental status as English Canada's greatest and most-read historian, and as the narrator of its most important folk tales — those tales, cast as history, that codify English Canada's vision of itself.

By any objective standard, his new book can only tarnish the statue. It is flawed in almost every conceivable way, in research, choice of subject matter, analysis. Yet it will find an appreciative audience: It speaks to enough English Canadian prejudices — Francophobia, anti-Americanism, fear of government — to sound a resonance in many readers. Even when he is writing bad history, Donald Creighton weaves with



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consummate skill the folk tales of his people.

To appreciate the skill, it is necessary to overlook a good many deficiencies. There is, for example, the research or rather, the lack of it. There are, in the entire book, only three citations from manuscript sources, the usual basis of scholarly research. For the rest the study relies on published sources, memoirs, parliamentary debates, and secondary accounts (and he misses some of the most important of those). Given the shortage of specialized studies for the period and the bias of memoirs, they are shaky foundations for a book.

The results of such inadequate research are obvious. The interpretations are all too often uninformed. The narrative is limited to the familiar. And, of necessity, this is virtually unalloyed political history. That is disturbing for the series. In most of the 14 volumes of the Centenary series that have appeared to date, politics overawed social and economic developments. However, two recent books — Zaslav's on the North and Brown and Cook on the period 1896-1921 — redressed the balance and produced useful and rounded pictures of society.

Creighton has reversed this bappy tide. Once again politicians hold centre stage, once again history is past politics. He does make periodic, perfunctory bows in the direction of social and economic history, with some figures on population growth, some fuzzy generalizations about social trends, some comments on high culture. They give no adequate sense of social development and they barely interrupt the political narrative that is Creighton's real concern. Indeed, even the political narrative is sharply limited to the federal scene, with occasional references to elections in Ontario and Quebec. A good example of Creighton's balance is to be found in his discussion of events in 1944. The crucial Quebec election of that year, which saw Duplessis return to power, is passed over in 13 lines, of which five deal with that fascinating political experiment, the *Bloc Populaire*. Yet the debate over family allowances in the federal House gets 105 lines, most of them concentrating not on the legislation but on a silly slanging match between Mackenzie King and Tory H. A. Bruce. Creighton is never short of pages to demonstrate the essential rottenness of Mackenzie King.

Mackenzie King's evil propensities form the book's running theme (but isn't Mackenzie King the subject of every book these days?). Canada, we are told, faced a "forked road" after 1939, a choice of futures. King and his Liberal successors pushed the country down the wrong fork, into all of our present troubles. These cunning Liberals ruled by deceit and misled the people into

accepting a number of disastrous changes, including the destruction of Canadian federalism in an attempt to placate Quebec, the crippling of the British Empire, the sellout of the economy to the United States and the ceding of non-elected and irresponsible "expens:

These vicious Liberal tendencies are usually assumed, or demonstrated through rhetoric rather than through evidence or analysis. Indeed, one of the few pleasures in reading the book is admiring Creighton's mastery of bombast. Take, for example, his description of American General Douglas MacArthur: "General MacArthur, that preposterous mixture of Genghis Khan and Louis XIV, now dropped from the heights of manic exaltation to the abyss of manic depression." The sort of flip one-liners most academics might fire over a beer, Creighton makes the substance of his book. It is an effective mode of argument. When Creighton wishes to demolish a Liberal leader, he begins with an attack on his physical characteristics. The subject becomes repugnant or foolish and his policies can be repudiated without reasoned argument. Jack Pickersgill is a particular target, Pickersgill with his "high-pitch & grating voice. . . ." As Creighton portrays him, Pickersgill was a slim college professor before he came to Ottawa. "Time and a long succession of good dinners at public expense had notably increased his girth. . . ." Zap!

Clearly, Creighton does not have either the inclination or the information to create scholarly analyses (and the information he has is sometimes wrong, such as the date of Ralston's resignation in 1944, the number of seats the Liberals won in 1953, Conn Smythe's position in the Maple Leaf hierarchy, the influence of Keynesianism on federal policy). But then, Creighton is spinning his folktales, not writing history. The method of attack on individuals is itself folkloric. The Liberal politicians and mandarins, the American imperialists, and other enemies of the Canadian Truth are the "black hats," showing their evil designs by their very physical appearances; the Tory defenders of the Truth are the "white hats," such as George Drew, "a handsome and attractive man. . ."

The Truth itself is a little less clear-cut, for reality resists being shaped into folklore. The story is of an innocent country, part of a great and liberal empire, which is attempting to develop a healthy nationalism within that imperial context. But these hopes are thwarted, the fair maiden is delivered up — by wicked people such as Mackenzie King and the sinister "planners" — to a moustache-twirling southern landlord. At the end, though, in the election of



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1957. a white knight rides in from Prince Albert to dish the treacherous Grits. We are left to wonder whether the fair maiden can find her way back to the proper road, hand-in-hand with Dief. There are some problems with the way the tale unfolds, however. The Canadian situation in 1939. Creighton must admit, was pretty dismal, with a 10-year depression and all. That weakens the drama right off, since it isn't clear that the road Canada was on, before the Liberals misled it, was a toad to anything but misery. Nor does the loss of empire-commonwealth stir much emotion, since Creighton shows that imperial feeling was at a low ebb before 1939, and that the war tended only to produce misunderstandings. Even Churchill, he discovers, didn't understand what the modern Commonwealth was all about. But that is a common Canadian Tory discovery; since the 19th century, they have found the British deplorably ignorant about the real nature of the association, a nature sufficiently mystical that only Canadian Tories themselves can understand it. The structure of Canadian government, so much a part of the problem in this tale, also creates some dilemmas. Creighton is vehement about the need for a centralized federation, and reacts violently to any concessions to the provinces, such as the tax-sharing agreements of 1956. At the same time, he recognizes the need for greatly

expanded government services. Yet his villains are the planners, who will direct such services in his centralized state. It is a bit odd to want centralization and modern services, and yet to tail against big government and faceless planners.

This is indicative of inconsistencies that run throughout the tale. In his treatment of domestic affairs, his narration of the ravishment of innocent, well-behaved Canada, Creighton is clearly a conservative and a Conservative. Yet, in dealing with external relations, he is a radical. That is because his anti-Americanism knows no bounds. Not content to chronicle American mistreatment of Canada, Creighton pursues the American demon throughout the world, ranging far beyond Canada or immediate Canadian interests. In the process, he adopts a New Leftish interpretation of the origins of the Cold War, an interpretation that is conspiratorial enough to be appealing.

