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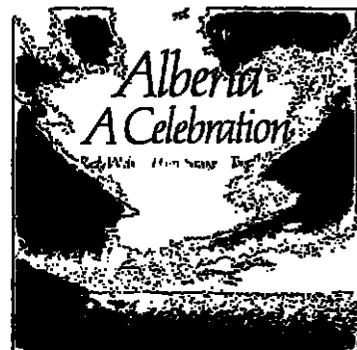


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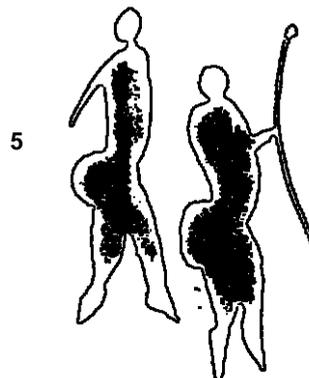
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LUDWIG ZELLER, S.A.

For nine years we have had a major surrealist poet and artist living almost anonymously in our midst. Chile's loss would be Canada's gain, if anybody paid attention

by Albert Moritz

THE SMALL third-floor studio is crowded with painted collages depicting impossible beings, creatures assembled from pieces of Victorian ladies and gentlemen, skeletons, surgical implements, fossils, printing presses, nod clocks. The images seem to be episodes of a hidden drama. Some of the scenes represented are "The Hermit and the Maiden tempted by Death in the sand-garden" and "Concentration brings forth the landscape."

This is Ludwig Zeller's studio, in his quiet mid-town Toronto house under the shadow of the University of Toronto's huge Robarts Library. And Zeller, his artist wife Susana Wald, and I are bending over Zeller's poetic text, *The Pleasures of Oedipus*. How can these pleasures be made as finely tortuous and intense in English as they are in their original Spanish? Tentatively, words emerge:

*Before the knot that closes its grooves I inquire,
I shout and faces burn in huge bitten
Stones, sliced are the images, to know
From where, to where we go, from top to bottom
I open them as if they were doors.*

Before the knotted, huge, burning images of Zeller we inquire.

The poem is scheduled to be part of Zeller's *In the Country of the Antipodes: Poems 1964-1979*. The book, forthcoming this fall, is the first comprehensive selection of Zeller's poetry available in English translation and in a single volume. As Weld and I work et the English, Zeller sits in the next room slicing up encyclopedias with scissors and scalpel. On his desk accumulate piles of gears, plants, molluscs, musical instruments -the imagery of colleges to come.

Occasionally, in order to consult on the meaning of a word, he puts his heed around the corner. Above a stocky, slightly hunched body, the heed is massive, the face normally registering either grave repose or spontaneous & light. Under a high-domed brow, his features reflect mixed German and Spanish-Chilean parentage.

WHO IS Ludwig Zeller? Few Canadians, even those dii involved in writing or visual arts, could answer that question. Yet Zeller has been a Canadian for the last nine years — nine of the most productive years in a distinguished and internationally recognized career as a major surrealist poet, painter, and publisher.

This relative neglect in his adopted country is not a situation unique to Zeller. He shares it with Josef Skvorecky and George Faludy among others. Seemingly, it arises from the fact that such writers have become established in another country and language before arriving here, and so are not seen as specifically Canadian. Skvorecky is the foremost living Czech writer, Faludy is perhaps the best Hungarian poet of his generation. Like Zeller, both have taken pains to have their work translated and to seek an English-speaking audience. And all three have succeeded very well — but much better in the United States and England than in Canada.

As a writer, Zeller is a direct heir of the classic French surrealism of André Breton, end of a rich vein of native Latin-American surrealism still little known to English-language readers. The work that he has produced in Canada (often published in tri-lingual editions) has been enthusiastically reviewed in Mexico, South America, New York, and France. As a visual artist, his work has been shown and taken into collections in Paris, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Sac Paulo, Mexico City, Chicago, Lisbon, Santiago, and other cities.

Zeller's father was a German immigrant to Chile, a mining engineer who became manager of the dynamite factory of the world's largest open-pit mine, located near Zeller's native village of



Ludwig Zeller

Rio Loa, in the heart of the Atacama desert of northern Chile. This harsh landscape, almost bereft of vegetation, continues to feed Zeller's work. It was then that he learned the art of paper cutting, still the basis of his work as an artist.

"There are no natural flowers in the desert" he says, "So when someone dies or there is a religious celebration, the townspeople make paper flowers. It left me with a magical impression of the world. I think that our true activity in life is similar to this act of creation, of transforming things." Zeller also locates the sources of his work in his father's "explosive" vocation and the desert's paradoxical fertility in hallucination.

"I remember an incident when I was a small child. The dynamite factory was distant from the town, surrounded by a high thick wall. One day about 8 am., just after the day shift went on, we heard a loud noise and everyone, all the children and mothers, rushed out into the street. We could see a huge plume of smoke above the factory. It was clear that there had been a violent explosion.

"The men who were late for work-there were always a few — were running through the streets, on their way to see if they could help. One of them was a certain Vincenzo, a man who we always late. I remember my mother shouting to him, 'Mr. Vincenzo, bring me word if my husband is all right!' He answered, 'I will. Mrs. Zeller,' and many of the other women asked him the same favour.

"All day long we waited for news. Finally, in the afternoon, my father came home, very tired, very unhappy. He told my mother that five men had been killed. 'I'll have to go now and tell their families,' he said. 'The explosion was so strong they were blown to pieces.'

"And when we asked who the victims were, we found that Vincenzo was one of the dead."

The desert and the Chilean coast, says Zeller, are rich in such happenings. They are reality, not surrealism, to the people of the region. They are a source of his vision:

*On the waters I watch the plumb-line oscillate
But I don't want to see what there is in the depths,
In my hand I warm the pebble that talks
And at night the roots grow by shrieks.*

IN CHILE, Zeller spent 1.5 years as advisor for the visual arts in the federal Ministry of Education. There he was instrumental in showing and promoting many now-prominent artists. During this time he also conducted years of concentrated research into the language of schizophrenics, and performed a three-year-long guided dream experiment under Dr. Helena Hoffmann, a disciple of Jung. Together, Zeller and Wald founded and directed Casa de la Luna, a cultural centre, drop-in residence for artists, and publishing house.

In the 1950s and '60s, Zeller contacted André Breton and the post-war surrealist group in Paris. At home, he had started his literary career at the age of 21 with a controversial article of harsh criticism against the Chilean surrealist group, Mandragora, matrix of many of Chile's best modern poets. Gradually, though, he found that his sympathies were in tune with the group and he struck up long-lasting relationships with its members.

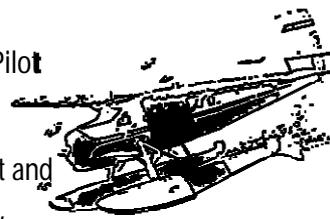
Zeller has always been a renegade and an original with respect to organized surrealism; in Anna Balakian's words, his work "pursues surrealism's dynamism, not its conventionalized imagery." Zeller maintains interest in and respect for many things that surrealism has dogmatically stigmatized: for instance, Christianity. "I will criticize surrealism," he says. "It has many faults and many in it have had closed minds on some points. And still when I speak of it, I know that there is nothing else. It is imperfect and in its childhood, but it is the way."

Zeller was known in his native country for biting literary criticism and pranks that kept his artistic life tumultuous. Once at the National Writers Union a vicious brawl broke out after the Communists under Pablo Neruda had narrowly won a vote for control of the organization. Zeller called the tire department and shouted to the arriving firemen, "There's an arsonist in the building," pointing to Neruda. The combatants' animosities were soon "washed away." In fact, to hear his friends talk, it appears that Zeller made a major hobby out of Neruda-baiting.

"Around the table at Casa de la Luna," he remembers, "you

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might have a Catholic, a Communist, a surrealist, an anarchist. People took their beliefs seriously, there was mental fight, but it was happy, there was no anger." During the painful collapse of Salvador Allende's presidency, this creative atmosphere was swept away by political polarization and violence. Realizing that he would be *persona non grata* in any future Chile, Zeller came to Canada in January, 1971.

Behind him he left a career including six books of poems, four volumes of translation from the German, eight one-man shows, a considerable reputation as a publisher and catalytic leader in art and literature. He came to a country where he could not speak the language, where the classic tradition of surrealism is misunderstood and grossly undervalued, and where Latin American literature as a whole is scarcely known.

IN TORONTO, Zeller set about to build a new audience among English and French speakers. His house in Toronto is to some extent a continuation of Casa de la Luna. It is not just a home for Zeller, Wald, and their three children, it is also headquarters of Oasis Press, one of the most active and certainly the most international of Canadian small presses. Many of its editions appear in tri-lingual format and are co-published in Brussels and Paris. Its authors include both contemporary and deceased surrealist luminaries from a half-dozen countries: Benjamin Peret, Rosamel del Valle, Edouard Jaguer, Paul Eluard, even Breyten Breytenbach, the South African surrealist now in prison for his stand against apartheid.

The door of Oasis seems always open, and at any time you might find them painters, printers, writers, engravers, sculptors, gallery owners, and art lovers. Most of them are young Canadian artists and poets who gather around Zeller. But sometimes the group will include foreign visitors such as the painter Eugenic Granell, one of the surrealist old guard, or the noted Italian art critic Arturo Schwartz, stopping by on a New York-Rome trip. There is a continual trickle of distinguished guests from three continents.

Though Zeller has not yet achieved a large English public in Canada, his efforts have borne much fruit in the United States, especially through his books *Woman in Dream* and *When Be Animal Rises from the Deep*. The latter book, printed here with superb accompanying English and French translations by John Robert Colombo and Thérèse Dulac, received no review or notice in any Canadian publication, though it was greeted with extended reviews and the highest praise in Mexico City, New York, France, and Italy.

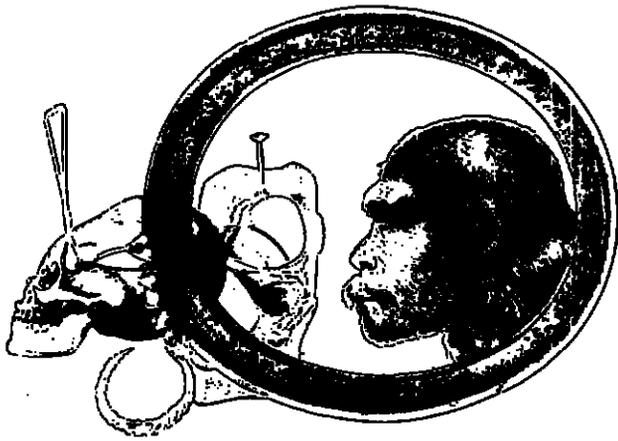
It has tired U.S. interest in both Zeller's written and graphic work. Just back from a lecture and reading at New York University, he will soon leave on a tour of New York's Centre for Inter-American Relations, Yale University, Columbia University, Brooklyn College, and several other institutions. Then he travels to Mexico City to hang artwork and give readings at a major exhibit in honour of the deceased artist, Wolfgang Pahlen.

Here in Canada, too, 1979 may be the year that Zeller becomes visible to his fellow citizens. Besides in *the Country of the Antipodes*, two books of collage — one a retrospective and one a new collage alphabet — will be published, and the Art Gallery of Hamilton will hang a major show of now printed collages by Zeller and Wald.

ANOTHER NIGHT. The dinner that opens most translating sessions at Oasis is cleared away. The next poem to be tackled is *Wanderers in the Mandala*, and Zeller goes for his notebooks to explain its genesis.

All the right-hand pages are filled with an unbroken flow of Spenserian prose. This is automatic writing, an upsurge of spontaneous imagery that forms the raw material of Zeller's poetry. The left-hand pages show the painstaking labour that forms the finished poem. Basically, the method is that of collage — verbal collage. First a few hundred images and phrases are selected from the thousands of lines in the notebook. Then they are lifted cut, rearranged, rewritten, until the final poem, a seem 150 lines, emerges: "It is painful to dream," as Zeller says in another poem.

In a recent issue of Mexico's leading national arts review, critic José Miguel Oviedo has said, "Zeller's world is unique, marvel-



Detail from Zeller's montage, "The Forebears."

lous, horrifying; a world created by an imagination in the savage state, which always wanders in the desert, brutal and anguished like primitive man, dreaming crimes of frozen ritual horror, copulating with women that are fish that are monsters that are entrails sliced open."

This is indeed one of the main results of Zeller's poetic research into the human condition. But in facing his vision, Zeller himself has become something different: calm, joyous, witty, a purveyor of marvels who takes delight in all the revealing oddities and ordinary things of life. At the end of the evening, he reminisces about Chile in a mood that is at the opposite pole of the vision Oviedo describes.

"In Chile, every party ends naturally, inevitably in a trip to the sea. The country's only 60 miles wide at Santiago. Once, after a particularly raucous literary evening, we climbed into some cars

and set off for the Pacific. I was in a car with Rosamel del Valle, a grand poet, and Humberto Diaz-Casanueva, another great poet who was Chilean ambassador to the United Nations under Allende.

"We were driving through a flat, desert plain, when Rosamel, who is quite drunk, sees a huge tree beside the road. It's the only object that can be seen on this perfectly level plain.

"It was early evening, and the full moon was rising so that it seemed to be in the branches of the tree. Rosamel started telling us that he had lived here when he was a child, that he remembered climbing that tree and playing in it. He insists that we stop the car so that he can climb it again, and Diaz of course is all for it.

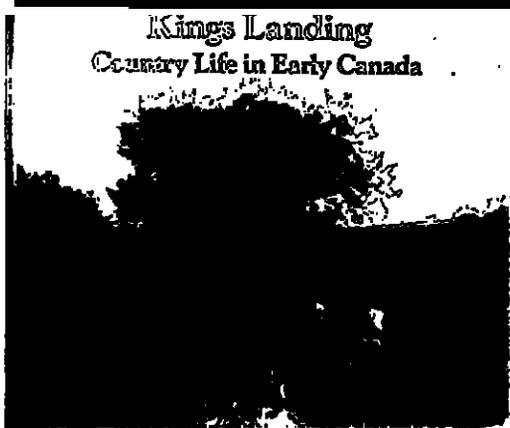
"They were both quite under the weather, but nothing could dissuade them. In a few minutes they were up the tree, singing folk songs to the moon. Gradually, though, this lost its charm, and then they discovered that they weren't boys anymore, and they couldn't get down. Finally, we decided that they'd have to stay there while I took the car and locked for help.

"We were really in the middle of nowhere. I drove three, four, maybe five miles before I finally came to a peasant's house. Luckily an old man was there. I had to go in and tell him, 'There are two great poets down the road a few miles, stuck in a tree. Could you bring a ladder and help me get them down?'

"But when the peasant heard they were poets — not just poets, but great poets — he was delighted. He took a ladder and we put it on the car, drove back and rescued Rosamel and Diaz. They had resumed their singing by the time we got there. The old man insisted on taking us back to his place and sharing his special, carefully hidden cider with the great poets. They were still singing together and of course got entirely drunk again.

"With the old man's help, I finally put them in the back seat of the car, when they promptly fell asleep. But at least I was able to get them to the ocean with no further incidents."

