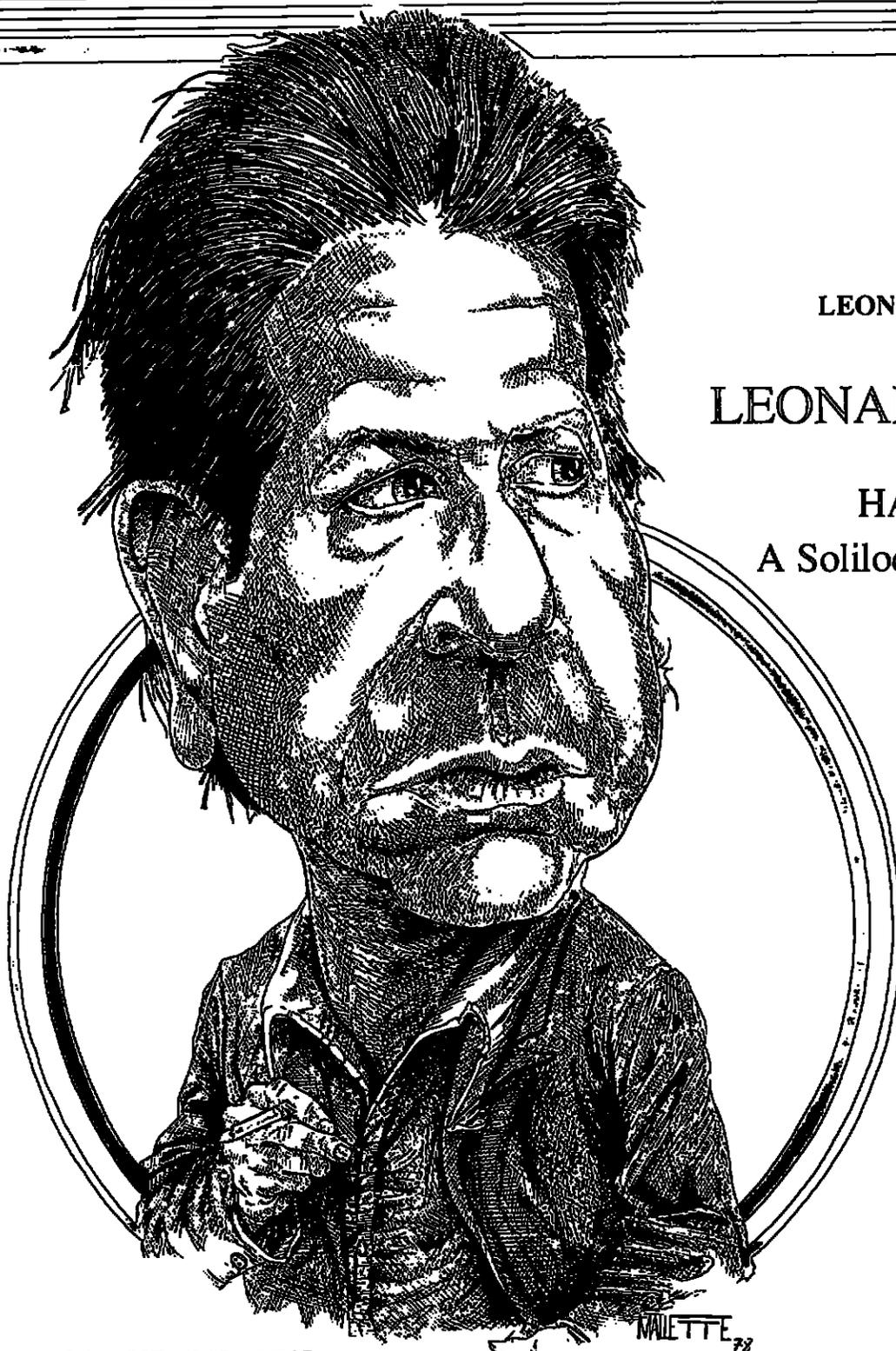


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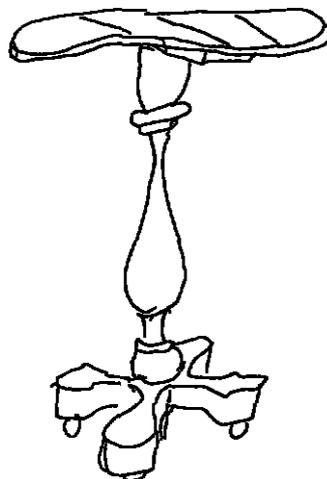
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# BETTER DEAD THAN READ?

All ban-thebookers must be Biblewaving fanatics or sexually repressed fascists, right? Wrong, says this chagrined liberal who visited Ontario's Huron County and found reasonable arguments for certain forms of censorship

by Paul Stuewe

THERE'S A FAMILIAR bogey astir in the land. Cry "Censorship!" in a crowded theatre these days and you'll be trampled to death by liberals manning the battle stations of editorial opinion and engaged reportage. What's all the fuss about? Mainly it's about a few groups of concerned parents in mostly rural areas of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Ontario who have begun to take an active interest in what their children are being encouraged to read in school. Furthermore, they have had the temerity to suggest that certain books are unsuitable for impressionable young minds.

The most recent censorship crisis has occurred in Huron County, Ont., an agricultural area about 120 miles west of Toronto. William French of the *Globe and Mail* has diagnosed a "strange mood" infecting the Huron County population with a desire to keep such books as *The Diviners*, *Catcher in the Rye*, and *Of Mice and Men* out of the hands of local high-school students. Curious about the psychology of any group foolhardy enough to go up against both the teaching and the intellectual establishments, I paid a visit to Huron County and found that the realities are rather different from the picture presented by the national media.

After reading press coverage of the controversy, I had expected to be confronted by crazed bands of Bible-waving fanatics burning books in the town square and extracting oaths of moral purity from local high-school teachers. Instead I found that the pro-censorship forces are led by two capable spokesmen whose arguments have a high degree of logical and moral force and are firmly grounded in community traditions at least as old as the notion of Canada itself.

One of these spokesmen is Elmer Umbach, a pharmacist who operates his own drugstore on the main street of Lucknow, a town on the northern edge of Huron County. Umbach represents the more intransigent wing of the fundamentalist, evangelical Christian opposition to the books in question, and his first words to me are: "I want you to insist that what I'm saying is a declaration of truth, and I am not interested in discussing or dialoguing with you." A finger stabs at me in emphasis. "It's available to anyone else from the same place I got it—the Bible. It's the only source of successful moral living, and the only system that has ever proved to work for everyone's good."

This unpromising beginning has taken place in front of several customers and staff at Umbach's drugstore. But later over coffee in the secluded back room of a neighbouring restaurant he unbends a bit and expands on his involvement with the pro-censorship movement. Umbach is not married, and thus has no children in the local school system; but he is active in community religious groups, and when some of his fellow churchmen became upset about the kinds of books being taught to Huron County students, he was asked to be their spokesman.

For Umbach and his associates, the salient fact of the controversy is that children are involved, children for whom their parents are morally responsible until they reach adulthood and children who are in danger of corruption from those who are supposed to be setting them a sound moral example: "Teachers now believe that students won't be well-rounded unless they study books such as *The Diviners* and *Catcher in the Rye*, but we don't agree. We believe that a child is not mature until he is physically mature, at about the age of 21. Until then he is not able to handle things like sex, and should not be exposed to them." He stresses that it's the protection of children that requires such strong action: "As far as adults are concerned, they can go ahead and destroy themselves any way they want to."

As a pharmacist, Umbach sees some of the nastier consequences of a decade of sexual revolution. The number and severity of cases of venereal disease is increasing rapidly in his hometown. Where a liberal would argue that this calls for more sexual education, he draws just the opposite conclusion: "Young people get venereal disease because they practice free love the way Margaret Laurence and such writers advocate. But when they get it they don't go to



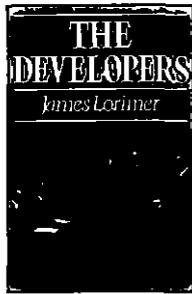
Elmer Umbach

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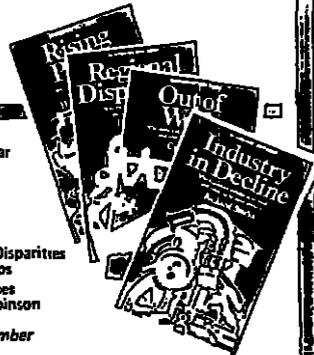
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her for help -they come to me, which is what they should have done in the first place."

This raises, albeit obliquely, one of the thornier issues in the controversy over book censorship: Does the reading of books actually influence behaviour and what are the consequences of the possible answers? A common liberal response is some variation on, "There is no evidence that anyone ever did anything simply because they read about it in a book." This (a) is untrue, since there is some social-scientific evidence to the contrary, although it is by no means unequivocal, and (b) tends to diminish radically the

Muck of the opposition to *The Diviners* and similar books is aroused because students are either required or encouraged to read them in school.

significance of reading. If books don't influence behaviour, then there would be little point in preferring one book over another for classroom use and school boards could save money by using a book already in most student's homes — and in the case of Huron County, the Bible would certainly qualify.

The problem here is the double-edged nature of the liberal response. By denying that books encourage certain specific activities (sexual ones, usually), it lays itself open to the more serious charge that books are, at most, entertaining diversions. If the tactical reasons for this are understandable — no one in their right mind would want to have to tell a group of Huron County parents their children were reading a book containing sexual incidents, that these were presented in a positive way, and that their children were likely to take them to heart — the thorough-going spinelessness of the position is still unacceptable. Does anyone reading this doubt that there are connections between reading and our social behaviour? We may not know exactly what the connections are, and we certainly don't want to say that reading about something necessarily entails doing it; but within these common-sense limitations, I suspect that we can all bring to mind examples ranging from direct emulation (I know that reading Norman Mailer's "The Time of Ha Time" led to my first important sexual experience) to more diffuse effects (I'm sure that reading Roust as a teenager made me into something of an aesthete, although there's no way of proving it). To argue the contrary is to reduce reading to the level of twiddling thumbs and scratching itches, and if you've read this far I doubt that you're that sort of person.

And if it may be objected that proponents of book censorship don't argue at such a sophisticated intellectual level, let me introduce you to a Huron County man who proved quite able to do so when I talked to him. Lloyd Barth, a retired schoolteacher, moved six years ago into the small community of Blyth, where he does a bit of gentlemanly farming and keeps an eye on the parsing scene. Barth is an intelligent and articulate spokesman for the local pro-censorship forces and his story sheds a great deal of light on the issues and circumstances involved.

Barth and his family, which includes two children who attend a local high school, moved to Blyth for certain specific reasons: "The people we met here impressed us as good people and good Christians, as being industrious, friendly, and of high moral standards." He experienced the kindness and consideration of his neighbours when his home burned to the ground during the busy growing season a year after he arrived. Local farmers dropped what they were doing to help the Barths save what they could and begin to rebuild.

In a community imbued with such mutual concern and shared values, the position of school teacher is seen rather differently than it is in more fragmented urban societies. As Barth puts it: "We've always thought of teachers as dedicated, a spiritual word meaning that they offer themselves up for the good of the children. For us, teachers came right after God, ministers, and parents, and were always pure in thought and action: and teaching was a profession,

which means to speak out the good that is in you."

Thus **Barth** is **perturbed** by some recent developments in the practice of teaching. The notion that teachers might strike, for example, is repugnant to him; it suggests that what was once a noble profession now has become merely a job. He sees his children coming home from school with an apparently endless series of fact-gathering projects and worries that they aren't learning anything about principles and morals. And when his children were required to read books he considered tilled with blasphemy and obscenity, this naturally quiet and contemplative man felt compelled to become a social activist.

Two points must be emphasized here. First, much of the opposition to *The Diviners* and similar books is amused because students are either required or encouraged to read them in school. Barth and fellow members of a group called "Concerned Citizens" know that there are many people who enjoy this kind of literature and while they are not happy about that fact, they have no plans to muzzle Margaret Laurence, boycott McClelland & Stewart, or even remove the 18 copies of the book in the Huron County library system. They just don't want it being forcibly injected into their homes, and that's quite different from advocating the sort of prior censorship exercised in totalitarian societies. Second, they are even more outraged by blasphemy than they are by obscenity — not least because many of them are farmers whose awareness of the sexual facts of life is rather more dit than that of most town-dwellers. Their concern with obscenity is largely a matter of context, and emerges only when what they would define as "immoral" sex (infidelity, prostitution, perversion) is being described. But Barth argues that "blasphemy is never in context." So the group is more concerned about God's name being taken in vain in such books as Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* than it is by the overt sexual content of *The Diviners*. Both these points should be kept in mind the next time you read something about the "sexually repressed fascist" many liberals identify as the typical proponent of censorship.

The strength of groups such as Concerned Citizens is grounded in a shared perception of a threat to the values of their community, and even to the sanctity of their very homes. There are no large funds, no outside agitators, no Canada Council grants inflating a minority

# TWO SUPERB NOVELS

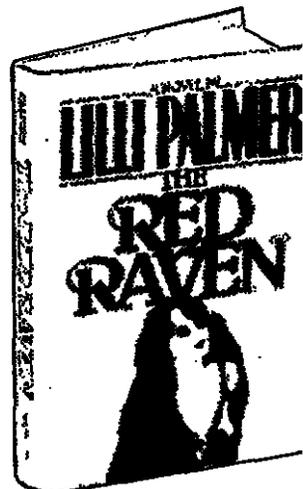
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gripe into a public issue. In his canvassing of area parents, Berth finds that he need only show them the books in question to arouse their energetic wrath. Where outsiders have been involved, as when the Writer's Union sent a delegation to Huron County in June to defend the books under attack, they have succeeded only in swelling the ranks of the local opposition. (Concerned Citizens was formed in July as a direct result of what was interpreted as an invasion by alien elements with no stake in the community and an obvious vested interest in promoting books such as *The Diviners*.) Let me repeat, if I haven't made it clear already, that people such as Lloyd Barth are not dummies, or hicks, or pathological mental

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**There are far more serious threats to liberty than those discerned by liberal commentators looking for red-necks in the woodpile.**

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cases. They believe that everything that is important to them is under attack and are fighting back with all the power they can muster. And as long as their opponents continue to treat them with condescension, their numbers and influence will continue to increase and multiply.

Concerned Citizens achieved its initial success in late August when the Huron County Board of Education voted to remove *The Diviners* from the list of books approved for study in its five high schools. (It seems that the trustees are more upset by "obscenity" than blasphemy). Before this decision, Lloyd Barth had canvassed all 16 trustees, and had again found that, in most cases, he had only to show them certain passages from the books under fire to win support for his arguments. By that time Concerned Citizens had shaken down to a hard core of active members, following what Berth describes as "Stalin's principle of decreasing the numbers and increasing the power," and was also able to bring pressure to bear on some of the trustees. It was a classic exercise in community organization tactics: define the issue; recruit those willing to commit themselves to it; and use every avenue of public and private influence available.

The word "community" keeps cropping up because it is essential to a proper understanding of what is going on in Huron County. There it connotes an integration of social and family life that just doesn't exist in big cities; urban residents accept a much higher degree of disjunction between their public and private selves. Many Home County people have been aroused to the point where they intend to exercise control over what happens in their community in the same fashion that urban social activists proposed in the 1960s and early 1970s, and anyone planning on opposing them will have to operate in the same context and with the same methods as groups such as Concerned Citizens.

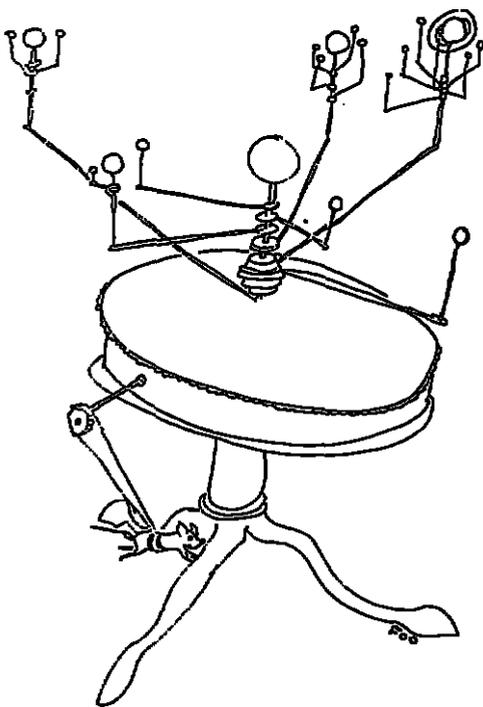
The moral issues involved here are not simple ones. If I ever have children, and they attend a school where they are required to read a book that is repugnant to my most deeply held beliefs, I hope, that I will have the fortitude to not interfere with their experience of a world that I know to be composed of good, evil, and indifference. But if it were a book that glorified war, or advocated the right of the strong to exploit the weak, I am also sure that I would, at the very least, be tempted to have it proscribed. Those without convictions of any kind may cast the first stones.

But what about the significance of events in Huron County for the Canadian community as a whole? My view is that they have been blown out of meaningful proportion, and that there are far more serious threats to liberty than those discerned by liberal commentators looking for red-necks in the woodpile. Viewed objectively, the people who live in Huron County are for the most part on the receiving end of social forces over which they have no effective control. If they do succeed in removing certain books from their high schools, these books will still be available commercially and in public libraries; and if they should succeed in removing them from the community entirely — a position on

which groups such as Concerned Citizens are unlikely to reach a consensus, from my observations — this would not affect the existence of the books, and would have only the most minimal impact upon the processes of their production and distribution. If a large number of such communities acted in concert, then the alarm might well have to be raised. But that isn't happening and isn't likely to happen, given the localized nature of the conflicts involved and the absence of anything resembling a national ban-the-books movement. No, as things stand the pm-censorship forces in Huron County have about as much chance of affecting Canadian literature as they do of converting the rest of us to their particular religious beliefs.

The real threat to freedom of expression in Canada will come, as such threats have always come, from those who wield centralized power without fear of check or control. The 1970 War Measures Act was the most effective censorship ever implemented in Canada; periodicals were seized, the press was muzzled, and it became impossible to exercise what we had come to think of as our natural political rights. The government has big powers — and it still has them: at the moment the editor and publisher of the *Toronto Sun* are being prosecuted for printing secret RCMP documents; and amendments are being proposed to the Criminal Code that would broaden the legal definition of obscenity to the point where almost any serious work of literature could be judged obscene. The new definition would make obscene anything of which "the dominant characteristic of the matter or thing is the undue exploitation of sex, violence, crime, horror, cruelty or the undue degradation of the human person." If you consider the potential vagaries of interpreting "dominant" and "undue," not to mention "sex, violence, crime..." and so forth, I suspect you'll agree that this is one bogey that does call for protest on the widest possible scale.

Thus while the media have been diverting us with tales of attempted censorship in the boondocks, the people and institutions with real power have gone about their traditional tasks of making laws and regulations conforming to the requirements of power, secure in the knowledge that what little opposition there is is laughably ineffective. If some of our national political and cultural leaders possessed the sense of moral conviction exemplified by Lloyd Barth and Elmer Umbach, they'd be righteously upset about that. They'd probably even be doing something about it. (I would like to thank Deanna Groetzinger for her help in the preparation of this article.) □



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After 30 years of exile, silence, and coping, Elizabeth Smart has produced a second novel recording the

## STATIONS OF THE WOMB

by Eleanor Wachtel



The *Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals*, by Elizabeth Smart. Clarke Irwin, 128 pages, \$11.25 cloth (ISBN 0 224 01566 5).

ABOUT 15 YEARS ago, one of the CBC's bright young men arranged to meet Elizabeth Smart while he was passing through England. "I don't know why or who you are," he told her, "but they said I should interview you." As they were leaving the studio after a rather perfunctory session, he comforted her with the observation: "Miss Smut, you are not the first woman to have had four children."