The tale has its problems, then, problems of evidence, interpretation, consistency, and so forth. Then, too, it has its strengths: its marvellous invective: its forceful writing; its buttressing of folk beliefs that are important to so many in English Canada; and its overall impression of somewhat faded Victorian grandeur. The school of political history that this book represents is nearly gone — a conservative school, a single-mindedly Wasp school, an

elitist school. It is probably good to have that school epitomized in a book by its leading figure, Donald Creighton. *The Forked Road* makes clear, as no criticism could, why history in this country must move on to new things, he studied in new ways. □

Fire, water, air, and earth

The Noronic is Burning! by John Craig. General Publishing, 117 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0-7736-1021-9).

Final Approach, by Spencer Dunmore, Peter Davis (Collins), 282 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 432-03503-6).

Northlight, Lovelight, by Jacques Folch-Ribas, Fitzhenry & Whiteside. 155 pages, \$7.95 cloth (ISBN 0-88902-400-61).

By BRYAN NEWSON

IN THE EARLY HOURS of Saturday, Sept. 17, 1949, the Great Lakes cruise ship *Noronic* caught fire while docked at the foot of Yonge Street in Toronto Harbour. Of the estimated 524 passengers aboard, 115 lost their lives while all 15 members of a skeleton crew managed to escape. A Court of Investigation into the disaster found both ship-owners and Captain of the vessel "in wrongful default."

From these basic facts, researched from newspaper and police files, the author has fashioned a lively account of the *Noronic* disaster, partially a factual record, and partially an imaginative re-creation of events, the book is most successful in its depiction of the particular horror of shipboard fire. A dramatic selection of before-and-after photographs complements the accounts of victims found burned in their bunks or huddled at exits and stairways, unable to find the gangplanks to shore. For those already uneasy about the adequacy of fire-safety measures in boats or buildings, the events told here hold little comfort. Itself steel-hulled, the *Noronic's* fittings and furnishings were nevertheless so flammable its 362-foot length was completely ablaze just minutes after faulty fire-extinguishers, inoperative fire hoses, and the absence of fireproof bulkheads (as required by law) failed to contain the linen-closet fire.

Less successful, because unnecessary, is the author's attempt to build suspense by means of artificial techniques — delaying climaxes; inverting the order of events — which attenuate the real drama of this senseless loss of

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life. There is morbid fascination enough in the account of 118 deaths, and sufficient mystery in the apparent complicity of ship-owners, captain, and crew toward the ever-present danger of fire.

Fascination of a different kind forms the basis of *Find Approach*, a highly readable adventure novel built around the excitement of flying. Written as the reminiscence of an ancient aviator making his "final approach" to death, the story covers four distinct periods in the narrator's life, from the dawn of aviation to the Second World War. The first period covers the early, heady days of flying, when crossing the English Channel was a momentous event; the second deals with the tactical use of aircraft during the First World War; the third with the development of passenger service between the wars; and the final period focuses on bombing raids during the Second World War. A variety of subplots and episodes involving royalty, an air hijacking, and various love affairs, flesh these separate sections out.

The book has all the elements of a good adventure story, and exploits most of them well. In spite of a brisk prose style and the author's marvellous ability to build individual moments of great suspense and excitement, *Final Approach* seems unsure of its overall light-plan, and takes wing more as a

series of vignettes than as a whole novel. Partially as a result of its episodic nature, characterization remains minimal and precludes the sort of involvement necessary to overcome occasional air-pockets in the plot (such as too many miraculous plane-crash survivals). The book's strengths are its superb depiction of the horrors of wartime flying, particularly the daylight bombing runs over the Continent; its extensive passages of sustained excitement; and the extent to which it reveals the author's wide-ranging knowledge and love of flying.

At a far remove from the world of burning ships and bombing planes is the imaginative landscape of *Northlight, Lovelight*, a beautiful, brief pastoral romance set on the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Many themes unite in the developing relationship between Pierre and Marie, orphans of nature and civilization respectively, whose summermeeting at a wilderness resort opens a new world for each. To Pierre's untutored world of instinct and feeling, Marie introduces (chiefly by teaching him to read) a social world of books, deviousness, and the possibilities of a more fully realized existence. From Marie, Pierre learns to articulate and refine his response to the world he inhabits; through him, she enters a relationship of love and trust unknown in the decadent intellectualism of her

foster home and her closed universe of books. By the end of their brief summer encounter, both characters exhibit a wholeness of outlook marking their growth to maturity.

It comes as no surprise to learn M. Folch-Ribas is also an architect, accustomed to manipulating the raw materials of nature; for all their length and sharpness of realization, the many passages of nature-writing in this book always serve functional ends. □

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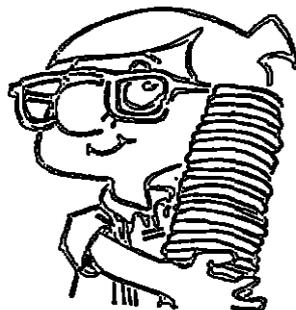
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alive and running with sap. David Trumble was born in rural Ontario in 1867. His father was a pedlar who took his 13 children to Gunter, a small backwoods community just north of Trenton, where David grew up. He went to school just one day:

*It was raining
I was running to get home
and I fell in the mud.
Dad said, that's it
You don't go no more;
if you can't keep on your feet
you can't go to school.*

He kept on his feet. Over the years Trumble was, by turns, hunter, lumberman, roustabout (and sometimes wildman) in a travelling midway, soldier (he was at Yimy Ridge), farmer, husband to four wives and father of 19 children. He lives alone now and still farms a bit near North Brook in Kaladar Township. "A giant," he says of himself:

*I never run across the man yet that could
ever throw me nor hit me in the face. I was
scienced, I was like that there fighter,
Muhammad Ali. I was so quick that I was
in and hit and gone and they didn't know
where I went. I was just like a butterfly.
For a big man — I weighed two hundred
and ten — for a big man I was just like a
steel trap. . . . I wasn't a man. I was iron.*

That kind of insouciant delight in himself and his world measures the whole book. In his descriptions of his prowess ("a real windsplitter"), of towns he's known ("That Picton was the wildest place Canada could afford. . . . Belleville was . . . pretty near all over alike"), even of his bewildered feelings about his first wife's leaving him ("I don't know. I don't know. She left me . . . I loved the woman, just something. . . the devil got into her. . . I don't know"), he shows the unself-consciousness that belongs to the true primitive.

