

A NATIONAL REVIEW OF BOOKS

# BOOKS IN CANADA

December 1985 \$1.95

The secret garden  
of Jean Little

The season's children's  
books in review

No laughing matter:  
Jack MacLeod on humour

Had an interview  
with Paul St. Pierre



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Volume 14 Number 2

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## Hearths of the East

If the glory of a nation is reflected by its writers, Nova Scotia's glory is also reflected by its writers' houses

SILVER DONALD CAMERON has a view of the harbour at D'Escousse from his fine old sea captain's house of the 1890s, painted a Wedgewood blue. His summer-time neighbour, Farley Mowat, a few miles downshore at River Bourgeois — both in Cape Breton — has a beautifully restored farmhouse sitting on a broad hillside above a wide bay. I learned these and other things while working this past summer on one of the most delightful assignments to come my way — searching out the links between old houses in Nova Scotia and the writers who lived in them.

One of Nova Scotia's richest treasures is the domestic architecture of past days. Adding grace to the towns, adorning the countryside, there are some 10,000 houses built before 1914. Many date from the coming of the Loyalists in 1783-84; others were built by the "Planters," the New England settlers who came here after the expulsion of the Acadians in 1755. There are even some houses with Acadian foundations, perhaps a fireplace, a wall or two, that were erected before the expulsion.

The Acadians built for posterity; the other day in Annapolis Royal I saw a house that had been thought to be a mere Loyalist house, though graceful and charming. It was actually built inside an older Acadian structure, part of which now forms a kind of outer shell. Open a cupboard door, and there's the Acadian wall: clay mixed with animal hair and covered with laths, as solid as when it was built perhaps 250 years ago.

If there are still 10,000 houses today, how many were there 20 or 30 years ago? You can still hear Halifax people speak with anger over the loss of Gorsebrook, the lovely Enos Collins house, built in 1812 and demolished in 1959 to make room for the red brick buildings of St. Mary's University. Since then a lot of fine buildings, public and private, have been allowed to die of decay or have sunk into rubble under the demolition hammer. But public opinion has come to appreciate old beauty, and heritage societies around the province have been working to keep alive what we still have.

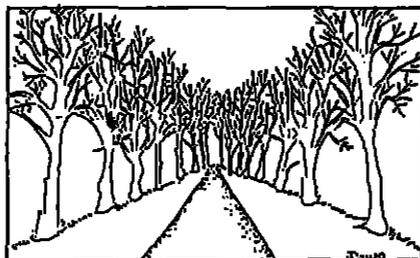
The provincial department of culture, recreation, and fitness has recently set

up a new branch, the Heritage Unit, under the direction of the historian Brian Cuthbertson, and has begun to make an inventory of all the buildings built before 1914. Many of the houses will be marked with plaques. My mandate is to cover the Nova Scotian writers whose main body of work was done after 1867.

But which of them was Nova Scotian? Wyndham Lewis, the English novelist, critic, and misanthrope, is sometimes listed as Nova Scotian, for he was born on his father's yacht off Amherst Head and left the province a few days later. Five miles or so further to the north, and he could have been born off the New Brunswick coast. Does this make him a Nova Scotian? Not on my list.

But then there's Alden Nowlan, generally taken to be a New Brunswick writer, although he was born in Nova Scotia and lived here until he was in his teens. He has written that his family was very poor. I found the house he grew up in, a somewhat dilapidated place now as then, but perhaps 150 years old, and showing still the symmetry of proportion of that early period. "It is nowhere so dark as in the country where I was born," Nowlan says in one poem. But some of his finest work is about living in that old house down that country road.

There's Sir Charles G.D. Roberts, actually born in New Brunswick, but he spent 10 years from 1885 to 1895 teaching at King's College in Windsor, N.S. In those years he wrote some of his best poetry and gathered around him a circle of friends and poets who gave an



enduring vitality to the poetry of that time. The college built in the wooded grounds some unpretentious but comfortable houses in which the masters lived, as they still do today. Roberts occupied one of these. Architecturally it isn't very interesting, a square box with

few of the traditional refinements of design or style. But watch for a plaque.

The critic Desmond Pacey wrote, "English-Canadian literature had its origins in Nova Scotia, the first Canadian colony to be extensively settled by English-speaking people . . . the first to develop a sense of cultural identity." Halifax, the capital, was founded in 1749; the first newspaper in Canada was published here in 1752; a book store was opened in 1760; and a periodical, the *Nova Scotia Magazine*, started in 1789. In 1828 Joseph Howe acquired a newspaper, *The Novascotian*, and opened its columns to the writers of the day. Since then it must sometimes have seemed that half the population of the province had taken to the pen.

For I am far from the first to compile a list of the writers. One survey, pre-1920, includes among the literary figures every minister who had his sermons printed, every professor who published an academic paper. The most recent guide is more than two inches thick, and gives not only a four-page listing of the complete works of Watson Kirkconnell, translator, poet, and former president of Acadia University, but also the names of everyone in the Atlantic Provinces who has had a poem published in a local newspaper. It's a triumph of computer science.

Brian Cuthbertson had told me to use my own judgement; out went many of the Victorian clergymen, the genteel poets, the professors. But there were (and are) some giants among the professors. How could I exclude Sir William Dawson, author of *Acadian Geology*? He was the leading scientist of his day, proud product of Pictou Academy, principal of McGill University. His house in Pictou is long since demolished, his address in Halifax still elusive, despite hours I've spent poring over city directories. But he's on my general list, as is Laurence Dakin, a poet with a history too exotic to be neglected: educated at Columbia, the Sorbonne, Venice; spoke six languages, read nine, lived in Monte Carlo, South Africa, the Pacific Islands. A Nova Scotian with more than the usual versatility.