The car conveys two sleeping poets through the desert to the sea — and Ludwig Zeller is at the wheel. Perhaps more than any maze of salt or sliced viscera, that is his true image. □



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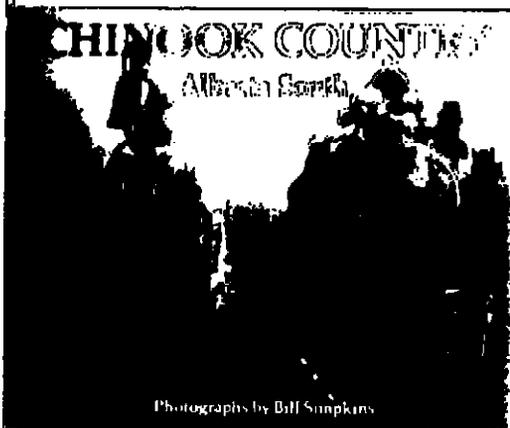
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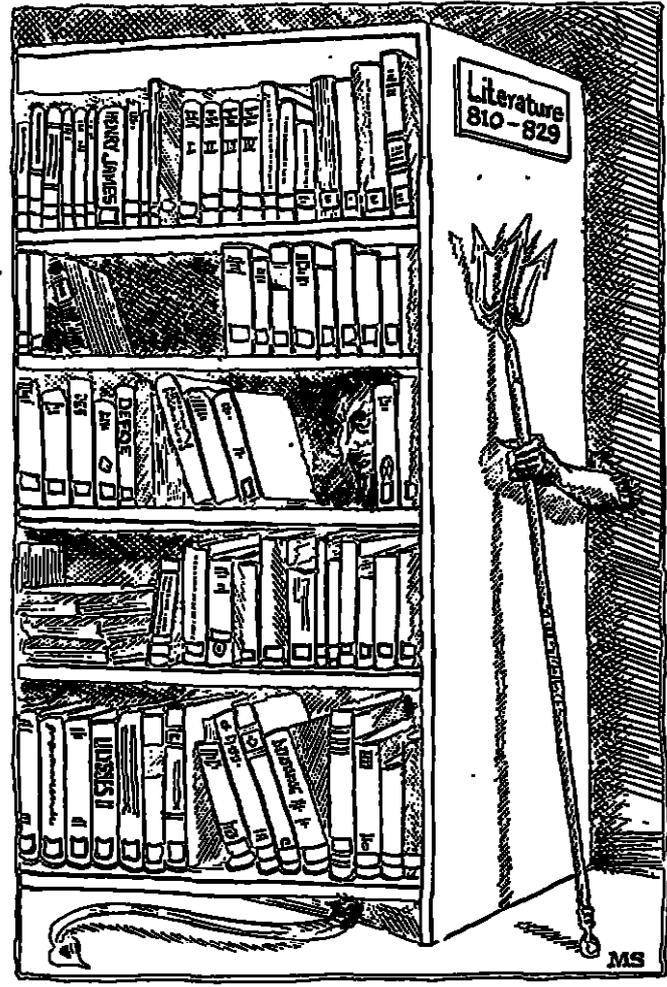


MONTREAL
and its country side

A high-school teacher argues that the Writers' Union, in its fight against censorship, is really advocating

LICENCE, NOT FREEDOM

by Barry F. Brewer



THE WRITERS' UNION of Canada has recently prepared a pamphlet cleverly entitled *C*ns*rsh*p: Stopping the Book Banners*. The Book and Periodical Development Council has distributed 8,000 copies of this pamphlet to schools, librarians, education administrators, and members of the Book and Periodical Development Council. About one quarter of this collage of poems, manifestoes, opinions, and newspaper reports is in my view truly excellent and one quarter is of moderate interest. The remaining half, not in rational harmony with the better parts, I find objectionable. The offensive pieces, emphasized by a variety of conspicuous type styles, seem to dominate. They are for the most part crude and transparent propaganda, characterized by florid rhetoric, over-reaching generalizations, irrelevencies, pretension, and clichés.

I have been a teacher in Ontario for 20 years. For nine of those I was head of an English department in a city high school. For one year, while taking a master's degree in English, I taught part-time at a large Ontario university. I have also taught for part of a year in an elementary school. For the last three years I have been a high-school librarian. I am not an evangelical Christian. Over the years I have taught (with never a word of parental objection) *Lives of Girls and Women*, *Catcher in the Rye*, *Who Has Seen the Wind*, *The Stone Angel*, *The Sun Also Rises*, and no doubt other works which Renaissance International would object to. Should the appropriate occasion arise, I would teach any one or all of these books again.

I do not object to labelling Renaissance International a crude pressure group that should be watched lest it wield disproportionate power. Nor do I object to an argument that in "banning" *The Diviners* the Huron County Board of Education made a bad decision.

But the *C*ns*rsh*p* pamphlet goes so much further. Its foreword states "that preparing to meet and defeat censorship could well be the most useful investment of work that a dedicated professional in the world of books can make." Such militancy

may be suspect, but still acceptable, perhaps, until it becomes clear that the Writers' Union defines censorship so broadly and is so indiscriminating in its assertion of "the right to read" that what it is really advocating is not freedom but licence. It fails to recognize the sound arguments supporting our present libel laws, the arguments in favour of controlling hate literature, and most importantly the crucial distinction between adults and children.

Our primary and secondary educational colossus is premised on children's need for special nurturing, a careful culling of experiences. In Ontario a board of censors rates movies as to their suitability for children, and TV shows are programmed with children's vulnerabilities in mind. In raising our children we almost universally accept *Ring Lear's* contention that "ripeness is all" and *Ecclesiastes' "To every thing there is a season."*

But *C*ns*rsh*p*, in its more emphatic but weaker parts, makes no significant acknowledgement that children differ from adults. Its attitude is like that of the trendy young thing who comes into his/her first school in September with a copy of *Teaching us a Subversive Activity* under his/her arm and proceeds to teach his/her hi-school students as he himself/she herself was last taught in university. Such greenhorns learn quickly once on the firing line that few high-school students are adult. People, yes — often beautiful people. People with rights, of course, but with the fundamental right to deal with adults who have the discernment to see young people as they are.

In addition to being a teacher and librarian, I am also a parent (three children: seven, nine, and 12) — a parent who takes the normal precautions. I keep my caustic cleaning solvents and my whisky on high shelves (different high shelves). I do not permit my children uncontrolled access to the television set, nor do I generally allow them to go to movies rated Adult Entertainment by the Ontario B&D of Censors. Indeed, I am truly grateful for the guidance given by the board of censors. I still remember very vividly scenes of violence and horror in movies I saw when I was

eight or nine and which I replayed in nightmares for years afterwards. Clearly I shall work to protect my children from what I consider harmful to them - including books and periodicals that I consider harmful, whether or not the books and periodicals are available in a school.

That I do not believe The *Diviners. Liver of Girls and Women, Forever*, and so forth to be harmful to my children once they teach senior high school is beside the point. The point is that the Writers' Union, using the word as a bludgeon, would call my interceding on behalf of my children censorship. The Writers' Union compiled its pamphlet in order to show teachers and librarians how to suppress parents like me, whom the Writers' Union views as a threat to democracy. Suppressing books may be bad, but suppressing people is worse.

The really dangerous idea underlying *Censorship* is that there is or should be a separation between the home and the public school — that the school should not be responsive to the will of the community — that the school is some kind of extension of the superstate, a master rather than a servant. The selection of materials for school English courses and for school libraries is not an exact science. Reasonable people of goodwill can and do disagree. Certainly within the teaching profession there is much discussion about what materials should be included and what excluded. Often the disagreement is primarily about timing, with some teachers feeling that a book is right for a grade level, others that it is perhaps too senior or too junior.

This problem of selection, as Alice Munro's letter in *Censorship* dates, is made more difficult by the presence in Ontario high schools of young adults side-by-side with 13- and 14-year-olds. These young adults of 18 and 19, all of whom are mature biologically and many of whom vote, drink, smoke, drive, and make out (not necessarily in that order), clearly need far different materials from those used with 13- and 14-year-olds. This fact, however, is not an argument against the public high school being responsible to the community. (An excellent article on this problem of selection for young adults is "Quality or Popularity: Selection Criteria for YAs" by Lillian Shapiro in *School Library Journal*, May, 1978. Ms. Shapiro decries the glut of "lust in the dust" books found in the "drugstore collections" of acme school libraries.)

The process of selection is not only a necessary part of any education system, it is also a part to which parents can make a positive contribution. Teachers and librarians may be better judges of the potential popularity of a work and perhaps of its literary merit. But teachers and librarians are not qualified to judge the moral aspects of a work in any absolute sense (nor is the Writers' Union). They can judge the morality of a work only in relation to (1) their own moral standards and (2) what they understand the community standards to be. When the teacher's moral standards and the community's standards are in conflict, then clearly the community must not surrender its will to a teacher, or school librarian, or any other functionary of the state. As public servants, teachers and school librarians have an obligation to achieve an awareness of the community's standards of morality and to keep

The Writers' Union compiled its pamphlet in order to show teachers and librarians how to suppress parents like me. . . . Suppressing books may be bad, but suppressing people is worse.

them in mind while making selections. For teachers and librarians to defy or even ignore majority community standards is an insufferable presumption of moral superiority.

It could even be argued that public education should restrict itself to a core curriculum that not only accepts the majority view but also recognizes minority sensibilities. It is difficult in a practical way for parents who are offended by what a curriculum includes to shield their children from the offensive material. On the other hand, it is relatively easy in a free society such as ours for

parents who are dissatisfied because of what a curriculum excludes to supplement at home.

The implicit justification for the notion that parents should not be permitted a voice in the selection of school materials is that writers, teachers, and librarians form an elite that can judge the literary merit of a work, and that its high literary merit should offset at least partially my moral offence the work may give.

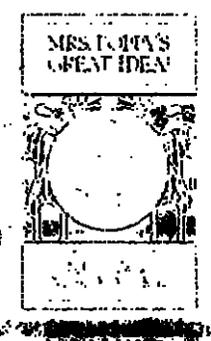
I am suspicious of this argument for a number of reasons. One is that the literary establishment is far from infallible in its judgement. Both Shakespeare and Mark Twain, for example, were ridiculed by the serious critics of their own time. Prevailing literary fashions of the day play a role, perhaps a large role, in the judgement of literary merit. In addition, teachers and librarians nowadays for legitimate pedagogical reasons include many works of no recognized literary merit. Obviously educators do not consider literary merit to be the supreme criterion in selecting materials for schools.

My confidence in the literary-merit argument is further diminished by the feeling that a seduction that is an artistic delight is nonetheless a seduction, and perhaps all the more dangerous to the naive than a etude botch of a job. So I can easily imagine a moral objector reading a complete work, studying it, and perhaps even appreciating its artistry, and in spite of its artistry, or perhaps because of it, arguing that the work should not be taught in a public elementary or secondary school.

I am not arguing that pressure groups such as Renaissance International, especially when well financed, are not dangerous. I am arguing that *Censorship* makes it clear that The Writers' Union of Canada is another pressure group. Though small, it seems well financed and just as vociferous and intimidating as Renaissance International. I believe it, too, is dangerous — dangerous in the same way as the boy who cried wolf was dangerous. □

Editor's note: A reply by a member of the Writers' Union will appear in next month's issue.

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Splits without spleen

Dalliance and dinosaurs are not enough. Something monstrous is missing from Margaret Atwood's exquisite satire for a Sunday afternoon at the ROM

by Dennis Dufiy

Life Before Man. by Margaret Atwood. McClelland & Stewart, 1% pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 77100807 4).

MARGARET ATWOOD'S latest satirical excursion among the politely damned of middle-class Toronto figures itself forth as a sexual quadrille. Elizabeth and Nate and Lesje and William couple and recouple as the dancers move about without getting anywhere. Last Tango in Toronto.

Obviously, plot remains a very subordinate concern of this work, since its sole function seems to be that of coming up with circumstances that render believable the various fallings-into-bed. And since these people cannot be faulted for moral fastidiousness or scrupulousness, it doesn't take many circumstances to provide them with a reason for going at it. As one might expect from so accomplished a poet as the author, the craftsmanship of the novel most displays itself in a coherent structure of imagery.

The relevance of the title grows from the jobs of the heroines. Elizabeth and Lesje. Both work at the Royal Ontario Museum. both their daily lives demand a concern with a distant, unstoried past. Lesje enjoys a rich fantasy life, tripping off to Conan Doyle's *Lost World* and life among the dinosaurs of her imagination. If the museum and lime past offer an instance of one character's split, then the world of toys sums up Nate's Land of Oz. A dropout from the legal system, he scratches the barest of livings from the sale of toys he makes himself. William has his environmentalist work to keep him spaced.

People, it seems to me, who are involved and fulfilled in their work generally lack the energy for involved dalliance, and of course all these folk are unbelievable as jobholders. For example, as the papers have been showing of late, the ROM has been a bit reminiscent of a banana republic, with rumours of staff plotting to depose their head, with various versions of the conflict leaked to the press and even the Ontario Legislature getting in on the act. Not a hint of this surfaces in the novel, because its

10 Books in Canada, October, 1979



Margaret Atwood

concern with the job world focuses only on the imagistic possibilities of that world. We are reading satire here after all, and not realistic fiction.

Satire requires, however, a certain importance in either the characters themselves or in what the artist imagines them to embody. Thus, for example, the targets of Pope's anger in *The Dunciad* are portrayed by him as squalid, ineffectual but thoroughly consequential folk, in that they represent habits of mind that are destroying culture. Atwood's gifts for cool, ironic, distanced story-telling provide memorable features of both *The Edible Woman* and *Lady Oracle*; those gifts then not only diminish the characters themselves, but make it difficult for the reader to attach much importance to whatever they may represent.

Let me mention an analogous case here.

Unlike almost everyone else who saw it, I didn't much like Woody Allen's *Manhattan*. Excellent photography of an idealized, non-garbaged New York, the incomparable Gershwin score, yes, yes. But on the trite, slick characters and their trendy, self-indulgent hang-ups. How unbelievable they were as writers or teachers, as people who have to work for a living. I am not enough of an idiot to remain unconcerned about anomy, about rootlessness in relationships, about loose and unfulfilling sexuality. The trouble with those problems, as they surfaced in Allen's characters, is that I couldn't take those people as serious or representative enough of the sort of folk immersed in such problems. They all lived a little too easily. Satire may require irony and detachment; it also demands a vivid sense of the monstrous.

This then strikes me as the reason why I found myself in awe of the stylistic grace and precision of this cold pastoral and yet so little moved by the entire reading experience. Let me illustrate this a little more by examining briefly the vampirist aspects of Elizabeth and Nate and their effect upon the reader: As a married couple in the process of splitting (another fissure in this novel of splits), Elizabeth and Nate go calmly about involving others in their troubles. Elizabeth has already had one lover who committed suicide after their break; Nate, the perennial married rover, strings along Lesje for months, being sort-of moved in with her and sort-of in his old home because he cannot bear to leave his children. As destructive and dangerous as Tom and Daisy Buchanan in *Gatsby*, the couple are both seen from such a distance as to render their monstrousness inconsequential. That is, my reaction as a reader was a cool "Oh yes, they're awful" rather than the passionate "My God, they stink!" that D.H. Lawrence uttered about the characters of Wyndham Lewis.

Could it be that I am chafing on account of trying to make Wagner out of Mozart? In its formal patterning and elegance, *Life Before Man* does have something of the 18th-century operatic about it. And if

Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro* remains a thorough swine, he does so within a structure of conventions that does not permit the audience to get in the sort of his, the villain mood they might if the Count were appearing in a work by Verdi. At such a point, the reviewer most fall back on personal taste.

To my taste, then. *L&Before Man* fails to give the kind of satisfaction that distanced but heartfelt satire can give (I'm thinking of Beryl Bainbridge's incomparable domestic fun and death in *Injury Time*), nor does it provide the reader with a sense of an author's anxious, fearful observation of evil or folly that another sort of satire might produce.

What saved *The Edible Woman* from precisely this fate were its touches of the bizarre and surreal, even as the heroine's madness in *Surfacing* relieves some of that novel's sermonizing tendencies. When a writer treats the lives of the banal and the every-dry, then surely he or she best succeeds when in the possession of the kind of amused affection and compassion we associate with the genius of Chekhov. Those qualities absent, the reader falls to wondering why attention must be paid to those of so little significance or interest. Sex isn't always an act of love, and writing about sex even less so. Yet it is love or hate, the presence of strong emotion, that compels a reader's attention. To do otherwise is to add to the ennui of the present while purporting to analyze them. □

The wearing of the gene

by Tim Heald

The *Mangan Inheritance*, by Brian Moore, McClelland & Stewart, 352 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 77106423 3).