Trumble was an Ontario pioneer. Character like his — strong, simple-natured, shrewd, with an instinct for survival that grows out of the bone marrow — is the kind that created the mythical, invincible Paul Bunyan. Anyone who knows rural Ontario today hears echoes of that character in the voices of the old people who remember living in cabins with "those wooden troughs for a roof," going "forty miles for groceries," and times when things just weren't "too nice." Trumble's voice, though, goes back farther than any of the others — so far back that it seems uncanny. His words, and his memory, are so clear that the reader becomes, at once, a part of that pioneer life: not a romantic version of it; a real, every-day, frying-the-snake-oil, eating-snapping-turtles part of it, in all its strong, sometimes awesome, sometimes ridiculous possibilities.

The book is actually the work of folklore collector Glen Ellis, who taped

and edited the old giant's words. Trumble can neither read nor write. Ellis has organized his words into a sort of counterpoint of prose and what John Colombo calls found poetry. They work well that way. The language is the slow, rhythmical old Ontario speech that has all but died out with the coming of rapid communication and it expresses more than a bygone manner and cadence. The book is rich with bits of lore that have become strictly collectors' items: "Plant when the earth is in blossom. . . . If you want a thing to come true, then you do it in the change of the moon. . . . Always give the earth back something to replace what you took."

The words are Trumble's but Ellis has sorely done a superb editing job. Along with old pictures and some fine current studies by photographer John Van Os, he has made of what must have been hours and hours of ramblings, a sharp portrait of a man and a century of Canadian life. □

To-witta-woe, a fivetaste of next year

The Wild Life I've Led, by Stuart Trueman, illustrated by the author, McClelland & Stewart, 160 pages, \$8.95 cloth (ISBN 0-77 10-8600-8).

The Wit & Wisdom of Bob Edwards, edited by Hugh Dempsey, illustrated by David Shaw, Hurtig, 124 pages, \$8.95 cloth (ISBN 0-88830-112-x) and \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0-88830-120-0).

The Golden Age of B.S., by Fred C. Dobbs, Gage, 184 pages, \$7.95 cloth (ISBN 0-7715-99846).

The Rise and Fall of the Peanut Party, by John Mitchell and Vintcent Trasov, AIR Publishing, 87 pages, paper unpriced (ISBN 0-88964-005-x).

This is the Law?, by Nigel Napier-Andrew, illustrated by Vicki Land, Doubleday, 95 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0-385 12339-x).

By I.M. OWEN

THE EDITOR suggested that reviewing these five books together might give an opportunity for a short essay on the nature of humour. Unfortunately they more readily suggest a long essay on the origins of yawning.

That's not quite fair to *The Wild Life I've Led*, except that it is billed on the jacket as a funny book. That isn't its main object; it's a pleasant little book of anecdotes about wild creatures in New Brunswick and Florida, sometimes funny and sometimes not. (If a story is

about raccoons. it can hardly fail to make anyone smile-except, presumably, those Toronto householders who want all the raccoons slaughtered to preserve the sanctity of their garbage.) Stuart Trueman has no particular expertise, either as writer or as zoologist; these are personal essays in the rather heavy-handed style of the journalism of yesteryear — or the Toronto columnists of this year and, I fear, next year.

Speaking of the journalism of yesteryear, its dreariest aspects form the main substance of *The Wit & Wisdom of Bob Edwards*. It follows up the success of last year's *The Best of Bob Edwards*, which contained much of the sharp political and social criticism from the *Calgary Eye Opener*, with a collection of the flabbily facetious pseudo-aphorisms that Edwards started putting into the *Eye Opener* in 1910, such as "Any man who doesn't want what he hasn't got has all he wants," or "A girl's kisses are like pickles in a bottle—the first are hard to get, but the rest come easy." Just barely tolerable as fillers, they are tedious in the extreme when grouped under subject headings. Some variety is given by interspersed "jokes" worthy of the *Globe and Mail's* *Your Morning Smile* at its worst, and "Society Notes," which are the only elements in this book that bear the individual Edwards stamp and are quite good when they are not based on his assumption that the mere mention of alcohol calls for a giggle. For instance: "Mrs. Alex P. Muggsy will not receive Friday. Mrs. Muggsy is insistent on this. She won't receive Friday under any consideration. If anybody comes around Friday they will get chucked out. Kindly therefore note that Mrs. Muggsy will not receive Friday. Better stay away Friday. Try Saturday." I like that. And David Shaw's drawings are worthy of a better cause. But when the publisher heads his blurb "Canada, here is your sense of humour!" an apology to the nation is called for, on pain of expulsion from the Committee for an Independent Canada.

Just as Bob Edwards depends on references to drinking for reliable instant merriment, so Michael Magee in his assumed persona of Fred-C. Dobbs depends on references to excretion. There evidently are people who enjoy his monologues, and for those who like that kind of thing *The Golden Age of B.S.* is the kind of thing they will like. "It's awful hard to know," says Dobbs in his folksy way. "where to begin with the people in the broadcasting game. There's all kinds a stories going around nowadays that kinda give you an idea of just where TV is. Course, it don't take a magician to figure out that it's in the grasp of the marketplace boys, I guess you could say the people in the bullshit business. . . . Broadcasting is really manipulation of the worst kind. There's

something awful cynical about it. the way everything is orchestrated and planned." Now read the back flap of the jacket: "Magee-Dobbs has appeared regularly on national radio and television programs and is heard every weekday on radio station CKEY in Toronto. The Ontario educational television network . . . televises 'Magee and Company' five days a week." Which gives a significance to the title of the book that Magee perhaps didn't intend.

Joke candidacies in municipal elections always seem to be boring and pointless. Books about them, it turns out, are even more so, and that is what *The Rise and Fall of the Peanut Party* is. In *This is the Law?* the producer of the CBC-TV program *This is the Law* has produced a non-book, simply listing some of the laws used or considered for use on that program, with no comment except in a pretentious introduction. Most of the laws seem quite reasonable to me, and the rest are uninteresting..