The line, but not its context, is quoted near the end of *The Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals*, her new novel. It follows, after more than three decades of silence, the publication of her rhapsodic classic of lyric prose, *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*. Yes, other women have had numbers of children, but few have sensed so acutely — or expressed so baldly — the toll that creation can take in the creative writer's life: "The womb's an unwieldy baggage. Who can stagger uphill with such a weight?"

The images are severe. Conscripted, in bondage, cornered, trapped, alone. Elizabeth knows the condition, that it is all an inexorable "consequence" of her own desires. With a disjunction that defies all logic, children are the result of passion. And it is passion of the most exalted, lush, extravagant kind that informed her first novel, *By Grand Central Station*, an allusive rendering of her initial involvement with the poet George Barker, the father of her children. She met Barker, already married, in California where she had fled the velvet embrace of her Establishment Ottawa family. 8 Books in Canada, October, 1978

Father was a lawyer; her mother entertained, and so the house was frequently filled with foreign diplomats and their cohorts from External Affairs, where all the brilliant young men went. They didn't see MPs because they were so dull and dentists were altogether beneath them. Just the rising intelligentsia: Marius Barbeau. Prank Scott. Mike Pearson.

Elizabeth "came out" at 19 with weights in her skirts and feathers in her hair. "You just curtsied to the Bessboroughs and met interesting young men who knew about Proust." After studying music in England for her year abroad, she returned to Ottawa and secured a job at the Ottawa *Journal* writing society notes and editorials. Piano was abandoned deliberately — "I knew you couldn't do two things. I didn't just want a pleasant life" — and she'd opted for writing from the age of 10 when she began her first diary. It was simply a question of whether she'd have to earn a living.

In 1938 Elizabeth planned to go to Paris, but didn't because of the imminence of war. Meanwhile, she'd sent some poems to Lawrence Durrell who was editing a literary magazine at the time, and he responded with interest. "What is Canada like? Mazo de la Roche? What do you read?" She wrote back that she thought George Barker was the greatest writer. Durrell suggested they meet, since Barker was selling some of his manuscripts.

*By Grand Central Station* alludes to their triangle and her movements from California through Canada, a return to Ottawa and eventually to New York. The writing, with its echoic biblical and

mythological images. is suffused with emotions so intense it becomes a compelling chart.

It was finished during her pregnancy, in the village of Pender Harbour, B.C., half a continent away from the scandalized gaze of Ottawa. She had picked the spot by sticking a pin in a map and gone there to write and perhaps to die. "You always think you'll die when you give birth — it's something atavistic — I wrote a will before each labour." She handwrote a complete copy of the novel for Maxi (Maximiliana von Urpani Southwell) to whom it is dedicated; it was in her house that Elizabeth finished it.

In the early years of the war, Elizabeth worked as a filing clerk in the British Army Office in Washington, D.C., and then in the Information Office at the British Embassy. She exhausted her family's connections to obtain a transfer to the London bureau, but was sacked with one month's pay when it was discovered she was pregnant again. Yet she stayed on in England, for 35 years a Canadian in exile.

Twenty of those years were spent as a copy writer for ad agencies and as a sub-editor for Queen (subtitled "The World's Most Intelligent Glossy Magazine"), for which Elizabeth wrote unsigned fashion blurbs. It was only a livelihood for the support of her school-age children, but it insidiously took over: "You can put your all into describing a cashmere twin set." Is it singular Irony that a went issue of Queen used a pun on the title *By Grand Central Station* to promote a fashion line?

During the war, Barker had taken the manuscript of *By Grand Central Station to Poetry* (London), who published it in 1945. More than two decades later, Panther Books brought out a paperback edition in England and in 1975 Popular Library published the first American edition. This led to a revived interest in Smart (who previously had only a rather underground cult following), and talk of film and theatre versions. Elizabeth meanwhile had removed herself to a remote cottage in Suffolk where she began to work again, garden, and entertain her grandchildren.

*The Assumption of the Rogues and Rascals* is the fruit of this 30-year hiatus. Understandably, it is an elliptical novel, a gathering of reflections, stories, bits of memoir, journal entries, and so on that in a way still conforms to something of the second-book syndrome: What happened to me since. ... Erica Jong's *How To Save Your Own Life* recounts the effects of *Fear of Flying*, just as Kate Millett meticulously reports in *Flying on her life since Sexual Politics*. Elizabeth Smart has rather more ground to cover: "The idea was if I keep my grammar and my syntax, I'll be all right. I can start at 50 or 60." Indeed, the book opens with a short passage from a 1946 diary.

Coping, as a style of life, permeates the work — coping not only with having children, giving birth, and giving all, but also with a dreary job, with boring people, and with the absence of love:

After being knocked out on the battlefield (of love? of passion — never mind now), I lay for a long time like Lazarus waiting for Jesus to come and tell me to get up. He may have come. Or he may not. Or he may have come and I have moved to another address. Or maybe he kissed me in a spot where too much local anaesthetic lingered. Anyway, there has been no resurrection.

The novel shows a good ear for talk, her sense for compact images, and the surprising juxtaposition of sacred and profane metaphors that works so effectively in *By Grand Central Station*. But the new book lacks the first's drive, just as survival seems somehow less forceful than love, though the energy it requires may be much greater. "I had to get through!" she writes. "I had to get through with my load!"

Margaret Atwood, who may hold a patent on the word "survival," wrote in "review of Tillie Olsen's *Silences*:"

Women writers, even more than their male counterparts, recognize what a heroic fear it is to have held down a job, raised four children and still somehow managed to become and to remain a writer. The exactions of this multiple identity cost Tillie Olsen 20 years of her writing life. The applause that greets her is not only for the quality of her artistic performance but, as a grueling obstacle course, for the near miracle of her survival.

Add another 10 years and she would be describing Elizabeth Smart. There ate many of us cheering from the sideliners. □

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David Trumble/Glen Ellis

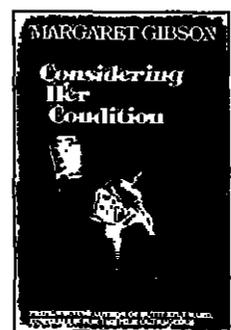
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gauge PUBLISHING

# The ploy's the thing

Leonard Cohen's great gift is for mimicry His problem is how to make posturing a vehicle for high things

by Sam Ajzenstat

**Death of a Lady?? Man**, by Leonard Cohen, McClelland & Stewart, 216 pages, \$10 cloth (ISBN 07710 2177 1).

THOSE WHO PRETEND that Leonard Cohen's career in poetry, his "life in art" as he calls it here, has not been a failure — as often abject as magnificent — will be in no position to understand what he has accomplished in this astonishing new book. Cohen has come close to dignity and gravity simply by taking his poetic failure as his theme.

By poetic failure I don't mean the poetry-doesn't-change-things idea, though that also, as before, has its place in the book; rather, *Death of a Lady's Man* is a picture of a poet trying to face what is cheap and second-rate in his work, to face also the fact that even his hatred for those qualities is impure because he loves them at the same time.

More than that, within and between the poems, Cohen counterpoints the failure of a poet with the failure of a marriage. Poetry and marriage are enemies just because each is its own kind of monasticism. Sex, the enemy of both, can pretend in its own interests to be a friend of each by attacking the other. Clearly there is a lot going on in this book; one of the most impressive things about it is Cohen's control of an immensely complicated texture.

It is all the more impressive for its suddenness. A year ago Cohen withdrew a draft of this book just before publication, but not before galleys had been sent to the reviewers. That set of galleys is entirely without the overt meditations on failure that so distinguish the final text. Not that the poems in the earlier text do not speak of failure. They speak of failures of devotion and of honesty. Among the marriage poems, for example, is "She Has Given Me The Bullet":

*Just after sunset  
waves creeping up to our toes  
my wife said: I have everything I want  
I looked down at her hair  
as she snuggled against my shoulder like a  
rifle-butt  
Toward the horizon  
mist fumed out of the water changing clearly  
into the eternal shapes of comfort and  
ordeal*

*I will bring these down, I said to myself,  
she has given me the bullet*

A beautiful ambiguity: the power to bring down the clouds. Is it the power to put a dream in place of reality, to destroy illusion and let us live reality or — more likely — simply the knowledge that in bestowing her love she bestows the power to destroy happiness?

The sense of failure is unambiguous in two companion pieces, "The Marriage" and "The Unclean Start." Both begin with fine, theatrical quarrels. "The Marriage" ends by zooming back from the fight to the Platonic idea of the marriage that the fight is both failing and falling to damage. It is a nice paragraph in Cohen's older style:

*In the realms where this marriage was  
se&d, where the wedding feast goes on  
and on, where A&M and Eve face one  
another, the foundations are faultless and  
secure, your beast's hair flares like black  
fire upward and your breasts, now in  
maidenhood, now in motherhood, dmw  
down my face. . . .*

But in "The Unclean Start," a beautifully self-contained short story in prose poetry, the effect is more bitter, more true, and is achieved without a retreat to higher realms:



*I always hide her beauty from myself until it  
is too late to praise her for it. Ropes were  
flying, uniforms flashing, everywhere haste  
advised and the threat of lost time. I stared  
at her as she became beautiful and calm. I  
would not get the blessing. The journey had  
an unclean start. And she must carry  
still-born blessings up the hill.*

The sense of failure is there. Nevertheless, the text of last year seemed deficient to bite and lacking in the unity it was so clearly trying for. Between then and now, Cohen seems to have had a brilliant inspiration. In the new text almost every one of the old poems has appended to it a passage in poetry or prose, bearing the same title, in which the old poem is discussed, set in context, praised, savaged, explained, or argued with. By this device the poet's agony is escalated, his varied failures are fused under the sign of poetic failure and become almost devastating.

To understand this book we need some idea of how Cohen has felled as a poet and why. Like all poets, but more than is allowable for the best, Cohen has not been able to make his poems say what he thought they were supposed to. A clear symptom of this was his statement, 10 years ago, declining the Governor General's Award: "Much in me strived for this honour but the poems themselves forbid it."

Quite obviously the poems themselves did not forbid it. Sartre's famous remark is relevant: "It is not enough to have turned down the Legion of Honour. You should never have deserved it." Because the much in Cohen that strives for honour had crippled whatever in him wanted to strive to write poems that would by themselves forbid honour, he, of all people, had to explain what the poems were really supposed to be doing. Truly to write poems that forbid the prize is to risk a reputation for incompetence. This episode forces our attention back on a nagging sense of dishonesty that one has always been able to feel even in Cohen's best poetry and prose. It also provides a clue to a deeper understanding of that dishonesty and to the special flavour of Cohen's work, if we remember that only a few years before it occurred, Sartre had declined the Nobel Prize. Cohen's gesture, like so much of his work, had an air of

mimicry about it that gave it a dishonest feel. His most conspicuous gifts are those of a rhetorician, a speech-writer, a mimic. At the same time he craves seriousness and profundity. His problem is how to make posturing a vehicle for high things.

Overt posturing can have only one serious purpose — to expose its own dishonesty. But that purpose is truly serious only when the dishonesty is not merely its own but everything else's as well. The poet, his poetry and the world are to be cut down to size, humbled, humiliated, undercut.

Under "She Has Given Me The Bullet": "There is no death in this book and therefore it is a life." And elsewhere Cohen neatly destroys the myths he previously built so much on, that self-inflicted pain could be redemptive: "A man set a fishhook in his lip. Does this mean we can believe what he says?" A few other miscellaneous lines will help to indicate the prevailing tone:

*It looks like a mind perceived by the mind, a barren shit-box. It looks like your judgment of me*

*The plan to teach my son there is no light in this world*

*Much of the effort of this ultimate version will be expended trying to dignify a worthless piece of junk*

Even the undercutting, of course, must finally itself be undercut. Cohen plays skilfully with the knowledge that the world's lack of light may itself be merely the lie by which the poet excuses his own cowardice and the vanity of his own inability. Strangely enough, this sense that the sickness may be in the poet alone, opens up a place in the book for a few sweetly and modestly redemptive lyrics, as pretty as any of Cohen's, in which the poet-lover stops trying to heal the world and allows himself to be healed by something beyond himself. "Sacrifice" is perhaps the nicest of these. In others such as "The Drawing" and "Daily Commerce" — the latter surely successful only in context — there is some effort to submit to the discipline of the trivial and the mundane.

This is not a modest book. As the good mimic he is Cohen has needed a model; the model he has chosen is, appropriately enough, Hamlet. There is, for example, an unweeded garden:

*I couldn't appreciate her work in the garden. I had come to depend too much on the weeds.*

The most obvious reference to Hamlet is a long and crucial poem titled "How to Speak Poetry" in the new text but in last year's draft called "Advice To Some Actors":

*Do not act out words. Never act out words. Never try to leave the floor when you talk about flying. Never close your eyes and jerk your head to one side when you talk about death*

The book even has its Horatio; his name is Roshi. Like Hamlet's Horatio he is admired for not being passion's slave, but, also like him, turns out to be not entirely liberated.

Much more could be said of this book. At the very least it should be a light for academics. Still, after all, isn't Cohen right? There is no death in the book. And what should be beautiful is only-pretty. Only enormous skill and mysterious alchemy ever make poetry seem other than the ridiculous thing it is. If the skill and alchemy are insufficient to the task, can one make art out of saying so? □

## Ex libris Canis lupi lux

**Aurora: New Canadian Writing 1978**, edited by Morris Wolfe, Doubleday. 248 pages, \$7.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 13646 3).

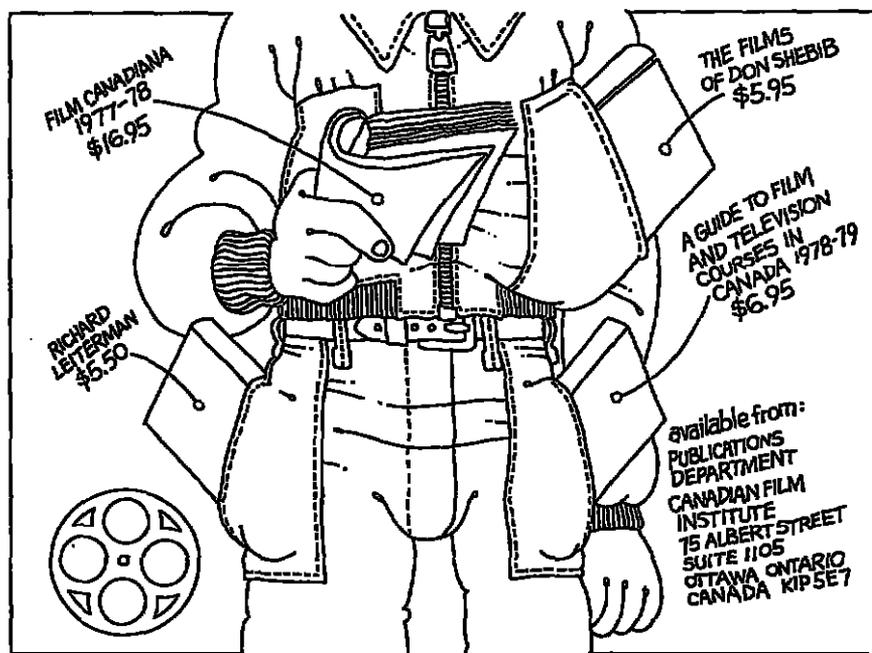
By W. H. NEW

THIS PROMISES TO be a Canadian version of the New American Review, an annual "paperback magazine" presenting new pieces by current writers both known and unknown. There are plenty of known writers in this first volume: everyone from Woodcock and Musgrave to Purdy and Wiebe to Waddington and Gustafson and Souster and Ryga and Joyce Carol Gates. But as editor Wolfe realizes in his introduction, it is a sampler that, sifting through scores of submitted manuscripts, he has assembled. And in reply to those critics — there are some for all anthologies — who mutter, "Whet? No Atwood? No Laurence? No Munro? No Hodgins? No Findley? No Richler? No (fill in the blank)?", no anthologist has more than answers that will satisfy himself. Perhaps the missing persons did not submit anything, or anything of value; perhaps there were restrictions of theme or organization. In a contemporary

sampler one expects to find variety and quality. Aurora, thanks to Wolfe, has some of each.

Without so indicating, Wolfe has opted for a thematic organization. He has arranged poems, stories, and essays so that, one after the other, they connect loosely in a single line, which makes the volume a good cover-to-cover read. A section on love modulates into a section on the literary scene, which is followed in turn by sections on the relevance of the past, the problems of seeking meaning in the world, the idiosyncrasies of the family, and the impact of larger issues-ideas and social problems.

But after having read these works, do we react any further? A sampler like this can be a few hours entertainment (it is), a guide to contemporary writing (which it is only in the most general kind of way), a sociological sourcebook for the future (about which time will do the telling), or it can be a regular mine of literary gold (which it isn't). It is disappointing, for example, that the pieces in the "Love" section, striving so desperately for Novelty or Significance, seem variously so trite, so adolescent, so televised, so banal. It is disappointing that the parodies in the book — and I & n knows we stand in need of some first-rate parody and political satire — either fall on easy targets or fall flat. It is disappointing that the tone of the book varies so little. If the pieces are representative of us today, then we're a pretty sorry lot: maundering about Meaning instead of doing something for ourselves, toneless and woeful instead of ever happy and frivolous or even unhappy and wretched. And we worry more about & pressing our Private Selves than we do about Privacy, let alone Public Policy. The trouble with too many personal declarations is that their personality isn't very interesting. They end up as evasions of the rigours of character-creation rather than as glimpses of ourselves. And they don't even have the



slick strokes of gossip about them to titillate us into thinking otherwise.

Fortunately there are a number of admirable writings in *Aurora*, which one savours and rereads in the midst of the rest. Don McLulich's poems assuredly and reflectively conjure up the personalities of Columbus and Layton; John Reibetanz eloquently resuscitates blank verse for the present; David Macfarlane, Tim Inkster, Florence McNeil, Ralph Gustafson, and Tom Marshall write fine poems; Douglas Barbour responds in an arresting way to Jack Chambers' paintings and Stephen Scobie to Ondaatje and Billy the Kid; John Hirsch's memoirs of the theatre remind us

how vital a form the personal essay can be, and Francis Sparshott's poems make philosophical reflection a happy and graceful act of the mind.

It is Gustafson's poem "The Magi" that stands out. Whether one sees literature as related to society or related solely to other literature, it succeeds. The allusions to Yeats and Eliot are at once crafted, deliberate, and rooted in Canada; the poem is about attitudes to separation, and it observes, with some passion:

*Culture was singular  
Prophets spoke with one tongue.  
Always there are a few  
Who do not laugh.*

The poet's distaste for the rhetoric of power gives the lines their clipped urgency. The poem also, by chance, calls attention to the cold vacancy at the heart of *Aurora*: the mom reserved for laughter, which we so desperately need filled. An anthology like this cannot create for the writer; it cannot assemble what has not been written. And the empty spaces in our literature are often as telling a guide to our collective aspirations as the declarations that we openly make: Perhaps they'll change. What Morris Wolfe has assembled here, certainly, is enough to make me look forward to whatever appears under northern lights in the second issue. □

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## Debut of D'Boot . . .

. . . and restoration of a dyke: two titles from Callaghan that test the limits of fantasy and taste

by I. M. Owen

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*No Man's Meat* and *The Enchanted Pimp*, by Morley Callaghan, Macmillan, 154 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1776 9).

"HOWEVER INTERESTING his theme, however true to life his characters, he insists on embroiling them in action so strange and tangled as to produce on the reader's mind an impression of artificial contrivance." That is Joseph Warren Beach, speaking of Thomas Hardy. And here is a note by Hardy defending himself on the same point: "A story must be exceptional enough to justify its telling. We tale-tellers are all Ancient Mariners, and none of us is warranted in stopping Wedding Guests . . . unless he has something more unusual to relate than the ordinary experience of every average man and woman."

Both points are good, and both might be made about the fictions of Morley Callaghan. If I understand him correctly, he usually sets out to portray ordinary people and, by placing them in unusual circumstances, to show how remarkable they really are. It's to do this—not only to justify the telling of the story — that he sometimes embroils them in strange and tangled action.