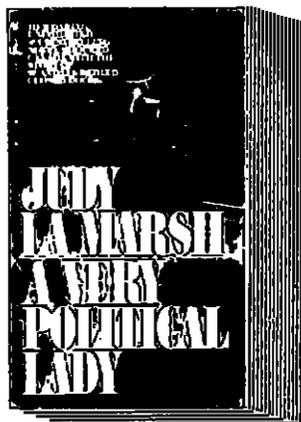
I AM WRITING this in a cottage on the rocky coast of Connemara, the barren west of County Galway where, 60 years ago, Alcock and Brown touched down after their flight from Newfoundland. From the win- &w I see a view almost exactly like that described by Brian Moore's central character Jamie Mangan bad poet, failed husband, incipient disaster, as he stands in the porch of his rented house near Bantry:

He add see that landscape, still as a mediaeval painting, unchanged and unchanging in the fields, the sea, the great headlands citing the bay like outstretched arms. Far off on the horizon the Fastnet lighthouse flashed on its secret message. It came to him that he was looking toward America from a point of land which was the most westerly part of Europe.

Mangan's view is well south of here. My

lighthouse is Slyne Head, and whereas Mangan was looking out perhaps towards New York, I look to St. John's. The feeling is the same. This is the old world where peasant farmers, whose family have lived in the same croft forever, hack a living from barren rock and maybe still use the donkey as their main source of power and transport. Their cousins and their children drive Chevies in the American Midwest where they wouldn't even consider the ancestral home adequate for weekends.

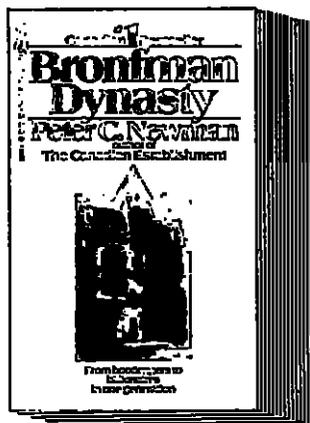
Moore's Jamie Mangan explores all this after his wife, a movie star he met on a press junket in Montreal, walks out on him and dies in a drunken late-night car smash. His father, a senior employee of the *Montreal Gazette*, takes Jamie in, cod distracts him with a wooden box of family bric-a-brac including a photograph of the greatest Mangan of them all, another indifferent poet who enjoyed no undeserved popular success in 19th-century Ireland. Riffling this treasure, young — well, 36, actually —



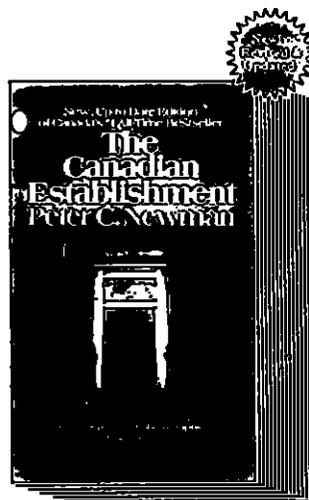
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Mangan comes across a photograph with "J.M. 1947?" written in one corner. It could be the poet, but one thing is certain: "The face in the photograph was his own."

At this point in the narrative Moore's book could easily have become absurd but, although the facts stretch one's credulity beyond the rational breaking point, he handles them with such a feel for place and such an accuracy of observation that you don't stop to think how far-fetched and silly it all is until it's over and done. The Mangan roots are in and around the village of Dtishanc near Mizen Heed on Ireland's extreme south west. "That's the very end of the country, down there," the man at Shannon Airport tells him, when Jamie picks up his rented car. "The very end of the land, as you might say." Arriving there, armed with the money his dead wife left him and the look-alike daguerrotype from 1847, Jamie immediately excites the sort of comic horror-movie reactions Roman Polanski could have done with.

As soon as he steps into the local real-estate office, looking for a bed and breakfast, the proprietor's wife "let the cat down and looked up, seemingly startled. Then, swiftly, she masked her startled look with a shopkeeper's halfsmile." You've guessed, of course. Jamie has "the Look of the Mangans," as terrible a thing in its way as The Curse of Tutankhamun or The Mommy's Revenge. Not only was Clarence his spitting image, but there was another more recent Mayan who looked just like

him, and people's shifty refusal to say anything about him until the last section of the book leads one to the obvious conclusion that he is the skeleton in the family cupboard.

It is not just the look of the Mangans that Jamie has inherited. He has the predisposition to bad poetry too... and much else besides. It has all come down the family tree and ended up in Montreal. "The uncanny facial resemblance, the bad poetry, the bad blood had been transferred across the Atlantic to this cold winter land, to this, his father's harsh native city." As the result of his Irish adventure Jamie knows he'll never be any good as a poet or a person because he is, in effect, a reincarnation. His life is ordained. He is even beaten up in a pub in Bantry and loses a tooth. If it is a right incisor. The man in the daguerrotype had a right incisor missing and so too did... but that would be giving away more than is fair.

This is not the first time Moore has toyed with the supernatural. He did it in *The Great Victorian Collection* when he had a man create a real museum of Victoriana by, in effect, focusing his imagination. He has also written about the relation between the new world and the old, most effectively in *Catholics*, his novella about the abolition of the old tridentine mass. I prefer the second of the two interests, at least in Moore's case. I cannot think of another novelist with the ear and the ability to evoke both so effectively. He really is assured in rural Ireland as he is in metropolitan New York

and he is clearly interested in getting them both right. The one time I met him he was in the middle of an annual tour in which he takes off from his home in California and visits Ireland, England, and Canada. The aim is, one senses, as much a professional base-touching as a social pilgrimage.

Not for the first time either he includes an element of Canada. But, although Jamie Mangan is a Canadian with a Canadian father, he scarcely has a recognizable Canadian identity. The Irish call him Yank and when his father is dying two Irish policemen arrive to give him the message.

"They have been telephoning you from America" one of the policemen said. He reached in his tunic pocket and took out a notebook.

"Canada" the second policeman corrected him.

"That's right Canada."

Montreal is, by Moore's standards, perfunctorily described and the only distinctive feature he really gets across is the extreme cold. He even retails the standard Canadian inferiority complex as if by rote. Of the successful movie star wife and his relationship with her, Jamie is made to reflect: "She's a winner, one of the All-American winners. And if she ditches you, it's because you're a loser. A Canadian loser." Oh dear.

Not that anyone outside Canada would judge or even consider Moore on the basis of his Canadianism, real, assumed, partial, guilty, hostile, or whatever. He is sometimes

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compared with Graham Greene who apparently much admires him. This comparison is often thought to be something to do with their mutual interest in Catholicism. but I think their outsiders' sense of place is more important. They write about communities that are not their communities but which they have studied intimately. In doing so they provide insights denied the inhabitants.

It would be intriguing to think that Moore is enough of an informed outsider to eventually write the great Canadian novel. Unfortunately, I doubt whether he himself finds the idea as intriguing as I do. In the meantime, we must make do with an Irish-American novel with little more than a ritual nod in the diction of the frozen North. □

Proof that few can top Gallant

by I. M. Owen

From the Fifteenth District. by Mavis Gallant, Macmillan. 243 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1813 31:

FIRST OF ALL, let's get the title story of Mavis Gallant's new collection out of the way quickly, and then try to forget it. It's a brief *jeu d'esprit* about three ghosts who complain to the police that they are being haunted by living people, and when I first saw it in *The New Yorker* I expected to find the name of Donald Barthelme at the end. It's not the kind of thing Gallant does well. (Mind you, Barthelme doesn't do it well either.)

What Mavis Gallant does do well is the reality of living people, and she does it so very well, so wittily, so convincingly, and with such unflinching grace that it makes me want to cheer, or weep, according to my mood and the particular story I'm reading.

The remaining eight stories show great variety, ranging widely in time (from 1920 to 1978) and space (from France to Hungary), but they have enough similarity of theme to make them sit happily together in one book: there are echoes from one to another, so that the effect is almost of a single novel with an ever-changing cast of characters.

The central figures, and many of the others, are people who are displaced from their natural settings; it is the contrast between them and their surroundings that defines what they are. Thus in "The Four Seasons," a tale of the Ligurian Riviera in the time of Mussolini, a luncheon guest who is a leading member of the English colony is observed by a 13-year-old Italian servant girl:

The meal went off without any major upset, though Carmela did stand staring when Miss Barnes suddenly began to scream, "Chicken! Chicken! How wonderful! Chicken!" Miss Barnes did not seem to know why she was saying this: she finally became conscious that her hands were in the air and brought them down. After that, Carmela thought of her as "Miss Chicken."

The married couple in "The Moslem Wife" are cousins, belonging to a group of English families that have been hotel-keepers on the Riviera for more than 100 years. They remain English, but with a difference:

Other men seemed dull to Netta — slower, perhaps, lacking the spoken shorthand she had with lack. She never mentioned this. For one thing, both of them had the idea that, being English, one must not say too much. Born abroad, they worked hard at an Englishness that was innocently inaccurate.

Alec Webb in "The Remission" is an accurate enough Englishman, "from a long line of medium-rank civil servants," but doesn't quite belong in the 1950s, when the story takes place. Finding that he has leukemia, he moves with his family to the Riviera, on principle — an "obstinate refusal to die on National Health." Since he has no money, his principle is costly to his sister and his wife's brothers, especially as he at once enters on a remission. Then there is his wife Barbara, who is forever saying "Thank God I'm Irish," though her family has lived in Wales for generations. And there is Eric Wilkinson, who becomes Barbara's lover. Looked down on by the English colony, quite rightly, as not the real thing, he ekes out a living along the Riviera by various odd jobs, including bit parts in French films as the perfect English officer and gentleman, occasionally being allowed to speak a line, such as "Don't underestimate Rommel."

This last idea is echoed, and elaborated in quite a different way, in the story "Baum, Gabriel, 1935-(—)." Dieter, a Bavarian, supports himself in Paris from 1960 to 1978 by playing German soldiers in television films about the Occupation, starting as a private and gradually rising through the ranks until he becomes an SS colonel. (He once hoped to retire as a general, but, foreseeing that the French will soon be tired of the Occupation, he withdraws to run a bakery in his native village.) Meanwhile



by Dr. J. Birnbaum
Author of CRY ANGER

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Gabriel Baum, a survivor of the Holocaust, has played appropriate roles in many of the same films; but now, at 43, he is no longer suitable as a Jewish refugee and becomes a Nazi colonel too.

My favourite among all these stories is "Potter," about a middle-aged Polish poet, in Paris on a cultural exchange, who falls in love with a young woman called Laurie Bennett. Having been educated at a very good Canadian Anglican boarding-school (Bishop Purse). Laurie can't spell, is totally ignorant of the world around her, and makes no attempt to speak any language but English. ("Potter" is one of her versions of the poet's name, Piotr.) For him the affair is largely a daydream — as love affairs between middle-aged men and very young women so often are — and Laurie, with the utter inconsequence of her behaviour, is a fitting figure of dream.

In "The Latehomecomer," a German who was put in the army at 16 in 1945 comes home to Berlin after five years as a prisoner of war (because the French authorities lost his file). Another story, "His Mother," is about a woman who has become displaced without ever leaving home. An upper-class Hungarian, she lives on in Budapest on her prestige as the mother of a defector who is said to be doing well in Scotland. And "Irina," presumed by her children to be at a loss as a widow after many years as the devoted, self-effacing wife of a heavy-weight Swiss novelist, is in fact living at last as she has always wanted to, with the very aged Englishman she had fallen in love with at 40.

In an article in the June-July, 1978, issue of *Books I Canada*, Geoffrey Hancock asked, in effect, why Mavis Gallant was ignored in Canada. This was followed by a whole issue of Hancock's own *Canadian Fiction Magazine* devoted to her work, and an interview by Martin Knelman that was featured in *Saturday Night*. Nevertheless, the question remains; she still isn't very well known in Canada and she doesn't spring to most minds as among our obviously leading writers. But that question is only part of a more important one: Why isn't she better known in the world at large? Read her, and ask yourself, not "Why hasn't she had a Governor General's Award yet?" but "Why isn't she a shoo-in for a Nobel Prize?" She's not, agreed. Yet I'm certain there isn't a finer living writer of fiction in the English language. There couldn't be. □

IN BRIEF

The Cambridge Apostles: The *Early Years*, by Peter Allen. Cambridge University Press, illustrated, 266 pages, \$29.50 cloth (ISBN 0 521 21803 9). Founded in 1820, The Apostles was and Prof. Allen presumes still is — a Cambridge undergraduate discussion club composed of carefully screened liberal intellectuals. Its members over the years have included Arthur Hallam, Alfred Tennyson, the Tre-

velyans, A.N. Whitehead, Bertrand Russell, G.E. Moore, Rupert Brooke, E.M. Forster, and most of the brightest lights of the Bloomsbury group (Strachey, Keynes, Leonard Woolf). Their collective impact on modern thought has clearly been enormous. The early Apostles were drenched in German romanticism, preoccupied with poetry, metaphysics, and university reform, and self-conscious to the point of self-infatuation (although not to the point of buggery as with their Bloomsbury descendants). The tone was set in the late 1820s by two prime mystics among the Apostles — Frederick Maurice and the short-lived Hallam, subject of the longest sustained elegaic composition in the English language outside of the New Testament. Both had a charisma (as we would now call it) that profoundly influenced their disciples and friends but which is difficult to discern at this distance. Prof. Allen, who teaches English at the U of T, has organized his material as a series of linked intellectual portraits, quoting copiously from apostolic correspondence. His method necessitates a fair amount of repetition and leaves some annoying gaps. Nevertheless, his chronicle is as fascinating as its price is ridiculous.

— DOUGLAS MARSHALL

Double, double, foil and fuddle

End Game in Paris, by Ian Adams, Doubleday. 216 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 14935 2).

By CHRIS SCOTT

STERN, a photo-journalist back from Vietnam, trying to wipe the mental film clean, is approached by a sullen young man in a Toronto bar. "It [the sullen young man's face] scented to hang there, a few inches above him, pale and tight, full of barely controlled anger.

"Stern?" — more an urgently whispered demand than a question.

"Yes?" Stern heard himself ask.

"We told you if you ever came back we would kill you." Then the pale thin face disappeared behind a group of dark overcoats struggling toward the door.

This is the tenor of Adam's prose style. Did they make it the overcoats? Read on.

Stern goes home to muse. "It was already obvious that he had been mistake" for someone else, who, by some extraordinary coincidence, shared his name." By some extraordinary coincidence. . . . From that ablative phrase hangs the suspension of disbelief. To seduce his reader's belief, to hold him in witless thrall, this is the spy story-teller's aim, end the more incredible the tale the surer his hand must be. Adams misses by a whole quiverful.

After the initial misfire (would-be assas-

vins do not as a rule warn their targets), Adams does try very hard to give us a portrait of Stem, his war, his women, his death fixation, his physiology. (Stem is a distance runner: "The oxygen in his lungs, blood, carried the information, burned the absorbed psychic entropy [sic] of Vietnam, until it was only displaced heat from his own body; exhausted carbons that randomly disturbed the space he ran through." Translation: he panted as he ran. There is much subclinical scribbling in this book.) Trouble is, neither Stem nor his author can answer the question: Whose Stem is which? When Stem reports the death threat, for example, he is told by a police constable called McLuhan: "You've gotta remember, Tim, you're on the old computer. You're going to have to get your story straight from now on."

Would that Adams could. As a distraction he incorporates a commentator-author, abbreviated as Au., into the plot. (A convention used by Heinrich Böll in *Group Portrait with Lady*, it reminded me of Mrs. Elton talking about "Mr. E" in *Emma*.) The Au. has spent a great deal of time and money looking for the murderers of one Jean Baptiste Villeneuve who may have been "agents of the Canadian Government's intelligence apparatus, convinced that Villeneuve was about . . . to take over the leadership of the revolutionary Liberation Front." or one of his own buddies, "supported by the malignant paranoia of suspected betrayal. . . ." With friends like that, who needs the RCMP?