The versatility in fact was a surprise. There were mathematicians who were also poets, clergymen who wrote suc-

cessful adventure stories, women who were publishing feminist novels as early as the 1890s. The style of education was a surprise, too. The earlier writers on my list went on from Dalhousie or Acadia University to Harvard, Edinburgh, London, the Sorbonne, Berlin, Leipzig — reflecting, no doubt, the vigour and prosperity of their day as well as the lack of graduate schools in Canada.

I have two lists. My general list — today's writers living in modern housing, earlier people whose house is either gone or cannot be identified — is about three names. My heritage housing list is finally just under a hundred names, their houses all found, photographed, and described. Many of them are inheritors of the New England tradition, with pleasure to be found in their proportions, balance, serenity, that simplicity of decoration which achieves true elegance.

Ernest Buckler lived in one such house, on the old highway running through the lush Annapolis Valley. It was very traditional, painted white, a farmhouse with a wide and hospitable front door, a gable, cornerboards grooved for decoration and topped with moulding. At Port Shoreham on the Eastern Shore, Charles Bruce, father of Harry, grew up in a very similar house,

again with a centre gable, and with panels of glass on either side of the front door, to give the entrance light and spaciousness. All this — and a superb view of the sea beyond.

As for simple magnificence, Watson Kirkconnell lived in the president's house at Acadia University for 40 years; it's rather new, built in 1852, but a good example of Greek revival architecture, modified by local craftsmen. It sits well on Wolfville's main street; its classical portico and Ionic columns are in harmony with the pillars of the main university buildings across the grassy campus slope. Wolfville in fact has many beautiful old houses; one of the most charming was owned by the turn-of-the-century jeweller and local historian/writer, John Herbin. The house is much older than 1900; it's the colonial cottage at its best, a storey and a half, with dormers, pilasters, lights, and fanlight.

Perhaps the most astonishing of all the houses — the Annapolis Valley at its finest — is at Falmouth, not far from Wolfville, the former home of a local historian and writer, John Duncanson. Built around 1830, it is surrounded by orchards, dykelands, stately trees. It's a low, rambling structure, two storeys, with 29 rooms, three large and two small dormers, two drawing-rooms, a dairy in

the basement, and a tunnel leading to the apple barn. A novel should have been written about this house.

Houses in Halifax have not all survived as well. Hugh MacLennan grew up in one that has suffered some traumatic changes. Built about 100 years ago, it now is a beauty salon. But the present tenants have lovingly restored the beautiful old carved fireplaces in the front rooms, and the fine staircase is still intact. The house in which lived Marshall Saunders (author of *Beautiful Joe*) has been renovated beyond recognition.

At the corner of Tobin and Barrington Streets, the large Georgian frame house with the particularly elegant Italianate doorway, now owned by the Sisters of Service, was once the home of Amelia Fytche, early feminist writer. Alice Jones, a sophisticated writer of the 1890s, grew up in the house called Bloomingdale, built in 1861, and now the Waegwoltic Club, gabled, dormered, and a charming family club on the shores of the Northwest Arm. And Charles Ritchie's old home, The Bower, is kept in prime condition by its present owner, a prominent Halifax lawyer.

Then there's Fraser Sutherland, managing editor of this magazine. I found the other day the farmhouse in which he grew up, and I'm happy to

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report that it lives up to tradition: 150 years old, white, sitting on the side of a hill, with a view, a red barn, and elm trees as fine as anybody's.

As for me, I have my own small gem, the most modest of all the houses I have described. It is the simplest form of pioneer dwelling, a single storey with a half-loft. It was once the village post office. But one of the living-room walls is made of 12-inch pine boards, and it has a partial view of the warm waters of the Northumberland Strait. Its previous owner was the village blacksmith, so I have three large chestnut trees for shade. Like many other writers of today, I too can spend my spare time scraping paint and renewing electrical wiring, and I can tell you that it concentrates the mind wonderfully for sitting down to the typewriter. But it's worth it, and never mind the plaque.

— MARJORY WHITELAW

## Beauty and the book

BIBLIOPHILES ARE considered an odd lot by the unenlightened — those who think it laughable that anyone could get a vicarious thrill from the smell of printer's ink or a rush from a new typeface. But the art of book creation is a complex one, immensely appreciated when understood. At least, some 300 members around the world of Vancouver's mysterious Alcuin Society seem to think so. Enormous amounts of their volunteer time are provided toward staging exhibits and seminars and producing a quarterly journal called *Amphora*.

Started in 1965, the Alcuin Society was named after Abbot Alcuin of York (735-804), who was Charlemagne's minister of culture. A man who cared about literacy, he blessed a certain style of lettering known as Caroline Minuscule, which eventually evolved into our modern lower-case type. Some of the society's activities have included the republishing of out-of-print historical editions — such as *The Canadian Settler's Guide*, by Catharine Parr Traill — producing limited-edition chapbooks and broadsides, and sponsoring exhibits and seminars about the book arts.

Now, after two decades of bookish existence, the Alcuin Society is rapidly becoming *de rigueur* with the West Coast literary set, if not everybody else. Its members include poet-designer Robert Bringham; renowned hand-printing specialists Gerald Giampa and Crispin Elsted; artist Sam Black; and Jim Zimmer, who has designed one of only two typefaces created in Canada. Among the group are many other experts well-known in that obscure arena

that encompasses book editing, designing, printing, and collecting.

The excitement began several years ago when the society initiated an annual book-design competition. It has since become a Canada-wide event, with entries last year of more than 120 titles from 45 publishers. In addition, this fall the society and Simon Fraser University sponsored an eight-week seminar course, "The Rare and the Beautiful," featuring lecturers from the various book arts. In March, Alcuin will coordinate a major exhibit — "Art of the Book" — at the Vancouver Antiquarian Book Fair, and the following month the citations ceremony and reception will be held for the 1986 book-design awards.