The question is whether, in *The Enchanted Pimp*, he has gone too far, so that his characters cease to be ordinary and become strange half-human creatures of fantasy. Take Jay Dubuque (known as D'Boot because he wears a surgical one and uses it as a weapon), who plays the title-role. He gets the idea for his career when he is bill-collecting for a furrier. To the stockbroker's wife in a costly condominium who owes \$400 on her beaver coat, he suggests: "Why, I know a well-

educated, well-off man staying hen at one of the hotels for a few days. . . — then leaving town, mind you — who'd give about two hundred dollars just to be in your company." Instead of reporting him to the furriers (who, beside firing hi, would probably have forgiven her the debt in their embarrassment) she agrees to the proposition; he finds her a Detroit dentist who is in Toronto for an orthodontists' convention, she tells ha friends, end soon he is in business as Edmund J. Dubuque, Convention Services. This is a fine idea, worthy of the early Waugh (how Margot Beste-Cherwynde would have liked it) and well suited to Waugh's style of grotesque satirical fantasy. When it is told in Callaghan's deliberately net matter-of-fact tone the fine-drawn cord of one's willing suspension of disbelief snaps abruptly, right et the outset of the story.

And this leaves the reader ill-prepared to accept the other main character, Ilona Tommy, a cultivated Hungarian aristocrat who earns her living as a prostitute, frequenting one of the shady hotels on Toronto's Jarvis Street. This establishment and its habitués are well-presented, evidently from direct observation. ("An elderly novelist who had once been famous sat by himself, trying to overhear conversations at tables nearby.") But Ilona is an oddity there. Clutching tightly round her shoulders the long mink coat that will figure largely in subsequent events (has anybody written on "The Coat in Callaghan" yet?), rejecting macho clients in favour of pathetic ones, she strikes even D'Boot as improbable, and thus the pimp becomes enchanted; the story concerns his obsessive and disastrous effort to get her out of that setting and make her

into a legendary courtesan. In spite of his and the author's best efforts she remains a creature of fantasy.

Everybody who writes about Callaghan sooner or later quotes the sentence in *That Summer in Paris* that has been called his "manifesto of realism": "I wanted to get it down sodiitly that it wouldn't feel or look like literature." When he deals with recognizable reality this principle works; when he ventures into the improbable it works in a way he didn't intend. Dialogue has always been a stumbling-block for him; he is probably aware of this, because in his best work it is kept to a minimum. The trouble is that all his characters talk exactly like Morley Callaghan. This is a perfectly good way of talking if you're Morley Callaghan; if you're a society matron, or an aristocratic Hungarian prostitute, or an enchanted pimp, it becomes ludicrous. ("He was flabbergasted. 'I'll be a monkey's uncle,' be said." "Flabbergasted" must be the most frequent adjective in the story, by the way.)

*The Enchanted Pimp* is a very short novel. To bulk out the book the publishers precede it with a rather long short story, *No Man's Meat*, first published in the early 1930s and long out of print. To a mildly contented middle-aged couple et their summer cottage on a lake somewhere in the southern Shield (very well described) comes a visitor, a beautiful woman whom they haven't seen for years, who has left her husband and travelled widely since. In the evening the husband and the visitor play craps, she keeps losing, and eventually the stake becomes his sleeping with her. When he reluctantly but with his wife's encouragement attempts to collect the bet,

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she is unable to pay up. he asks his wife to comfort her. the two women spend the rest of the night together. sad in the morning they elope. It's not a bad story, though it was probably more arresting (nay, flabbergasting) at the time it was written, when these things were more startling. The title, *No Man's Meat*, was then and is now in execrable taste. Somebody should have persuaded him to change it. □

## Second crop picked too soon

Considering Her Condition, by Margaret Gibson. Gage, 108 pages, \$8.95 cloth (ISBN 0 77 15 9324 4).

By JOHN HGFSESS

MARGARET GIBSON's first book, *The Butterfly Ward*, was one of the more successful short-story collections to be published in recent years. The number of copies sold (3,500) probably didn't alter the commonly held view among publishers that short stories have no market, but the spin-offs were highly profitable: one story, "Ada," was adapted for CBC-TV drama directed by Claude Jutra; another, "Making It," provided the basic plot for the runaway film bit, *Outrageous!*, starring Craig Russell.

At least three of the six stories in *The Butterfly Ward* were emotionally powerful, a cry from the underground — the kind of human testimony found in David Freeman's *Creeps* or John Herbert's *Fortune and Men's Eyes*, so searingly honest in their depiction of social problems that literary values become a secondary consideration. Where Freeman made people pay attention to the everyday life of paraplegics, quadriplegics, and other "spazzes," and Herbert exposed the violent sexuality of men in prison, Gibson depicted the grim realities of mental hospitals based on what she had personally experienced through repeated periods of incarceration and treatment.

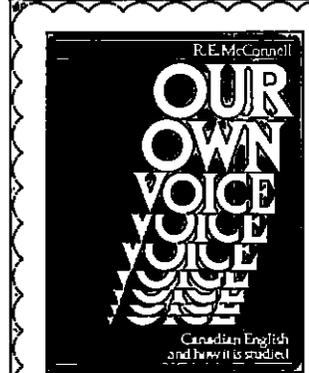
It frequently happens that such writers, once they are delivered of their rage and their blackest memories, have little more to say. Their strength is documentation and at their best they are vitally important writers, but when they try to go beyond the crucible of pain that motivated their early work, relying more on imagination sad literary artifice, their work becomes progressively weaker. Gifted as they are, primarily with courage sad a will-to-survive, they are not brilliant titers; invention is not their forte.

Gibson's new collection of seven stories is more uneven than the first. It contains the best story, "Still Life," that she has published so far and one good commercial property, "Dark Angel Pale Fire," already sold to CBGTV for adaptation. There is a passable thii, "Brian Tatoo: Hi Life and Times," with some fine moments although

it's ultimately too melodramatic. The rest are rather trivial, and on balance, it would appear that she has not extended her range.

From the first line of "Still Life" ("Jane sat in the study of her parent's house. a house that somehow must be hers too for she bed never left it in her forty-two years of living,"), Gibson is in tight control of the material. The theme is one of her basic ones -the life-against-death struggle of someone who is nearly mad. Jane is zonked with scotch all day long, seething with rebellious thoughts about her well-to-do, respectable, and "lifeless" parents. Once a week she goes out shopping for groceries for them, travelling by taxi — that's all she has seen of the world. As in most of Gibson's fiction, the situation is extreme, the characters are desperate, but "Still Life" is told so calmly and exactly that it commands belief. (A number of other stories in the collection seem to spin out of control, into histrionic events such as rape or suicide that are quite unmoving compared to this quietly chilling tale.) All that happens, in terms of plot, is that Jane dsida to pack and leave, to "cross over" as she puts it, and enters life that may well be perilous, and eves make her more unhappy (compared to the comatose comforts of home) but at least the pains will be those of real life. When we last see her she is sitting in a bar, with her suitcases and ha vague plans, setting out at 42 to find if her life has any meaning.

In "Dark Angel Pale Fire," Gibson describes a love affair that she had several



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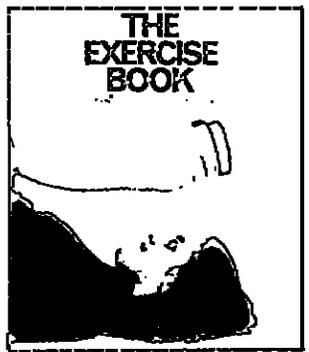
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years ago with a black "a" and why, inevitably, as creatures of adversity, they had to part. Its best moments consist in recreating the surprises of reality, for Gibson is a sharp observer of human behaviour; its worst (and they are 'few) consist in striving for poetic effects ("Levi's, bare chest darkly gleaming, levi's, bare pale breasts, palely, palely under the moon's cold light"). This story is similar to "Making It." Gibson's commemoration of her friendship with female-impersonator Craig Russell: two outcasts in a hostile world who share some beautiful times together.

In "Brian Tatoo: His Life and Times," an interesting idea is spoiled by the lack of subtlety with which it is presented. The story describes a series of encounters between a 28-year-old female journalist, Meg Glenn, and a young man ("Alcoholic. Sometime drug addict. Low I.Q. Member

of tie Paradise Riders Motorcycle Club") that she is writing about. She knows her subject is "good copy" but she feels an increasing revulsion at having to care about the depressing facts of his life. He ends up putting the barrel of a shotgun in his mouth (and presumably kills himself), tortured by the excess of passion he has developed for the unfeeling Miss Glenn. The problem with this story is that, apart from reminding readers of her view that "nice" respectable people are killers in disguise, Gibson settles for what is becoming a philosophical cliché in her work, rather than exploring the full potential of the theme.

Gibson wanted to call her first collection of short stories *Still Life*, but her editors said that wouldn't sell. The new collection was originally announced as *Kaleidoscope* (a story called "The water Fairy" makes frequent mention of kaleidoscopes). But

incomprehensibly, for there is no story by the name, and no discernible theme throughout, it is called *Considering Her Condition*, a frail title, and one that given Gibson's medical history allows for some awful jokes. Gibson's vision is a unique one in Canadian literature but she is in a period of floundering, which may lead to new growth. The success she has found in the last two years seems to have taken the creative tension out of her work, and she has not yet found the subject or circumstances that will once again give her fiction its compelling necessity.

The first volume of stories took years to germinate; this one seems to have been written under pressure, to meet a deadline, to fulfil a contract. And although Gibson has done her best, her methods of writing do not allow for assembly-line efficiency. Most of what is here simply isn't ripe. □

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# Alice through a glass darkly

With Munro, the cheat is in discovering that people are exactly what they seem

by Wayne Grady

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**Who Do You Think You Are?**, by Alice Munro, Macmillan, 240 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1712 9).

By WAYNE GRADY

THERE IS A tendency to describe Alice Munro's talent as an ability to take the ordinary and make it new, to teach the reader to see. "You'll find at least one member of your family in these stories," wrote Hugh Garner in his preface to *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), "probably the one you have most despised all along." You'll read one of Munro's stunts and suddenly see your old Aunt Phoebe as a frustrated concert pianist, and that will somehow make your life richer.

There is that level to her work, of course, but it is no longer the level on which she spends or requires — the most energy. Munro's vision of the world has darkened in the 10 years since her first book, and her prose has accordingly become less innocently evocative of rank kitchen smells and adolescent love. She still works the same raw material, but she writes now in a minor, sadder key, and the result is a novel of literary as well as nostalgic value.

*Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), as a study of growing up sane in small-town Ontario, was essentially a humorous book with serious, though not tragic, undertones; a celebration of sexual and intellectual maturity with a tinge of lament for lost

innocence. Very feminine, said some critics; very Canadian, said others. The transitions to the minor key were lively few, but contained the seeds of her future work. When Del Jordan asks her mother why she loved Del's father, for example, the answer is, "Because he was always a gentleman":

Is that all? .. In the beginning of her story was dark captivity, suffering, then daring and defiance and escape. . Now I expected as in all momentous satisfying stories — the burst of Glory . . . I hoped this was it.

But in Del's mother's stories, as increasingly in Munro's, there are no bursts of Glory. "Stories of the past go like this," she now writes, "round and round and down to death."

*Who Do You Think You Are?* begins with the death of one father and ends with the imminent death of another father. In between are the twin stories of the two daughters: Rose, who grows up in West Hanratty, Ont., the child of a defeated father and a powerless but compassionate stepmother named Flo; and Janet, who is from Dagleish, Ont., the child of an equally ineffectual father and a somewhat non-existent mother. Both girls think they've escaped from the cloistered virtue of their youth, both marry wealthy, weak "en and move to Vancouver, have affairs (or rather non-affairs), leave their husbands,

move to Toronto, and become writers. There is a peculiar two-way mirror effect at the end of the book, a faint Nabokovian twist, when a Dagleish woman asks Janet: "That. Rose you write about. Is she supposed to be you?"

With some writers the great disappointment in life is discovering that nothing is as it seems, that all is illusion. With Munro the cheat is in the discovery that people are exactly what they seem to be: petty, vindictive, without secret yearnings, hidden lusts. What is hidden is their pettiness. In *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* (1974), one of the stories is about a woman married to a miser. Long after the marriage has ended the woman discovers that he wasn't such a bad writer, that all the time she thought he was an insensitive, oafish verse dramatist he was "ally soaking up impressions and forging them into truths. This could not happen in *Who Do You Think You Are?*, in which the husbands are a merchant and a lawyer, the women wasted flowers of old-fashioned virtue, carrying the limitations of their backgrounds around with them like a suppressed accent. What Janet learns is that Rose's life, though she has escaped West Hanratty, is not that much more interesting than Flo's, and that even Janet's writing about Rose's life can't redeem it. In *Something* the act of writing could still be called "an act of magic . . . an act of a special, unsparing, un sentimental love." In *Who* the act has become a

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conjurer's trick, a cheat. "pulling fictions up like rabbits out of hats; skinned rabbits, raw and startling, out of such familiar old hats."

In the end there is neither hope nor despair, but there is a triumph of acceptance that is not simply resignation. If life insists on "making a gigantic fuss, as usual, for a small effect." Munro CM at least find fascination in the gigantic fuss, and see in that at least a small burst of Glory. □

**We dipped  
And we flipped**

Private Parts. by John Robert Colombo, Hounslow Press, 75 pages, paper, unpriced (ISBN 0 88882 026 7).

The Works: Collected Poems, by Phyllis Gotlieb, Calliope Press, 254 pages, \$10.50 paper (ISBN 0 96907740 8).

Mister Never. by Miriam Waddington, Turnstone Press, 35 pages, paper, unpriced (ISBN 0 88801.001 7).

By BRIAN BARTLETT

THE FINEST PART in the prolific Colombo's newest book of original poetry tells of reading a novel and forgetting the title, the author, the place and time of reading, everything except an image "Of opening the refrigerator door/ And finding in there/ Bright Arctic light and air." Not only does that fridge light stand out in Colombo's memory; it stands out brightly in this collection. *Private Parts* is a book starved for images.

Despite the title and an epigram from Updike ("Our inner spa & warrant palaces"). Colombo gives us few private or inner moments. He would do well to read Updike on Max Beerbohm and rhyme in light verse, since his own incessantly rhymed stanzas are often too cute, dully rather than charmingly silly. A coast-to-coast celebration of Canadian girls III this, "They like it upside-down/ In Charlottetown./ They do more than neck/ In Quebec." might be amusing as a late-night improvisation at a party, but on the page the humour runs thin.

Much of the book is dark, though too surface-scratching to be called brooding. Repeatedly Colombo speaks of wearisome, worrisome sadness without dramatizing any feeling: "The world is such a mess./ Society is under too much stress." Coming upon the lamenting lines. "An Indian arrowhead/ (They bled/ And are dead)," I wondered if Colombo was playing some skitish game, deliberately adopting kindergartinish rhymes. Doggerel defeats this book. Of the 26 volumes of Colombo's poetry (some of them inventive and graceful) this is not one of the winners.

For those of us who value Miriam Waddington's earlier *Driving Home, Mis-*

*ter Never* is thin gruel. She seldom delves deeply into what she calls "the book's theme of absence, of unreturned love, or to put it differently, of a one-sided projection of the self." This chapbook is excessively dreamy, dreamy not with passion but with misty yearning. The sturdiest poems are among the shortest, "Mister Never in Winnipeg" and "Mister Never in the Chekhov Museum in Moscow." Softness infects many of the other poems, such as the first one, which arrestingly describes a Prairie house drifting in light across the country. The magnificence of that image crumbles, for the house is "smiling." Houses smile in the most cloying sorts of verse, which should never come from a poet of Waddington's strength.

Sometimes Phyllis Gotlieb wields language and rhythm with a dash and a daring neither Colombo nor Waddington muster. yet few pieces in her *Collected Poems* are roundly, inevitably satisfying. She has been self-indulgent in reprinting uninspired haiku (hasn't everyone written uninspired haiku?) and four poems for voices commissioned by the CBC. One of the poems for voices, a recreation of early English actors performing a miracle play, *does* include jazzy high spirits and passages of irresistible anachronistic wackiness.

"Was/Man," an account of a wereman rather than werewolf, rises to a forceful finish: "He/dashed water in his thickening fur to douse the rank/civil insidious urge of the secret man." The rest of the poem is baggier, lacking the swiftness and sharpness an Ondaatje would have given it. More sharpness in the overall gathering of Gotlieb's work, a selection rather than a collection, would have better served her poetic gifts. □

**Where uncool  
Sappho loved  
and sung**

Mermaids and Ikons: A Greek Summer, by Gwendolyn MacEwen, House of Anansi, 110 pages, 55.95 paper (ISBN 0 88784 062 0).

By SEAN VIRGO .

WRITING WITH love about a foreign landscape and its inhabitants is akin to describing an overwhelming film or novel: the writer is grappling with her own perceptions and responses as well as with the realities of the world she has visited. The Baedeker approach—documentary and mildly anecdotal—confines itself to the actual world, but the great and abiding travel books are always subjective. The Arabia of Lawrence T. E., the Sardinia and Mexico of Lawrence

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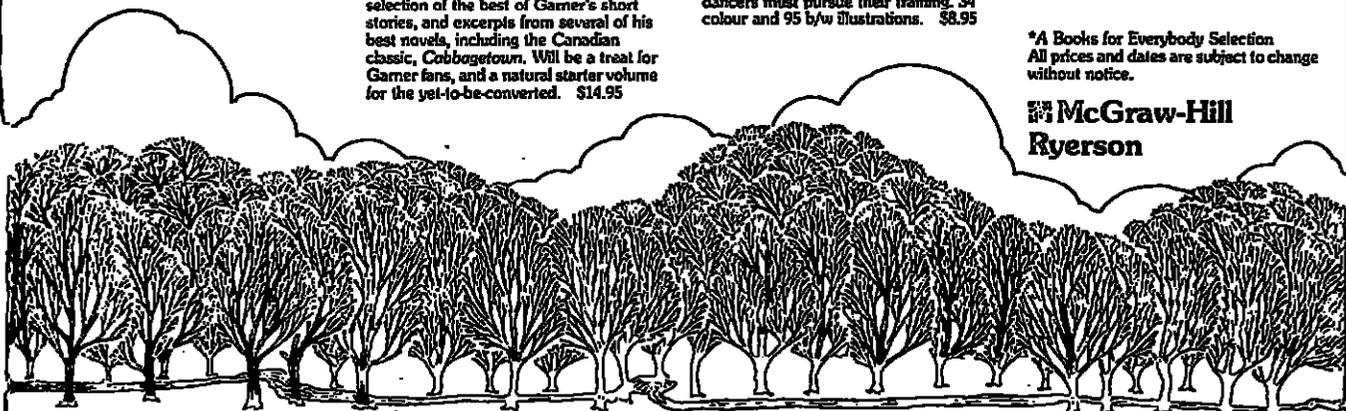
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D.H., the Greece of Henry Miller. are countries of the mind and the heart — contradictory, intense and wildly misleading; peopled with pygmies, ogres, and anthropophagi; seductively insistent.

This vulnerable book is neither one nor the other. Gwendolyn MacEwen alternates between carrying a camera and painting expressionist pictures. She watches herself, self-consciously — a tourist learning her husband's homeland; but she also wants to touch, breathe, and explain the country.

The result is schizoid: the book oscillates between a rather embarrassing cuteness; a heightened, metaphorical series of visions; and passages that try to analyse and interpret the history and culture of the Greeks, the last enthusiasts of Europe. It's as though she is writing for three different audiences.

I think the book is undigested, hastily written, and unfair to MacEwen's marvellous talents as poet and novelist. It's a constant reminder that the most powerful artefacts of literature are often refinements of banal perceptions, because the passages here that are relined show up the others so cruelly. It's hard to relate the chatty descriptions of the knitting parties that bracket the book ("I knat and knat") with the writer brooding in the underworld of Mycenae "over the evils of Time" or encountering the revenant Phidias in the flesh. The one stance diminishes the other.