Stem's connection with Villeneuve? He, or his *doppelgänger*, was picked up and later released by the Paris police at the time of the murder. At this point the reader might have welcomed some direction from the omniscient Au. But no: "The Au. completely rejects this idea of 'the message from the Author God' and maintains that all writing is political. [The slogan is Sartre's. In case the Re. doesn't recognize it, the Au. has a list of unacknowledged quotes acknowledged at the end.] Moreover, that the phrases, images, thoughts that make up the multi-dimensional space of the writing are all ready-made, drawn from a vast lexicon of existing information coming from 'innumerable centres of culture.'" No wonder the cop was called McLuhan.

Meanwhile, in Toronto, someone blows up Stem's car. And in Montreal, beck in 1971, the Popular Liberation Front has kidnapped a cabinet minister called Paul Lapalm.

Stem meets up with Ledman, an old CIA chum from Vietnam, and gets a rundown on the acronyms infesting Montreal: "The Israelis are here with MOSSAD. SAVAK, to keep an eye on their Iranian students, the South Africans with BOSS, the Argentinians with SIDE." plus the KCIA, the KGB, MI6, the SDECE, and the Algerians. None of this is much help to Stem. Seven years later Ledman, "speaking to the Au. in Paris in the summer of 1978," says that he came to see Stem as a figure "out of a Kafka

story." Well, yes, except that Kafka was always so much more amusing.

The Au. keeps the plot against Stem a classified secret until the dénouement of this silly, pretentious book, which is headed by a quote from the Swiss author Friederich Durrenmatt, whose prose style is a model of economy and grace. *End Game in Paris*, alas, reads like a Roland Barthes novel shuffled with a manual on how to speak spyese. (Did you know that the CAF TIT HQ is at Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa? The Au. does.) *End Game in Paris* comes complete with a bibliography headed by Adam's own *S: Portrait of A Spy*. The Durrenmatt quote? "Any of us could be the man who meets his own double." Thank you, Mr. Adams. Once is enough. □

Black and white and quickly over

Good *Night Little Spy*, by Eric Koch, Virgo Press. 181 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920528 03 1).

By DAN HILTS

EVEN A BOOK that is meant to be light summer reading should occupy the reader for more than 3% hours. That's longer than

It takes for the ice to melt in a mint julep but shorter than it takes to leave much of an impression.

This isn't a spy novel involving agents of the superpowers in complicated plots to preserve the ruling élites. The main character, Monty Hayes, is a Toronto public relations man with a personality defect—he'd rather tell the truth than not—that gets him fired. He takes a job with a small PR firm in a small, fictional, East African country that has just overthrown a dictator who resembles Idi Amin. However, the new leader isn't much of an improvement: he only manages his public relations better, through the firm, naturally, that hired Hayes. After a few weeks of palace intrigues, a little in-let-racial sex, and some African atmosphere, he inadvertently helps topple the regime and becomes a hero.

Koch's novel is competently written, in the sense that there aren't any obvious mistakes and the African background seems convincing. But the book is listless, without tension or suspense, and is light without being funny. One reason it lacks any punch is the long narrative passages. The characters don't exist or act on their own; they're described and explained to us, which makes for fast, easy reading but little enjoyment. In fact the only thing that slows the reader at all is the large number of chapters—19—an unusual device for padding a book. The story never gets much more interesting than a release written by a glib PR man. □

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Hemlock and better

Deathwatch on Skidegate Narrows and Other Poems, by Sean Virgo. Sono Nis Press, unpaginated, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 919462707).

By AUGUST KLEINZAHLER

SEAN VIRGO'S *Deathwatch on Skidegate Narrows* is a mixed affair of large, serious aims and flawed achievement. On one hand, the book has the intention and scope to be major poetry. It deals with subjects and images that Virgo clearly feels have emerged as central for Canada, and it attempts to give them a definitive treatment. In the final analysis, it may be bigger and better than any poetry that has dealt with this material before.

But Virgo's themes, subjects, and style too often remain at the level of cliché. His gifts as a writer are often thwarted by the tradition he adopts — the imitation shamanism that many writers like to put on like a wooden mask.

The book's strongest point and centerpiece is the title poem, a major work of 34

pages divided into sections with epigraphs from Rabelais, Ingmar Bergman, and George Barker, among others. It's a labour of self-discovery in and through Canadian landscape, and an attempt to summon up and subsume the country's primitive and natural ethos. Large and impressive, "Deathwatch" seems to concentrate Virgo's power over words into a concrete, original style in many fine passages, including this one on a squirrel:

*It's no small matter
this casual transcendence
between one world and the next:*

*You blow like a thistledown
ten fathoms high, over the brig of dread;
the ferryman sees your shadow on his deck
and spits in the tide, crosses himself
against monsters and higher authority*

This succeeds in conjuring the creature's magical leap from world to world, branch to branch. The fourth and fifth lines, especially, enact the meaning through pace and rhythm. The coalescence of natural and mythic, descriptive and intellectual elements is fully achieved.

Anyone interested in Canadian poetry ought to read "Deathwatch" and judge its success for himself. Does it escape the faults of much of the rest of this book, in which Virgo's poetry seems swallowed up by its poetic ancestors in native legend and recent poetry?

For those of us who have not yet had it with the "Crow on my shadow's toe/CawCawCaw" school of poetry, some-

times known in this country as the West Coast Renaissance style, Vii offers more. All the old favourites here: Raven, Fox, Owl, and Bear. We have juniper, cedar, and hemlock, salmon and frog. Totems careen through the dim ferny glow of forest corridors like taxis down Rue St. Catherine, and animism is rife.

There are blood and bones aplenty, too, inevitable in this sort of poetry, to demonstrate that through myth we have succeeded in stripping existence, well, . . . to the bone. Where does this stuff come from? From the aboriginal imagination, it claims, and the spirit of place — especially bleak, wilderness place. But there is also a large admixture of D.H. Lawrence via Ted Hughes. And why do we see so much of it? Because it is easy to write. Variations on the rich motifs of Pacific Northwest native legends provide endless possibilities for someone with lots of time on his hands — for instance, a poet living in the Charlottes in January.

This material can be easily and endlessly recombined or slightly changed so that the writer sounds quite vatic while saying nothing:

*Frog in my side
Crow in my side
Pike in my side
Begone
Slimy face
Pecking head
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And so forth. We could quote the following six stanzas, but for the sake of brevity, begone.

Deathwatch does take a bright turn at the end with the poem "Runners." Here Virgo shows a trim, muscular line that succeeds in giving us a fox in flight across the frozen landscape. Incantation gives way to sharp, meaning-charged, original observation, as in the best portions of the book's title poem. In his introduction, Vii comments that "the poem 'Runners' is, I suppose, my first attempt at starting again from scratch. Another landscape, another air to breathe, a different voice."

Overall, *Deathwatch* employs a style that seems not strong enough to carry its major intentions. Virgo possesses plenty of raw poetic ability, but sometimes it is weakened by the easy mock-shaman style, which is impressive and rings false. Still the book, which was published last year, is one of the most comprehensive and intelligent efforts in our recent poetry. It is proof that Sean Virgo has matured as a poet and now is a leading candidate for a future Governor General's Award. □

Elvis in the underworld

The Love and Death of Orpheus, by Ronald Hambleton, Green Bushell, illustrated, 192 pages, \$10.00 cloth (ISBN 0 9590786 2 5).

By JEFF MILLER

IN MAKING narrative fiction of the Orpheus story, a sibylline scatter of myth and legend, Ronald Hambleton has wanted to tell us that thw is nothing new under the sun — or, for that matter, the moon. Under Mr. Hambleton's pen, anyway, the heroic post, singer, lover, and reputed inventor of both the lyre and pathetic fallacy (myth says the very trees bent to his song) is the son of a famous women's-libber:

She, a representative of the typically intellectually dominant Achean woman, had no wish to become merely an unpaid worker and child-breeder like so many women of the mountainous mainland. She carried on with her interests in astronomy, gardening, and music, and as one of the Muses was kept too busy an official business in and around Olympus to spend much time rearing a near-accidental son. . . .

His experiences aboard the Argo are those of an impressionable youth fallen victim to the propaganda of chauvinism, of manifest destiny if not imperialism: the search for the Golden Fleece is here compared obliquely to both the first Apollo moon shot and the Vietnam War. And ultimately, Orpheus's deadly luck in love, culminating in his murder and dis-

memberment at the hands of frenzied Thracian women, concludes a career much like that of Elvis Presley or Jimi Hendrix, also victims of their day and calling.

This approach can be engaging, and is sometimes compelling enough to send you back to Ovid or Bulfinch or Frye for mote. Mr. Hambleton is a writer of some craft and charm. He has given texture and dimension to his narrative by skilfully weaving into it lively and imaginative versions of the Actaeon, Hylas and Herakles, and Aristaeus stories, to mention a few. (The latter figure, an agricultural demi-god in myth, is made to seem a sort of Max Yazgur, the owner of the farm where the famous Woodstock music festival took place.)

But somewhere along the way the "historical inevitability" theme begins to wear thin, or feel forced, particularly where the effect is hinged on language. -Orpheus, for example, is made to declaim, "You play on an audience as much as on an instrument," or to think jealously of Calais's love for ship's captain Jason that the former has become a "culture vulture"

In the exposition of this view of history Hambleton seems to want to do something big with the Nietzschean Appollonian/Dionysian dialectic (Orpheus's experience viewed as a struggle between the ethereal and the chthonic), but seems uncertain whether he wants to "se the conceit as a mere metaphor or as his narrative's core. The result is a sort of negative capability, an unintended moral that the truth of a myth, the radioactive nub that persists when the myth is no longer an artifact of belief or faith, is not that it makes graphic some Spenglerian theory of history, but that it is the imaginative expression of a need or feeling that transcends time. "The tragedy began," as Yeats sums it up in his version of the same myth,

*With Homer that was a blind man,
And Helen has all living hearts
betrayed. . . .*

*Does the imagination dwell the most
Upon a woman won or woman lost?
If on the lost, admit you turned aside
From a great labyrinth out of pride,
Cowardice, some silly over-subtle thought
Or anything called conscience one:
And that if memory recur, the sun's
Under eclipse and the day blotted out. □*



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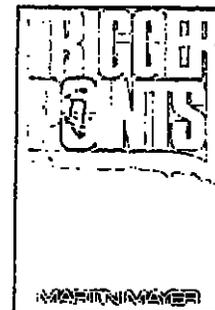
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by Val Clery

And No Birds Sang, by Fletley Mower, McClelland & Stewart, 2.50 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 6618 X).

WAR, AS THOSE who have been caught up in it will recognize, is conducted in a vacuum of unreality that is unforgettable. Having been paroled from the mundane life sentence of earning a living, combatants are cast out into a wilderness where the predominant end atavistic choice is to kill or be killed. Few temperaments adjust easily to this brutal translation, but behind the traditional smokescreen of grousing, most soldiers do come to relish the comradeship, the personal challenges, and the cycles of terror and relief that make up warfare. To appreciate the residual effect of having fought and lived to tell the tale, you need only sit in a Legion hell and share a reminiscent beer with a veteran. Warriors rarely need more encouragement than the ordering of another mend.

Farley Mowat is a veteran both of war and of sexy-telling, so it is no surprise that he should sit us down and oblige us to listen to tales of battles long ago. And like many veterans, he feels no compunction about telling the same tale twice. In 1955 he published *The Regiment*, a spirited and detailed account of the experiences of his militia unit, The Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, during the Second World War; a second edition was published in 1973, and subsequently a paperback edition. Mowat's latest book, *And No Birds Sang*, is partly the same story told again from the point of view of himself as an officer of the regiment.

Mowat is a natural story-teller, adept at describing action and at dressing it with colour and atmosphere, and *The Regiment*, only his second book published, fully demonstrated his instinctive skills. His Public persona suggests that, like many story-tellers, he is a performer *manqué*, and

this may explain why he obeyed the urge to retell the wartime saga of "The Hasty Pees," as his regiment was popularly known, with himself quite properly at the centre of the action.

Needless to say, Mowat's new account is entertaining and highly readable, as far as it goes. He is amusingly candid about the problems his adolescent appearance exposed him to in gaining acceptance as a volunteer recruit, a potential officer and a subaltern with his regiment abroad; when eventually he arrived in England, a superior officer arranged for a lusty Land Girl to relieve Mowat of his virginity.

He was relatively fortunate in going with the First Canadian Division to invade Sicily; not that the war there and later on the Italian mainland was less lethal, but because he was spared the stagnation the bulk of Canadian troops endured while waiting for D-Day. Again, he does not conceal the fact that his youth and inexperience contributed to the misadventures that his unit, like any fledgling force, invariably suffers when it first goes into action.

Winston Churchill's rhetoric about the Mediterranean theatre being "the soft underbelly of Europe" was a bitterly ironic joke among the troops who drove the German rearguards across the volcanic desert of Sicily, and who later hammered their way north over the mud and rock fastnesses of the Sangro, Monte Cassino, the Hitler and the Gustav Lines. In both books, the bitter extent of the joke is vividly shown in terms of suffering and death.

But to be honest, Farley Mower's superimposition of his personal story on his earlier impersonal account doesn't altogether come off. Indeed, the insertion of new personal details seems to have led to excision of much peripheral detail about the Sicilian and Italian campaigns; at times, in the new book, the Hasty Pees seem to be fighting the war alone. Furthermore, time seems to have eroded Mowat's attention to detail: in page proofs of *And No Birds Sang*, the British 78th Division (correctly cited in *The Regiment*) becomes a non-existent 79th Division; those execrable Indian-made "V" cigarettes were never included in the British "compo" rations, but were issued as supplementary supplies; and those "compo" rations, while obviously not Mom's home cooking, were generally considered superior to the ersatz food of the

German Army and the scientifically devised "K" rations of the U.S. Army.

What may have been conceived as the justifying *leitmotiv* of this retold saga is Farley Mowat's growing disenchantment with war, his realization that the price of the seductive excitement was death, a death that was cruelly and hideously final. In the latter end grimmer chapters of his book, dealing with the winter battles of the rivets Sangro and Mom in eastern Italy in 1943 — battles that were costly nightmares for infantry generally and for his regiment in particular — Mowat contrives a riveting climax. Then suddenly end bewilderingly, with the death of an admired fellow-officer, the book ends. There is no change of pace to prepare the reader for this hiatus, no hint of a sequel that would follow Mowat's experience during the remainder of the war; the effect is an acute sense of disappointment.

The fault seems to emerge from the fact that Mowat is so instinctively a story-teller and a performer, reactive rather than reflective. He launches into the book in so familiar a narrative style that the reader is conditioned to anticipate a story with a beginning, a middle, end and an end. But there is no end. In the classics of war, such writers as Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Edmund Blunden universalized their intimate experience of battle against an impressionistic portrayal of its horrors and arrived at a personal epiphany of truth. Farley Mowat either lacks, or has failed to express, the philosophic distance from himself that such an approach demands.

For those who have not read *The Regiment*, *And No Birds Sang* is obviously a book about the experience of war that should not be missed. For those who have read the fine earlier book, the new book may serve as a fascinating postscript and as an autobiographical fragment from a lively, courageous and engagingly human Canadian. □

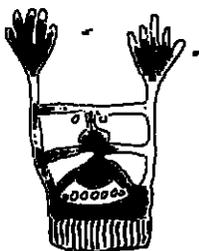
Saw sub, sank same, salvaged shorts

A Bloody War: One Men's Memories of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1939-45, by Hal Lawrence, Macmillan, illustrated, 193 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1734 X).

By ASHLEY THOMSON

ON NOV. 10, 1942, Gordon Sinclair, then of the *Toronto Star*, reported how "an officer and stoker, barefooted in their bathing suits, leaped from the dark deck of the Canadian corvette *Oakville* to complete the capture and destruction of one of Germany's submariners" prowling the South Caribbean in search of Allied convoys.

The officer was Hal Lawrence, then 22, and his feat of derring-do became instant



legend. During the war, Defence Department artists portrayed the capture in a popular poster captioned "Men of Valour — They Fight for You," and afterwards Joseph Schull wrote up the story in his official account of Canadian naval operations during the Second World War, *The Far Distant Ships. In A Bloody War*. Lawrence reveals for the first time in print what really happened that dark night:

As I hit the deck of the U-94, the belt of my tropical shorts snapped on impact. My pants slid down to my ankles. I stumbled, kicked them off, and rose. Clad only in a pistol, two grenades, a gas-mask, a length of chain, a flashlight and a Life-belt, I lurched to the deck. . . .