Judges with different tastes and specialities — a press operator, designer, typographer — are selected for the awards in order to ensure a well-rounded opinion. "The judges have some strange discussions and battles when it comes to choosing the winners," says Anne Tayler, a Ph.D. candidate in English literature who devotes a substantial part of her spare time to working for the society. They examine such separate elements as type style, design, paper stock, ink colour, and binding, then balance their overall impressions before coming up with a decision. Last year's poetry winner, for instance, was *Double Tuning*, by Robert Finch, printed and bound by the Porcupine's Quill and designed by Tim Inkster. ("Fine design overall, though page format is sometimes unbalanced. . . . Beautiful use of colour in the type.")

The awards dinner has become something of a social event in the publishing world ("We've had people flying in from Ontario, Yellowknife, and Alberta," Tayler reports), but — as with many other literary organizations — the Alcuin Society continually finds itself in difficulty when it tries to get financial aid. "Many foundations and other money-giving bodies just don't know what the book arts are," says Tayler. "There is the notion that we are a bunch of literary fuddy-duddies sitting around with presses in our basement."

— DONA STURMANIS



## Listening to Lee

THE AUDIENCE IS like a roomful of Mexican jumping beans — 150 children aged two to nine jammed together on the second floor of the Children's Book Store in Toronto, waiting, shouting and yelling, to hear from Dennis Lee. Judy Sarick, the store's owner, stands at the front of the room, leaning against a table topped with piles of Lee's books.

"I'm pleased that Dennis is here to read from *Lizzie's Lion*," she announces in a calm, husky voice. "Ten years ago, on the second Saturday after we opened the store, he read from *Alligator Pie*. We sold thousands of books that day. Dennis. . . ."

"Get him to start already!" hollers a boy at the back of the room.

Sarick flushes and turns to Lee, who stands beside her gripping a chair. Some of the children sit hushed, faces lifted and expectant, but most of them are thrashing, kicking, rolling, and jumping.

Lee asks them to yell out their ages. He receives a cacophonous chorus of numbers. He starts again, this time employing a more orderly approach.

"Anyone here zero?" One hand goes up. The group giggles at the hand's suddenly embarrassed owner. The hand quickly descends.

"Anyone two, three, four . . . seven?"

"No! No!" The kids clap with glee.

"Anyone here 45?" Lee's own hand goes up, along with those of some of the parents at the back of the room.

Lee asks for a volunteer. Pierie Macdonald comes up, dressed in a hot pink sweatsuit, and props herself on his knees. He asks her if she is nervous, and how old she is. Self-possessed, she replies: "I've seen thousands of people before and I'm seven and three-quarters." Lee destroys her composure by tickling her until she gasps. He grins, pleased that he has gained control.

From the pile of books on the table, he picks up *Lizzie's Lion* and begins to read: "Lizzie had a lion/With a big, bad roar,/And she kept him in the bedroom/By the closet-cupboard door. . . ." He stops periodically to include the audience in his reading, as he relates the story of the robber who enters Lizzie's room to steal her piggy bank. "Will he get away with it?" he asks in mock horror.

One loud, resounding "Yes!"

"We have a cynic in the audience," says Lee.

Pat Shaughnessy, a grade-one teacher from Brampton, sits holding his two-year-old daughter and four-year-old son. "I'm having as much fun as Nora

and Aaron," he whispers. "He knows just how to tickle the fancy of kids."

"For children, language is still a form of play," Lee has told a visitor before the reading began. "The run of the words is like being on a toboggan ride. I

feel like the medium for their collective energy, which whizzes around the room. It's like surfing, and I'm riding the wave of their energy."

As his reading ends, Aaron Shaughnessy stands up with a satisfied smile and

turns to his father. "I can't wait to go to school tomorrow to tell my teacher about this." Asked what he liked best, Aaron pauses to think, then proclaims solemnly, "Because, well, he's so nice!"

— SHERIE POSESORSKI

## ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

### Mea culpa

'The lesson for me is:  
before you call the kettle black,  
suck in your pot'

By Bob Blackburn

SOMETIMES I THINK those who accuse me of being too picky have a point. As I write this, we are getting close to municipal election day, and my eye has been caught (and offended) by a heading in a weekly newspaper that serves the municipal ward in which I live and vote. The heading reads: "Everything that informed voters ought to know."

It is, indeed, a foolish caption. The feature that follows is nothing more than an attempt to clarify a change in election procedure that has puzzled many of our burghers, and to catalogue some other basic facts. It is useful information, but it isn't *everything*. I assume the word was used facetiously, but the frivolity was out of place. However, what bothered me was the misuse of *informed*. Surely *informed* voters already know what they ought to know, and the information being offered is something *uninformed* voters ought to know.

But does it *really* matter? Here is this friendly, *free*, little neighbourhood newspaper trying quite efficiently to help me through the election maze, and all I can do is carp about a little slip that virtually no one else would even notice, much less be misled by.

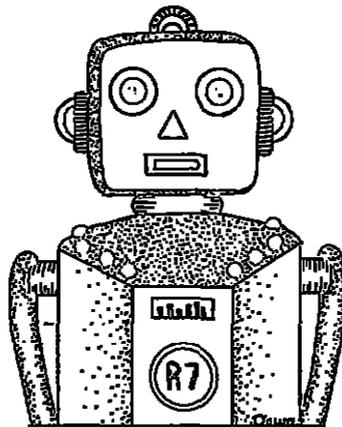
This particular sensitivity has some professional value, but it can be a curse. I am fond of music, but my perception of pitch is ludicrously poor, and I am grateful for that weakness every time I see one of my musician friends shudder at the occasional clinker in a performance I am finding quite enjoyable. They are put off; I shrug it off. Yet some of these same people, when I complain about a grammatical error committed by a paid writer, say things like, "Well, what's the difference? It's easy enough to figure out what he meant."