The whole experience put me in such a sour mood that I read *The Loved One* to cheer myself up. □

Oh my gawd, 'ark at 'im

Ben Wicks' *Canada*, by Ben Wicks, McClelland & Stewart, 124 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0-7710-8983-x).

By ALAN EDMONDS

BOW, EAST LONDON, ENGLAND
THE TROUBLE wiv that bleedin' idiot Ben Wicks is that 'c's what the nobs call a parvenu (and I knows I spelled it right cos I looked it up). what means "a person risen up from obscurity; an upstart." Being as how that's the case., and so as not to let the Cockneys dahn, I'm takin' it on meself to put things to rights for them Canucks about this here book Wicks has got out.

This Wicks, see, come from around hem-before we run him out, that is, for puttin' on the dog (he useta bugger up the language sumfink awful, like saying: "I went to Rosie's 'ouse the hother day and hit were 'orrible"). So he sold up and took 'is dash and dolly and goes off to Canada where the cnfty bastard did an about turn and set hisself up as a professional Cockney. Give up all his airs and graces, 'e did, and talked worse than his dad and mum or even his Aunt Lid, all because them Canadians think Cockneys is . . . well, quaint. Christ! — Wicks. *quaint?* If he's quaint, I'm a fairy, which I ain't, it being a bit dangerous to say so, specially on

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University of
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Saturday night if West Ham has just lost.

Anyway, *this Wicks gets a lot of these ginks over* in Toronto. Ontario, and a few other places to think that it'd be a good idea to let a bloke who talks funny (by Toronto standards, anyway; he don't sound nuffin special round here) to on telly and the wireless and whatnot. Oh, an 'e can draw a bit so he does these here cartoons which is okay if you like that sort of things, but not a patch on Giles. What's really funny, a course, is that he gets on the wireless because he talks Cockney-or like they thinks a Cockney talks over there anyway-but anyone over there what talks proper English, like on the BBC, don't get on at all because the Lord Mock a Ducks what run the CBC and the telly say they sound too English for Canadian stations. Barmy, ain't it.

Well, this Wicks has gone and done this here book called *Ben Wicks Canada* whattakesthemickeyoutofthe Canucks and the English both, and 'e's done it by saying that what Canada needs is a load of the British Upper Classes to go over there and run things. Now I ain't saying we can't spare a few of 'em. What I am saying is that if you was a Cockney like me and you knew this feller Wicks you'd be wondering like the rest of us round here whether he was kiddin' or not. Just because he went

over to Toronto where they don't know no better and sold himself as a professional Cockney don't mean that 'e ever got over his delusions of grandeur. Maybe 'e thinks 'e's one of them now — them Upper Classes he wants to import, I mean-and reckons as how if 'e can sell the idea then 'e can get himself a decent job like being president of somefing and land on easy Street.

Well, anyway, it ain't all that funny, is that book. And that's the trouble. Gawd knows what'd appen if them Canadians don't see the joke. From what me cousin Bill's girl Winnie says (she's the one what married a Canuck in the war and went off to live in a wigwam in Vancouver or someplace) there's enough Canadians what don't like the English already wifout takingtheriskof having 'em take this geezer Wicks serious and thinking 'e's serious when 'e says what Canada needs is a few of our nobbs to go over there and run things.

I wouldn't mind meself, I mean, they're just as bad at running this country as the Labour government, so it wouldn't be much loss. Except to old Monty Python, that is. I mean, who'd he have to take the piss out of if it weren't for our Upper Classes? Come to think of it, though, he could do worse than have a go at old Ben Wicks and make him look a proper Charley, too. □

Slipped disco and sharp tKlaa

Declining Gracefully, by John Sandman, Coach House Press, 109 pages, \$4.50 paper.

0 Master Caliban!, by Phillis Gottlieb, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 244 pages, \$10.50 cloth (ISBN 0-6-01 1621-8).

By JOHN OUGHTON

GOTLIEB AND Sandman have each produced a new novel where the moderate entertainment value is a result of blending established genres. Gottlieb's second science-fiction novel 0 *Master Caliban!* marries the themes of Man monkeying around blasphemously with Life (as in Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*) with the old story of a questing group of children helped by kind, talking animals. Sandman's heroine Sylvia is a hard-drinking young nurse who wanders about Toronto's Strip at night looking for action. Lest you jump to the conclusion that this is a new Canadian genre called Harlotquin, be assured that Sylvia never actually does it (under the covers of the book). When she wants to, available males either are gay or too pickled to play. When they want to, Sylvia either gets confessional phone calls or an urge to dump hot water on the gent's, er, urge. Sandman, author of *Earing Out* and *Ford's Ear Chevs*, has concocted more of a hors d'oeuvre than a main course this time. His ear for contemporary conversation and eye for desperate night scenes are still sharp, but *Declining* never reaches a climax of style or character.

When Sylvia is "finally having her fit" near the novella's end, angry at the men who can neither seduce her nor satisfy her, her hot-water therapy misses the patient. Sandman no doubt is aiming at an unphilosophical existentialism with his title, declining the privilege of authorial intervention as his characters sink into passivity. In appearance, the novel shows Coach House's recent design shift to "laying up the author," a slim volume embellished with drawings and typesetting by Sandman. It may be the first novel published about Toronto's disco scene, so try it before "Disco Duck" fades into memory.

When the first pages of 0 *Caliban!* introduce a four-armed humanoid, and a motherly chimp and lovably grumpy goat who both talk; the reader may wonder if he has picked up science fiction for the wrong age group. A motley group of children and adoles-



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cents crash-land on the inhospitable planet inhabited by the trio. **But things** rapidly become complicated with the introduction of **ergs**, the self-maintaining robots who have taken over, and their former master **Edvard Dahlgren**. **Dahlgren**, an almost demonically self-possessed geneticist, was sent to the planet to experiment. His clones and **drones** run amok and he becomes a prisoner. **Sven** of the four arms is his son, and the **ergs** create a mirror image of **Dahlgren** whom they plan to **pass off** as the real man. The interplay between **man** and mirror is echoed by their chess game, which runs through the book. This **structural** gambit is lost on dolts like the present writer who could **never** master checkers. But other games with the computer **and**, the technological tinkering of the Mozart of machines. **Shirvunian**, keep the plot moving along. **Gotlieb** skillfully integrates the quest theme and the robot and computer **elements** with **suspense** and a little sex. **The poet in Gotlieb adds touches like her invention of Klax, a log-like reptile who is both vegetable and scientist and equipped with low-intensity telepathy.**

What her novel most lacks is a **psychological sense of the future, on the part** of the characters, who with little change in **manner (except for the robots)** could easily **turn up in Lord of the Rings**. SF fans who like **large** doses of the incredible **may** still want a fix after **O Myster Caliban!** It should be fine reading for **adolescents and isenjoyable** light.. fiction for adults who like their androids served **up** with rooks, pawns, and **whimsey**. □

Robin's egging us on again

Language of Fire: Poems of Love and Struggle, by Robin Mathews. Steel Rail Publishing (Box 6813, Station A, Toronto). 119 pages. \$10.95 cloth (ISBN 0-88791-002-5) and \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0-88791-000-9).