And that is only the beginning of this particular story.

What Lawrence has given us is a refreshingly irreverent behind-the-scenes look at what it was like to be a sailor — or as he prefers to say, a matelot — in the Royal Canadian Navy during the war. His stories take him from 1939, when he began as a midshipman on a small patrol vessel outside Halifax Harbour, until war's end, when he entered peace-time service as a first lieutenant, having spent most of his time in between helping to protect convoys, the main function of the Canadian navy during wartime. Lawrence rose through the ranks not so much because a bloody war thinned out the commissioned officers, as his title is supposed to imply, but because good men were needed to take command in a service which expanded from 5,000 men in 1939 to nearly 100,000 in 1945 (making it by war's end the third largest allied navy).

Historians may cavil at this book, pointing out that if Lawrence has based the book solely on "memory," then what is recorded 30 years later should be taken with a pinch of salt water. They will also delight in pointing out that the book gives a distorted picture of the period, which was a lot more monotonous than Lawrence implies. But of course, Lawrence is not writing for historians — he is reminiscing for the intelligent layman.

Unfortunately, even this kind of reader will be disappointed with his book. For when Lawrence gets wound up in naval jargon it is frequently difficult to follow what he is saying. Lawrence himself admits that "half the [naval] vocabulary was foreign" but it does not seem to occur to him that many of his readers may have the same problem. This is particularly surprising since he is a sometime lecturer in English at the University of Ottawa, where one would expect him to be sensitive to the problems of communication. As it is, Lawrence will likely be read by old salts; while the rest of us landlubbers turn to other things. □



Account rendered

No Time to Mourn: A True Story of a Jewish Partisan Fighter, by Leon Kahn, Laurelton Press (1164 Wolfe St., Vancouver), 212 pages, \$7.50 paper.

By RLRANOR WACHTEL

LAST MARCH, when Parliament was dissolved for the election, a piece of legislation that died on the floor of the House of Commons would have amended the Criminal Code to include as obscene "the undue exploitation of violence, crime, honor or cruelty or the "due degradation of the human person." By this definition all accounts of the Holocaust are obscene. To describe what occurred would be criminal, against the law.

But the stories must be told, and for two important and interrelated reasons. One is that we should not be permitted the luxury of ignorance — we didn't know, we don't know — nor the false comfort of revisionist history (David Irving's recent *Hitler's War* claims that *der Fuehrer* wasn't aware of how the "final solution" to the Jewish problem was being accomplished). Even exposure to a soap-opera treatment of mass slaughter.

the American TV miniseries *Holocaust*, was enough to stun West Germany into abandoning its statute of limitation on the prosecution of war criminals.

The first test, then, is a public one, remembering for the good of our own moral integrity. The second is of more significance to the teller. There is an obligation to bear witness. Driven men such as Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who documents the Gulag, or Elie Wiesel, a chronicler of the Holocaust, write out of this need. The survivor must tell his tale, exorcise it, try to cope with the guilt of surviving. "A small price to pay," said Golda Meir, "for being alive."

Leon Kahn is a middle-aged Vancouver businessman who resolved to bear witness. *No Time to Mourn* is self-published (after several Canadian and American publishers turned it down). "The mind, soul and conscience" of his family, Kahn dedicates the book to his 24 close relatives, including his mother, father, sister, brother, grandmother, and on and on, who were murdered by the Nazis.

Kahn grew up in a *shred* or village in Poland. During the war, it was occupied first by Russians and then, after 1941, by Germans in concert with Lithuanians. The persecution of Jews followed an insidious progression: first they were forbidden to walk on the sidewalk; they could walk only in the gutter. The belongings were confiscated, yellow stars of David had to be worn on front and back of clothes; they could no longer leave town except for

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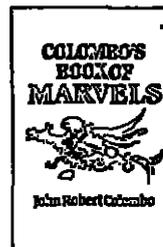
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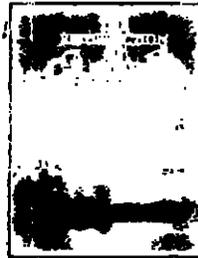
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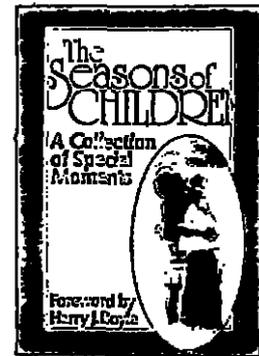
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THE SEASONS OF CHILDREN A Collection of Special Moments Foreword by Harry J. Boyle

In honour of The International Year of the Child, the Canadian Authors Association brings you The Seasons of Children, a special collection of poems, short stories and photographs which join together to capture the delights, heartbreaks and discoveries of youth.

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brutal, forced labour. Soon the final solution was implemented and the village's 5,000 Jews massacred. Kahn, 16, in hiding with his family, witnessed the rape and killing of the women and children. (Of the six million Jews who were slaughtered, 1.5 million were children.) He had to watch, to memorize the details of each horror.

His family escaped to a neighbouring village, but it wasn't long before Jews then? were being rounded up for extermination. They decided to split up, and as soon as Kahn could manage it, he joined the Partisans — a hodgepodge of Jews, Communists, and Russians — guerrillas operating out of the forest. Fighting, despite (perhaps because of its risks, gave his life purpose and direction, meaning that was swallowed by revenge after he saw his sister bayoneted to death and his father shot.

No Time to Mourn doesn't have the slick pace or polish of a professionally written war adventure, although Kahn experienced all the ingredients of such a thriller. It has the awkwardness of authenticity. Most moving and fascinating, are the photographs, with their utter innocence. Cracked group shots, school photos, and family portraits posed before classical pastoral scenes or heavy drapery. Susan Sontag has described how her life was divided into two parts: before and after she saw those famous pictures of children with yellow stars being herded, hands held over their heads, to their deaths. After reading about these people's living, fleeing, and dying, there is a poignancy to their photographs as well. The sheer ordinariness of the living, marked for destruction but not martyrdom.

Kahn's father, as he was dying, told Leon that after it was all over, people would be forced to find reasons for what had happened. Although Kahn alludes to the complicity of the Catholic Church, the incomprehension of the Jews, naivety in the face of evil, he is unable to explain or understand why. He does only what he can: in painful, simple terms, he tells his terrible tale. □

An old oak at the stump

Tommy Douglas Speaks, edited by L.D. Lovick, Oolichan Books, 288 pages, \$ 13.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88982 022 8).

By FAT BARCLAY

ONE APPROACHES a collection of political speeches with more reservations than VIA Rail in summer. Surely nobody, anywhere, possesses greater potential for being stupefyingly boring than the average Canadian politician in full oratorical flight. And what about the horde of typos, certain to be lying in wait, having slipped past a somnolent editor?

24 Books in Canada, October, 1979

Such not unreasonable pessimism turns out to have been misplaced in this case, however; *Tommy Douglas Speaks* was worth publishing and will remain worth reading because Tommy Douglas was no average Canadian politician. (Was, because although Douglas is still hale at 75, he has retired from active politics.)

This collection contains full texts or excerpts from 35 major speeches spanning Douglas's 42-year political career, beginning with his spirited maiden speech to the House of Commons as federal MP for Weyburn, Sask., and ending with a major address to the House as energy critic for the NDP.

Together they reveal Douglas as a complex, dedicated man whose optimism is apparently indestructible. Fuelled by his religious faith, Douglas' optimism enables him to view his fellow men as misled, but improvable. (From a radio speech at Christmas, 1975: "If Christmas means anything it should mean that, like the shepherds of old, we catch a vision of the world as it ought to be and not as it is. In our finest moments all of us feel the thing we ought to be, beating beneath the thing we are.")

As editor L.D. Lovick points out, for much of his career Douglas's role was the "incredibly difficult" one of inspiring "the troops" with optimism one moment and playing Cassandra to the nation the next. He was particularly vehement in his denunciation of the Columbia River Treaty, the War Measures Act ("his finest hour" says the admiring Lovick), and the continuing government sell-out of Canada's oil and gas.

Lovick's lengthy introduction and explanatory notes fill in the biographical details but stop short of discussing whether Douglas's various warnings, jibes, and homilies achieved the desired results. (Lovick is a teacher at Malaspina College in Nanaimo, B.C.; his field is English and Canadian Studies, not history or political science.) Instead he provides an analysis of Douglas's oratorical methods and philosophy.

Tommy Douglas Speaks is based on two main assumptions: that Douglas himself can be defined and explained by his own words; and that an examination of his words will define democratic socialism as it was and is understood by the CCF and the NDP. A thorough reading of the book will persuade the reader that both assumptions were correct, but the book's usefulness regarding the second assumption is limited by its lack of an index.

Douglas himself comes off well. Here are two sample quotations you won't find in Colombo:

"[My grandmother] had such long and beautiful hair that her boast was that she could sit on her hair. Now I have a daughter who can't sit on her skirts. There is a generation gap."

"When a Yankee trader tells you that you are a tough negotiator, you know you have been taken to the cleaners."

Tommy Douglas, says Lovick, "is a classical liberal" because "he believes that human beings are created good and are corrupted by the society or environment they inhabit." On the evidence of this book he's also a man of principle in an age of pragmatism and a thoroughly decent fellow. As even *Time* magazine acknowledged, in one of the quotes that Colombo chose to print: "Tommy Douglas doesn't have to kiss babies. Babies kiss him." □

Let us now appraise infamous men

The Myth of Delinquency: An Anatomy of Juvenile Nihilism, by Elliott Leyton, McClelland & Stewart, 280 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 5307 X).

Shadows of a Violent Mind, by Guy Richmond, Antonson Publishing, 223 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 919900 29 1).

By ELEANOR SWAINSON

MOMENTS BEFORE his execution in the United States last May, murderer John Spenkelink wrote: "Man is what he chooses to be. He chooses that for himself." Some people, however, clearly have more choices than others. Two recent books on criminality and violence address the question of choice from interestingly different perspectives.

In *The Myth of Delinquency*, Elliott Leyton sets forth his theory of "treble delinquency" to explain chronic delinquent behaviour in the young offender. Society itself, he maintains, is the foremost offender, creating an "underclass" of persons who live in poverty and humiliation, with no rightful place in the social order. Stripped of self-respect and rejected by society, the parent in this group rejects his child, and the child, convinced of his own worthlessness, rejects his parents, society, and ultimately himself. What follows is a series of destructive and apparently meaningless acts.

As it turns out, such behaviour is really a rational, planned response. The child struggles to communicate his needs to the world: his behaviour is a *cri de coeur* for help and recognition. Does the child choose this path, or is he programmed? Implicit in Leyton's explanation of his theory is the sad conclusion that the whole process is inevitable from the beginning, that the child has nothing else to choose.

Leyton's style is entertaining, articulate, free of jargon, and tempered by an obviously deep concern for his subject. His line of argument is less sure. Were it not for the pains he takes to emphasize the limitations

of his study. one could **accuse** him of being **dangerously** simplistic. As it **is**, all of his case studies **are** of children **from** one training school **in the Maritimes**, and **all fit neatly** into the **social** context **that he describes**. When applied to these eight **cases**, **Leyton's arguments** and **most of his recommendations** sound totally convincing.

It is **Recommendation 15** I find alarming. **Leyton** believes **that family courts** should **hold parents** end child equally responsible for a child's crimes and should have the power to order families to undergo joint **counselling**. If the child **has** chosen his mode of **behaviour**, and if society is to blame anyhow. how can one justify such coercion of the parent? What about the **family** that doesn't fit the pattern? **John-Louis Evens III**. currently **appealing** his **death sentence**. was recently quoted: "**I come from a super loving family. I was never abused. I was just a rotten kid.**" **Perhaps** we should listen to the **criminals**.

Having spent **17 years** as **prison doctor** at **Oakalla, B.C.**, **Dr. Guy Richmond** has listened to **hundreds** of criminals. and **approaches** the problem of **crime from a far more complex perspective**.

Richmond believes **that** the metaphysical philosophers have **come closest** to explaining human **behaviour**, and it is **clear** that his own thinking has been heavily influenced by **Jacob Bmnowski** end **Sartre**. "Violence. rage and **hatred are at the heart** of Being." he maintains. Richmond adopts **Bronowski's image** of the Sphinx of Violence. comparing the anti-social forces **lurking** below the surface of human **consciousness** to a **stalking beast**, **walking** quietly. **ready** to spring. Dependent upon others. men is socialized to **control** his **rage**, but his life process remains a **struggle** to reconcile his **own** needs with the demands of the society that **would restrict** hi **freedom**. According to **Sartrian** philosophy, how men **handles** that conflict constitutes his choice of Being. but the veneer of **civilization** is thin and the choice of Being is precarious.

Richmond is especially interested in the criminal psychopath. whose **behaviour** is a deliberate inversion of the **behaviour** of society. **Hatred** and violence become his **behavioural norm**, the pursuit of evil his **self-fulfilment**. In a touchingly revealing statement. en offender interviewed by the author comments: "**I want status** too, the mirror opposite type."

Richmond believes in prevention. In every **case**, he maintains. a criminal's **behavioural** disturbance will **have** been evident from childhood. when it is not too **late** to **change** the **individual's** choice of Being. Skilled loving **care** at the right time could empty **our** penitentiaries: "**Love weighs** lighter than hate and to maintain a **balance**. love needs to be poured on lavishly."

The author is less sore about treatment than prevention. but believes that it must be attempted. Among his recommendations **are** that psychopathy be recognized es **mental illness** in Canada and **that** it be

treated in **special facilities away from** the destructive and dehumanizing maximum security unit.

In a society that has become increasingly desensitized to violence, the offender **enters** prison younger, better **educated**, more **demanding**, end **filled** with more hatred than ever before. If **more and** more violent means **are used to control him**, **worries Richmond**, where will the **escalation** of violent **behaviour** end?

Society's **attitude** is ambivalent. We condemn the offender when he **violates society's norms**. but when it is **expedient** we **create** new norms **that condo**"; the **same behaviour**. In time of **war**, we **hire** soldiers to **kill**; in time of **peace**, we **clamour** for the **return** of **capital** punishment. Is our meting out of "justice" to **our** criminals merely a **rationalization for our own desire to punish**? We **manage** to **justify** violence end to unleash the Sphinx at will.

This disturbing and well-written book is **rich** in detail and peppered with literary quotations **from a** variety of works. A **large** number of typographical **errors are particularly** distracting. Where **was the proof reader**?

More than **30 years** of work with prisoners has **left** Dr. Richmond with a **passionate concern** for this group of **his fellow men**, with a **number of answers**, and with a lot more questions. This volume should be **required** reading for anyone who **has** ever **entertained** a simplistic thought about crime and punishment. □

Anglo insecurity in another ERA

Equal Rights: The Jesuits' Estates Act Controversy. by J. R. Miller, McGill-Queen's University Press, 223 pages, \$13.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7735 0302 1).

By **DONALD SWAINSON**

THIS BOOK WILL be welcomed by students of **19th-century** politics es well as by those interested in the history of **English-French** relations in Canada. It is a **straightforward analysis** of the **agitation** that swept Canada. **or more particularly** Ontario, **after** the Legislature of Quebec parsed the **Jesuits' Estates Act** in 1888.

On the **face** of it the situation **was** simple enough. **The estates** of the Jesuit Order had been **confiscated** by the **British** Crown after the **Conquest**. **The order was subsequently** dissolved by the **Pope**, hot was **reconstituted** in 1814. **The Jesuits** returned to Canada **in the 1840s** and, supported by **powerful factions** within the Church, **lobbied** for the **return** of their lands. By the **1880s** the Jesuit Order **was a** thriving and powerful **institution**.