Being so easily distracted by minor gaffes sometimes gets me into trouble. That almost happened when I set out to write this month's column. I was listening, not at all carefully, to a U.S. net-

work TV newscast. There was an item, as usual, about violence following a quasi-funeral in South Africa. My ear was suddenly jarred by a line referring to a man "who many say has become a martyr."

I thought that was a peculiar, and possibly even stupid, thing to say, and I was soon at the keyboard writing something to the effect that a martyr is a martyr, and that it was irrelevant in this context whether many or few or none or all say that he is. I was also bothered by the *become*. It seemed to carry the implication that becoming a martyr is a gradual process; that it is a title bestowed by some sort of popular consensus.

In fact, except in the narrow, ecclesiastical sense, becoming a martyr is an action taken voluntarily by the martyr-to-be. The "modern" meaning of the noun today has been established for centuries. The *OED* cites a 1650 reference to "that heathen martyr Socrates," which is amusing in itself, because *martyr* in the time of Socrates was a Greek word



meaning witness. (That, in turn, is the clue to how it came through religious channels to its present meaning in English.)

For a valid modern definition, I like the following from *Webster's* (unabridged, second edition): "One who sacrifices his life, station, or what is of

great value, for the sake of principle, or to sustain a cause." That is clear enough for me.

No doubt you have discerned how I was sitting here smearing egg all over my face. One jaw of the trap I had fallen into was my willingness, if not eagerness, to believe that when anything in a news report strikes me as peculiar it is probably because of careless writing; the other was my allowing myself to get so caught up in that detail that I had not really paid attention to the context. I had simply, and stupidly, said to myself, "Here is a man who gave his life to uphold the cause of anti-apartheid; he is, by definition, a martyr." I had not even bothered to note his identity.

I had written quite a lot before I stopped to wonder whether it might be barely possible that the reporter had written that restrictive clause for some good reason that I had missed. I dug into memory, and then into the press, and discovered, of course, that the man referred to was Benjamin Moloise, who, although known as a firm supporter of the violent overthrow of apartheid, had in fact been, rightly or wrongly, hanged for murder. I read that he had confessed, then recanted, then admitted that he had become involved in planning the crime out of fear for his own life.

So, in truth, the reporter was doing his job well by writing "who many say has become a martyr," because there certainly is room for argument.

I felt like a bloody fool, and did the electronic equivalent of tearing up what I'd written. But I found no comfort in the fact that I alone knew of the blunder. I can endure any kind of criticism except *self-criticism*, and I just couldn't leave this alone. This isn't the first time I have caught myself this way, and I keep hoping to learn. The lesson for me is: before you call the kettle black, suck in your pot. The lesson for you may well be: always keep a comfortable distance between you and anyone showing symptoms of autocatharsis. □



# Give Canada for Christmas

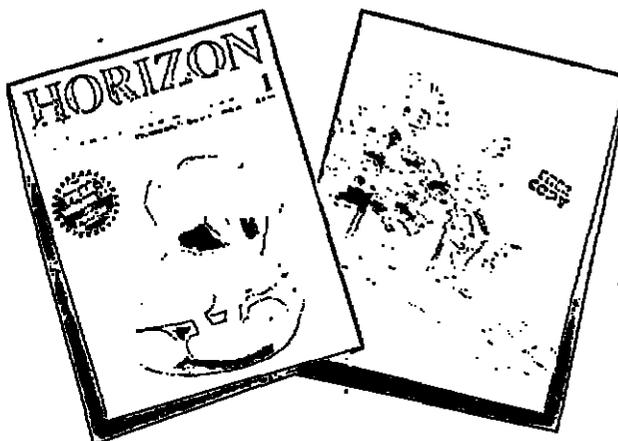


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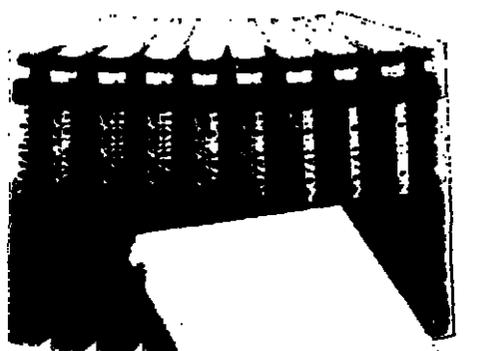
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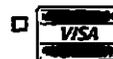
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# Play it again, SAM

Almost blind from birth, Jean Little has become an award-winning children's writer by combining talent, perseverance, and some remarkable technical aids

By Barbara Wade Rose

A CHILLY AUTUMN wind blows open the last pink roses of the year in the sunny garden behind the small black-and-white cottage on a street in downtown Guelph. Inside, children's novelist Jean Little stirs the lemon meringue filling that cooks on the stove for a pie she and her mother will share with a guest for lunch. "I'm sure it was two cups of liquid," she says, taking the box of mix into an adjoining room. A magnificent golden Labrador named Zephyr picks himself up from the kitchen floor and follows her. Jean Little places the box under a device similar to the microfiche readers found in public libraries. When she switches on the light, the print on the box is suddenly magnified many times over. "There, two cups — that's right," she says, satisfied. Zephyr thumps his tail in appreciation.

Jean Little



It has been a good year for Little, 53. Her new novel for eight- to 12-year-olds, *Lost and Found* (Penguin), has just been published. *Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird* (Penguin), last year's spare, moving novel about a boy's learning to cope with the death of his father, won Little the Canadian Library Association Children's Book of the Year Award and the Canadian Booksellers' Association Ruth Schwartz Award. During almost 25 years of writing for children, Little's realistic books have been translated into nine foreign languages. In particular, writes Meguido Zola in the periodical *Language Arts*, Little was "in the vanguard" of writing about handicapped children. "That is the real thrust of Jean Little's novels, recognizing and mastering the enemy within, rather than tilting at the one without." But perhaps her foremost accomplishment since she won the Canada Council Children's Literature Award in 1977 has not yet appeared in print. Little has been mastering a formidable enemy within herself.