By JAMES LORIMER

IN THE **BITCHY**, petty world of Canadian university politics, Robin Mathews is a special **figure**. He has friends and admirers, of course, but then so do most **professors**. What is **unusual** about him is the enormous following of enemies he **has acquired**. No other individual's **very name** arouses as much hatred and **contempt** in the common moms of the nation's universities.

The **reason** is quite **straightforward**. **Mathews and his colleague James Steele**

did more than anyone else in Canada to raise what turned out to be **the most** substantial political issue that **Canadian** universities have had to face in the post-war period. **The** statistics they produced about the wholesale **importation** of foreign academics, **mainly American**, and the questions they raised about the absence of anything **Canadian** in the **university curriculum**, created an issue that was **far more dangerous and difficult** for **many** academics in Canada than "student **power**" ever was.

And Mathews **style** in this political fight has not been that of a royal commission chairman. He responded to the many vicious attacks that **came** his way with vicious counterattacks. He was hounded by opponents, and in **turn** he hounded some of them.

A decade later, **what was** irresponsible extremism, an **insult** to scholarship, a **denial** of all the high principles of academia, **petty** nationalism, and all the rest **has** become common ground for **most** Canadians outside the academic world. It is well accepted by many Canadian professors, though the majority of **university** academics **are** steadfast in their promotion of liberal American ideas and content. It is no longer Mathews but **rather** deputy ministers of **education** who raise with the federal **Minister of Manpower and Immigration** the question of quotas and limits on the entry of foreign academics **into Canada**. It is not Mathews but provincial education **ministers** who **point out** that **university-collected** statistics on the citizenship and country of origin of their faculties **are** misleading, and who **demand greater attention** to the need to hire qualified Canadians.

The fascinating question that is raised by **Robin Mathews'** new book of poetry is whether he is going to he right again.

The view Mathews takes in many of these fine poems is **that** Canada is coming to the end of its "**pre-history**," of the period before this country **begins to exist** as a free and independent nation. The status of Canada as **an** American dependency is not argued by Mathews; it is assumed, and is the basis for his disgust at the facts of the Canadian sell-out and at those who **have organized** and administered this activity. So, for instance, Mathews reflects on Mackenzie King and **Lester Pearson** in their **Karsh-produced** images; and notes caustically that, **you** remember about King

his desire to live among ruins which he worked patiently to produce in his own country

Mathews expresses what he regards as a widely **felt desire** to replace the American definition of Canada and Canadians that is still being imposed on us, explicitly and implicitly, by **institutions** and by our own real-life **encounters** with individual Americans. He

offers two fine versions of this **latter** situation: the first in a pair of poems, "One can't help but admire the Liberal American **couple**," and a sequel: the second in a **wonderful** short story about building a **bridge** in **Northern** Canada. Along with this refusal to accept an American version of **our** reality comes **the desire to create our own definition of ourselves and our country**. For Mathews it is the independence, integrity, empathy, and passion of **private** personal **relationships where** we can experience the attitudes towards each other that he thinks can and will be expressed in the public **sphere** as well. "**Love is revolution**," is the line with which the book ends..

Is **Mathews** right, again, **about** what is happening to Canadians' understanding and **attitude** about themselves, the U.S., and the world? That is the question that **this** book raises, and what makes it an exciting work to read — certainly not the **kind of thing** you think of when someone says "Canadian poetry." Mathews **crystallizes a shift** that is **occurring** in Canadians' sense of themselves right now., and **explores** the power and possibilities of the change. And this is no observer's piece of **work**; Mathews sees **himself** — accurately I think-as **helping** as **gain** an independent sense of ourselves. The result is poetry for lots of people to read, not **poetry** only for poets. □

Stable hopper

E. P. Taylor: A Horseman & His Horses, by Muriel Lennox. Burns & MacEachern, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0-88768-069-0).

By **TERRENCE N. HILL**

I **would like to see** Ms. Lennox's living mom. I don't mean to be prying, but I **would** like to know where the author keeps this book. Does it grace her coffee table in the tradition of the lavishly illustrated, **not-really-meant-to-be-read** coffee-table books; or does it sit uptight in some bookshelf pretending to literature?

Unfortunately, I bet Ms. Lennox has no more idea than I do where this book belongs. Although it was four **years** in the making, no one **seems** to have given **this book much thought** beyond the basic, "Gee, we ought to do a book on **E. P. Taylor**." That basic thought is an excellent one. The man is a fascinating Canadian, and no person in the world has done as much in — and for —

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In Canada, he turned the racing industry around, taking the Ontario "leaky-roof circuit" right into the major leagues. At the same time, he was becoming, the leading breeder of thoroughbreds in the world. Canadian Champ, Nearctic, Victoria Park, Greek Answer, Victorian Prince, Northern Dancer, and Nijinsky are just a few of the great Taylor-made thoroughbreds.

All of this Lennox tells in this book and accompanies the story with photographs of the great man and his great horses. Physically, the book is well put together. It presents itself with the gloss and heft of a book that needs four legs to properly support it. Yet even as the author shows Taylor as a man who demands the best, right down to the details, she allows some really glaring errors to find their way into the book.

The alphabetical listing of stakes winners bred by Taylor accidentally leaves out all the names starting with M and N and half the Ls. The great American horse Swoon's Son is referred to as "Swoon's Song," while Jean-Louis Lévesque's champion filly Fan-

freluche is renamed "Franfreluche."