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With responsible government, problems like those of the Jesuits' lands in Lower Canada and the Clergy Reserves in Upper Canada fell within the ambit of colonial control. The United Province of Canada was not able, however, to resolve the situation. The problem of the estates was thus passed to the new Province of Quebec in 1867. There it festered for two decades.

Honoré Mercier, a friend of the Jesuit Order and a nationalist, became premier of Quebec in 1867. He decided to deal with the problem of the estates, and did so brilliantly; Mercier's Jesuits' Estates Act was satisfactory to both major wings of Catholicism within Quebec, as well as to the province's Protestant minority. The bill was unanimously approved by the Legislative Assembly of Quebec. That was a considerable achievement, and one would have assumed that the matter was terminated.

Such was not the case because of the intervention of two factors. First, the preamble to the statute publicly (and in inflated language) acknowledged the involvement of the Pope in the resolution of the problem. Second, English-speaking Canada — especially Ontario — had been seized by a mood of despondency and insecurity. The economy was sluggish; national policies did not seem to be working; emigration south was accepted as proof that the country was failing; major groups were campaigning for continentalist solutions to Canadian problems. In short, many English-speaking Canadians perceived that the confederation experiment had failed.

This malaise was explained in different ways. One view was that Canada's lack of a homogeneous people had prevented the birth of a real nation. Why was this the case? Because French Canadians and/or Roman Catholics resisted assimilation into British-Canadian culture. What better symbolized this failure than the Jesuits Estates Act and a foreign Pope's direct intervention in the internal affairs of Canada.

The result was an explosion of fury in Ontario that led to the formation of the Equal Rights Association. The ERA, "an overwhelmingly middle-class professionals' movement," was an umbrella organization for disparate groups of racists, bigots, and cranks. It fed on English Canadian insecurity and paranoid fears of French Canadian expansion. Both major political parties were shaken, and the Conservative Party took another of its several steps towards oblivion in Quebec. French Canada was made acutely aware of Ontario's intolerance and inability to comprehend the nature of a pluralistic state. The kind of fervent nationalism preached by Mercier was sanctioned by the ERA agitation, and made acceptable to many French Canadians who had hitherto been wary.

J. R. Miller explains all of this in his solid, extensively researched and well-written book. This is, and no pejorative sense is intended, old-fashioned political history. Nothing is more central to the Canadian experience than French-English

relations and federal politics. Miller's book is an important contribution to these areas, and is timely because we are still striving to deal with the problems that baffled the creative statesmen of the 1880s. How often does one hear a complaint about French on the cereal box, or a bilingual historical plaque in English Canada? When did a Toronto crowd last boo the French language at a sporting event? It goes on and on, and proves that the Equal Rights Association has never really died. □

Forty thousand bed sheets' worth of wrong

Blacks in Deep Snow, by Colin A. Thomson, J.M. Dent & Sons, 112 pages, \$8.95 cloth (ISBN 0 460 90280 6).

White Canada Forever, by W. Peter Ward, McGill-Queen's University Press, 205 pages, 915.00 cloth (ISBN 0 7735 318 8) and 56.M paper (ISBN 0 7735 0319 6).

Men of Colour, by Gary E. French, Kaste Books (Post Office Box 3, Stroud, Ont. ML 2M0), 182 pages, \$8.50 paper (ISBN 0 9690838 0 71).

By FRED BOOKER

IT HAS BEEN demonstrated that during an emergency an individual or nation will show its true character. White Canadians have always treated the immigration of large numbers of non-whites to Canada as an emergency. Usually the Canadian character they have shown under these circumstances has been murderous.

In their recent books, Thomson, French, and Ward inform Canadians that much of their population is non-white and, at one time, 40,000 Ku Klux Klan members were active in the Canadian West because they hated the fact that it was so.

Thomson's small book, *Blacks in Deep Snow*, presents the familiar story of black Alberta cowboy John Were, introduces to the literature a complete account of the successful life of popular black Saskatchewan doctor Alfred Shadd, and stirs up the debate even more about what is feet end legend regarding the life of sensational black badman Daniel Williams. However, it is Thomson's discussion of the 1907 migration to Alberta of the Oklahoma black dryland farmers, led by Jefferson Davis Edwards, that demonstrates Canadian whites objected to non-white immigrants simply because they were non-white.

Four years after the 1907 migration a reinforcement party was prevented from joining the colony. Alberta immigration officers gave in to the agitation of local boards of trade, which argued that the large

group of blacks, because of their race, could not succeed in Alberta. The whites feared the blacks would become a drain on the province's economy.

In fact, Thomson includes ample evidence the blacks were better prepared than many groups entering the Canadian West at the time. The blacks had overcome the stubborn dry land of Oklahoma and were feared and persecuted there by less successful and less skilled white racists. They arrived in Emerson, Man., with their own train of seven railway cars filled with farming tools, equipment, horses, mules, and their personal effects. Most were carrying at least \$300. Some were able to show drafts worth as much as \$3,500. One group of 175 arrived with capital worth nearly \$100,000. These amounts were substantial in 1911. Thomson asserts that the agitation was simply because the blacks were non-white immigrants.

Doting the same year, in the House of Commons, the Hon. Mr. Thoburn, speaking against the immigration of the Oklahoma blacks, said: "Would it not be preferable to preserve for the sons of Canada the lands they propose to give to niggers?" Thus, white Canada's case was simply stated.

White Canadians showed little imagination in their treatment of the Oklahoma blacks. In his study of white race supremacy in British Columbia, *White Canada Forever*, Ward shows how during the 1870s and 1880s the Chinese and East Indian Sikhs met similar insults and abuse. The animus reared its ugly head because of the large numbers, and because the immigrants were non-white. Earlier individual blacks, Chinese, Sikhs, and Japanese had successfully assimilated into Canadian life. Large groups usually met resistance, agitation, and finally, violence. A sad record for Canada, especially in the case of the Sikhs, who were citizens of the British Commonwealth. The Japanese, like the blacks and Chinese, were not.

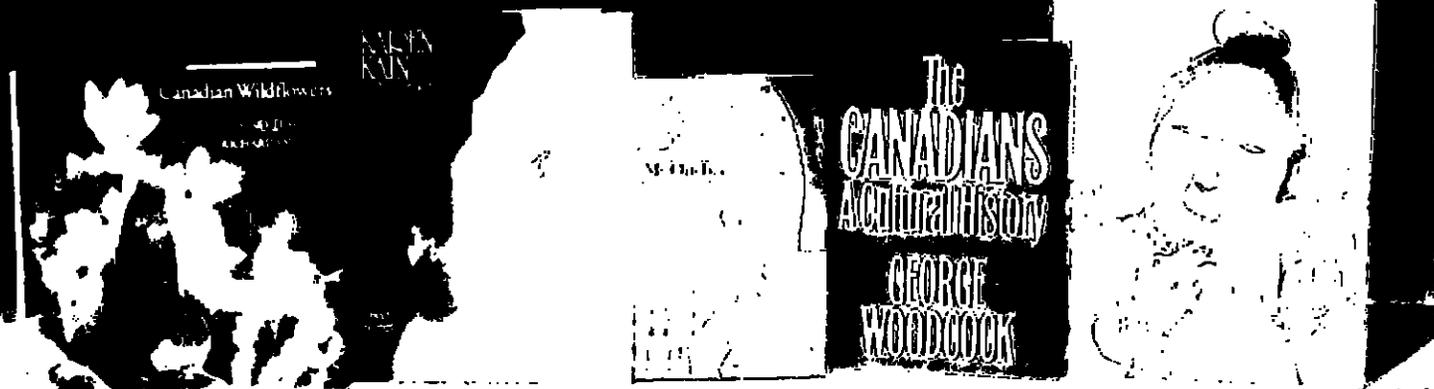
Ward notes that Japanese immigrants began arriving in large numbers about the time that Japan defeated a white country in the 1904-5 Russian-Japanese War. From the beginning, then, British Columbia whites were fearful of their Japanese-Canadian neighbours. The fear remained until the consummate defeat of Japanese Imperialism in 1945.

Most Japanese in Canada had come from Hawaii and many more were Canadian citizens and successful West Coast fishermen when the white animus was provoked again with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Afterward the white Canadians smashed Japanese-Canadian free enterprise on the West Coast and permanently dispersed the community.

Because of this record, it is surprising there was any successful settlement of non-whites in Canada at all. Oro Township in Ontario's Simcoe County, archivist Gary French reports, was settled by blacks in 1819 with the ease of the settlement in Amber Valley, Alta., led by Jeff Edwards.

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French's *Men of Colour* will mean little to the general reader. But for those who have kept up with the material published on blacks in Canada since 1971, the bulk of the book, a list of the individuals who made up the Oro Settlement, will be an important source.

Thomson's *Blacks in Deep Snow* is a useful introduction to the history of blacks in the Canadian West, although he fails to discuss his sources. His book, therefore, does little to resolve the debate between those who hold differing views on the reported murder by, and reported execution or acquittal of, the colorful black badman Daniel Williams. This is important. If Thompson's version is true, then it is a welcomed moment of comedy in this otherwise dreadful chronicle.

Ward fails to make *White Canada Forever* easily readable. It will find itself labelled, like most Canadian history, boring at worst and tough going at best. Although it is a psychological study of white racism in

B.C., it follows the federal and provincial parliamentary debates on the subject. Such a narrative is a babel of tongues. Politicians often deal in half-truths, subterfuge, and just plain lying. A historian must transcend the information to give history meaning and impact. He must learn how to write if he wishes to be read.

Ward's book has the same faults as Robert Morton's study on the Chinese of B.C.; it has little to do with the Chinese. In more than 200 pages of discussion of Chinese, Sikh, and Japanese-Canadians, Ward mentions only one non-white, the East Indian Gurdit Singh, sponsor of the 1914 attempt to land a group of 376 prospective Sikh immigrants at Vancouver. The book gives the eerie impression racism and violence are practised without doing real harm to the victims. There are Chinese, Sikhs, and Japanese-Canadians still alive who remember the outrage and suffering. Their testimony should be part of a study such as this. □

While the 13-year-old hem has adventures and succeeds in proving himself, the readers learn how the French and English battled for control of Newfoundland and how the mercantile princes established their stranglehold on the island. Barnhouse also provides a glossary of nautical and historical terms and a series of sketches of instruments and equipment used on old sailing vessels.

Apparently also meant to provide children with an easy-to-absorb lesson in Newfoundland's history is Tom Cods, Kids and Confederation by Tom Moore (Jespersen Press, 65 pages, \$2.95 paper). On the 30th anniversary of Confederation with Canada, this little book is the story of the referendum struggle from the point of view of a young boy in a Newfoundland outport. But all it tells is that some Newfoundlanders were against Confederation while others, including Joey Smallwood, were for it. Although Moore outlines the tensions created by the issue in the village and in the young narrator's family, he fails to convince us why the whole thing mattered to anyone in the first place.

Child of the Canadian Forest by Rene Bonnardel, translated from the French by Patricia Crampton, (Burke Books, unpaginated, \$7.95 cloth) was originally published in Europe. It is part of a series called Children and Animals dealing with children in interesting geographical locations around the world. This child, Ti-Luc, lives in Chicoutimi, Que. A simple text describes his day-to-day life and colour photographs show his activities and the wild animals in his vicinity. Although some things are explained that Canadian children already know - how to play baseball and how to dress warmly for winter, for example - this book, with the rest of the series, would probably be a popular addition to the reference section of a children's library.

Mrs. Poppy's Great Idea! by Darlene Wolk (Kids Can Press, 44 pages, \$2.25 paper) contains instruction of a more inspirational sort. Mrs. Poppy, her children grown up, has recently sold her house and moved to an apartment. But she misses the work about her old home, in particular her garden. With the help of Robbie, a seven-year-old girl, Mrs. Poppy manages to transform a vacant, garbage-filled city lot into community gardens, and to bring together an assortment of compatible and colourful gardeners. All obstacles are overcome by Mrs. Poppy's determination and ability to engender co-operation. It is an attractive little book — the illustrations by Anita Kunz are very appealing — but the message hits rather hard.

Mouse Woman and the Muddleheads (McClelland & Stewart, 131 pages, \$10.95 cloth) also presents a resourceful female as the central character. This is Christie Harris's third book about Mouse Woman, a *narnauk*, or supernatural being, whose strong sense of what is proper causes her to interfere and straighten out the muddle-headed activities of human beings and other

in the beginning

by May Ainslie Smith

Children's books: across the county and through the woods by foot, train, and ship

A LOT IS expected of books for children. They must, of course, entertain their readers, but first they must satisfy the adults who buy them — the parents, teachers, and librarians who want to believe that their children are reading something "worthwhile." Since it began publication in 1976, *Owl Magazine* has provided a consistently high level of both entertainment and edification. Owl has now produced some children's books that meet the same excellent standard. Last year it was *A Day in the Woods* (Greedy de Pencier, unpaginated, 56.95 cloth). Colour photographs by Noel Keenan show his son Rory's adventures during a day of explorations alone in the woods. The best thing about these adventures is that — apart from a swim with a pet raccoon — they could happen to any child taught to be sensitive to his environment. Most of the things Rory sees are not uncommon — a garter snake, a robin, a spider — but the photographs capture their magic and the text by Val Clery conveys Rory's sense of wonder as well as his feeling of kinship with what he observes.

This year, as a special project for the International Year of the Child, Owl has written "All Aboard!" *A Cross Canada Adventure*, written and photographed by Barbara O'Kelly and Beverly Allinson (Greedy de Pencier, 95 pages, \$6.95 paper). Kate, a 10-year-old girl, travels from her grandmother's home in Newfoundland to join her father in Vancouver. She makes the trip by train and, most important, by

herself. Her trip is well planned: friends or relatives meet her at every stopover, but for 14 days she is essentially on her own. Kate is a lucky traveller; she never misses a train or loses anything. She is also lucky enough to meet some extraordinarily interesting people: the town major of Louisbourg; some young occupants of Prince Edward Island's Ark experimental centre; a naturalist working at Jasper. Meeting people such as these provides Kate with insights that might be difficult for the average cross-Canada tourist to acquire. But overall, Kate's journey is plausible; her excitement as she makes new discoveries about Canada is contagious; and the photographs, especially those of the people she meets, are wonderful.

Other children's books, although lacking the resources and polish of *Owl Magazine*, make equally sincere efforts to convey something important. In the biographical note attached to *Quest of the Golden Gannet* (Breakwater, 97 pages, \$7.95 cloth and \$4.95 paper) Dorothy P. Barnhouse mourns "the lack of Canadian content in our school curricula" and complains that Canadian children know more about American heroes than Canadian ones. Her book, set in the late 17th century aboard a ketch bound across the Atlantic to Newfoundland, will probably serve a more valuable purpose as a history text than as a piece of literature. It is the sort of book that a good history teacher and a grade 7 and 8 class could have a wonderful time with.

narrators. Her adventures are based on West Coast Indian legends, adapted by Harris from anthropological sources. The stories are lively and the illustrations by

Douglas Tait are excellent. *Mouse Woman* provides a glimpse of the wealth of legend and folklore that few Canadians ever become acquainted with. □

on the racks

by Paul Stuewe

Half a shelf, half a shelf, half a shelf onward lumbers our paperback hero

FALL IS traditionally a time of high hopes and rafts of new releases in the publishing industry, and this season's new soft-cover reprints are likewise as collectively ambitious as they are numerically impressive. Faced with such a clamorous brood, all brightly packaged and imprinted with review excerpts bestowing astonishingly uniform approval, the harried critic is tempted to quote Sir Geoffrey Faber on the "gambling competition for potential best sellers" and echo his call for self-imposed restrictions on the number of new books. But one then remembers that it is only in the last few years that we have had any sort of active paperback publishing at all, takes heart from the examples of Tennyson's "Light Brigade" and fans of the Toronto Argonauts, and recognizes that it's time to do or die rather than reason why. So half a shelf onward, and let no one be dismay'd.