A well-planted and sunny-natured woman, she was born in Taiwan in 1932 to J.L. and F.G. Little, who were medical missionaries. When they discovered in Jean's infancy that she had about 10 per cent of normal sight, it was some improvement on the diagnosis of absolute blindness at birth, and the family rejoiced. It would be one of the things that made Jean special. One of the first words she learned, after "mommy" and "daddy," was "book." When the family settled in Guelph when Jean was seven, the girl with the thick glasses who loved to read was transferred from a school for the visually handicapped to a regular children's class.

"It was awful," Little recalls. She is sitting on an overstuffed chair in the front room of the cottage, a room filled with extra chairs for visitors. Paintings reminiscent of the landscape around her Muskoka cottage dot the walls. "They called me names, they chased me home from school. . . ." Her voice trails off. The child retreated even further into the world of books, holding them a scant three inches from her nose in order to read the print.

Jean also began to write stories herself. Her first "book" was written in an orange scribbler when she was in grade five, an adventure tale about a boy and his dog Lad who live on the top of a mountain and, after a series of adventures, save the boy's mother when she has an accident. Her father purchased a special large-print typewriter for Jean as soon as he learned of her talent. *Something of a writer himself* — Little remembers he religiously kept a diary and insisted she date her poetry — he arranged to have a book of her poems published privately when she turned 15.

"Every writer should have a father like that," says Little now (he died when she was 21). She can recall him sending two of her poems to *Saturday Night* magazine two years later and the subsequent thrill of seeing them in print. The cheque for \$30 bought her a few yards of green velvet for a party dress. When a letter to the editor appeared in the next issue inquiring politely about the interesting poet named Jean Little and asking for further details about her, Little's mother took one look at her husband and coolly said, "You didn't!" "He did," says

PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL OREISTER

Little, hooting with laughter — he had even gone to Oakville to mail the letter under an assumed name.

After graduating with honours in English from the University of Toronto, Little met her first published author at a seminar in Utah, where she was attending a special course on teaching handicapped children. Virginia Sorensen was principally known as a children's writer, so that's what Little decided to be — never believing it would become something she could afford to do full-time. She returned to Guelph and began to teach a class of children with cerebral palsy, writing as a hobby.

"I discovered there were no books with real children with cerebral palsy as characters," she says. "The children who had any kind of handicap were either miraculously cured at the end or they died." It was 1961 when she wrote *Mine for Keeps*, about a young girl named Sally Copeland and the crutches that transport her to school, the little dog Susie who teaches her responsibility, and the secret place beside the fence that makes her feel special. Little showed it to a local librarian who suggested submitting the manuscript for the \$1,000 Little, Brown Canadian Children's Book Award. Little won, and her first book was in stores and libraries the following year. "That's embarrassing," she now recalls with a smile. "When I'm travelling and people ask me whether I had any trouble getting my first book published, I almost hate to answer — they get so mad!"

Another eight books followed as Little's two brothers and a sister married and began raising 11 nieces and nephews for her to observe and enjoy. She has mixed feelings about never having raised any children of her own, but concedes that being an aunt has had its benefits. "I think I enjoy it better because you can always give them back. You enjoy it, but you can always sit and say to yourself, 'My, that child is turning out to be a selfish one,' and you don't feel responsible." The children in her own books have always reflected Little's keen observations. Margaret Laurence, writing in *Canadian Children's Literature* in 1976, said: "One can always be certain with Jean Little's characters, of true feelings and characteristics. There are no good guys and bad guys; all are ambiguous mixtures."

Jean Little laughs sometimes at the way in which those characters develop. "When I wrote *One to Grow On* [Little, Brown, 1969], there was a character in it that I did not like at all — she was a very nasty child. I finally sent her to Europe with her parents to get rid of her. I was sitting typing the finish of the book: — my heroine was up in Muskoka and her god-mother and her best friend were coming as a surprise. So I typed 'Tilly got out of the car' and 'Pam got out of the car' — and then my hands typed 'and Lisa got out of the car.' I just sat there staring and said right out loud, 'She can't! She's in Europe with her parents!'"

Along the way to critical acclaim Little's left eye began giving her trouble: it was diagnosed as glaucoma and corneal edema "and it blistered and became so painful that I had to have it out." It was replaced by a glass eye, which Little cheerfully removes for curious audiences of schoolchildren, "although the teachers," she adds, "tend to sort of faint away in the aisles." Her 10 per cent vision was reduced by half. Editing and retyping manuscripts became an increasingly tedious process; Little would hold a page to her nose to read it, and then try to find what point she was at on her typewriter. Still, during the 1970s she published four more books, won the Vicky Metcalf Award in 1974 for her achievements to date, went on a whim with a friend to Japan to study Japanese for two years, and spent her spare time leading children's groups such as Explorers and Canadian Girls in Training.

Then, in 1977, professional success met head-on with her personal handicap. *For Anna* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1972), about a German immigrant girl coping with anti-German sentiment after the Second World War, had been so successful that

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Little wrote a sequel. Hailed by the *New York Times Book Review* as "first-rate," *Listen for the Singing* (Clarke Irwin) garnered her highest honour yet: the Canada Council's annual award for best children's author. Shortly afterwards, bad news struck. "Within three days [of winning the award], I found I had glaucoma in my remaining eye and thought I would be blind within a year and a half — because that's what happened with the first eye.

"That was a very bad time," she now says quietly of the eight years it took to finish another book. "I did pretty well stop writing for a while — I just didn't know how to do it. I would come out of the depression for a while and try to write, doing absolutely ridiculous things. I taped a bell to the space bar on my typewriter and used a tape recorder so that when I

'Within three days I found I had glaucoma in my remaining eye and thought I would be blind within a year and a half. . . . That was a very bad time,' Little says of the eight years it would take to complete her next book

stopped to think, I counted the number of keys I had hit between the bell ringings to try to figure out what the last word I'd typed was. It was absolutely insane."