But this is where the vulnerability I spoke off comes in. MacEwen insists that the Greeks have no use for "cool;" the protective Western armour, and she has learnt to shed it herself. I think she would feel that the kind of distillation I'm talking about would be an armour, a falsification of her real, many-levelled experience of Greece and herself. And at least in theory she would be right. She lacks the alchemical ego of a Lawrence, but she offers us her Greece with a disarming, butterfly uncool — and for that alone the book is worth reading. All the same, it's the poems seeded by her Greek summer that I'm waiting for. □

**IN BRIEF**

Ghost Towns of Ontario. Volume I — Southern Ontario, by Ron Brown, Stagecoach Press, illustrated, 200 pages, \$11.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88983 018 5) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88983 020 7). Ghost towns? In Ontario? You may be incredulous-as Brown was when he first heard of Depot Harbour, near Parry Sound. It was once Ontario's most promising natural deep water harbour; little now remains except buckling sidewalks and crumbling foundations. Incredulity was transformed into enthusiasm, and this interesting book about a little-known facet of Ontario history was the result.

Brown seems to have been quite thorough in his research, which involved rummaging through the Ontario Archives, poring over old maps and business directories, interpreting aerial photographs, driving to sites throughout Southern Ontario, and talking

with oldtimers. He discovered a surprisingly large number of ghost towns, victims of the unpredictable shifts and changes in the progress of Ontario's development. He faithfully catalogues them all, giving for each a brief account of its history, its character, and the reasons behind its rise and decline. These descriptions are enhanced by a copious assortment of photos (old and new), illustrations, and maps.

— ANDREW MACRAE

**Horse under snow**

The Heroin Triangle: The Confessions of Michel Mastantuono as Told to Michel Auger, translated from the French by Gaynor Fitzpatrick, Methuen, 242 pages. \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 92520 9).

Good Time Charlie's Back in Town Again, by Alfred Silver. Avon Books; 189 pages, \$1.75 paper (ISBN 0 380 39065 5).

By ANDREW ALLENTUCR

THE DRUG TRADE fascinates writers and readers alike. Drug smuggling is the stuff of legend: hi risk and hi living; heroism and betrayal; great wealth and desolate poverty. Two new books are based on the myth of the international smuggler and the reality of the life of small-time street pushers. The contrasts are vivid.

The Heroin Triangle is the true story of Michel Mastantuono, a petty criminal from Marseilles who immigrated to Quebec in 1969 and insinuated himself into the Montreal heroin trade. Along the way he met and bedded the beautiful Quebec actress Danielle Ouimet and, as her lover, moved in the lofty circles of the Quebec cultural scene.

Mastantuono quickly squired a specialty: fitting kilo bags of 96 per cent pure heroin into the crevices of expensive sports cars. The cars would be shipped from Europe to Canada using Ouimet's glamorous lifestyle as a believable pretext, it being accepted that stars pack their cars as others pack their luggage. According to Mastantuono, they brought perhaps a few hundred kilos worth tens of millions of dollars into Canada.

Mastantuono was able to afford a superb life for himself and his mistress. He kept a plush apartment at Habitat 67, dressed Danielle in elegant clothes, maintained several expensive cars, and made frequent trips to Paris — once just to buy himself a pair of pants.

What is perhaps most extraordinary about Mastantuono's brief career is the carelessness of his methods and the slowness of police to catch an. His cars would be passed by Canadian and American customs even when they were so stuffed that there was barely room inside for passengers. Heroin

powder littered several cars. But it was informers, not border checks, that eventually caused his downfall.

Once arrested, Mastantuono professed complete innocence. "Heroin," he asked. "What is that?" He confessed his guilt only, he says, to save Danielle from a long jail sentence. He was eventually extradited to the United States, found guilty of drug violations, and jailed in the august company of several Watergate figures. Not bad for a petty hood from Marseilles.

**Good Time Charlie's Back in Town Again** is a novel about small-time drug pushing in Winnipeg. While the plot is contrived, the setting of morning houses, crash pads, and devastated lives is utterly real.

Jigs, the protagonist of Silver's story, drifts into Winnipeg on the invitation of old friends now joined in business as the Great Northern Cocaine Company. He is to become the firm's Western salesman, pushing their new product, synthetic cocaine that works as well as the real thing.

The Mounties have infiltrated the company and have held off a raid, but, prodded by the need to save a would-be suicide victim, they storm the house, arrest everyone but the luckily absent Jiggs, and put an end to the enterprise. Jiggs and his girlfriend escape only to begin another, even more precarious career as cop killers. The story is well told and profoundly sad: whimsy turned to tragedy.

Auger and Silver show that the glamour

of the drug trade is brief, the risks immense and perhaps not worthwhile. In both books the dealers are poor men with little education for whom drugs represent a way out of poverty and into wealth and stature. Yet those who flout the drug laws court the malice of the authorities. Too often the sole legacy of drugs is squandered life. On that Mastantuono and Silver seem to agree. □

## Alimentary, my dear Watson

**Figures in a Ground: Canadian Essays on Modern Literature Collected in Honour of Sheila Watson**, edited by Diane Bessai and David Jackel, Western Producer Prairie Books. 365 pages, 514.50 cloth (ISBN 0 919306 89 6) and 57.50 paper (ISBN 0 919306 90 x).

By SAM SOLECKI

WHERE IBM OR Exxon give their retiring executives a watch, a book, or an extravagant retirement dinner, the academy occasionally rouses itself to produce a volume of essays (a *festschrift*) in honour of one of its departing members. This has been a good year for such collections: first there was *A Political An.* in honour of George Wood-

cock; now we have the volume for Sheila Watson; and later in the fall Oberon Press will bring out a collection for Arthur E. Barker.

The reviews of this kind of book usually open with a requisite and deserved praise of the person being honoured, followed by a general comment that the essays are "uneven" or a "mixed bag." It's a standard format and, in some respects, a necessary one because it manages to separate the person being honoured from the essays themselves, for which he or she is not really responsible. *Figures in a Ground*, however, often evades or overwhelms this separation because Sheila Watson's presence is felt, in various ways, in so many of the pieces. Some reflect her wide-ranging interests (Lewis, Eliot, Lowry), while others (F.T. Flahiff's elegant essay on *The Great Gatsby*, and Michael Ondaatje's lyrical one on Marquez) are so permeated by the sense of occasion that they become almost homages to her.

Overall, the quality of the essays is uneven. The least interesting and the most pretentious are Robin Matthews' "The Wacousta Factor" ("Wacousta is one of the great characters in fiction") and E.D. Blodgett's structuralist "Prisms and Arcs: Structures in Hébert and Munro." At the other end of the critical spectrum are informative and provocative essays by Eli Mandel ("The Ethnic Voice in Canadian Writing"), Douglas Barbour ("The Phenomenological I: Daphne Marlatt's

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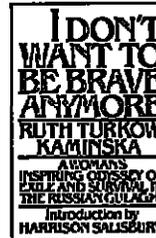
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Stevenson"), Morton L. Ross ("The canonization of *As For Me and My House*"), an interview with Robert Kmetsch (here disguised as Roland Barthes), and Rudy Wiebe's fascinating compilation of facts about "The Death and Life of Albert Johnson." Some of these will probably find their ways into various more-specialized collections.

I have space neither to outline the arguments of any of the essays nor to argue against them, but there are two general points that I want to make. The first relates to the relative lack of evaluative criticism in the volume. Reading through the essays I was left with the confusing feeling that all the works being discussed were of equal value and equally successful as works of art. This failure to discriminate produces in one case (Barbour's essay) the absurd claim that 16 Canadian poets (most of them of marginal importance) are among "the most interesting poets in the English-speaking world." Secondly, the collection is notable for the presence of three essays — by Mandel, Blodgett, and Kmetsch — where the critical ground is structuralist, a stance rather rare in Canadian criticism. Mandel's commitment to the *nouvelle critique* is less than that of the other two since his concern with the inevitable doubleness of the ethnic voice in literature is ultimately socio-literary, and his analysis is almost completely free of the new jargon. Blodgett and Kroetsch, on the other hand, write from

within the structuralist project: Blodgett uses terms and procedures derived from Genette and Jakobson to analyze the figures in Hébert and Munro; Kmetsch applies Barthes and Derrida in his argument in favour of a new "deconstructed" novel, the kind that he is interested in writing. Both use the new meta-language of the Paris school to make some basic points.

Overall, *Figures in a Ground* is no better and no worse than any of the other *fest-schrifts* that have appeared in the past two decades. Having said that, however, I'm left with the uneasy feeling that in all these cases perhaps an extravagant retirement dinner would have been a better idea. □

## Marriage à la mod

*Chestnut/Flower/Eye* of Venus, by Gerald Lampert, Coach House Press, 167 pages, \$4.50 paper (ISBN 0 88910 079 9).

By MICHAEL SMITH

STEPHEN AND JULIE Martin, the unhappily married couple in this second, and last, novel by Gerald Lampert — who died in April — probably deserve each other. Both

come from childhoods fraught with unusual pressures (his mother was committed to an insane asylum; hem might as well have been). Together they consume about \$40 worth of liquor a week, and spend \$40 more on analysis. Stephen tends to be a self-pitying wretch, while Julie is a pudgy sloven who keeps the family fed on junk. After a marriage of more than 10 years, Julie has decided that Stephen repels her, and has cut him off from what he constantly whines for: love.

Stephen, the first-person narrator, lives like an outsider in his own home, but he can't leave or throw Julie out, because he feels he's the only one capable of providing for her and their daughter. He's frustrated by the compassion that sometime3 still exists between them, and the intimacies implied when, for instance, Julie accidentally brushes against him in the bed they continue to share. He begins analysis with Arthur Gottman, a cynical, sexually ambivalent, bullying Gestaltist who also happens to be Julie's analyst, their neighbour from across the street, and the husband of Julie's occasional best friend.

The confessor, Gottman — whose name may be one of Lampert's puns — has almost omniscient knowledge of the Martins' private life. His message to Stephen is simply that he should stand up for himself — even if it means infidelity or desertion. One memorable Wednesday Stephen manages to make it with three (whew!) compliant women in the space of less than eight hours. Meanwhile, Julie has become involved, perhaps more than platonically, with an artist named Kelly — also, of course, a friend of the Gottmans — who can't get a showing for his work, and ends up so broke that he has to move right into the Martins' rather trendy Toronto home.

The unravelling of their lives, which is never — quite appropriately — wholly resolved, is tightly built on the relentless documents of middle-class breakdown. Dimming letters, a gradually disintegrating car, Stephen and Julie's horoscopes, squirrels in the attic, snatches of fear and self-doubt — all are interspersed with mordant confrontations at parties and group sessions, as well as between the Martins themselves. Yet, despite the plot, wary readers should be relieved to learn that Lampert leans slightly more toward Richard Wright's wistful *The Weekend Man* than tedious, *Chatelaine*-style urban Angst.

His style is compressed and apt ("I am catatonic with contentment"), and his dialogue, at times, fairly stings. But there are curious lapses. Lampert can't spell "eczema," for example, and at one point he appears not to understand how frequently birth control pills must be taken (more often than just the days one has sex). It seems unlikely, too, that the Martins' daughter, Susan, should sleep through almost everything — though this may be meant to show how withdrawn the family has become. The title, by the way, is a quotation from a poem by Bill Bissett, and refers to a couple of important symbols in the book. □

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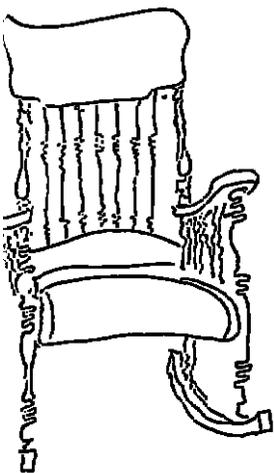
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## How not to stuff a mushroom

The Canadian Woman's Almanac, by Ruth Fremes, Methuen, 256 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 93740 1).

Superwoman: Everywoman's Book of Household Management, by Shirley Conran, Penguin Books, 400 pages, \$2.95 paper (ISBN 0 14 00 4880 4).

BY JANE W. HILL

IF ANYONE COULD benefit from these books it should be me. My husband and children will attest to that. And both are very useful, in somewhat different ways.

The Canadian Woman's Almanac is by Ruth Fremes, a home economist well known through her newspaper column "Eating Right" and per book *Nutriscore* (both with Dr. Zak Sabry), as well as her broadcasts on consumer affairs. Her she has given us a guide to daily life, in personal and practical matters, through discussions of child rearing, marriage and divorce, old age, money management, careers, the handling of crises, women and the law, house-keeping, health, nutrition, and relaxation.

And all with a specific Canadian slant, listing the names and addresses of private and public agencies from St. John's to Victoria that are available for help or information, bibliographies after each chapter, charts and lists for wise shoppers, and so forth.

Mrs. Fremes is straightforward and serious, eager to help all Canadian women to become more competent, more confident in themselves and their relationships with others, and better able to cope with the many demands placed upon them in modern society. She takes us through all the stages of life, answering the questions asked by women today on Life Cycles, Lifelines, Life Plan, and Life Style. As she says in her introduction: "Here, I thought, was something I could do. I could put people in touch with each other and the services that are available to us all." Through her previous work, Fremes realized the concerns women have about "running a home, finding time for a career, and keeping in close touch with their families and with themselves." Mrs. Fremes is sensible and sympathetic, and though experienced homemakers may find some of her material familiar it is good to have it all in one place as a source book. The price seems to me rather high, though, especially when the book will have to be updated every few years. And surely much of this information may be found through the phone book or in free government publications.

Shirley Conran's *Superwoman* is really terrific value for the money. It is a compendium of virtually everything you could want to know about running a home, based on her belief that there is "no job, whether it's running a factory or bathing a baby, which isn't performed easier or quicker by organizing it beforehand, by thinking about it in advance." The book was on the best-seller list in England for 44 weeks and has now been edited by Ruth Fremes for use in Canada. Product recommendations, laws and regulations, and financial considerations, are all Canadian. Mrs. Conran is a textile designer, journalist (for 15 years a women's editor on leading British newspapers), broadcaster, and also the mother and sole support (evidently) of two sons. She has a delightful personality and has obviously learned how to make the absolute most of her time, and have fun, too. She reminds us that "the whole point of housework is to keep the place functioning efficiently as a cheerful background for living." After offering us "Out Motto: Life is too short to stuff a mushroom" (any reader of *McCall's* will appreciate this), she explains her filing and notebook system for keeping track of everything coming into or going out of the house. She then goes on to discuss such things as making your own household cleaners (better and cheaper), sensible food shopping, how to make simple draperies, safety and maintenance throughout the home, how to move without mishap (an excellent chapter), handling money, self-preservation (how to deliver a baby, fire protection, how to complain and

win), starting your own business, how to profit from a crisis, and on and on. *Superwoman* is indexed and intended to be a reference work, a kind of instruction manual, with places for you to fill in your own vital statistics, lists, or future aims.

Mrs. Conran is helpful in myriad ways, though I don't imagine any one reader will be able or willing to follow her in everything. For instance, her own sons have been doing all the food shopping, preparation, and cleaning up since they were 12 (and been paid for it), as well as doing their own mending since the age of seven (that's what she says). Are there any among us who would care to try that? But *Superwoman* is so comprehensive and specific in its suggestions and so good-humoured that, though I was overwhelmed by it all, I am inspired to get myself organized this very October. Now if I could only find a pencil around when I could start making a list! □

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## Swords and ploughshares

The Great War and Canadian Society: An Oral History, edited by Daphne Read, introduction by Russell Hann, New Hagtown Press, 224 pages, \$10.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919940 013) and \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 919940 02 1).

The Harvests of War, by John Herd Thompson, McClelland & Stewart, The Canadian Social History Series, 207 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 8560 5).

Senator Hardisty's Prairies, 1849-1889, by J.G. MacGregor, Western Producer Prairie Books, 272 pages, \$11.25 cloth (ISBN 0 919306 85 3).

Western Canada Since 1870: A Select Bibliography and Guide, by Alan I. Artibise, University of British Columbia Press, illustrated, 312 pages, \$17.50 cloth (ISBN 0 7748 0090 0) and \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 7748 0091 7).

By SUSAN JACKEL

READERS WHOSE notion of oral history has been formed by the books of Barry Broadfoot will be surprised to discover how sophisticated this branch of the historical profession can be. *The Great War and Canadian Society* consists of the recollections of some 200 informants from the Toronto area, gathered during the summer of 1974 by a team of young interviewers.

The interviews themselves make rewarding reading, despite the usual limitations of material of this nature; these are, after all, memories going back 50 years and more, on the part of individuals whose historical consciousness is often minimal. Just as rewarding, however, is Russell Hann's excellent introduction, which makes a convincing case for further projects of this kind. Hann's lucid summary of the relations

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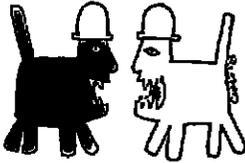
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John Fraser, Globe and Mail

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between speech, culture, and politics, and his evident assimilation of a large and complex body of scholarship in this field, give *The Great War and Canadian Society* immediate usefulness to students of Canadian history, without in the least impairing its appeal to the general reader.

The same years in another region of Canada give focus to J. H. Thompson's *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West, 1914-1918*. Thompson, too, stresses the intensity and range of the changes wrought by the First World War in the lives of ordinary Canadians, although his sources and methods more nearly reflect the concerns of the conventional social historian.

Clearly organized and more than competently written, Thompson's brief study challenges a few standard interpretations and clarifies others. Western Canadians, Thompson argues, found themselves caught between their ideological devotion to democracy, in whose name the war was being fought, and their long-standing discontent with economic policies favouring the industrial centres of Canada.

Government intervention, made necessary by wartime demands, intensified the dilemma of Western farmers. Thompson records that "during April and May, 1918, farm journals carried advertisements urging that extra acres be seeded opposite announcements that farmers were to report for military duty," while "an appeal to consumers to 'save beef,' which recommended veal as an alternative, was regarded as sheer idiocy by Western stockmen."

Thompson's book deserves more detailed commentary than there is space for here. Not the least of its merits is its author's sensitivity to Western attitudes and priorities in an area of study where all too often "Canadian" means Toronto/Montreal/Ottawa. Teachers of Canadian history would do well to consider *The Harvests of War* for their reading lists.

J. G. MacGregor is well known as a writer of popular history. Most readers, however, will probably find his latest book harder to get through than the work of the most case-bound specialist. Richard Hardisty, in *Senator Hardisty's Prairies, 1849-1889*, is merely a peg on which to hang a hodge-podge of anecdotes and random information gleaned from MacGregor's reading.

There is no denying MacGregor's devotion to Prairie lore; but one looks in vain for the transforming intelligence which turns data into history. What really functioning historian would try to recreate the thoughts of his central figure by writing, "Hardisty knew that it [the Qu'Appelle River] rose some two hundred airline miles due west" — this, supposedly, in 1855? Nor, for that matter, do we gain any satisfactory sense of

the mind and personality of Hardisty himself. There is altogether too much circumstance here, and too little character.

Too detailed and discontinuous for casual reading and too superficial and unreliable for the scholar, the book's main strength lies in its index, where one can find the names (and in the text, trace the relationships) of more than 300 residents of the Prairies during the closing decades of the fur trade. There are the makings here of a small but valuable biographical dictionary for this period in Western Canadian history; perhaps some enterprising archivist will take note, and bid vigorously for Dr. MacGregor's files when and if they ever come up for auction.

Not a history but a historian's aid is Alan F. J. Artibise's *Western Canada Since 1870: A Select Bibliography and Guide*. Nearly 4,000 entries refer the student to books, pamphlets, articles, and theses on the four Western provinces appearing as recently as 1977.

Any "select" bibliography is bound to evoke dissent, as Artibise is aware. Nevertheless, to have the recent upsurge in graduate and scholarly research assembled and organized is a valuable service in itself, and there will undoubtedly be an opportunity in future editions to repair errors and omissions.