McClelland & Stewart has just released a batch of "quality paperback" titles, and if content is decidedly variable, form is looking up with attractive covers and durable bindings. The fiction offerings include Gabrielle Roy's *Garden in the Wind* (\$5.95), four stories as fragily beautiful as prairie flowers swaying in a spring breeze, and Rudy Wiebe's *First and Vital Candle* (\$6.95), further evidence that Wiebe is probably our most overrated writer since Callaghan: this is "creative writing" with a vengeance, as rich in adjectival overkill and artificial paradox as it is totally devoid of interest. Two Thomas Raddall novels, *The Governor's Lady* and *Hangman's Beach* (each \$6.95), keep the historical pot boiling with competent re-creations of 18th-century North American milieus, although both emphasize descriptive scene-painting at the expense of plot and character development.

The non-fiction titles in M & S's new format are of a uniformly higher standard, and include two books that have been widely acclaimed by experts in their respective fields: Edith Fowke's *Folklore of Canada* (\$7.95) and Basil Johnston's *Ojibway Heritage* (\$5.95) are well-written, scholarly and yet accessible to non-specialist readers. Equally laudable are Ken Adachi's *The Enemy That Never Was* (\$7.95), a lucid, effective account of our mistreatment of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War, and Wilder Penfield's *No Man Alone* (\$7.95), the

autobiography of the humanistic neurosurgeon who ministered to both the minds and bodies of his patients. Richard Rohmer's biography of E.P. Taylor (\$7.95) is a horse of more mottled colours as Taylor's reasonably eventful career is not well served by Rohmer's typically turgid prose.

Other non-fiction reprints include a worthy pair from Deneau & Greenberg: Dalton Camp's *Gentlemen, Players and Politicians* (\$7.95) is among the best Canadian political memoirs, a fascinating, few-holds-barred narrative of public life as experienced by a knowledgeable insider; and Norman Levine's *Canada Made Me* (\$6.95) recounts an exile's return to a gloomy, materialistic post-war Canada, seen as a human stew of rejects from Europe that has failed to jell into a viable culture. Although Levine's jeremiad is somewhat dated, it's still relevant to a country where mortgage-interest deduction appears to be a bigger issue than national unity.

Speaking of gloom, Joe Clark: A Portrait (Totem, \$2.75) suggests that we're in for years of it: according to biographer David L. Humphreys, Clark was a real hella at university — had a messy room and seemed addicted to Coke (the beverage, needless to say) — before settling down to the serious business of getting elected. With hagiographers like Humphreys, Clark is going to need something as extreme as a fling with Margaret Trudeau to break out of an earnest Boy Scout image that's all too close to reality, if this excruciatingly dull book is to be believed. And for sheer unadulterated silliness it would be hard to beat Jeremy Brown and David Ondaatje's *Canadian Book of Lists* (Signet, \$2.95), a quintessential non-book containing "10 Well-Known Divorced or Separated Canadians," "The 6 Most Hated Foreigners in Canadian History," "10 Items of Etiquette Canadians Should Know About Table Manners," and other conversation-stoppers for your next social gathering. Possibly it's all an elaborate ploy to win mention on the "10 Worst Books of the Year" list, in which case it's an unqualified success.

Turning to recent paperback fiction, Carol Shield's *The Box Garden* (Totem, \$2.50) is not as compelling as her marvelous *Small Ceremonies*, although it's still well worth reading. A farfetched plot

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works against her ability to And meaning in the mundanities of everyday life. and the result is a mildly disappointing novel from a writer who has done and will do much better. Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Sold* (PaperJacks, \$2.50) is in his patented country-boy-goes-Faulkner style, and while I find it grating, there's no question that Kroetsch is a gifted writer who will astonish us all if and when he gets out from under the influence of the Sage of Oxford (Mississippi). Much Farther down the qualitative scale are Betty Wilson's *André* Tom Macgregor (Signet, \$2.25), of interest only for its Edmonton skid-row setting, and André Bruneau's *Moving Out* (PaperJacks, \$2.50), where inept plotting and construction produce a book of no particular interest whatsoever.

No month would be complete without its quota of thrillers, especially when they're led by Spencer Dunmore's *Means of Escape* (Totem, \$2.50). This is an engrossing, fast-paced yam of downed fliers

fleeing across Nazi Germany, and its consummate professionalism leaves most of the competition Far behind. William Crichton's *Night of the Dragon* (PaperJacks, \$2.50) stays within hatcher-throwing distance by brewing up an exotic tale of gang warfare in Toronto's Chinatown. And Jim Lotz's *Murder on the Mackenzie* (PaperJacks, \$2.50) remains in the running with a Far North mystery that's long on both regional atmosphere and somewhat plodding narration. Completely out of the money is Leo Heaps's *The Quebec Plot* (Seal, \$2.25), a boringly unbelievable thriller about Quebec's separation that insults all shades of opinion with its robot-like characters and their stereotyped ideological yammering. If Sir Geoffrey Faber were still around he would surely see the need for a quota system on thrillers about Quebec separatists, and might even suggest that this isonegambling competition when the steady string of snake-eyes suggests that it's "Time, gentlemen, please." □

the browser

by Michael Smith

Ramps at-e rampant but when it comes to places, B.C.'s big beautii atlas shrugs

WHILE CANADIANS still appear to be trying to decide exactly who the bell we all are — or, at least, who we want to be — British Columbians no longer have any excuse. The sumptuous new *Atlas of British Columbia*, prepared by A.L. Farley (University of British Columbia Press, 136 pages, \$45.00 cloth) provides 115 maps of the province, both modern and historical, detailing even such arcana as summer water turbidity and the location of boat-launching ramps, for those who are interested. (The accompanying press release informs me that there are approximately 350 landing fields and 100 scaphone bars in British Columbia, and that both Edmonton and Prince George receive the same number of telephone calls from Dawson Creek, whatever that means.)

For so comprehensive a piece of work, however, there seems surprisingly little emphasis on plain, ordinary places. The main gazetteer map is the last one in the book and, rendered mostly in light-face type on a grey background, one of the hardest to read. Except for a small inset of the Vancouver area, there's no breakdown into smaller, regional maps, where more places could be recommended. As a result, not every place listed in the gazetteer is actually shown on the map; nor does the gazetteer list every place that it might. It includes, for instance, Woodpecker and Moose Height (both along the Fraser River between Prince

George and Quesnel), but neither is shown on the map, and there's no reference to Australian (on the Fraser between Quesnel and the Williams Lake region). I picked all these at random from my *Hammond Ambassador World Atlas* — an American publication, by the way — which, on a map about the same size, managed to squeeze them in.

One of the B.C. atlas's historical maps, showing the distribution of native ethnic groups in 1850, helps to point out the intensely local interest of Charles Hill-Tout, whose anthropological field reports have been edited by Ralph Maud into four volumes under the general title *The Salish People* (Talonbooks, illustrated, each \$6.95 paper). Hill-Tout concentrated his studies on the Salish tribes of southern British Columbia; where he came to live in 1891. The books are at once an inventory of their ethnography, social customs, and culture; an anthology of their folklore — which might easily be collected separately — and something of a biography of Hill-Tout himself. Born in England in 1858, he was a theology graduate whose belief in Darwinism posed "intellectual difficulties" that led to his emigration. He was voraciously self-tutored, and often speculated on the basis of flimsy evidence, but his field work, into which his pet theories intruded only occasionally, was impecca-

ble, partly because he was an enthusiast, clumsy in the politics of anthropology, he never received in his lifetime (he died in 1944) the son of recognition a collection such as this ought to bring.

Of interest more to professional archaeologists (or certainly to people better versed than I am) is Sheryl A. Smith's *The Methodist Point Site: A Middle Ontario Iroquois Camp on Georglan Bay* (Ontario Ministry of Culture and Recreation, *Archaeological Research Report 11*, illustrated, 85 pages, \$3.00 paper). Basically, it reports and analyses findings at a site in the Penetang Peninsula where Iroquois occupied seasonal camps from 1150 to 1250 A.D. and again from 1340 to 1360. Though it's also a technical report, I found interesting *The Welland Canals* (Ministry of Culture and Recreation, *Heritage Planning Study 1*, illustrated, 175 pages, 54.00 paper). Four different Welland Canals were constructed between 1824 and 1932 and only segments of the first three have survived the ravages of progress and vandalism. Before they disappear, the province is evaluating their historical significance and considering them for official preservation.

preservation of culture was one of the motives for the Native People's Caravan of 1974, according to Vern Harper's *Following the Red Path* (NC Press, illustrated, 93 pages, \$7.95 paper), though Harper admits there was also an element of anti-white racism. (The non-native members of the caravan graciously tolerated this, he says.) Whatever the case, the rag-tag group that made the pilgrimage across Canada met a phalanx of armed RCMP when they arrived at Parliament Hill on Sept. 30, 1974, and the confrontation ended in what Harper — who concedes he has no love for the police — calls an "RCMP riot." Impoverished, disorganized, and fractious, the caravan had few links with recognized Indian organizations — which Harper contends really feed off native people, rather than working for them — though it did have support from the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist).

Harper has since broken from the Maoists, and now believes the Indians' future lies with a gentler form of socialism and a spiritual return to "the sacred ways of our people." Naturally his book is one-sided, but it could be much more disturbing if its documentation weren't limited to a smattering of quotes and a narrative based on what Harper rather imperfectly recollects. (The publishers naively pass this off as "Native oral tradition.") In an author's note, Harper apologizes to his editor for operating in what he calls "Indian time," which may explain how 90 brief a book happens to postdate the event by five years. Like an out-of-date yearbook, it serves to remind, but not much else.

And now for the cowboys. As Grant MacEwan tells it, in Pat Burns: *Cattle King* (Western Producer Prairie Books, illustrated, 200 pages, 514.95 cloth and \$7.95 paper), Burns, whose Calgary-based

ranch operation became the biggest in Canada, began his career by slaughtering and selling — at double their worth on the hoof — two ancient work oxen give” to him in lieu of wages at a bankrupt Ontario lumber camp. Such details are lavished by MacEwan (who is, among other things, a fanner lieutenant-governor of Alberta), flitting with extraneity and attributing connections that are sometimes strained. He suggests, for example, that from his travels in Maine Bums just *might* (MacEwan's word) have brought to the West some of the famous stories about Paul Bunyan, the legendary lumberjack, and then portrays part of one of these stories as being Bums's own words. He also lists meticulously the ingredients for a 3,000-pound cake baked in 1931 to celebrate Bums's 75th birthday (300 pounds of flour, 285 pounds of sugar, 300 dozen eggs, etc.) at a party he grandly describes as “the most notable... in human memory.” Urp.

POSTSCRIPT: In last month's column the bibliographical details were inadvertently omitted for a handsome facsimile edition of a 1939 book titled *Georgina: A Type Study of Early Settlement and Church Building in Upper Canada*, by Francis Paget Hett. The book is published by Paget Press, Sutton West, Ont. LOE 1R0, illustrated, 126 pages, \$15.00 cloth. □

first impressions

by Douglas Hill

Love, death, and the North: three models from CanLit's basic starter kit for fiction

Crossings, by Betty Lambert (Pulp Press, 284 pages, S.J.95 paper), is a delight. I've read few novels this year with characters as particularized and whole. *perceptions* as amusing and alive. It takes the basic Canadian-fiction starter kit (one each of confused heroine, husband, lover, abortion, flight, island) and assembles it with a lightning wit and energy that make the results wholly agreeable.

Lambert's narrator, Vicky Ferris, is a writer; the novel is offered as the visible process of her attempts to discover truth and reach understanding about her past, about her family, her sexual needs, her career. The construction of this record — the sting of “the non-causal from the causal” — forms the texture of the book. It all looks mildly experimental, especially with its jazzy format, but there's a linear plot and a

coherent, if involved, time-scheme to give a reader his bearings.

What Lambert does best is write interior narrative that sounds authentic — wry, self-critical, inventive, above all natural. Her rhythm and timing and her wacky humour seldom fail her, even on the rare occasion when the situation she's de&b-ing runs dangerously close to cliché.

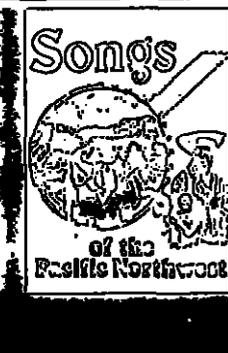
There will be objections to some glib theorizing; when the book tries to get deep, it often gets murky. And the sexual attitudes Lambert depends upon are surprisingly traditional; her politics are Jongian at best. These are quibbles. *Crossings* is a superbly realized novel.

In The White Shaman (McClelland & Stewart, 248 pages, 510.95 cloth) C.W.

new for fall



'79



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Nicol fails to grasp the fictional possibilities of his subject. He's working with interesting materials in this story of a young Englishman's discovery of his place in the life and spirit of the Eastern Arctic -the contrasts between Inuit and white, nature and technology, past and present — but a combination of flaws makes his treatment disappointing. And since the idea's been managed well before (Thomas Berger's *Little Big Man* and Thomas York's *Snowman*, for instance.), one's patience with Nicol's imperfectly conceived legend-making is minimal.

The whole book seems slightly out of focus. Dialogue is stiff, images are forced, point-of-view wanders, structure is awkward. While the hem's tragic involvement in the mystical pantheism of the North is ultimately convincing, even powerful, the relations with his biologist-mentor that prepare for it in the first half of the book are not. Nicol's overwrought language too often approaches the meanings it wants without clearly articulating them.

The White Shaman is written with considerable intensity, but the florid style works its spell only fitfully. The dust-jacket claims the novel "will leave a lasting impression on anyone intrigued by the nature of our world and man's place within it." I guess I don't qualify.

ii **

Needles, by William Deverell (McClelland & Stewart, 352 pages. \$12.95 cloth) is the Seal Books \$50,000-prize novel. Measured against last year's disappointing winner, *Judith*, this year's choice would seem to make some commercial as well as literary sense. *Needles* is a formula book, a drug thriller, but the stereotypes are competently handled and the story reasonably exciting.

The plot is complicated, with a couple of ingenious twists. Deverell's hem, Foster Cobb, is a lawyer, a former Crown attorney trying to get a private practice started against the handicaps of mid-life crisis, failing marriage, and sizeable heroin habit. The villain is the ruthless Dr. Au, a psychopathic drug kingpin interested in acupuncture and castration. The story is set, and set well, in Vancouver; there's plenty of sex, violence, gore, and heroin-talk.

The book is a touch overwritten; Deverell has a penchant for the pretentious. And the psychology is none too subtle. But if *Needles* lacks the ingredient of style or characterization or vision that would make it tint-rate, it's nonetheless a carefully organized, workman-like thriller and deserves to earn a good return on the money invested. □

interview

by Wayne Grady

Why story-teller Farley Mowat abhors facts: they get in the way of the truth

FARLEY MOWAT, who needs no introduction, spends his summers in Rivet Bourgeois on Cape Breton Island. Wayne Grady tracked him down there to talk about his new book. *And No Birds Sang*, which is reviewed on page 20. The interview was conducted in the hold of *The Happy Adventure*, better known to Mowat fans as *The Boat Who Wouldn't Float*:

Books in Canada: Your new book is a war story. Can you tell us something about it and your own war experiences?

Mowat: I was an infantry officer, a platoon commander for most of it. Not a very good platoon commander, which is why I stayed one for a long time. Everyone else got promoted. I had the distinction at one time of being the oldest surviving lieutenant in the Canadian army in Italy. But I did get promoted to captain four times.

BIC: And demoted three times?

Mowat: That's the implication. My batman got so sick of this that he took my captain's pips, cod put them on dome fasteners so he could get them on cod off more easily. He'd wake me up in the morning and say, "Good morning, sir. It's a rotten day. What are we today?" And I'd say, "I think we're a lieutenant." "Good enough!" he'd say.

BIC: Was it a funny war?

Mowat: All wars have their humour, but there isn't much of it in this book. This book is a departure for me; I've never written anything quite like it before. And I think it's a precursor of the kind of writing I'm going to be doing in the future. The title; is taken from Keats's poem "La Belle Dame Sans Merci."