Little eventually turned to dictating her work on a tape recorder, adding punctuation so that a typist could record her intentions faithfully. (Even now, she says, she silently punctuates story-telling on the radio or on her favourite "reading," the Canadian National Institute for the Blind's series of tape-recorded books.)

*Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird* took 97 cassette tapes and the tenacity of Little's editor, Shelley Tanaka of Penguin Books, to bring the story of Jeremy Talbot to life. "She was fantastic," Little says of Tanaka. In order to edit the book, Tanaka would read the manuscript to Little, and both would suggest revisions. On the dedication page Little credits Tanaka's "patience, incisive skill and mounting excitement" for the book's success, and adds, "Jeremy and I would never had made it without her."

During this time another helpful colleague came along in the form of Zephyr, a thoroughly trained, friendly guide dog who snores in church and follows Little wherever she goes. ("It can be a bit embarrassing in public washrooms," Little admits, "when people come along and see Zephyr's tail thumping away under one of the cubicles.") She was afraid she would not qualify for a guide dog, not being totally blind — "one of the few times in my life," she says wryly, "that I thought I might have too much sight."

The latest addition to the cottage she shares with her 82-year-old mother and bedridden aunt — and the saving grace to Little's writing — arrived in June. SAM, a colloquial name for the Synthetic Audio Microcomputer on which Little now writes her books, sits in a quiet corner of her office with a printer donated by the local Lion's Club. Developed by David Kostyshyn, an enterprising blind businessman in Hamilton, Ont., SAM can tell Little what letters, words, or even phonetics she is typing, and repeats, in a gravelly, electronically accented voice, any command she gives it. "It's made me more independent than I ever was — even when I could see much better," Little says with delight. "I'm just like any writer. Now I can insert and delete without thinking I'm going to have to redo the entire page." SAM's only drawback is a

jealous Zephyr, who drops soggy bones into the lap of any visitor who pays more attention to the computer than to him.

Little's vision has held at around five per cent with the aid of a special contact lens that prevents blisters from forming on her right eye. Her imaginative vision is ever-expanding. "I love fantasy myself," she says over salad and lasagna prepared by her active mother. She declines to write fantasy, however, because "there are lots of children's books that I love to read that are outside my scope as a writer. I've read a lot of writers who say that because *they* write a certain type of children's book: that's the type of book kids should read. I think children need all kinds of books."

Although her kind of books are about real children whose parents die or who find pets they have to give up, Little dislikes writing novels solely to depict a human dilemma. "When I came along there were lots of things you didn't mention, like death and divorce. That certainly has changed — there's nothing you can't write about for children if you do it well. But when somebody says, 'I think we should write a book for children about divorce' or 'we ought to write a book about prejudice against Jews,' it comes out that way, like a sermon. There's a lot of young adult fiction that is like that. It's so problem-oriented that the story didn't get to the writer first, the propaganda did."

Her face lights up when she recalls the books she loved as a child — Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* and *The Little Princess*. "I asked my mother when I was about 11 to tell me the name of a perfect book and she told me *The Little Princess*. After that I had great respect for my mother's opinion." Many of the children in Little's books, handicapped or otherwise (and there are plenty of both), share a love of the "secret place" where "no adult comes. That's very, very magical."

She feels a commitment to the world of children's books because "you go so intensely into them" as a child. "You're not thinking you should really be doing something else. You may be hoping that no one will catch you and *make* you do something else, but otherwise, as far as you're concerned, you're living right in that book."

"So many people grow up and stop reading children's books, then complain and complain because they read Margaret Atwood and it may not be what they want to read just then. They don't want to look at that world, they want to look at a different world, and they won't find it in adult fiction."

That different world remains with Little as an adult. Her childhood memories are among her strongest, partly because she was handicapped and partly because of her writer's perspective on life. "I have one particular memory of being eight and starting regular school," she says. "The strain of it was so great I was going temporarily *bald*, of all things. One morning my mother said 'The house is cold, stay in bed for a while longer and I'll bring you an orange.' I was sitting looking at these pretty orange boats reflected in the window and I was suddenly conscious that memory fades. So I said to myself, 'I am going to remember this moment, always.' That memory is very strong."

As Little comes outside the house to say goodbye, she points with pride to the brilliant orange sunflowers, bursting with black seeds, at the bottom of the garden. They stand six feet high next to the green wooden shed where Little once kept her own "secret place," a room furnished with bed, wood-burning stove, and a table for writing when the pressures of the outside world became too intense. The room is quiet and empty. Next spring, when it is warm enough to work there, her family plans to hook up an electrical system so she may take SAM out from the main house and resume her writing in a place where no other adults come. We peer in at the door of the shed. It has been bereft of Jean Little's imagination for too many years. □

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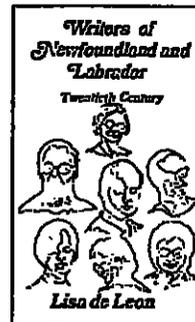
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# Identity crisis

The season's children's books run the gamut of adolescent problems — from dealing with racial diversity to overcoming bulimia

By Mary Ainslie Smith

**L**IZABETH CLEAVER, who died last summer at the age of 45, created some of Canada's most exciting pictures for children's books. Her brilliant collages frequently illustrated native legends, beginning in 1969 with her collaboration with William Toye, *How Summer Came to Canada*. Her last book, *The Enchanted Caribou* (Oxford, 32 pages, \$8.95 cloth), is illustrated in a new and intriguing way.

Each episode in Cleaver's retelling of this Inuit story is accompanied by a tableau of dramatic silhouettes, created by photographing shadow puppets.