Each of these horses is referred to more than once by his newly invented name. Either Ms. Lennox does not know the names of these famous horses, or she didn't bother to proofread the book.

Neither of these possibilities seems quite forgivable in a coffee-table book. If, on the other hand, *E. P. Taylor* is intended as a definitive biography, its shortcomings are even more obvious. The writing is average; the research lacks depth; and the tone is entirely too laudatory. Nothing bad is ever said about E. P. Taylor. Perhaps there is nothing bad to say, but the fact that Muriel Lennox spends her summers training Mr. Taylor's saddle horses makes me wonder how hardshelocked.

The book is disappointing. But if you love horse racing (or know someone who does) you can buy this book knowing that it will be enjoyed. The true fan will overlook the flaws of the maiden writer in favour of another glimpse of her subject matter. And just to forestall any outcry from the women's movement, I use the term "maiden" in the horse-racing sense of a female or male who has yet to prove itself a winner. □

the browser

by Morris Wolfe

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from CLARKE IRWIN

The peripatetic reviewer is reborn after a certain amount of NECK STRAIN

I LOVE walking and generally subscribe to the view that people who love walking are decent sorts. (Hitler, I like to imagine, hated it.) When Max MacPherson's walking column began in the *Toronto Star* 10 years ago, I liked it so much that I clipped and saved it every week. I'd been away from Toronto for some years and had found nothing that quite compared with the pleasure of walking Toronto's streets and ravines and beaches; MacPherson's columns were a wonderful reminder of those pleasures. It turned out, alas, that the columns ran for only a short time — about a year. Then in 1968 Macmillan published *The Short Happy Walks of Max MacPherson* by Harry Bruce: By Harry Bruce? Who the hell was Harry Bruce? I'd never heard of him. All I knew was that Max MacPherson was one helluva writer. Anyway, I didn't, buy the book because I already had most of its contents in a file folder. The file folder now is lost and I was delighted to receive the newly published paperback edition of *The Short Happy Walks of Max MacPherson* (Totem Books, 167 pages, \$1.95). And even more delighted when I discovered how well it stood up

to re-reading. What I hadn't noticed originally was that a lot of the time Max isn't even walking. He's in a boat. Or he's at the Park Plaza with Mrs. Max. Or he's standing outside Oakwood Collegiate telling us how much he hated it. Or he's riding a bicycle. Or he's lusting after women who aren't Mrs. Max. It doesn't matter. Sitting, standing, riding, walking, lusting, whatever, Harry Bruce does a wonderful job of evoking Toronto. No one has done it better.

* 8 4

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES remain an unpopular and unattractive group in our society. They have none of the glamour we attribute to Mennonites and Hutterites, who at least have (what we consider) the good sense to keep mostly to themselves. That probably explains why the Jehovah's Witnesses is the only religious group ever to have its publications outlawed in Canada. It's interesting to watch Canadians wringing their hands over the Hollywood Ten while they remain unaware of how we treated Jehovah's Witnesses during the Second World War. (Or how we treated the leaders of the Canadian Communist

Party, eight of whom we threw in jail at the height of the Depression in 1931 for no other reason than that they were Communists.) It's because of our continuing ignorance of such things that books like M. James Denton's *Jehovah's Witnesses in Canada* (Macmillan, 388 pages, \$10) are especially welcome. Although it's tediously written, the book is a valuable addition to our knowledge of the history of religious and political persecution in Canada.

* * *

THE VERY title of *The Belgians in Manitoba* by Keith Wilson and James B. Wyndels (Peguis Publishers, 100 pages, 52.50 paper) suggests the kind of book people who write columns such as this can easily make fun of. But the truth is this is an excellent little paperback. It's well organized and written and it tells the absorbing story of the gradual assimilation of yet one more Canadian ethnic group. One of the results of that assimilation is that the Flemish language now is virtually unknown by young Flemish Belgians. Without a knowledge of their language, the authors argue, the younger generation has been "effectively cut off from their cultural inheritance." (Whether French-speaking Walloons have been similarly affected isn't clear.)

* * *

THANKS to last fall's four-part CBC television series *Flight: The Passionate Affair*, I've developed an interest in Canadian aviation. I was glad, therefore, to discover among the latest goodies *Books in Canada* has sent me a Jackdaw on the subject — *Wings of Progress* by David Collins (Clarke Irwin, \$4.50). I don't know how much use Jackdaws are in the classroom, but this one certainly is fun in the living room. There are some front pages including that of the London *Daily Graphic* for July 26, 1909: it has a full-page picture of Louis Blériot standing on top of the monoplane he'd just flown across the English Channel. And there's one of the *Globe and Mail* the morning after the *Hindenburg* burned in 1937. There's a "Manual of Instructions For Operation, Maintenance and Rigging Of The Gypsy Moth" and a nice five-part essay on the history of flight with particular emphasis on Canada. Good stuff.

* * *

I DIDN'T see either of Mark Orkin's earlier books, *Canajan, Eh?* and *French Canajan, Hé*. But based on my impression of his latest over-priced effort, *Murrican, Huh?* (Lester and Orpen, 128 pages, 58.95 cloth) I'm not sure I've missed anything. Entries include such things as "FARRENER: A non-Murrican," "NECK STRAIN: A

transportation term," and "SQUARED EEL: A fair shake." SNOW WONDER the statue of Liberty on the cover of the book is holding its nose. *Murrican, Huh?* is one more example of a sort of book that seems to take up more and more shelf space each year — the book for people who don't like books.

* * *

ANOTHER such book is Still More "It Happened in Canada" by Gordon Johnston (Scholastic-TAB, unpaginated, 80 cents). Johnston's book, which is modelled on Ripley's "Believe It or Not" at least has the advantage of being priced at a level in keeping with the worth of its contents. One thing I've often wondered about such books is how the editors decide which words to emphasize in their entries. (Or maybe they do it randomly). You get things like, "Because of CONSERVATION there are MORE beavers NOW than when Europeans first arrived here." Or "The Rt. Hon. JOHN G. DIEFENBAKER a lifelong advocate of law and order and free enterprise, ... early in life helped pay his way through University of Saskatchewan LAW course by pedalling a bike many miles from farm to farm as a BOOK SALESMAN." □

Letters to the Editor

ALL THE MUSE..