*O what can all thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.*

I use it because at the climax of 'my military existence these lines were running through my head as I was going quietly crazy with fear. That was Christmas, 1943, in Italy, just in front of Ortona, when I had reached the limit of my endurance. The book is a memoir, but it's really about the slow growth and corrosion of fear, and what fear does to you, the wounds within which don't show cod which get no sympathy in after years. So the book is, in a way, an attempt to make some amends to all the people in all the wars who have been destroyed by the worm that never dies. And since I suffered from this myself, and I make no bloody bones about it, I figured I was a good man to tell the story. The other

aspect of the book is that it's no anti-war book. There are a lot of them, I know, but there can't be too many. And right now we particularly need them because I see smell another war in the offing. It may come in Africa, it may come in the Middle East, but it will be brought about by the Americans. The last refuge of a dying empire is war. The United States is in a state of moral and physical collapse, and any imperial power, when it begins to break down, invariably and inevitably turns to war.

BIC: What are your working habits? How do you write?

Mowat: I come myself. I have to use great cunning to do this. I force myself into a situation where I have no alternative but to write. It's extremely difficult to do, but once done, and I'm committed to it, then I'm a morning worker, I start in about 8 or 9 a.m. and force myself to stay there until noon. If I have one of those infrequent days when I'm writing like God Almighty then it's no hardship, but on a normal day I probably don't do more than six or seven pages. I like research; in fact research is the best fun, more fun than the writing. But I think my work will become more and more subjective as time goes on.

BIC: You mean more memoirs? A novel?

Mowat: It's hard to say. I don't like using any of the tags. They're all inadequate. I don't see any need to have to define a story as fiction or non-fiction. It's a story. And I



Farley Mowat in one of his rare appearances as a captain.



refuse to define it. People at *Reader's Digest*, who used some of the stories from *The Snow Walker*, insisted on knowing whether the stories were true or fiction. I told them it was none of their business. They were buying the story, not the statement. But they had this bit about slotting facts. I abhor facts. What are facts? Facts are useless. They get in the way, they lie to you. Never let facts interfere with the truth.

BIC: Is that the policy you followed in *And No Birds Sang*?

Mowat: Yes. It's a personal memoir, but it's still subjective non-fiction. Every god-damn phrase isn't verifiably factual. Where for artistic purposes or for the purposes of making a point it is necessary to exaggerate or elaborate or de-emphasize, I'll do it without any trouble. People who pretend they write nothing but facts are liars.

BIC: Where do you place yourself in relation to other writers?

Mowat: Nowhere! I'm in a room by myself. A niche of my own. I'm a primitive. I'm a subjective man, highly emotional, and I rely almost entirely upon instinct. I can't live without it. I have a rotten imitation of a conscious mind, and I recognized this early on in life. So I lean on the subconscious, on the old animal within, and I'm seldom misled. I'm considered pretentious and too artistic by the purely commercial guys, and too commercial by the artistic guys. And you know, I'm perfectly happy with that position. One of the reasons I like living down here is that people here recognize me as a story-teller, in the old antique sense of the word. And that's what I want, to be known as a story-teller, a saga man, one of those who maintain the tradition of informative entertainment, who keep connections with the past, the immediate past and the distant past.

BIC: But there have been others in that position. Hugh Garner, for instance.

Mowat: Sure, but Hugh wrote fiction. I was caught in that trap as a kid. My father being a librarian and a very well-read man, he insisted that the only kind of writing that amounted to a plate of beans was fiction. He included poetry and play-writing, but the writers of non-fiction were not to be considered in the same breath. He laid into me rather heavily, trying to make me into an artistic writer, and I guess part of the deal was my resistance to that.

BIC: At what point did you abandon Tolstoy and embrace "subjective non-fiction"?

Mowat: Well, I never abandoned Tolstoy, but I stopped trying to write like Conrad after the war, when I got married and had to make a living. My idea was to go out into the wilderness somewhere, build a log cabin, and write deathless prose, great novels. I soon discovered that you couldn't do that and eat too. And then I got sidetracked; I went to the North and got mixed up with the Eskimos, and I got so furious at what had happened to them that I forgot I was going to be a great artist and I became a publicist for the Eskimos. I have never regretted it: it was the right thing to

do. I don't think I could ever have been a novelist anyway. I'm lousy on things like plot, organization. I'm a subconscious writer. I have, however, written half a dozen novels, none of which have ever seen the light of day nor ever will. I wrote them during the first 10 years of my writing career, but I stopped when I got tired of working for eight months and writing 600 pages and potting them in the bottom of a filing cabinet forever. It seemed like a rather pointless exercise.

BIC: And you don't intend to bring them out again?

Mowat: No! God, no! And I have it written into my will: under no circumstances can anybody ever publish them. But I don't mind them lying around as amusements for the future generation. □

Letters to the Editor

NET BOOK BENEFITS

Sir:

I read with great interest Geoff Hancock's interview with Bernie Rath (June-July). I have worked in the British book industry for many years in publishing, bookselling, and libraries and I whole-heartedly support Britain's Net Book Agreement.

For the past two years I have been working in the acquisitions department of the University of Saskatchewan Library and am responsible for deciding from whom books should be ordered. If I were performing the same task in Britain my task would be much simpler. Libraries there most, under the terms of the Net Book Agreement, order books either through bookshops or library suppliers and not directly from publishers. An agreement made between the Publishers, Booksellers, and Library Association would allow my supplier to pot me a 10 per cent discount for net bwh. I would need fewer accounts with my suppliers: I would have accounts with no publisher: I would expect my supplier to perform bibliographic verification and resolve problems of wrong book supply.

Here the situation is markedly different. I am forced to have accounts with many North American publishers because some of my library suppliers refuse to handle certain orders and some publishers refuse to deal with library suppliers; I am plagued with suppliers offering "special deals" with no mention of service: I am bombarded with thousands of one-line invoices; and my correspondence files with publishers are bursting at the seams.

The interview quoted above made no mention of library involvement in the book trade. Libraries buy thousands of books each year. One of the greatest problems we face is budgetary control. Knowing how much money to encumber at the time of ordering is vital. In Britain the price to be paid is known: here one can only guess how much one will eventually pay for books.

A net book agreement is good for everyone involved in the book world. Publishers benefit by dealing only with accredited book shops and

suppliers; booksellers benefit because each shop must sell at the same price and can pick up lucrative library business; libraries benefit for the reasons stated above.

Therefore I call upon all interested parties to support the concept of a net book agreement for Canada. Let us loosen the strangle-hold of the chains, create European-styled academic book shops, and rid Canada of the cut-throat competition presently at play in the book trade.

Peter Scott
Saskatoon

LESSER BREEDS

Sir:

Re K. Pohle's letter (August-September) criticizing my use of the term "Nazi Shepherd" (May): A distinction was intended, not a slur. Allow me to make the distinction clear. A German Shepherd for Alsation is a See, strong, loyal, handsome, and courageous dog. A Nazi Shepherd, outwardly similar, tends to rip faces off little children.

Ned Shepherds are growing in numbers. The reason, according to some dog experts, is overbreeding and inbreeding designed to emphasize those of the dog's features that are most attractive to dog-show judges. The result is an owner who collects more ribbons and a dog that is physically frail and mentally unstable. The practice, not limited to German Shepherds, is unsafe and inhumane with any breed.

Readers may be interested to learn that this summer, in Ontario, a pack of seven dogs attacked and killed a nine-year-old boy. Five of the dogs belonged to the boy's family. In Laval, Quebec, a 17-month-old girl was savaged by two Huskies, one of which weighed 60 pounds, the other 125. According to witnesses who drove off



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October, 1979, Books in Canada 33

the dogs with clubs. the dogs bit the girl 16 times and "hoo! her like a piece of meat." A fine beginning to the dog days of August.

In Disraeli, in the Eastern Townships, a three-month-old boy was attacked by a neighbour's Husky early in July. The boy was bitten through the neck. He died.

If I remember my own children rightly, a three-month-old's neck is not so big around as my wrist.

Events such as these, and others I mentioned in my review, are what led me to invent the term Nazi Shepherd for any large, dangerous dog: with it, I meant to sharpen the point that man's best friend is being reduced to the status of vicious, filthy vermin.

W. A. Marsano
Toronto

The editors recommend

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

FICTION

The Resurrection of Joseph Bourne, by Jack Hodgins, Macmillan. Should Hodgins fail as a school teacher, he might well find employment in any pub as a professional teller of tall tales, of which this latest novel is a notable *mélange*.

NON-FICTION

Bright Glass of Memory, by Douglas LePan, McGraw-Hill Ryerson. By any standard, LePan has had a distinguished career — as poet, novelist, academic, and diploma, — but some readers will be disappointed by the restraint with which this memoir deals with aspects of his personal life.

POETRY

sunblue, by Margaret Avison, Lancelot Press. Continuing upon the Christian commitment evident in her earlier work, Avison lyrically affirms a faith that loves the world and hopes for its redemption from pollution and viciousness.

CLASSIFIED

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34 Books In Canada. October, 1979

CanWit No. 46

WHEN PARLIAMENT meets this month, Prime Minister Joe Clark will be embarking on a freshman course called Statesmanship 100. Presumably he will need a recommended reading and viewing list if he hopes to pass his final examinations four or five years from now. Some titles that come to mind are *How to Be Your Own Best Friend*, *Apocalypse Now*, and *Harry Rasky's* celebrated TV documentary *Next Year in Jerusalem*. Readers are invited to make their own suggestions (maximum: 10 titles) and we'll pay \$25 for the wittiest list. Address: CanWit No. 46. Books in Canada, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4. The deadline is Nov. 1.

RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 44

CONTESTANTS WERE asked for samples of backward or reverse limericks (on a model taken from Jack MacLeod's novel *Zinger and Me* and attributed to James Thurber). Entries tended to fall into two categories: those that split words arbitrarily, producing a pure-nonsense effect in the Lear tradition; and those that essayed a degree of logical coherence. However, the judges noted that the model itself fell into the former category and after considerable debate decided to award the prize to Maralyn Horsdale of Fulford Harbour, B.C. She receives \$25 for this pleasant bit of fooltometry:

*In tudes that are very south lati,
A young duck-billed pus of a plary
Eats drops made of gum,
And quats that are kum,
But specially he loves cuke that is patty.*

Honourable mentions:

*Cried Jane. "My pants have gone under;
That buss on the boat was no blunder.
The kind sailing man
Dried my tail by his fan.
Now I'm ful of erogenous wonder."*
— Ian C. Johnston, Nanaimo, B.C.

*The old Publican, Ham, up in Totten
Stocked a row that was flagrantly bent,
With Scotch made from the hop,
The corn liquor was pop
And his gin was all made out of cotton.*
— D. A. Defoe, Kingston, Ont.

*A bee which was fated to bumble
From a weed took a terrible tumble.
So we coddle'd the molly,
And hock'd all the holly,
To furnish a sale for a jumble.*
— N. T. Porter, Victoria

• • •

*An Anzee once purchased a chimp.
Though pressive 'twas still quite an imp
At an entine 'twould bark
On the way to a park
Most athletic — but how like a symp.*
— G. E. Clerihew, Vancouver

*Old Buster, a bit of a sod,
Said, "Our casting is terribly broad;
Its lighting is moon,
Its doggles are boon,
And its wallop is loaded with cod."*
— Janice Patton, Toronto

*Wit Eric, who's far, far from dim,
Functed Rose, blossom-fresh but not prim,
"Child" he said, "hear my love-
tales of bliss, little dove."
Eric's rhymes now his disports well limn!*
— Odymer Vingo, Toronto

*A boy she wasn't was Tom:
De plus, as dey say, was nom ...
O my mots are quite bon
When the sense I make's non
And imbid Perignon that is Don.*
— Jon Landers, Coquitlam, B.C.

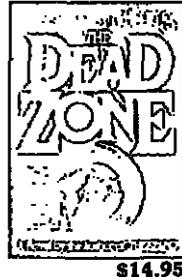
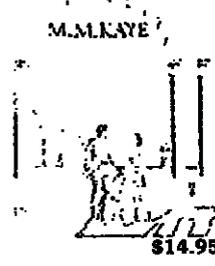
Books received

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:

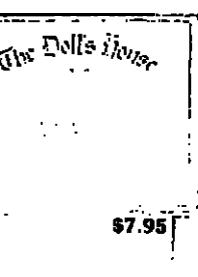
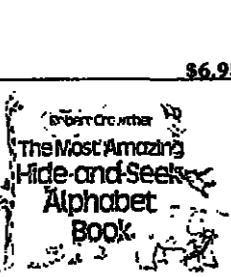
An African Abstract, by Deane Lewycky and Susan White, Manitoba Council for International Cooperation.
Alan Sillitoe: A Critical Assessment, by Stanley S. Atherton, W. H. Allen.
Annapolis Royal, by Roger Viets, Loyal Colonies Press.
Approaches to Psychology, edited by John Medcof and John Roth, Methuen.
Changing Place, by Penny Kemp, Fiddlehead.
Changing Voices, by Donna Dunlop, Fiddlehead.
College Streetcar Runs All Night, by Chris Falters, Unfinished Monument Press.
Controversial Chemicals: A Citizen's Guide, edited by P. Kruus and I. M. Valerius, Multiscience Publications.
Cookies for Luke, by Sheila J. Bleeks, illustrated by Kelly Clark, Cherry Publishers.
Cordillera, by Norbert Ruesbaat, Pulp Press.
Every woman's Almanac 1980, The Women's Press.
Fire, edited by Sheila Meland, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Galactic Warlord, by Douglas Hill, Clarke Irwin.
The Gift of the Frost Fairy, by Sheila Bleeks, illustrated by Kelly Clark, Cherry Publishers.
The Girl from Flier Trading, by Ingrid Betz, Robert Hale.
A Guide to Scholarly Publishing in Canada (Third Edition), by Philip J. Csercone, Canadian Federation for the Humanities/Social Science Federation of Canada.
The Health Care Business, by Ake Blomquist, The Fraser Institute.
A History of Boeotia, by Robert J. Buck, University of Alberta Press.
The Isabella Valancy Crawford Symposium, edited by Frank M. Tierney, University of Ottawa Press.
John Wayne: The Actor, The Man, by George Bishop, Caroline House.
Just So Many Words, by David Plenedin, MIR Publication Society.
The Mountains and Law Enforcement, by D. Bruce Sealey, Book Society of Canada.
Old Oakville, by David & Suzanne Peacock, Hoanslow Press.
Photographs Danger: A Collection, edited by Miriam Adams and Lynn Rotin, 15 Dance Lab.
The Principle of Federation, by P. J. Proudhon, translated by Richard Vernon, U of T Press.
Research in a Passion With Me, by Margaret Morse Nice, Consolidated Amethyst Communications Inc.
Schools in Jeopardy, by Peter Hennessy, M & S.
The Self-Help Guide to Divorce, Children, Welfare (Second Edition), by Penelope Jahn & Charles Campbell, Anansi.
Shotgun and Other Stories, by Kent Thompson, New Brunswick Chapbooks.
Single Father's Handbook, by Richard H. Gaitley & David Koulouk, Doubleday.
The Star Husband, by Jane Mobley, Doubleday.
Superman, by Tom Clement, Unfinished Monument Press.
Syntax of Ferment, by Liliane Welch, Fiddlehead.
Tall Tales of Joe Muffetaw, by Bernie Bedore, illustrated by Yukel Hassan, Consolidated Amethyst Communications Inc.
Theatre Des Commencements, edited by Laurent Mailhot, University of Montreal Press.
The Theories of Fish, by Bernal MacDonal, Fiddlehead.
This Tavern Has No Symmetry, by Ted Piantos, Steel Rail Trolko, by David Gurr, M & S.
Two Island Poets, by Andy Mathisen and Tim Merrill, Caitlin Press.
Untitled Novel, ca. 1905, by Duncan Campbell Scott, Penumbra Press.
Women Pioneers: Volume II, Canada's Lost Plays, edited by Anton Wagner, Canadian Theatre Review Publications.

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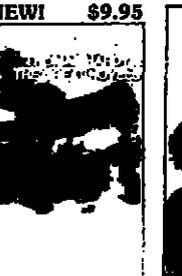
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