It would take a more erudite reviewer than this one to assess Artibise's success in covering all of the several fields of study included. A few anomalies struck even this unpractised eye: W. F. Butler's *The Great Lone Land* listed in the original edition of 1872, instead of the Hurrig reprint of 1968; several articles by F. G. Roe but no mention (unless the index be at fault) of Roe's crowning achievement, *The North American Buffalo*; the absence of Gerald Hutchinson's edition of the Rundle journals, Chief John Snow's *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places*, and Donald Stevens *Writers of the Prairies*. Yet on the whole, the book seemed sufficiently complete and easy to use for it to serve, as it was intended, as a useful student guide to work in the social sciences in the Western half of the country. □

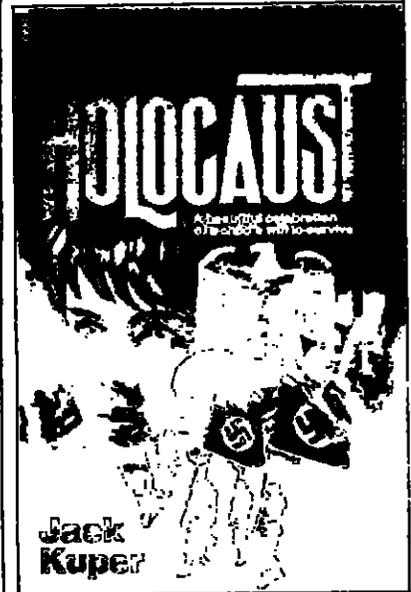
## When the crime is the punishment

*Cruel and Unusual*, by Gerard McNeil and Sharon Vance, Deneau and Greenberg, 179 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88879 005 8).

By JOHN HOFSESS

IN 1976, THE authors accompanied and observed a 13-member subcommittee of the Commons Justice Committee in a fact-finding tour of the federal prison system. Their brief, sometimes polemical,

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October, 1978, Books in Canada 25 -

report cuts through the usual sociological jargon and political rationalizations to provide a vivid picture of how Canada's penal system works and to a larger degree-how it fails. In some prisons one half the inmates are incarcerated for drug offences; after months or years of being exposed to the dehumanized prison subculture, many of the men convicted of misdemeanours are psychologically ripe to gravitate to crime.

*Cruel and Unusual* exposes many of the illogicalities and paradoxes in our current ideas about "justice." Taking the life of a convicted murderer is said to be an immoral act by the state: but imprisoning the same man for 25 years, sometimes of necessity in solitary confinement (such as the men convicted of murdering Emanuel Jacques) is regarded as humane and enlightened. Criminals in need of psychiatric treatment frequently don't get they care charged under laws that don't provide the option of therapy as part of the sentence, or they are referred to penal institutions where such therapy is not available. In sum, the authors document an overwhelming case that Canada's prisons are a breeding ground for more crime in the future. The Trudeau government often claims that certain problems - such as unemployment and inflation - are beyond merely national control: but when one examines self-contained problem areas in this country (such as the prison system, or for that matter the postal system) one finds that they are equally in a mis-

managed mess. Gerard McNeil and Sharon Vance have listened well, thought hard, and produced a damning document. □

## Out of the dark that covers us . . .

New Age **Politics** — Healing Self & Society: The Emerging New Alternative to Marxism and Liberalism, by Mark Satin. Whitecap Books, 240 pages, \$2.95 paper (ISBN 0 920422 012).

**Minimum Salary: One Million Dollars, The Race Toward Madness**, by Guy Joron, translated from the French by Mark Czarnecki, Musson, 151 pages, 58.95 paper (ISBN 0 7737 1023 x).

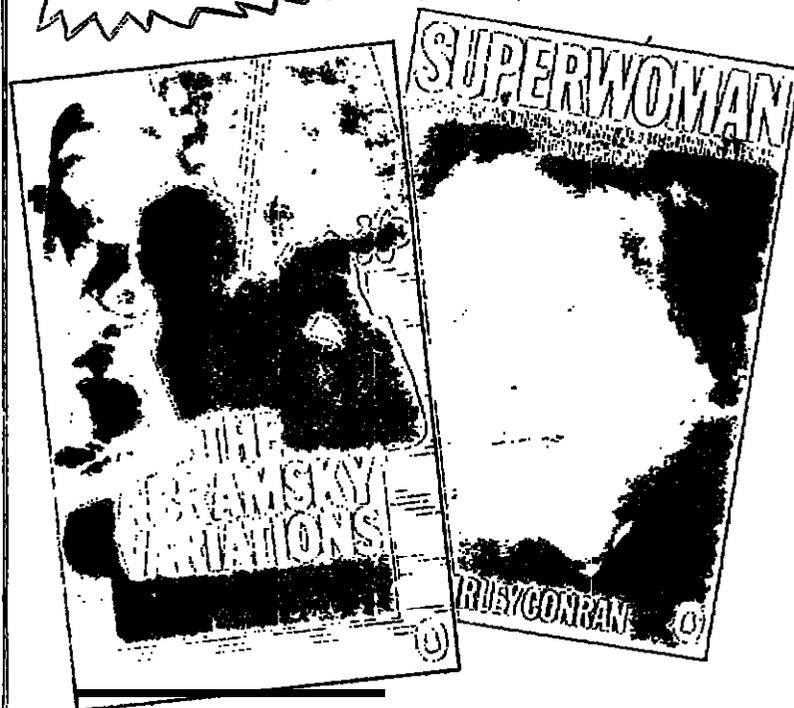
By ROBERT CARLGRRN

WHILE RUEFULLY anticipating the imminent collapse of our society and perhaps of civilization itself, our more earnest social philosophers haven't yet despaired of finding an analysis that they hope will explain just why we have created a world so full of human misery and potential for disaster, and how we may still redeem our perilous situation through appropriate political action.

In New Age **Politics**, Mark Satin insists that no fundamental improvements can be made in the structure and functioning of society until we, as thoroughly committed individuals, resolve to replace our present attitudes and values with a new ethic derived from what he calls the "trans-material" worldview. Instead of regarding the material or perceptual world as co-extensive with the whole of reality, we must acknowledge the validity of such other "states of consciousness" as the spiritual, religious, and mythic. Our ability to attain these alternative states depends on embarking on a journey of progressive self-development through which we can satisfy all our needs — whether physical, emotional, or spiritual.

For Satin, the congeries of attitudes and values that constitute our present "thing-and-death-oriented" worldview, creates the "Prison" whose main elements are patriarchal attitudes, egocentricity, scientific single vision and the bureaucratic mentality. From this source flows the "monolithic mode of production" and its institutions. Some familiar examples: the hierarchical state, large-scale technology with its huge corporations, state schooling, professional medicine, monogamy and the nuclear family, and rigidly defined social roles. These pervasive institutions all tend to restrict our freedom of choice, curtail self-reliance and personal responsibility, reduce us to producers and consumers and

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—worst of all—frustrate our need for love and esteem. Furthermore, monolithic technology is notoriously wasteful of non-renewable resources and may yet submerge our world beneath a tidal wave of solid wastes and chemical pollutants. In radical contrast, the succeeding "New Age" or "biolithic" institutions based on the trans-material worldview would be designed to allow each citizen to maximize his potential in ways largely of his own choosing, would replace coercive organizations with truly participatory ones, and enable human beings to dispense with the bogus compensations of consumerism. The old nation state would give way to autonomous community districts and regions. Huge cities would cease to exist. Biolithic technology would incorporate certain sorts of high technology but would lay its greatest emphasis on an "appropriate technology" determined by smallness of scale, relative simplicity and compatibility with resource and environmental constraints. The biolithic economy would promote both self-sufficiency and sharing; participating citizens would have the widest possible range of choice in occupations and conditions of employment.

But Satin's vision of a new society transformed by a non-violent evolutionary process of personal inner change is addressed mainly to the industrialized West. As a former Marxist, Satin has come to believe that the sort of society envisioned by Marx would represent no improvement over what we have already: modern capitalism and socialism are both creations of the Prison. But can the oppressed peoples of the Third World wait the many decades it may take for us Westerners to get our souls benignly transformed? Surely it's a measure of Satin's own egocentricity if he can't see that in the neo-colonialist Third World the crying need is for immediate and revolutionary social change. Better to eat and hope in a Marxist "Prison" than to toil, starve, and despair in a neo-colonialist or bourgeois police state. Although *New Age Politics* is well-structured and written with intoxicating enthusiasm, as soon as one puts the book aside the lovely cloud castles begin to dissipate in the cool wind of second thoughts: many of the arguments adduced by Satin in support of his position would not easily convince a determined xeplic. His trans-material metaphysic will be accepted or rejected according to one's temperament and outlook. It's strictly a take-it-or-leave-it proposition.

In his intelligent and amusing *Minimum Salary: One Million Dollars* Guy Joron, energy minister in the Parti Québécois government, shares many of Satin's concerns about environmental destruction, depletion of natural resources, quantum in-



creases in the cost of cleaning up the mess made by our wasteful society, the pernicious economic consequences of unrestrained inflationary growth, and the general social malaise and demoralization that signify the collapse of traditional values. Joron believes that it's absolutely necessary for us to change from an economy of extravagant waste to one of planned conservation. Unlike Satin, he believes that the present structures of government can be changed in such a way as to make them responsive to the wishes of an enlightened electorate. He is not a socialist but a socially committed technocrat who would use state power to intervene in the operations of the marketplace whenever such intervention promised solid benefits to the larger community. Independence from the federal structure would give Quebec the control it needs over its economy and natural resources in order to plan for a society of economic and social justice in which new unifying values might evolve.

One wishes that the politicians of English Canada would address themselves to our problems with the same sort of refreshingly dit. witty, and incisive analysis as is here offered by M. Joron. □

## Time to snuggle up to Uncle?

**CanAmerican Union Now!** by Dan K. Donnelly, Griffin House. 208 pages, \$5.95 paper.

By LOUIS FINKELMAN

DAN K. DONNELLY'S *CanAmerican Union Now!* is a forceful argument that Canada must act, quickly and decisively, to join the United States. His tone is regretful but certain: no Canadian wants to see the end of Canada; Canadians have a deep loyalty to their country. But what, Donnelly asks, are the alternatives?

Quebec can be kept in Confederation, if at all, only against the will of a sizeable party of its citizens. Quebec is doomed to economic dependency as long as its language makes it an inconvenient place for other North Americans to do business. Confederated Canada is doomed, for the indefinite future, to make sacrifices and concessions to appease Quebec.

Decentralization, in Donnelly's view, was one of those *sacrificer*. Even in the *status quo*, Confederacy is too weak. No form of decentralization will satisfy the Quebec nationalists; anything short of a separate state will become a step towards separation.

What about letting Quebec go? English Canada without Quebec would be hopelessly crippled. The weak central government would be unable to reconcile the conflicting interests of the different prov-

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METHUEN PUBLICATIONS

inces. The Atlantic provinces would be isolated. Quebec could survive as a nation, but Canada without Quebec would be Balkanized.

There is one hope for a stable, unified Canada: if the provinces would cede some of their power back to the Federal government, and the francophones of Quebec would only give up the foolish attempt to work in their language. But that is too much to hop: for. So it seems inevitable that Canada will fall apart into little, quarrelsome, impoverished states.

Before that happens, Donnelly suggests, there is still time for a strong Canada to apply to join the U.S., and leave Quebec to its own devices. All the anglophone provinces have to do is decide, quickly, to apply to become states. The U.S., in exchange, will assume a good part of the expense of union, and allow Canada to retain its distinctive culture. Then Quebec will get her comeuppance. The evident glee with which Donnelly, an anglophone Quebecker, describes francophone consternation at union is one of the rare moments of open emotion in the book.

Donnelly's analysis of the problems that Canada can expect to face in the near future seems plausible enough. His optimism about the future of Canada as part of the U.S. seems less well earned. Wherever the Canadian reality is less attractive than U.S. reality, Donnelly assumes that union will change Canada. Productivity will rise to the

U.S. rate, taxes will fall. Regional equalization payments, an unfortunate necessity in Canada, will be phased out. Wherever Canadian reality is more attractive than U.S. reality, Canada will retain her advantages. All that is required is a little rational planning. For example, we can pass a few laws to keep urban blight and crime from spreading to Canadian cities. Residency requirements for applicants for public assistance, tough zoning regulations, and some anti-crime laws ought to go a long way toward protecting Canadian cities.

If life were only so simple.

Donnelly, in exploring the costs of union, develops a hypothetical set of transition-period protection plans, giveaways for those who would be hurt by union. They include settlements for civil servants, pensioners, and others, with the most generous payments going to anglophone Quebeckers who decide to relocate. The plans are described in enough concrete detail to invite reasonable debate.

The evidence on which the book is based is projection of what will happen if various courses are followed. Donnelly describes the future with confident knowledge. There are moments when we who are more or less ignorant of the future can be disconcerted by that knowledge. Among the more remarkable items that Donnelly brings up from the land of the future is this: "Any repressed society — whether Communist or military dictatorship — once it reaches a developed

nation status, will eventually fling off its chains and choose freedom over regimentation. . . . Russia will surely [do so] within a generation; Eastern Europe perhaps sooner." Prophecies such as this do undercut Donnelly's credibility.

Donnelly's *CanAmerican Union Now!* raises issues, primarily economic issues, that are important in debate about relations among anglophone Canada, francophone Canada, and the U.S. We should not be surprised or disappointed if his questions are more convincing than his answers. □

## Look what they've done to your burg, Jean

City for Sale, by Henry Aubin, Editions L'Étincelle/James Lorimer & Co., 401 pages. \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88515 094 5) and \$10.95 paper (ISBN 0 88515 075 9).

By CHRISTOPHER BLACKBURN

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28 Books in Canada, October, 1978

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**Montreal Gazette**, focuses on the forces behind the urban transformation of Montreal during the past 20 years. As in other major centres, international interests have directly or indirectly generated most of the city's downtown development. The outside capital is largely European, with Britain leading the various interest groups involved in the redevelopment process. Foreigners, sometimes acting through Canadian frontmen to circumvent the Foreign Investment Review Agency, have been buying land and constructing highrises and large housing developments. The main construction companies and construction materials companies in Quebec — those that get the major contracts — also tend to be foreign-backed. For example, the hugest shareholder in Genstar Ltd., an ostensibly Canadian company, is La Société Générale de Belgique, a Belgian corporate giant that "controls one-fifth of all Belgian industry." Genstar, which recently purchased the Abbey Glen Property Corp., is "the largest homebuilder in Canada" and "the No. 1 owner of developable land in all of urban Canada." A subsidiary, the Mimn Co. Ltd., is a major producer of cement for highrises and highways, and the second-biggest contractor on the extension of the Montreal subway.

Aubin's point is that outsiders, with few ties and little accountability to Montreal's citizens, do much of the changing of the community. While these outsiders profit, the benefit to the host community is questionable. Some foreign investment may be necessary, but Canada is too dependent on it. One of the problems caused by massive foreign investment is that it pushes up the price of local real estate, and may upset the national growth pattern in the community.

Comparatively little foreign money goes into the industrial sector (which would create more jobs for Canadians); most goes into the development of property and the building of highrise office blocks and apartments. Aubin also points out that, of the land development companies discussed in this book, "over 90 per cent of those whose ownership can be traced have ties to petroleum, automobile, auto parts or automobile raw material suppliers." (For example, La Société Générale de Belgique is also the biggest shareholder in Petrofina.) He concludes that these foreign corporations have "a vested interest in perpetuating the public's reliance on the private vehicle — as well as high energy consumption and the vast highway network which goes along with it."

Aubin goes into the question of municipal and provincial debt involved in expanding services to meet the needs of a growing city. Again, the same global corporations reappear. In 1975 and 1976 Canada borrowed more money in foreign bond markets than any other country in the world. Interests — largely European — that underwrite bond issues often are also involved locally through land development or construction companies. One of the underwriters of a

\$50-million bond issue floated by the Montreal Urban Community in 1976 to obtain more money for subway extension was La Société Générale de Banque, an affiliate of Société Générale de Belgique.

This book has a number of photographs, maps, diagrams, and tables, that help the reader follow the often intricate details of corporate entanglements. The material is well-documented, with explanatory notes and chapter-end footnotes. Unfortunately there are a number of small but annoying typographical errors, and the material has not all been consistently updated.

The information presented in this book is often startling, and appears to justify the comment on the jacket that "Montreal's elected officials are to a large extent the pawns of international finance." The author suggests that while economic uncertainties caused by the election of the PQ government in November, 1976, slowed foreign investments in Canada, this has been only a temporary pause. To an independent Quebec, foreign investment would be even more important. □

## Sum totem of experience

**Grey Feathers**, by Wenceslaus Horak, illustrated by Jerry Huta, Three Trees Press, 28 pages, \$5.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88823 004 4).

From **First Moon to End of Year**, by Rosalia Scott, Guinness Publishing, 61 pages, \$7.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919228 08 9) and 55.95 paper (ISBN 0 919228 10 0).

**Journey to the Sun**, by Yves Troendle, Oolichan Books, 169 pages, \$11.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88982 008 2) and \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88982 006 6).

By **SHEREE HAUGHIAN**

IF THE HABITS of an average bookworm had to be recorded for statistics' sake, the scribe would have to call attention to the consistent inconsistency of the creature. In the morning, reality is caught and harnessed by the latest how-to of personal fulfilment and self-actualization. By afternoon, the reins are thrown to the wind — the spirit gallops off to Austen's society of manners or to the science-fiction salamander that drained Lake Winnipeg.

Three children's books about the customs and beliefs of native peoples suggest that publishers assume that thioffhand eclecticism gets passed, like genes for ted hair, from one generation to the next. Although it would be too simplistic to say that any of the trio fits tightly into slots labelled pure escapism or stark realism, each has its loyalties.

The ethereal buoyancy of Hula's illustrations makes **Grey Feathers** a natural for

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**METHUEN PUBLICATIONS**

October, 1978, Books In Canada 29

election into the flying carpet set of *The Arabian Nights* and *Peter Pan*. Short enough to be a bedtime soother, the story mythologizes Grey Feathers as a kind of Good Witch of the Western World. There are no weighty moral connotations to choke the imagination. Like the seasons she follows, this part-goose, part-woman is sheer whimsy. The magic is in her presence rather than her wisdom.

*From First Moon to End of Year* by Rosalia Scott brings insights about Indian culture to children in a different way. While the book does allude to the natural world's cycle, acting as a native's calendar, it does so with methodical precision rather than mythical zest. Blight-Day, the Lillooet boy the reader accompanies through the year, is just another foreign face from a supplementary social-studies manual we might have had flung at us many moons ago during our own childhood. Vaguely educational and decidedly dull.

*Journey to the Sun*, a novel based on Iroquois myths, pulls the polarities together. It recalls a cultural past when myth, and science, and realism, and escapism, weren't sectioned into smug catch-alls for flailing critics, when knowledge was the sum totem of experience.

To this well-integrated world view, Troendle adds the choicest scraps of existing literature. The familiar quest theme is played out by four youths who do knightly combat with monsters and rescue fair damsels. While journeying to unravel life's greatest mysteries, the travellers bide, like Chaucer's pilgrims, over tales and deeds of lesser import. The novel dances from fundamentals to frivolity, without skipping a beat.

Still, books that take the cosmos by the horns can deaden reader interest, particularly when the reader is under 12. The main characters help deliver *Journey to the Sun* from this evil. They are just curious little boys capable of squabbling, exaggerating their worth, and grumbling about their destiny.

In short, they are perfect Canadian heroes. □

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## Fuguist from I Ching gang

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Glenn Gould: Music & Mind, by Geoffrey Payzant, Nostrand Reinhold, 192 pages, \$11.95 cloth (ISBN 0 442298021).