Sir:

In John Hofsess's review of Laurence's *Heart of a Stranger* (November), he lumps together novels by Canada's best (female) writers, each one very different from the others, and states that they are "ultimately unsatisfying" and that only males possess "important creative activity." If female/male was replaced in the above by Jew/Gentile or by non-white/white, these bigoted views would never have passed the editors. Atwood, Engel, Laurence, Munro, Thomas, and Wiseman are Canada's best writers — who incidentally are women.

Dr. Murray Burke
Department of Mathematics
University of British Columbia
Vancouver

... THAT'S FIT TO PRINT

Sir:

I am sure we all join John Hofsess ("The Laurentian sbiild stays up." November) in pi- & to those women writers who are so kindly filling the gap left by old male writers recharging and new male writers engaging in important creative activity. But aren't the women a funny lot? Imagine no, wanting to be treated as a collective unit! Since the women cannot be taken seriously as writers but only as a vaudeville turn between the acts, the least they could do is to take off all their clothes. Can that really be what John Hofsess means? Dear me — and in the special children's issue too!

A. Jean Elder
Vancouver

ROOT OF PRONATALISM

Sir:

I do not wish to defend my views on abortion as contained in my book, *Compulsory Parenthood*; however I would like the opportunity to extricate my thesis from the web of distortions Professor Ajzenstat has woven around it (October).

In taking aim against my "elaborate and depressingly shameless snow job," the reviewer states that, in my view, anyone who opposes abortion is in favour of pronatalist population policies. This is a gross misrepresentation of my position.

Professor Ajzenstat, an avowed opponent of freedom of choice in abortion, has completely ignored the distinction I drew between an individual's moral position on abortion and his or her views regarding the law on abortion, which, incidentally, governs us all. I did not, suggest that at, people opposed to abortion are advocates of population increase, although some may be. Many men and women opposed to abortion personally still campaign for laws that respect an individual's right to choose. The right to "be against abortion personally," is one which should be respected by the state, a view expressed in the book and ignored by the reviewer.

I do claim that the enactment of anti-abortion laws had little to do with morality, that these laws always came into effect as a coercively pronatalist response by secular and ecclesiastical powers, suffering from demographic anxiety or bent on courses of aggressive exploitation — military, economic or religious — of others. Such laws became part of the social fabric and remain in effect even when their enforcement has been shown to be detrimental to the emotional and physical health of women and the ecological health of the planet.

I fail to see the "embarrassing circumstance" involved in Malthus being opposed to abortion. In the first place I stated that Malthus was opposed to all forms of artificial birth control. In the second place I would never call Malthus an "antinatalist," let alone history's most famous one. Although he did alert the world to the dangers of population growth, he certainly was not aware of the pervasiveness and tenacity of coercive pronatalism in human society.

Of the conclusions I drew in the final chapter of the book, the reviewer states — a government might not find it, so easy to do an about face from pronatalism to anti-natalism as Waters suggests." Professor Ajzenstat should read the newspapers. The Indian state of Maharashtra has recently passed a bill making sterilization compulsory after two children — a coercively anti-natalist policy. Meanwhile access to legal abortion services throughout India remains relatively limited — a residue of coercive pronatalism stretching back many millennia.

Wendell W. Watters, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry
McMaster University
Hamilton

SEED OF ABSOLUTISM

Sir:

You really owe Wendell Watters and your readers a review by someone who is no, so obviously committed to oppose the issues presented in *Compulsory Parenthood* (October). Sam Ajzenstat's lack of respect for people of differing opinions from his own is shocking. He denies my intellectual integrity to the author. And the accompanying crude caricature tells us exactly what he thinks of everyman and everywoman — anyone troubled with an unwanted pregnancy is nothing but a sucker-sucking sailor and his whore, with a gun.

Some day absolutists like Sam Ajzenstat have to deal with a crucial flaw in their position. By definition, absolute moral principles cannot be arrived at, democratically or over time — otherwise they would be subject to review by other or subsequent groups. Notwithstanding the best of intentions, they are thus an imposition of control by one group over others. Is that a moral process

by which to arrive at a moral truth? To my mind, this is the pivotal issue in the debate on reproductive morality, since not only most men but all women were excluded from the original process.

By process and by content, the absolutist's position did and still does deny the individual's right of choice. By resting their argument on the axis of absolutes versus relativity, they seek to prevent individuals and groups from ever changing that process and, therefore, from changing the content.

Far from "respect for life," as we can see, the absolutist position breeds contempt for people. And wouldn't it be more logical to expect a content of universal principles to emerge over time from a universal process?

Maureen J. Orton
Hamilton, Ont.

RULE AND CHATELAINE

Sir:

I find the profile of Jane Rule by John Hofess in the October issue quite inaccurate. Jane Rule's books have all been reviewed by *Chatelaine*, except her first one — which we now received as a review copy. We have also bought (and would welcome more) short stories from this very talented author.

Hofess seems to have chosen a theme that Jane Rule has been victimized by the Canadian literary establishment and then shaped his facts to try to substantiate that theme. I, for one, when he offered to write a profile of Jane Rule for *Chatelaine* last summer, would have been much more inclined to say "yes" to him, if he would write about the subject and less about his own prejudices.

(Ms.) Doris Anderson
Editor
Chatelaine
Toronto

Mr. Hofess replies: *In a letter dated Aug. 3, 1976, Chatelaine editor Doris Anderson wrote to me: "It's true that only one of Jane Rule's excellent books has been reviewed in Chatelaine but we have never received her books without asking the publisher — which is generally long after other reviews have been published. I can conceivably see us doing a profile on Jane Rule if we felt the public were sufficiently aware of her writing to merit a full length profile."*

Jane Rule herself said the article was completely accurate. When I informed her in January that Weekend magazine had turned down a story suggestion for a profile and that I was approaching other magazines, Jane Rule wrote, Feb. 6, 1976: "I wonder if you'll have any better luck with Chatelaine. ... They also can say they have no prejudice against my writing, having published my stories (heterosexual) and even a short, positive notice to Lesbian Images."

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Upon examining Rule's complete files of past reviews there was however a previous mention of one of her novels, This Is Not For You (November, 1970). The reviewer said, "the reader is left with a feeling that the author should put her obvious talents to a less-futile subject."