The story itself is lovely, telling how Tyya, a young woman, is transformed into a white caribou by an evil shaman and then rescued from her enchanted form by the man who loves her. In an afterword, Cleaver explains how she feels shadow theatre is particularly well-suited "for showing dreams, visions and magical happenings, like a human turning into an animal." She also provides instructions showing readers how to create their own shadow puppets and construct a simple back-lit shadow box to tell their own stories. *The Enchanted Caribou* is a wonderful addition to Cleaver's legacy to Canadian children.

There is also enchantment for young children in *Winter Magic* (Methuen, 32 pages, \$9.95 cloth), written in German by Eveline Hasler, translated into English by David Ross, and illustrated by Canadian artist Michèle Lemieux. Peter is bored by winter until his white cat, Monty, changes into a magic steed and carries him into a world of winter surprises. They see animals snug in their underground nests; they hear the heartbeats of silent winter birds; they approach the cave of the Snow-King, guarded by a fringe of rainbow-coloured icicles. Then, as the warm comforting lights from Peter's home guide them through the winter dusk, Monty shrinks and shrinks until he is a normal-sized cat once more.

*Achimoona* (Fifth House, 98 pages, \$19.95 cloth, \$9.95 paper) is a collection of short fiction by native writers for children from nine to 12, illustrated with 16 colour reproductions of work by

native artists. In the introduction, Maria Campbell explains that *achimoona* is the Cree word for stories, and that they are gifts from sacred places within the storytellers. The writers in this collection got together at a Saskatchewan Education workshop to discuss some of the common threads in their story-telling, then worked on their own to produce these stories, drawing where they could from the traditional methods of the old story-tellers. The results are somewhat uneven, reflecting the diverse ages and backgrounds of the writers. The stories are also diverse, ranging from fantasy to allegory.

Saskatchewan Education is producing a teacher's guide, suggesting that this anthology is meant mainly for classroom use. However, it is a good book for private enjoyment as well, filling a need perceived by Campbell and the other writers to provide material that speaks to the special feelings and problems of native children, such as facing prejudice and struggling to feel secure in their own identities.

Also for a special group is *Camels Can Make You Homesick*, by Nazneen Sadiq (Lorimer, 89 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$5.95 paper), five stories about the experiences of five Canadian children of South Asian origin, presented with sympathy and humour. In "Shonar Arches"



Amit, overwhelmed by all the spicy Bengali food his visiting grandmother forces him to eat, takes her to McDonald's for a Big Mac. Surprisingly, this begins to bridge the gap between them.

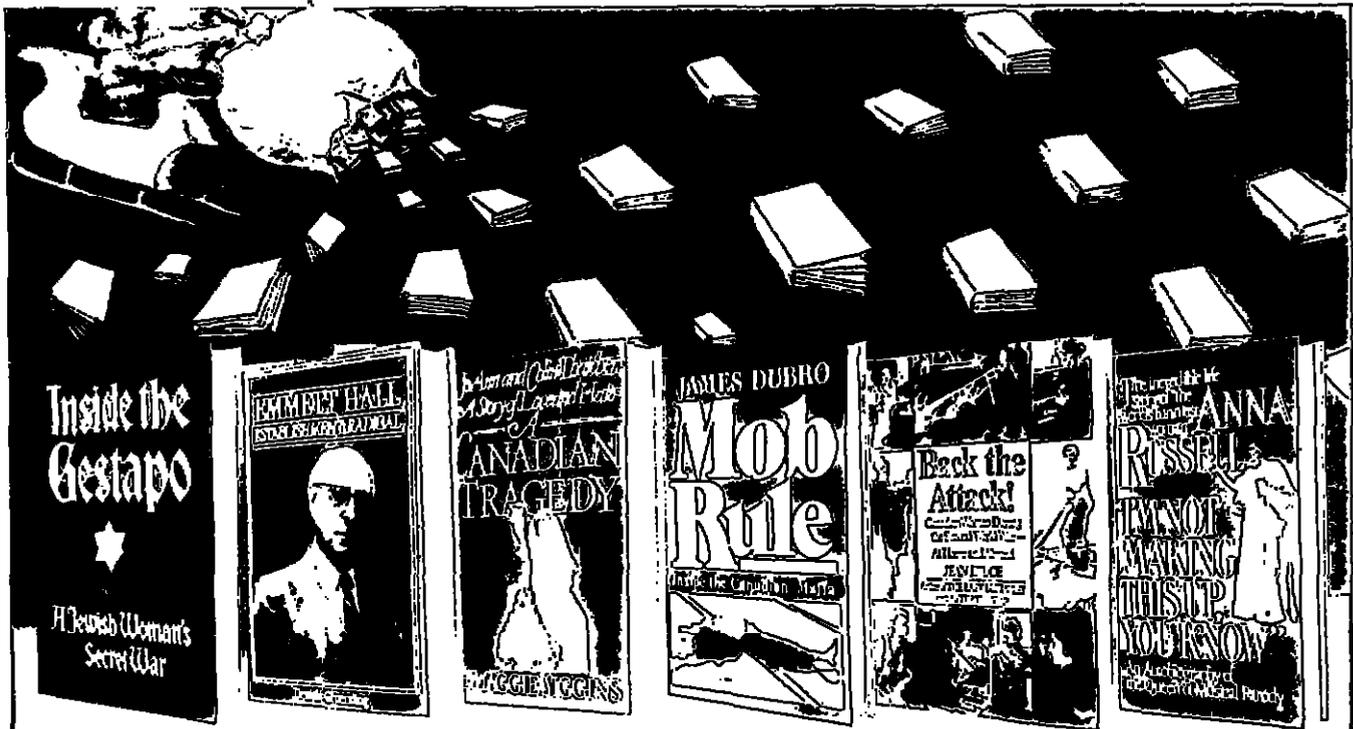
In "Peacocks and Band-aids" Jaya,

about to perform a classical Indian dance for her school's assembly, receives help from an unexpected source when part of her costume is maliciously damaged. For Zorana, in the title story, a visit to her parents' homeland, Pakistan, and a runaway camel lead her to make some discoveries about herself. These stories are about children with specific backgrounds, but all children reading them will identify with the need to be accepted by one's peers, to have a secure home base, and to feel good about one's talents and abilities.