By JULIE WASILEWSKI

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AT 12 YEARS OLD, Glenn Gould walked onto the stage for his first public performance. His playing was acclaimed as having "the fearless authority and finesse of a master," Geoffrey Payzant in *Glenn Gould: Music & Mind* sets out to reveal the man and mind SO Books In Canada, October, 1978

behind this "giant musical intelligence" and the effort results in a thought-provoking book.

The introductory chapter is mainly a biographical sketch of the pianist's early years. However it's not the story of Gould's personal development as a man and as a artist; rather, it's a string of isolated events that constitute the musician's public life. With such scant knowledge of the man, Payzant then attempts to acquaint the reader with the working of Gould's mind.

Teaching musical aesthetics at the U of T may make Payzant, as the blurb claims, "uniquely qualified to write this book." But it may also cause him to "force Gould's thought into theoretical contexts which it might not fit" — something Payzant is aware of and would like to avoid. He doesn't always succeed. Throughout he repeatedly discusses his subject in such terms as "obsessional artistic personality," "attitude of healthy indifference," "classical artistic disposition."

These are minor quibbles given the book's overall interest and insight. Payzant is illuminating on such subjects as Gould's "new philosophy" (a philosophy of recording) and his abandonment of the stage, the notion "that genius flourishes in solitude," the competition among musicians and the circus-like atmosphere that prevails in public performing, and, most interesting of all,

the fascinating concept of "ecstasy":

Art shares with prophecy the capacity to serve as a mirror to those who contemplate it... What does one find?... The inner vulnerable secrets of the artist... Or perhaps... a revelation of the cosmos or Divine Truth or of the human condition... Ecstasy is a delicate thread binding together music, performance, performer and listener in a web of shared awareness of innerness.

Payzant gives the reader an awareness of more than Gould. He quotes Kant, Stokowski, Storr, LeMoyné, Rubinstein and many more whose habits, work, or thoughts, have an affinity with the subject's. The point of these juxtapositions is to show that, while a musician may need isolation to create and can claim "his abilities and his achievements are his own and nobody else's," the artistic experience is not a unique experience limited to a few "greats." It is accessible to all who choose to pursue the path.

But scanning tie footnotes and bibliography, one wonders if the book has been thoroughly researched. Payzant relies heavily on newspaper and magazine articles for information about Gould. There are enough Facts for a story, enough theories for a conjecture, enough comments for a portrait, but still not enough insight for an analysis of the musician's mind. □

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## first impressions

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by Sandra Martin

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## Fine old distilled history and a first novelist already in a rut

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NOBODY EVER SAID the old man couldn't write. One might disagree with the advocacy of the Laurentian thesis or quibble with his primacy of Sir John A. Macdonald, but Donald Creighton, at 76, remains the most literate historian in the country. Now he has turned to fiction and in his first novel *Takeover* (McClelland & Stewart, 196 pages, \$12.95 cloth) his concerns are the same pre-occupations that have dominated his long and distinguished career as a political, and economic historian: anti-Americanism, conservatism, and Canadian economic development.

He is writing about the Stuarts, whisky distillers who can trace their Loyalist roots back before the American Revolution and their company through four generations of proud and canny businessmen. The book opens in the mid-1960s with Richard Stuart, prosperous, middle-aged, and bored, looking for a way out of the family harness. He wants to retire and enjoy himself but there is nobody to succeed him at Stuart & Kilgour, for his children are shown neither aptitude nor inclination and his other relatives are aged or otherwise occupied. Salvation knocks in the person of a smooth-talking gentleman from Kentucky named James L.

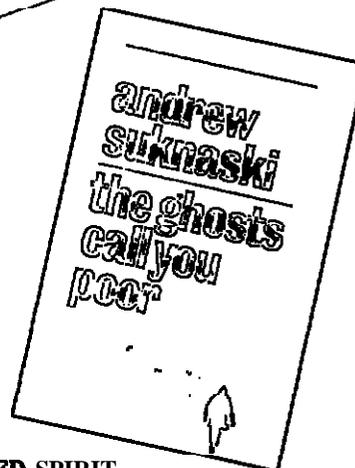
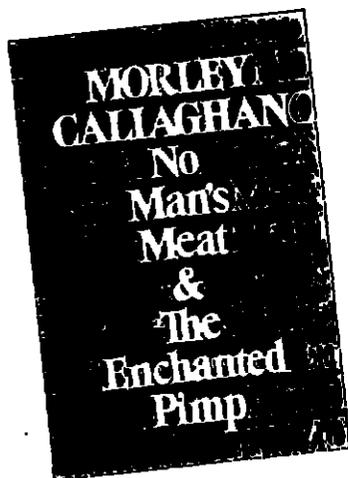
Pettrigrew who offers to buy Stuart & Kilgour For \$50 million. Stuart refuses to sell unless he has the unanimous support of each of the Family shareholders; in the process much is revealed about the integrity and ruthless self-interest of this distinguished Canadian family. Creighton writes elegantly and he draws his characters with a fine and sure hand. The plot moves slowly and in places too obviously, but these are not serious faults in a first novel. He has a good feel for horror and a fine appreciation of evil and I, for one, look forward to his next piece of fiction.

\* \* \*

THIS TALE ABOUT a young woman and her pig farm in central Alberta won the \$50,000 prize in the M a S/Bantam first-novel competition. To promote Aritha van Herk's *Judith* (McClelland & Stewart, 190 pages, \$10 cloth), Jack McClelland held a Judith-calling contest in which every appropriately named Canadian woman could write in for a free autographed copy. He must have glanced at the advance orders and anticipated remainders for this is a mean-spirited and tedious book.

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opposite of misogynist, for it would describe the heroine perfectly. At 23 Judith Pierce turns her back on the city life she embraced so eagerly a few years earlier and buys a pig farm. The move is financed partly by her inheritance (her parents having died conveniently in a tragic car crash) and partly by her savings from her job as a secretary. It is prompted by her disgust at the affair she is conducting with her boss and from a neurotic need to pay homage to the memory of her dead father-in his time one of the province's best pig farmers.

Judith disappears from the city without either a backward nod or a forwarding address and she spurns all efforts at country hospitality. Like every good Harlequin heroine, Judith camouflages her grief behind a patina of icy pride and suppresses her loneliness in the exhaustion of hard physical labour. Eventually Judith allows a grudging friendship with a neighbour, but she scornfully rejects the woman's husband and her three attractive and eligible sons. Unlike a Harlequin, *Judith* is pretentious, replete with clumsy symbolism and rushing flash-backs. Worst of all for a book of this genre, the heroine never comes to her senses and

marries the boy on the next farm and lives happily ever after. No, Judith uses her farm boy the way one of her precious sows uses the hired boar and once her lust has been satiated, Judith dismisses her swain and opts for the pigs. Let them rut together.

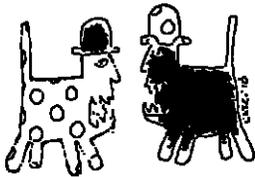
IT IS STRANGE that Canadian literature, itself an amalgam of so many diffuse strains and influences, should boast so few novels about the immigrant experience. I don't mean stories about English-speaking peoples, but books about Italians, Greeks, Ukrainians, or Hungarians, peoples to whom the language and the customs as well as the wretched climate are not only strange but incomprehensible.

*The Italians* by F. G. Paci (Oberon Press, 205 pages, \$15 cloth and \$6.95 paper) is a good novel about an Italian family named Gaetano and their life in Marionville, one of the countless northern mill towns where life is as predictable as getting drunk after the hockey game on Saturday night. The conflict is between the parents who are both unable and unwilling to abandon their heritage for the mores of the new country and their three children caught halfway between the old and new worlds, trapped between love for their parents and scorn for their ways. The children belong in neither place and *The Italians* is about their attempt to find a middle-ground. The author was himself

born in Italy, but he was raised in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., where he is now a school-teacher — good experience for such a novel.

HELEN KEREMOS is a private dyke. She is the strong silent type who likes her liquor hard and her women soft? She thinks fast, drives a mean van, and always gets her person. A *Reason to Kill* (PaperJacks, 186 pages, \$1.95) written by Eve Zarembo is a mystery thriller about the disappearance and murder of a homosexual teenager. It's adequate entertainment for a summer cottage or a city bathroom.

DAVID WATMOUGH is a prolific writer of short stories, plays, and mono-dramas; his presence, like his book, is only technically acceptable in the first-novel column. No *More into the Garden: The Chronicles of Davey Bryant* (Doubleday, 207 pages, \$8.95 cloth) is a series of sharply palpable incidents added together by a brief and rather vague narrative in which the author, David Watmough, tries to reach the Davey Bryant of his stories. The book is about a return to innocence — the Cornish garden of David/Davey's youth — a haven that the selfish, egotistical, and licentious Watmough/Bryant can never regain. Watmough has a good ear for dialogue and a keen eye, but his self-pitying tone coupled with his solipsism are inevitably grating. □



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## Sasquatch and sauerkraut, with Senate salad, Italian dressing, and Gaelic bread

**NOBODY, I COULD** have sworn, made sauerkraut the way my father did or ate it in the same weird combinations with other foods. But I'm wrong. It turns out that Captain Cock and his men did. So I'm informed by **Sailors & Sauerkraut**, excerpts from the journals of Captain Cock's expeditions (edited by Barbara Burkhardt, Barrie McLean, and Doris Kochanek, Gray's Publishing Ltd., 199 pages, \$4.95). Sauerkraut, it seems, is great for preventing scurvy, and this fascinating and handsomely produced book-books from this publisher are always well-made — includes a number of scrumptious sauerkraut recipes. Like the one for "sauerkraut soup with buckwheat porridge." This recipe, according to Captain Cock, is especially good with sour cream; my father, I'm sure, would agree.

\* \* \*

**ALL OF US** prefer things to be nice and simple. We want to know that energy derived from nuclear reactors is a good thing. Or a bad thing. Aristotelian thinking, Alfred Korzybski would say. What we don't want to know is that we don't know which. Or that it may be both good and bad in equal measure. That's why **Critical Choice: Nuclear Power in Canada: The Issues Behind the Headlines** by Charles Law and Ron Glen (Corpus, 161 Bloor Street West, Toronto, 268 pages, \$10.50) probably won't get the kind of attention it deserves. It's too dispassionate.

\* \* \*

The **Canadian Senate: A Lobby from Within** by Colin Campbell (Macmillan, 184 pages, \$5.95) offers the best overview I've seen of Canada's Upper House. It also offers extremely compelling arguments for its abolition. Only rarely, says Campbell, has the Senate protected provincial and regional interests in the way intended by the Fathers of Confederation. Instead, the Senate has for the most part functioned oligarchically, protecting Canada's "proprietary interests" by challenging, delaying, and amending legislation passed by the House of Commons. A timely book.

\* \* \*

**THE ONLY THING** wrong with Canada's **Lost Plays; Volume I: The Nineteenth Century** edited by Anton Wagner and Richard Plant (Canadian Theatre Review Publications, York University, 223 pages, \$6.95 paper) is its title. The five 19th-century comedies included here have been "lost" only in the sense that they have

not heretofore been available to a large audience. Forthcoming in this series are collections entitled *Women Pioneers*, *Plays of the Depression*, *Experimental Plays*, and *war Plays*.

\* \* \*

**JOHN GREEN**, who brought us *On the Track of the Sasquatch*, *Year of the Sasquatch*, and *The Sasquatch File*, has done it again. Now we have **Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us** (Hancock House, 492 pages, \$14.95). This book, like all Hancock House books, is shoddily produced. Green's tedious recital of the evidence convinces me, for one, that there is such a thing as a Sasquatch. But who would have thought it could all be so boring?

\* \* \*

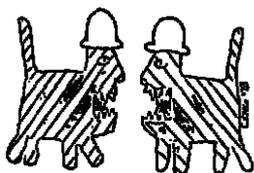
**I EXPECTED** Nicola Schaefer's *Does She Know She's There?* (Fitzhenry & White side, 235 pages, \$9.95) to be maudlin. After all, it concerns Schaefer and her professor husband coming to terms with a severely retarded daughter and deciding to lock her herself. Schaefer does a fine job of steering clear of self pity and mawkishness in this well-written book.

\* i t \*

**THE HANDSOMEST** book I've seen in a while is **From the Farthest Hebrides** (edited by Donald Fergusson, Macmillan, 321 pages, \$19.95). *From the Farthest Hebrides* rescues from oblivion 108 Gaelic folk songs. The words (in English and Gaelic), music and social history of each of the songs is presented, much of it in beautiful calligraphy. Given the quality of this book (and its limited sales potential) a real bargain at \$19.95.

\* \* \*

**I WANTED TO** like **Roman Candles: An Anthology of Poems** by Seventeen Italo-Canadian Poets (edited by Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Hounslow Press, 85 pages, \$4.95). After all, we haven't yet had in Canadian literature a clear sense of what it's like from the inside to be Greek or Italian or Portu-



## NEW POETRY FROM ANANSI



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In **HEAVEN**, the promise of Domanski's first collection is more than fulfilled. These are compassionate, beautifully-crafted poems, exploring love, death, grief, and the comforts and torments of heaven.



guess or East Indian and living here. But to judge by this book we have to wait a while yet far an Italian Irving Layton. Oh, there's the odd line that stays with one — Filippo Salvatore, for instance, writes in "Three Poems For Giovanni Caboto": "Giovanni, they erected you a monument. / but they changed your name; here I they call you John." Mostly, however, the poems are much too misty-eyed for my liking, full of sentimental talk about construction-worker fathers as in Sam D'Agostino's "I should leave poems/and this language and/I should blow up/all the sub-divisions I he carried cement for." (What's so bad about carrying buckets of cement?) Full Mo of lamentations for loved ones left behind. Vincento Albanese writes: "I did not give you flowers./I only gave you love./because I had so much./and you know/I did not want it all./or I'd have a party/of cheese and wine./and get drunk I among the broken bottles." Sigh.

\* \* \*

Essays on Philosophy and the Classics by John Stuart Mill (edited by J. B. Robson, U of T Press, 578 pages, \$35) is Volume XI of the *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*. F. E. Sparshott's intelligent and witty introduction is a delight to read. Mill, he tells us, liked to boast of his open-mindedness; but based on the essays in this book, Sparshott says, his "claim seems hardly justified." Sparshott points out, for instance, that

"Mill is not prepared to discover that Plato's thoughts are other and better than his own." Like the rest of us, Mill prefers "to

say that Plato has 'failed to grasp' a point on which they are at odds." □

## of some import

### From New Delhi to New York via Phraxos, with Kipling, Fran, and Fowles

The *Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling*, by Angus Wilson, Seeker & Warburg (Collins), illustrated. 370 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 436 57516 7). Writing a book about a literary giant of Joseph Rudyard Kipling's stature can be fairly compared with, say, the task of producing a one-volume critique of the life and works of William Shakespeare or a "reader's digest" of the King James Bible. Yet Mr. Angus Wilson addresses himself to this Herculean assignment with a scholarly thoroughness that is highly impressive. His more than 300 pages of carefully researched biographical material (including quotations from unpublished work) are graphically illustrated with rare and interesting photographs and drawings. Despite this, Mr. Wilson somehow gives the impression that his interest in his

subject is academic rather than empathetic, and there is little indication of any deep feeling for the power and beauty of Kipling's verse or his prescient vision.

The title of the book suggests there is some parallel between Rudyard Kipling's life and the experiences of the principal character in one of his earlier stories "The *Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes*." It is difficult to see why — "less it be that life itself is a strange ride for everybody, Kipling included. Another Kipling masterpiece, "Debits and Credits," might also furnish a symbolic title since Mr. Wilson has a tendency to enter debits of adverse opinion against each credit of commendation.

But, having said this, it behoves us now to hand Angus Wilson a couple of credits in

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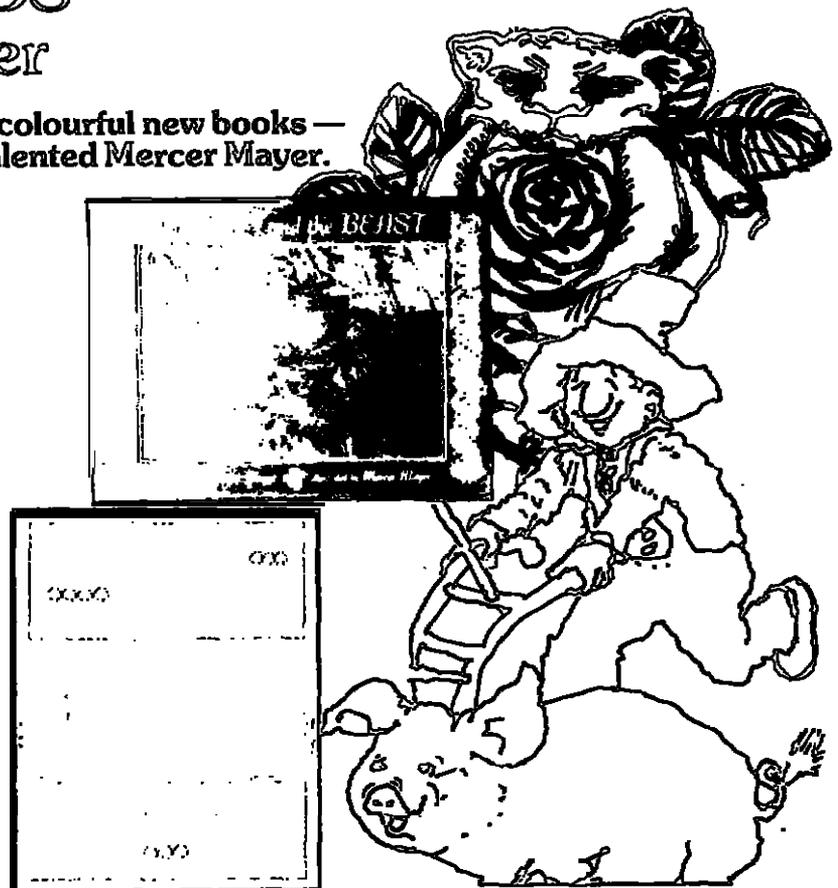
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34 Books in Canada, October, 1978



quick succession: the first for his fascinating account of the joys and sorrows of Rudyard Kipling's four-year sojourn in the U.S., his marriage to Caroline Balestier of Vermont, and his warm friendship with such eminent Americans as Teddy Roosevelt and Mark Twain (with whom he received an Honorary Degree from Oxford in 1907); the second for his lucid writing on the subject of Kipling's almost magical perception of the hearts of children. He loved and understood children and was understood by them. Credit where credit is due; when Mr. Wilson is good he is very, very good!

Not so goad, however, is the way in which he obtrudes his own political likes and dislikes into the structure of his story. Less or Mr. Wilson's political ideas and more reminders of Kipling's incomparable rhyming and prose style would make for smoother reading. Mr. Wilson tends to equate ardour with "violence" and realism with "brutality." Thurston Hopkins in his book *Rudyard Kipling: The Story of a Genius* says of Kipling's philosophy, "Let anyone who has recklessly accused the writer of brutality or crudeness read (or re-read) 'The Story of Muhammad Din,' or 'Without Benefit of Clergy' or 'The Conversion of Saint Wilfrid'."

Admittedly the multi-faceted talent of a literary colossus such as Rudyard Kipling presents a problem to biographers; the subject is just too big. Here was a man supremely in touch not only with his own time but also, through those flashes of prophecy that illuminate so much of his work, with the future. Notwithstanding Wilson's anti-Imperial bias, unprejudiced readers of his book may well conclude that in the hindsight of recent history, had Kipling's ideas and ideals prevailed in their day, the world would be all the better for it now.

Nevertheless *The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling* is well worth reading because it is highly informative about the life of a great man—even though the book is not, in the deepest and best sense of the word, interpretative. The author ends his book with the words: "He [Kipling] did so many things very well indeed that the greatest novelists never saw to do. It secures him a sure place in Olympus." Agreed, well and good, and Amen to that.