Nor, wishing however to reside in prejudice, nor have good editors like Doris Anderson misunderstand me, I have written a second article to be published in the January issue of "Come", magazine, examining in depth the editorial attitudes to Jane Rule and her work by major Canadian magazines over the past 12 years. It is there made clear that only two magazines — Chatelaine and The Canadian, which has a profile on Rule by Paul Grescoe scheduled before Christmas — have chosen to recognize Jane Rule's existence, or show any sign of doing so in the near future.

CanWit No. 19

THE STORY goes that on a dull news day back in the 1920s the copy editors of the *London Times* organized a competition to see which of them could invent the most sensational headline. The winner was: ARCHDUKE FERDINAND STILL ALIVE, FIRST WORLD WAR FOUGHT BY MISTAKE. We'll pay \$25 for the most sensational headline with a Canadian theme. Address: CanWit No. 19, Books in Canada, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4. The deadline is Jan. 31.

RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 17

HELLO. This is your CanWit judge speaking in the first-person plural. We have two winners of our contest seeking idiosyncratic messages that well-known Canadians might record on their telephone-answering devices. Each will receive \$25. One selection is from Donald C. Mason of Mississauga, Ont. His entry will appear after this colon:

Keith Spicer:

Good jour. I suis out pendant some instants, but je truly recevrai with plaisir your communication. At le sound du tone, parlez your pièce. I serai happy écouter to vous in le one ou th'autre, or toutes the deux. Canadian langues national. Et I répondrai as tôt as possible.

Charles Templeton:

I've been many things — evangelist, cartoonist, interviewer, commentator, editor, producer, moderator, politician, inventor, author, et cetera. Today, I'm an absentee. I pmy your indulgence. If you have an urgent message for me, please say I, when the tone ends. I'll be checking every forty-three minutes and fifteen seconds.

Johnny Wayne:

God knows, she warned me! 'Johnny, don', go!' she pleaded. But I went anyway. So, I'm gone. Don't worry, I'll be back! And, if you leave a number, I'll give you a call — on my dime, already!

Fred Davis:

Hello, them. Fred Davis, hem, inviting you to sham your thoughts with us through the scientific miracle of magnetic tape! I'm really awfully sorry, but we had to go out. We'll be back, though, after this message from ... YOU!

John Turner:

Just popping out to my law office. A little routine business. You can reach me there, or leave a message after the beep. If I don't, get back to you. I means the machinery got all screwed up. Just blame Trudeau, and try again. Heh, beh, heh.

Irving Layton:

Alexander Graham's bell has ceased to toll, and, here, my pickled voice sounds, begging you blow gently through my wire, excite my recording head, and so engrave your sweet message on my heart.

The other selection is from Bruce Bailey of Montreal:

Lloyd Robertson:

Good day, A, the top of the news today, Lloyd Robertson is out and this is a tape of his voice. And now — on the lighter side — Lloyd will be back around 6 and you can leave a message in the pause between the weather and sports — coming up next.

Marshall McLuhan:

Hello. Every medium is a message. If the message is a happy one, the medium is happy. Always strike a happy medium. The, was a joke. A joke is a medium. This is a tape — yet another medium. Use it, to leave 'a medium-sized message for me. Marshall McLuhan.

Northrop Frye:

Hello. This is Northrop Frye on we. Northrop himself is indisposed. He's been through Hell today; he's tos, his Innocence. Heaven knows, it was quite an Experience. You may leave a message at the sound of the archetypal scream.

Stompin' Tom Connors:

Hi, there! (Stomp! Stomp!) I'm Stompin' Tom Connors and I just wanna say

That this here's a tape fer when I'm away. A, soon as I finish this hard-drivin' song, Just leave me yer message and ya can't go wrong!

(Stomp! Stomp!)

Pierre Berton:

Hello. This is Pierre Berton on tape. You have a message. Is it a front-page story? Did it happen to you? Is this a happy message? Is it recent? Does the message have something to do with railroads? Whatever it is, leave it before the buzzer sounds!

Honourable mentions;

Bobby Orr:

Hi. This is Bobby Orr, the man with the Bic stick. A, the sound of the puck hitting my slapshot, call your moves. I'll check the instant replay tape later.

— Pent O'Neil, Montreal

Robert Service:

Toó bad, I fear, there is no one here in the Robert Service house; From cellar to dome, my Yukon home Is as quiet as a mouse.

I may be down i' Dawson mm.

Or afield with sled and pack: When you hear the tone, leave your "me and phone,

And I'll call when I get back.

— Philip Walsh, Ottawa

John Robert Colombo:

This is John Robert Colombo on tape. I am unable to appear in person today. Please don't leave any messages. Just look 'em up in Colombo.

Ernest Buckler:

By some strange phenomenon you have reached Ernest Buckler on tape. Since it is difficult for me to speak into this strange contraption, please try again around seven tonight. By, ha, time I may have erased the tape.

— Michael O. Nowlan, Oromocto, N.B.

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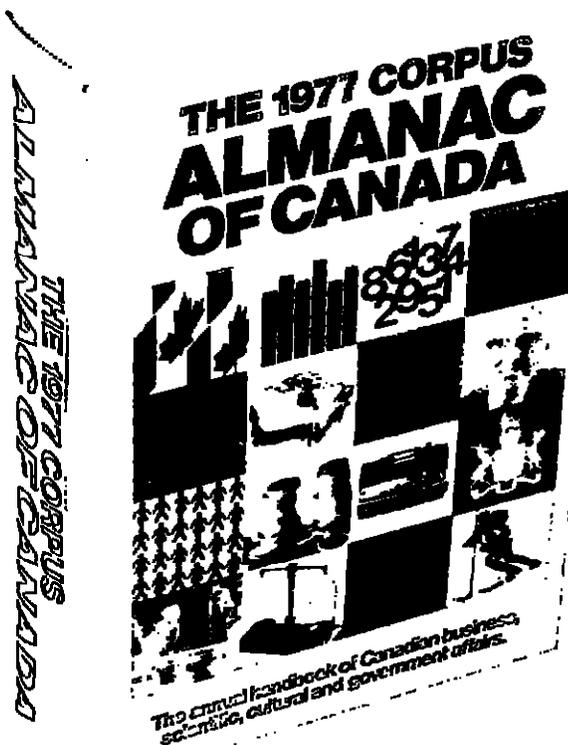
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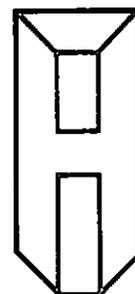
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