—WALTER J. REEVES

*Metropolitan Life*, by Fran Lebowik, Dutton (Clarke Irwin), 177 pages, \$10.75 cloth (ISBN 0 525 15562 7). A self-appointed trend-squelcher, Fran Lebowik is a sardonic and often devastatingly funny columnist for such disparate magazines as *Mademoiselle* and *Andy Warhol's Interview*. Conservative by nature, she is against house plants, digital clocks, Muzak, mood jewellery, *Ms. magazine*, pop psychology, most shades of green, bad grammar, Erica Jong, leisure suits, and virtually anything done in groups. She writes, mainly in aphorisms, about coping with life in New York City (which she loves) and the problems of retaining one's

sanity, integrity, and individuality when surrounded by a solid mass of trendies, Saks, and crypto-literates.

At 27 she writes with the bitter whimsy of W. C. Fields and the venomous insight of Dorothy Parker. Unlike them, she guzzles Perrier water not booze — an addiction surpassed only by her consumption of vintage cigarettes. Here are some typical Lebowitz pronouncements:

Citizen's Band radio renders one accessible to a wide variety of people from all walks of life. It should not be forgotten that all walks of life include conceptual artists, dry clean-as, and living poets.

If your sexual fantasies were truly of interest to others they wouldn't be fantasies.

Your right to wear a mint-green polyester leisure suit ends where it meets my eye.

Humourists such as Lebowitz are best read in snatches, in weekly or monthly doses. Collected, the columns lose some of their punch and most of their surprise. They don't become predictable, but the edge is softened.

With the publication of *Metropolitan Life*, Lebowitz has gone from underground cult figure to instant celebrity. She has even appeared on TV talk shows — until recently one of her pet hates. Indeed, Lebowitz is currently so popular she is in danger of becoming a trend-a painful irony for one of her sensibilities.

— SANDRA MARTIN

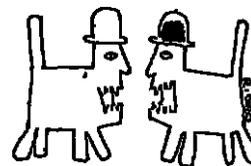
*The Magus: A Revised Version*, by John Fowles, Little, Brown & Co., 656 pages, \$15.50 cloth (ISBN 0 316 29092 0). The original version of *The Magus*, published in 1965, was Fowles' first novel, though it appeared after *The Collector*. His subsequent novels have been equally ambitious, but also somewhat disappointing, as if the tremendous energy needed to complete *The Magus* left Fowles drained, written out, as *The Alexandria Quartet* apparently left Lawrence Durrell. This return to his first love, then, might be viewed with a certain amount of suspicion, a rather shady collusion between a publisher and a spent novelist, not unlike Durrell being sent back to Egypt by the BBC. But the revision is much more than a sales gimmick. Despite

Fowles' own protestations ("I have taken this somewhat unusual course not least because . . . the book has aroused more interest than anything else I have written"), and despite the hatchet job he did on the novel when turning it into a flimsy film script a few years ago, Fowles has obviously returned to his magus with reverence.

What has been changed? Chapters 29 (Urfe's first conversation with the pseudo-Lii and the story of de Deukans — which seems, by the way, to be an early sketch of *The Collector*) through '53 (Urfe's encounter with the German soldiers) have been almost entirely rewritten or restructured. Urfe tumbles to Lily's "real" identity more quickly, only to be duped more quickly — and more mercilessly — by Conchis. Urfe is slightly more intelligent. Lily more alluring, and Conchis more diabolical and, oddly enough, more human. The many parallels with *The Tempest* have been underscored and increased, with Urfe emerging as a more credible cross between Ferdinand and Caliban, Lily as both Mel and Miranda, and Conchis as the all-controlling Prospero in his cell. Some of the earlier erotic scenes have been made more explicit, primarily in response to the changed sexual coded *Bat The Magus* was originally conceived to bring about. In one scene, Urfe's last meeting with Julie, explicitness has weakened the effect: in the first version their "affaire" is never consummated; that it is now makes the ensuing trial scene, well, anti-climactic.

Although roughly the same length as the original, the revised version leaves almost nothing out, and much has been added. It is at the same time more complex and more accessible: a dozen years of mulling and fiddling by one of this generation's best novelists over one of civilization's most recurrent themes — the chasm between illusion and reality that is constantly being bridged by art — has resulted in a work of permanent significance.

—WAYNE GRADY



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## Surrealists thrive, naturalists bud, and social 'realists keep socializing

MICHAEL BULLOCK's *Black Wings of Death* (Fiddlehead, 72 pages) and Roy Kiyooka's *The Fountainebleau Dream Machine* (Coach House, 60 pages, \$4) are witness to the continued vitality of surrealism in Canada. And they are further similar in that both authors seem open to Eastern influences: Bullock to the compression of Chinese poetry; Kiyooka to the paradox and playfulness of Eastern wisdom.

Kiyooka's is a finely produced book combining surreal collages with texts suggested by or interpreting them. At first Kiyooka's choice of images and materials seems random, insignificant. But cumulatively there frail, whimsical, yet strangely serious tests develop new suggestions within the surrealist message of unconscious creativity. The subtitle of the collection, "13 Frames from a Book of Rhetoric," leads one to look forward to the complete work.

Despite similarities, Bullock's work is so

distinct from Kiyooka's that the two books together prove the futility of attempts to take surrealism as a finished and definable phenomenon. Kiyooka composes riddling, punning, and allusive meditations while Bullock's medium is the pure surrealist image delivered in classical grammar and simply lyric form. Where Kiyooka evokes the floating, secure adventure of the dream, Bullock confronts violence and nothingness. His characteristic style is propelled by phantasmagoria, though he is also capable of a lovely, fantastical pastoralism. The lyric is rigorous, and among the several perfect and many exciting poems here, there are others that are flawed by cliché and a wooden versification, especially in Bullock's shorter lines.

Surrealism may be alive in Canada, but there are few "surrealists." It is clear from reading *The Poet's Progress* (Coach House, 56 pages, \$4) that David McFadden is one of our best poets who owes much to the genre. His ability "to see a mosque in

place of a factory" is only one of the ingredients of this impressive long poem.

*The Poet's Progress* is a meditation on the impermeability of the world to human thought, a sorrow that might be compensated for by man's role as an integral part of his world. McFadden engages this theme of "knowing" versus "being" with characteristic concreteness, vividness, wit, and supple mastery of idiom.

Toronto now is so full of peoples and classes, coincidences and signs, energy and activity, that it ought to have a poetry of its own. The Universe Ends at Sherbourne & Queen by Ted Plantos (Steel Rail Educational Publishing; 128 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$5.95 paper) is a pioneer effort in that direction. Or perhaps it is a stroke of social realism aimed at the new bourgeois metropolis.

In any case, Plantos' work has the qualities of both pioneer poetry and social realism. Extremely simple and uniform in outlook, descriptive, unpolished, often etude in expression; it pays no particular attention either to contemporary writing or to the range and potential of language. Thus it is often wooden, off-putting in its clumsiness and failures of tone. However, credit must be given to Plantos' knowledge of, concern for, and vivid depiction of the poor and outcast of Toronto's Cabbagetown.

Brian Fawcett's *Creatures of State* (Talonbooks, 126 pages, \$5.95) and Brian Henderson's *The Expanding Room* (Black Moss, 93 pages, \$3.95) reflect the work being done by younger poets in an effort to forge a purely Canadian idiom, an idiom that appeals to the facts of nature while it attempts to cope with modern social and psychological realities.

Fawcett's work, firmly rooted in landscape, townscape, and personal experiences, expands into a well-earned and genuine visionary criticism of the deadly contradictions within society. It is easy to read about these things and repeat them, as many poets do today. For Fawcett, the knowledge rises directly from the contrast between the vast cleanness of nature and our throwaway settlements, between man's intellectual heritage and the use he makes of it — contrasts that Fawcett seems to feel viscerally.

The title poem of Henderson's collection describes how, in imagination, "our living room grows wide as wind"; the furniture becomes forest, the ceiling sky, and he sees wolves pulling down a young caribou behind a sofa. This is Henderson's typical strategy. Those facts that can be related to nature, in its purity and innocent violence are seen as real, while psychological or social facts are transformed into natural ones. Yet the human ego remains present, sometimes refreshed, sometimes shattered by the wilderness within it. Henderson's writing has a nervous energy, though it seems at times perfunctory. Many of the poems lack a distinction of style and resemble the standard one-page periodical



# dreamspeaker

## Cam Hubert

Two stories in one haunting book: *Dreamspeaker*, about a troubled young boy and a wise old Indian, which was an Award-Winning CBC-TV drama; *Tem Eyos Ki*, a passionate narrative on the Indian Land Claims question. Don't miss it. \$10.95.



Clarke  
Irwin 

poem too much. But potential and sometimes accomplishment are to be found here.

**Diasporas** (Mosaic Press/Valley Editions, 127 pages. \$4.95 paper, 55.95 cloth) is Seymour Mayne's 10th collection of poetry since 1964. Despite this tireless labour, the Muse — an ungrateful goddess

- has seldom favoured him. Here, especially in such shorter poems as "Amsterdam," he achieves some notable successes. But in general, this volume often displays an ungainly way with words, a tendency to moralize imagery, and a grandiloquence that makes it difficult to enjoy. □

involved with is Imagism. It dispersed itself after about three years in England — from about 1912 to 1915. Then it vanished. It was the custom to say that it wasn't very important, but lately we've begun to see that that was the central movement that propelled all. But that movement had to split up, and was judged unimportant after it split.

**BiC:** How is one group judged to important, another no?

**Dudek:** It's obvious when a movement is important. The movement becomes important when there is a reality behind it. *Tish* is important because it imported into Canada a kind of poetry that grew out of a central line of Modernism — in Olson and Creeley and Duncan and others and it changed all the young writers in Canada as a result. Because the principle behind it is correct. It's the principle of authentic speech in relation to one's life and the particulars of existence. It's made for some lousy poetry, of course, but the principle itself is sound. You know, the central principle that makes for Modernism in all the arts — experiment with the medium — results in some bad painting and some bad music and some impossible poetry when it is carried to its ultimate limits. That's one of my theories — though I'm a Modernist — that Modernism can be a destructive process. But along the way, it creates a lot of excitement and some masterpieces — James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Eliot's *Waste Land*. But you can see that *The Waste Land*, as a poem, is falling apart. It's a poem that is really exploding and becoming a chaos, not a poem in the sense that Tennyson would have accepted.

The nature of Modernism in all the arts is to me an obsessive question, the central question for some time to come for writers and thinkers. It's fashionable now with Frank Davey and Warren Tallman and others to talk about Modernism as finished. They speak of this as the post-Modern period. But that's not entirely hue. The whole nature of the thing they're doing, the post-Tishites, is Modernist, an extreme form of modern experiment that disintegrates the poem.

**BiC:** That sounds sad.

**Dudek:** It's too bad, but there's a kind of honesty that demands it. You want to get close to life, to yourself, to the truth of living, and you want that so very badly that you will let go of the structure of the poem. It's a terrific desire to get the mud down on the page.

**BiC:** Even at the expense of the poetry?

**Dudek:** They've given that up as not being the essential thing; and that's where they're wrong, in my opinion. The objective poem as art object is something they are willing to throw out — the idea of a poem as a work of art that will endure. That is something I believe in like a religion, but they've lost it.

In a brief way, I would say that in Canada, the generation of Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman, Charles G.D.

October, 1978, Books In Canada 37

## interview

by Marion McCormick

# Why Louis Dudek thinks Modernism remains the central question in the arts

LOUIS DUDEK was born in Montreal 60 years ago and has been a major literary force in Canada for much of his adult life — both as a poet and as a patron of poets. In 1943 he joined John Sutherland and Irving Layton in editing *First Statement* and he was editor of *Delta* from 1957 until it ceased publication in 1966. He now lectures in Canadian and European literature at McGill University, where Marion McCormick tracked him down to ask his views on the contemporary scene:

**Books in Canada:** Is there a Montreal group, meaning an Anglo-Montreal group, as there was in the 1940s with the *First Statement* group?

**Louis Dudek:** Oh sure. Montreal is peculiarly a centre. I feel it's back to about what it was in the 1940s. There's a sufficient number of poets at the Véhicule Gallery with Ken Norris at the centre, and some others in the colleges, people like David Solway and Michael Harris and others. They're not of one school. They write different ways. But Montreal is again a place that critics would want to look at to write seriously about poetry.

**BiC:** What causes a group to form?

**Dudek:** A group forms because they are people of a mind, obviously. It's a very intense experience. When a few people come together and their ideas and emotions start to combine, the impact is much greater than the sum of the individuals. The *Tish* group in Vancouver was like that from 1961 on. They changed Canadian poetry, and the Véhicule Gallery group is partly related to them. It's the same aesthetic. So, the fundamental question: What happens when a group comes together? It comes down to what happens when nations are formed, or religions. When groups of human beings come together, they form a kind of psychic power that other people feel.

**BiC:** It seems to me that sometimes groups form for reasons of mutual protection.

**Dudek:** That doesn't apply here. There's something positive that brings them together and makes them enjoy each other's

company and each other's work, to talk about what they're doing and quarrel among themselves, because that's always there. As time goes on, the quarrelling becomes more significant than the thing that holds them together, and then they split apart. Don't you think that's the rule — the way that *Tish* now is dispersed all over Toronto and elsewhere, the way that *First Statement* was dispersed in 1947?

**BiC:** You just get tired of each other?

**Dudek:** No. Essentially unique differences between individuals are what cause the quarrels. There are quarrels between all sorts of people, but between writers the quarrels are based on temperamental differences and differences of approach to reality and the craft they're working at. Eventually these become dominant. A Layton is different from a Dudek, and they cannot really work together beyond a certain point in their development. And that happens with each of these groups.

**BiC:** They become destructive.

**Dudek:** Destructive of the group, and maybe there's a letdown in the period after a group has broken apart. The important movement for modern poetry that we're all



Louis Dudek

Roberts, were trying to write a poem that had already been written, by Swinburne, by Tennyson. The generation that A.M. Klein belonged to, and Frank Scott and A.J.M. Smith, were trying to write a poem that had not been written. But they had a good notion of what it was going to be — a modern poem. Now the present generation does<sup>1</sup> have any conception of the ideal poem they want to produce. They do have very clearly the idea of the process and the purpose for which they're writing, but not the poem. So naturally they fail in making the poem, but they do get at a<sup>2</sup> important idea about process.

**BiC:** Are you hopeful about the future of poetry?

**Dudek:** Oh yes. The drive that is propelling the new poetry is very genuine. It's a real aesthetic. And it can't fail altogether. There are already a few good lines here and there.

**BiC:** Are there parallel developments among the francophone poets, or are the two groups so divorced that you can't even tell us?

**Dudek:** It's a great pity that I've become less interested in French-Canadian writers since the political movement that has developed here. I don't believe in nationalism. It doesn't represent the real French Canada as I know it. I hate the whole idea of nationalistic group-feeling. Nationalism was a liberating idea in the 19th century, when oppressed minorities were making a bid for freedom, but it isn't in the 20th. Nationalism "is a movement for power and expansion, on the part of majorities who are taking over. The French-Canadian movement in the beginning was very hopeful and good. It brought together the English and French Canadian writers; but when it became committed to separatism, it became exclusive. I think poetry is universal, but if it's going to be a matter of "we" and "they" -and "Gott mit uns" -the" it's junk. That kind of poetry is anti-human and is not going to survive. Show me some great patriotic poetry. Any that survives probably does so in spite of its patriotism.

**BiC:** So a poet can't afford political commitment. It's anti-poetic?

**Dudek:** Well, what I'm saying is political, you know. □

## on the racks

by Paul Stuewe

### Tales of multi-cultural mystery and multi-national imagination

THE 1974 TRIAL of Toronto developer Peter Demeter for the murder of his wife Christine had just about everything you could ask for in the way of glamour and excitement: lots of sex; one vicious act of violence; and exotic foreign and domestic backgrounds featuring large numbers of improbable Central Europeans. The Demeters wove such a tangled web of mutual deceit about themselves that we may never discover all the whos and whys of Christine's death. But thanks to George Jonas and Barbara Amiel's *By Persons Unknown* (Signet, \$2.25), we now know almost everything else about the life and times of a couple whose marriage might serve as a case study of the Lennon-McCartney thesis that "money can't buy you love."

The process of ferreting out the often rather rank details of the Demeter menage seems to have had some effect on the co-authors writing style, which sketches most of the participants with "a" acidity bordering on snideness and exhibits a marked fondness for atrocious puns and overburdened metaphors. The intrinsic fascination of the story being told, however, easily carries the reader over these rough spots, and as compensation then are a number of extremely acute observations regarding our multi-cultural mosaic. In terms of immediacy, impact, and insight into the real world behind the headlines, *By Persons Unknown* is the sort of book that only capable journalists can create, and one can safely predict that it will continue to be read as long as anyone cares about what it was like to live in the Canada of the mid-1970s.

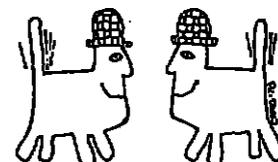
But if you've had enough of contemporary reality, Richard Wright's *Farthing's Fortunes* (Signet, 52.50) will take you on a most delightful time trip through the North America of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Our Hero, Billy Farthing, is a virile young rogue moving from adventure to adventure the way the rest of us move from soup to dessert, and along the way we gentle readers are also treated to a dazzling series of vivid social milieus peopled with interestingly oddball characters. This is the unpredictable world of picaresque fiction, where all fates are provisional and the protagonist's personality a public work-in-progress. Wright serves it up with all the zest of a veteran writer finally getting his teeth into something he's always wanted to try. As my Faithful Companion commented, "This is in the same league as Tom Jones and you don't have to put up with all those bloody digressions."

Where *Farthing's Fortunes* displays a contemporary writer putting new life into an old genre, Jack Hodgins' *The Invention of the World* (Signet, \$2.50) shows us one hard at work mastering some more recent innovations. Hodgins tries hard for philosophical and psychological resonances in this tale of a religious sect and its effects upon a small West Coast community, but for all the evident technical expertise — radical temporal shifts and multiple narrative points of view figure prominently — his plotting and character depletion are quite tenuous whenever they depart from familiar stereotypes. Part of my inability to warm to the book may result from the hearty folksiness of much of the narration, a "exceptionally tedious idiom that is not difficult to write but is extremely difficult to write well; conversely, admirers of the novels of Robert Kroetsch and Howard O'Hagan may find it quite attractive. *The Invention of the World* is a "ambitious novel by an undeniably talented writer, but it is also a good deal less than the masterpiece our more febrile reviewers have been" quick to dub it.

Pauline Gedge's *Child of Be Morning* (Signet, 52.50) returns us to the more familiar genre of the historical novel, Egyptian Division, where the nobles are beautiful, the masses are passive, and phrases such as "he suddenly realized" and "she was aware for the first time" stand in for the basics of psychological motivation. But if this is a thoroughly conventional book, it is also a solidly researched and expertly constructed one that should appeal to aficionados of the form, although others might be advised to test the waters before swimming. Some advice, I heard them once more murmur, wearily, as the setting sun glared the desert with a patina of yellow journalism. . .

Also in paperback

- *A Bird in the House*, Margaret Laurence (Bantam-Seal, \$1.95).
- *A Whale For the Killing*, Farley Mowat (Bantam-Seal, \$1.95).
- *Bloody Harvest*, Grahame Woods (Bantam-Seal, \$2.25). The fall and rise of a rural Ontario loser, slow in spots but the climax depicts one of the most harrowing scenes I've ever tottered through. □



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# Letters to the Editor

## WASPS ON THE NEEDLE

Sir:  
I did not call academics "pathetic stumblebums" (May). That epithet was reserved exclusively for the Tallmans and Barbour whom I take to be representative of the Wasp gentility that has presently established itself in the leaseneries of this country. Judging from the tone and contents of Mr. Vardon's letter, he's probably too young to know the battles that were fought to remove the genteel restrictions on language and subject matter that bobbed the Canadian writer prior to the 1940s and the establishment of *First Statement*. My point, ignored by all your correspondents, is that a new gentility has replaced the old one, consisting mainly of academics who churn out collections of lifeless "poems" that no one but their most devoted friends will ever read. They derive status from these collections, authority at conferences and with literary gents, and the changed cultural climate that prevails undoubtedly helps them to obtain promotions. It's the Wasp sensibility that I deplore, not the Wasp who certainly has every right to exist. It's his outlook and attitudes I find limited and limiting. It's his lack of imagination and thinness of emotional response and his very real dominance in the economy and culture that I've been attacking ever

since I first began to write and publish. John F. Vardon's acute observation that I and other non-Wasps have been published and have even collected some honours on the way is not really very helpful if it's placed in proper context of my argument. I do not wish to instruct him where others have apparently failed to do so but Mr. Vardon might remember the next time he pens a letter that truthfulness, logic, and a strong grip on the issue under discussion are what make the difference between facetiousness and irony. But, good Lord, facetiousness and wave-of-the-wrist irrelevancies hoping to be taken for wit is what the cornered Wasp always comes up with. He has never disappointed me yet, not in four decades of writing and publishing!

While I'm at it, I might as well clear up another misunderstanding. For me, an academic is not someone who teaches at a university: he is someone who substitutes literature for life. He's a specialist on the erotic poetry of the Renaissance who masturbates daily. The other day someone remarked to me that a well-known professor of CanLit had an orgasm each time he read one of his favourite poems. "I believe it." I said somewhat sourly and left it at that. An academic is someone who avoids the seminal issues, the actualities of the day. I., the May issue there are two letters concerning the editorship of *Canadian Literature*. They make precisely those points against gentility and academicism that I've made over and over again. Only to have my words fell on cotton-plugged ears. Whether it's the class structure of our society, Christianity's responsibility for the Holocaust, the Wasp's responsibility for the disaffection of the French-Canadians, the respectability and hypocrisy of the Christian churches, whatever the lii issue may be, there you will no, find the academic. I'm not pitting

Jew against Weep. I'm presenting an outsider's view of the Christianized culture of this country, a culture whose sogginess and mendacity are exactly what the genteel and academic will defend to the last drop of distilled water in their veins. I'm too old a hand at this not to realize that my recent publications have touched a very sensitive nerve indeed. I'm also too experienced to anticipate any other response but fuzzy think-log and name-calling but not too weary of them not to be delighted by the spectacle of the Vardons and Skeltons squirming lii pierced bugs on the point of my needle.

Robin Skelton is too generous. For writing such a hilarious letter it is surely he, not I, who deserves the Leacock Medal for Humour. Though its bovine elegance made me think of a cow stretching herself on her own yield of dung, I hope his numerous friends and well-wishers will now join me in trying to persuade him that his real talents lie in composing funny five-minute skits rather than in turning out one brilliant unread opusculum after another. Were Skelton to apply himself to the task I know he'd have more success than he has had in eying to come across to an increasingly bored public as poet, horny goat-footed sage, and Yeats' *doppelgänger*. In any event, whatever he does he knows he always has my concern for his stability and happiness.

Irving Layton  
Toronto

## SECTARIAN PEEVISHNESS

Sir:  
By founding and sustaining a recognized scholarly journal devoted to Canadian literature in a time when few other critics considered the subject worthy of serious attention, George Woodcock



... politics... movies... Musk Ox... advice to the lovelorn...

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performed our writing a service of historic dimension and our debt to him for it will not easily or quickly be repaid.

Robin Matthews displays a sad lack of self-awareness in describing his initial attack on Woodcock as "urbane, restrained, and cheerful" (May). To have greeted the fulfilment of Woodcock's great labour with what amounted to sectarian peevishness required a meanness of mind that has few parallels in the annals of literary bitchery, and Woodcock paid him an undeserved compliment by replying to it personally. To then discover Matthews making an issue of Woodcock's manners, while in the same breath delivering a vicious slam upon the innocent head of Warren Tallman, who has taken no part in the exchange, leaves one wondering whether the man is just drunk, or suffering from some permanent imbalance of the senses.

In his first outburst Matthews accused Woodcock of actively suppressing writers of articles on literary nationalism. When Woodcock denied this and asked for names Matthews made the less than devastating reply that the only two names he could think of — Waters and McDougall — had in fact published, but perhaps might have been published more. He then performed the logically interesting feat of faulting Woodcock for not publishing a list of writers he admits showed no interest in being published. Granting him the benefit of the doubt and accepting Matthews' claim that none of his malice stems from the fact that his own writing was rejected by Woodcock (justifiably, if his letters be taken as a sample) his biggest bugbear seems to be a writer that Woodcock failed to suppress (Tallman).

Matthews' conviction that a sinister anarchist plot exists between Woodcock and "Tallman's Black Mountain literary end political minions" is purely hallucinatory. The widely scattered host to whom Warren Tallman gave literary succor over the years includes no anarchists that I am aware of but does include a goodly number of dedicated Marxists who hate anarchism like Henry Ward Beecher hated the devil. And Woodcock her basic personal differences with Tallman's literary stance which he has gone so far as to express in the Vancouver press.

If Matthews possessed even marginal familiarity with the West Coast poetry scene to which he has set himself up as such a dedicated detractor he would realize Woodcock's publication of Tall-

man is proof of his openness to inhospitable views and evidence of his usefulness as an editor. There is no doubt that in order to keep up regular publication in a pioneering field *Canadian Literature* was forced to use some undistinguished work, but if Woodcock was ever guilty of suppressing worthwhile writing that came along, Matthews has resoundingly failed to show it.

I am concerned enough with native character in this country to spend my time publishing a journal on it but I see nothing to be gained by the sort of cankerous negativism Matthews has put on display here.

Howard White  
Editor, *Raincoast Chronicles*  
Madeira Park, B.C.

### SETH'S DAD SAYS..

Sir:

One habit of mine that my wife finds particularly endearing is my ability to loiter over the small problems of domestic life until everyone in our household has adapted to the contingencies and forgotten what the crisis was. Our most recent example occurred last spring. Our three-year-old son refuses to sleep in a room that does not have an open window. One April day his bedroom window, no matter how much force a 102-pound woman with a three-foot crowbar could exert on it, refused to open. Every day for a week or so Seth asked me if I'd fixed it, but getting the usual reply he finally gave up and stoically moved his foaming onto tie-back porch where he has slept ever since. The weather has been hot and he may learn something about the constellations so I can't see how it will hurt the ted. He doesn't mind anyway because it means he can litter the entire floor area of his room with hit watercolours and not have to rearrange them each night to find a convenient place to crash.

I am probably the only person in history who reads *Books in Canada* regularly six months after it comes out, which while allowing your rag to share in my most endearing character trait probably means I shall never achieve the instant fame I am sure must be visited upon those appearing in your Letters column. Undaunted, I write.

I don't giggle maniacally in the kitchen alone on insomniac nights very often. And I especially

don't do it over book reviews, and certainly not over a review of reviewers by a bookseller. But Paul Stuewe's "Soft a Recycled" [on blurbs] in the March issue pulled out all the stops. Riveting! Ribald! Hilarious! A Comic Masterpiece! And whoever was the lunatic visionary that pasted-up the "Frog à la mode" in the middle of the last paragraph of Mr. Stuewe's article deserves to share The Joseph Heller Collage Tempby with David Gilhooly, the demented soul who drew it. Forget all those other crumbbuns you got writing for you and turn over a full issue of the pulp to Stuewe and The Frogman and the paste-up artist. Canada will never be the same, and I'll have my copy bronzed along with Seth's shoes.

B. Strange  
Vancouver

## CanWit No. 36

RUMOUR HAS IT that the recent cutbacks in the CBC's budget, now frozen at \$500 million a year, are just the beginning. By mid-1979 the corporation may be subsisting on only \$50 million a year, about \$40 million of which will of course be spent on administration. How will the corp cope? Two-hour specials featuring one Irish Rover? Theme evenings to repeats of the best of the *Viewpoint*? Readers are a typical prime-time schedule for CRC-TV in its impending age of austerity. Maximum: 100 words. Address: CanWit No. 36, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4. The deadline is Oct. 30.

### RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 34

EVIDENTLY A certain northern light-heartedness lurks in these sombre latitudes after all. Our request for "illicit threesomes" brought forth an abundance of tongue-in-cheekiness, causing endless ruminations among the judges. The winner is David Lane of Charlottetown, P.E.I., who receives \$25 for mating these John-and-Mary quips:

- gatecrashing bore (one at every party)
- tarred and featherbedded (punished for favouritism)
- ring-a-dingbat (escort service for the undiscriminating)
- South Sea Bubblegum (coconut flavoured)
- greasy spoonerism (minced words, side order of fries)

#### Honourable mentions:

- figureheadache (Governor General's constitutional dilemma)
- nightshiftless (an insomniac)
- hammer and popsicle (kindergarten approach to communism)
- quicksilver dollar (inflationary unit of currency)
- inanthropopropriate (something impossible for man to do)
- will power and the glory (psychological rewards of dieting)

—Glynn Davies, Toronto

## men and their libraries: 5

by Foo



- crackpot of dawn (a rooster)
- baptism of fireflies (light rain in the night)
- in the same breathalyzer (another impaired driver)
- cubcrootbeertrivalof7-Up)
- face to facelift (meeting an old friend)
- strike the right noteworthy (meet an influential person)
- go the whole hogwash (tell a whopper)  
—Mrs. Myra Stülbom, Saskatoon

\* \* \*

- trashcanan (adulterated polka)
- limerickshaw (fast two-footed poetic metre)
- downunderwear (Australian rib-tickler)
- pitchforked tongue (a biting ambiguity)
- firehosery (matching ensemble with hot pants)
- sophomorass (youthful indecision)  
—Roger Glazin, Stouffville, Ont.

\* \* \*

- paperback scratcher (brother or sister author who reviews paperback reissue of your latest book)
- Canada Post haste (a contradiction in terms)
- slapdash seven (Canada's latest long take-off and landing airplane)
- rocks in the headline (journalese)
- tricky dictionary (Watergate fact book)
- tar-sand beaches (the latest natural resource)
- Labatt's fifty-fifty (watered beer)
- Orange and lemon parade (Toronto motorcade)
- Georgian Bay of Pigs (Yorktown, 1778)
- peeping Tom, Dick, and Harry (voyeurs' convention)
- Mission impossible dream (code name for Canada's national unity task force)

- Lotto Canada Post (chance of same-day mail delivery — that is, 1:10<sup>6</sup>)  
—M.G. and N.R. Evans, Toronto

\* \* \*

- taking the bullshit by the horns (analysis of an election speech)
- Peter Pan Principle (when bureaucrats do *not* rise to their level of incompetence)
- dogma in the manger (a belief that holds on in defiance of the facts)  
—Grant Buckler, Wolfville, N.S.

\* \* \*

- gurubarb pie (a confection consumed by those desiring an exalted state of oneness with the universe)
- gurubarb pie-eyed (a decidedly unexalted state caused by an excess of gurubarb pie)
- Inadvertentmaker (an involuntary follower of Omar)
- sewingding (a wild party held by the garment industry)
- mamillaregalia (official trappings of a sex goddess)
- zodiacuary (a star statistician)  
—Peter Money, Toronto

\* \* \*

- rolling stone mason (improvident bricklayer)
- don't honourable mention it (a disclaimer expressed with Oriental politeness)
- penny pinch'er fanny (amorous approach by a skinflint)  
—L. Bannerman, Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

\* \* \*

- ring around the collarbone (museum curator's nightmare)
- knock-knock wood (a spell to ward off bad jokes)

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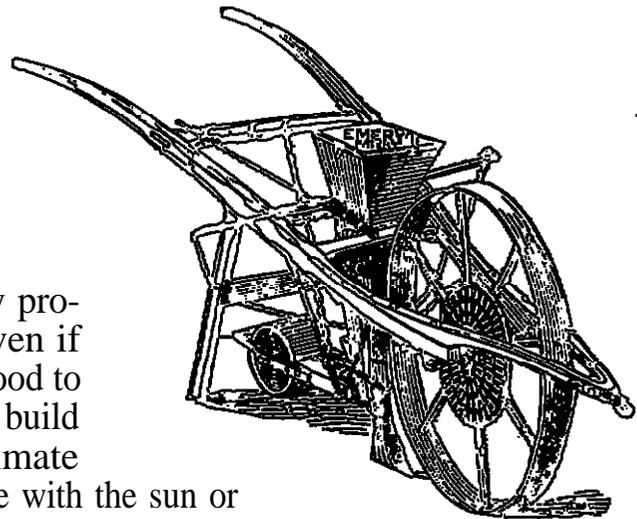
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—W. Ritchie Benedict, Calgary  
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—Bruce Bailey, Montreal  
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—Christine Arcand, Ottawa  
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- back to the stonewall (postal union negotiations)  
—M. McKenzie, Montreal  
\*\*\*
- sweet and sour puss (bad-tempered waiter in a Chinese restaurant)
- John Deere Abby (farmers' advice-to-the-lovelorn column)
- run of the Millhous (Nixon's memoirs)  
—Donna Samoyloff, Toronto  
\*\*\*
- far out of print (William Burroughs)
- ground zero beef (radioactively sterilized)
- Lower House broken (a Liberal backbencher)  
—Rod Manchee, Ottawa  
\*\*\*
- gin and Teutonic (German bartender's special)
- Diefenbaker's Dozen (Western Tory Old Guard)  
—Barry and Janet Baldwin, Calgary  
\*\*\*

- sovereignty association football (Levesque's favourite game)  
—Peter Gorrie, Ottawa  
\*\*\*

- flock of sheep-skins (cowardly academics)  
—Richard Parker, Liverpool, N.S.  
\*\*\*

- hickory daiquiri dock (where the rumrunners stashed it)
- lunatic fringe benefit (party for Monty Python)  
—Joan McGrath, Toronto

## The editors recommend

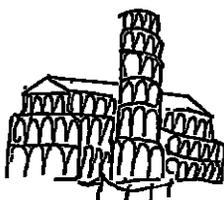
THE FOLLOWING books were reviewed in the previous issue of *Books in Canada*. Our recommendations don't necessarily reflect the reviews:

### FICTION

- The Glassy Sea**, by Marian Engel, McClelland & Stewart. A nun's tale. Not vintage Engel (neither was *Bear*, said our ursophobic reviewer), but highly readable nevertheless.
- Murder by Microphone**, by John Reeves, Doubleday. Satirical detective story in which the CBC is the chief victim.
- Red Dust**, by W.D. Valgardson, Oberon Press. Another fine collection of short stories from the verbal Gillray of Gimli.

### NON-FICTION

- Fun Tomorrow**, by John Gray, Macmillan. A literate publisher's fascinating memoir of the 1930s.
- G Toronto**, by William Kurelek, General Publishing. A study of urban contrasts.
- Northern Vagabond**, by Alex Inglis, McClelland & Stewart. Biography of geologist and Bay Street baron J.B. Tyrrell.



### POETRY

- Loosely Tied Hands**, by Joe Rosenblatt, Black Moss Press. Award-winning celebrator of unlovely fauna graduates from amphibians (toads) to reptiles (snakes).
- Still Jack**, by John Thompson, House of Anansi. Brave experimental writing, the last testament of a poet who died in 1976.

## Books received

THE FOLLOWING Canadian books have been received by *Books in Canada* in recent weeks. Inclusion in this list does not preclude a review or notice in a future issue:

- The Merger**, by Earl Kulkarbocker, PaperJacks.
- Bearwalk**, by Lynne Sallot and Tom Felner, PaperJacks.
- The Assignment**, by Martin Myers, PaperJacks.
- Frigate**, by Martin Myers, PaperJacks.
- Kamouraska**, by Anne Hébert, PaperJacks.
- Poems and Elegies 1972-1977**, by David S. West, Fiddlehead.
- Tell-Tale Feathers**, by George Swede, Fiddlehead.
- The Ultimate Contact**, by Kathy Tyler, Fiddlehead.
- Wind, Sun, Stone and Ice**, by D.H. Sullivan, Fiddlehead.
- The Ordinary Invisible Woman**, by Gwen Huser, Fiddlehead.
- William Arthur Densco: Memoirs of a Literary Friendship**, by Jessie L. Beattie, The Fleming Press.
- Vancouver**, by Eric Nichol, Doubleday.
- Copyright Canada**, by Alan Dawe, Macmillan.
- Eyesclops**, drawings by Hilda Woolnough, Square Deal.
- The First People**, drawings by Lee R. Updike, text by R.D. Symons, Western Producer Prairie Books.
- The Regulatory Process in Canada**, edited by G. Bruce Doern, Macmillan.
- Property**, edited by C.B. Macpherson, U of T Press.
- Can You See Me Yet?**, by Timothy Findley, Talonbooks.
- Craft Dinner**, by bpNichol, Aya Press.
- Unemployment Insurance**, edited by Herbert C. Grabel and Michael A. Walker, The Fraser Institute.
- Charles Sangster: The Angel Guest and Other Poems and Lyrics**, edited by Frank M. Tierney, Tecumseh Press.
- Irving Layton: The Poet and His Critics**, edited by Seymour Mayne, McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Canada on Stage: Canadian Theatre Review Yearbook 1977**, CTR Publications.
- A Checklist of Canadian Theatres**, CTR Publications.
- Canada's Third Option**, edited by S.D. Berkowitz and Robert K. Logan, Macmillan.
- Men of the Saddle**, by Ted Grant and Andy Russell, Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Poems of Rita Joe**, translated by Bernice Francis, Abanaki Press.
- FrithSol**, by David W. Frith, Garfrithon Press.
- Georgian Bay**, by James Barry, Clarke Irwin.
- Cult of Concrete**, by Mona Elaine Adelman, Editions Bessencours.
- God's Mountain**, by James Ashwin, G.R. Welch Co.
- Les Petits Groupes**, by Yves Saint-Armand, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
- Once When I Was Drowning**, by Al Pitman, Breakwater Books.
- Flotsam**, by H.R. Percy, Breakwater Books.
- The Buntonbridge Mustelians**, by Raymond Fraser, Breakwater Books.
- The Government Party**, by Reginald Whitaker, U of T Press.
- The Dismissal**, by James Reaney, Press Porcépic.
- A Canadian For All Seasons: The John E. Robbins Story**, by John A.B. McLeish.
- Next-Year Country**, by Jean Burnet, U of T Press.
- Canadian Literature**, by Robin Mathews, Steel Rail.
- From Next Spring**, by Gerald Gilbert, Coach House Press.
- The Story So Far: 5**, edited by Douglas Barbour, Coach House Press.
- The Ghosts Call You Poor**, by Andrew Suknaski, Macmillan.
- Spellcraft**, by Robin Skelton, M & S.
- Occultism in the Old Testament**, by Solomon A. Nigosian, Dornance.
- The Swastika and the Maple Leaf**, by Lisa-Rose Betcherman, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
- In Praise of Older Women**, by Stephen Vitezecy, Totem.
- The Quebec Plot**, by Lep Heaps, Peter Davies Ltd.
- Vancouver Nightmare**, by Eric Wilson, Clarke Irwin.
- Mrs. Simcoe's Diary**, edited by Mary Quayle Innis, Macmillan.
- Stephen Leacock**, by David M. Legate, Macmillan.
- Abrn**, by Joan Barfoot, McGraw Hill Ryerson.
- Silence is My Homeland**, by Gilbert Douglas, Stackpole Books.
- The National Gallery of Canada Ninth Annual Review, 1976-77**, National Museums of Canada.
- Francois Bigot: A Rediscovery in Dramatic Form of the Fall of Quebec**, by John Coulter, Houslow Press.
- Remember Me Well**, by Andrei Germanov, translated by John Robert Colombo and Nikola Roussanoff, Houslow Press.
- Religion and Ethicality**, edited by Harold Coward and Leslie Kawamura, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- The New Land: Studies in a Literary Theme**, edited by Richard Chadbourne and Halvard Dahlie, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

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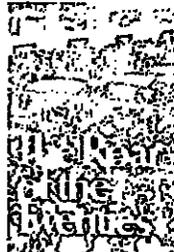
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