In *The Summer the Whales Sang*, by Gloria Montero (Lorimer, 165 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$5.95 paper), Vivi Aquirre feels very insecure about her background. She has always lived in southern Ontario, and so is hurt and confused when she is labelled an immigrant, even by her best friend. Then her Spanish mother and Basque father separate, and on her 13th birthday she finds herself in a small airplane bound for Labrador, where her mother is making a film on the archaeological excavation of a 16th-century Basque whaling station.

Vivi feels that she is being unfairly transported to an alien environment. What's more, she has just finished a school project on Greenpeace and doesn't want to have anything to do with whalers. In spite of herself, she makes friends with the residents of Red Bay, becomes involved in some of the archaeological discoveries and learns more about her father's Basque heritage. By the end of the summer, she is much more ready to accept herself, her family situation, and what the future might bring.

Thirteen-year-old May, in *White Mist*, by Barbara Smucker (Irwin, 160 pages, \$9.95 paper), also feels insecure and different. She knows she was adopted by a white couple in Sarnia, Ont., when she was an infant, but she knows nothing about her parents or background. Then, during a summer job at a resort community on Lake Michigan, she and Lee Pokagon, a fellow worker, are summoned back in time by a stately, white-haired Indian. They visit 19th-century Singapore, a logging town that once hoped to rival



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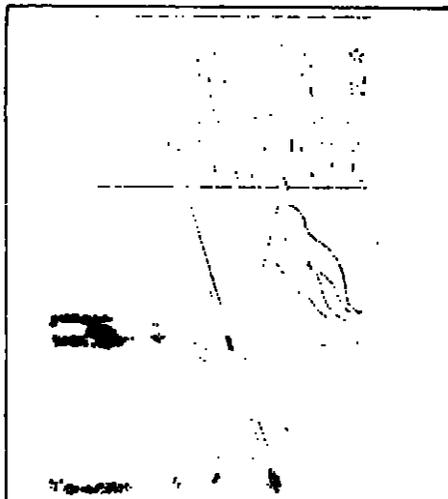
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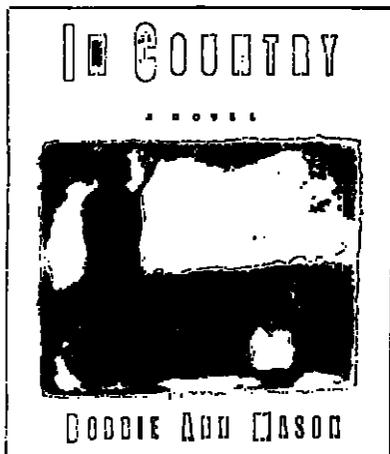


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Chicago and Milwaukee as a lake port. But when lumber supplies were exhausted it became a ghost town and was buried by Lake Michigan's sand dunes.

May and Lee discover that they are descendants of the Potawatomi Indians who lived near Singapore, and they learn the sad history of their people's dispersal. The chief who summoned them has an urgent message to send back to the present — a message that may help them save Lake Michigan from destruction by environmental pollution.

Smucker deals with a number of important issues — pollution, mismanagement of natural resources, prejudice, mistreatment of native peoples — and as she strives to find balance in her presentation of these, plot and character development suffer. May and Lee are not as real as the problems they face, and the time-travel mechanisms seem particularly contrived. Still, Smucker has never shied away from such sensitive issues as persecution and slavery in her novels for children. Once again, her courage in confronting the evils in life must be admired, as well as her optimism that these evils can be overcome.

The problem facing Gabby in Patti Stren's *I Was a 15-Year-Old Blimp* (Irwin, 185 pages, \$12.95 cloth) seems at first to be much less serious. Gabby is overweight, feels self-conscious, and is teased by her classmates. So far, nothing new — the same plot is in hundreds of novels aimed at the teenage market. Gabby's sense of humour makes us believe at first that the novel will just be one extended joke, a fat girl putting herself down. But then the tone changes. Gabby becomes bulimic — a vomiter — believing that this is the only way she can control her eating. Eventually it is no longer possible for her to eat anything without vomiting, and her attempt to lose weight becomes life-threatening. With the help of some loyal friends and family, Gabby pulls through, and we have a story that is not a joke but a sensitive portrayal of a young person struggling to make sense of her life.

*Storm Child*, by Brenda Bellingham (Lorimer, 148 pages, \$12.95 cloth, \$5.95 paper), concerns another search for identity. Isabel Macpherson has grown up in Fort Edmonton with her father, a carpenter for the Hudson's Bay Company, and her mother, his Peigan Indian wife. The crisis in Isabel's life comes when her father decides to return to Scotland, leaving his wife and daughter behind. Feeling hurt and betrayed by all white men, Isabel leaves her mother and friends and goes to live with her Peigan grandparents, where she is known as Storm Child. On the prairies of the 1830s, she is caught up in treachery,

revenge, and the dangerous rivalries of different Indian bands and different trading companies. Isabel finds her loyalties torn, and comes to realize that she can never belong wholly to either culture but must find a way of her own.

*Two Parents Too Many* (Scholastic, 107 pages, \$2.95 paper), also by Brenda Bellingham, is in a lighter vein. Jenny and Katy's parents are divorced. Their father has remarried, and their mother plans to remarry soon. The two girls hatch a number of schemes to stop this marriage, but find their mother as determined as ever to live her own life. Some of their tricks are pretty far-fetched, but more unbelievable is the amount of patience that the four adults — the parents and step-parents — have with these two brats. The practical grandmother who comes to the wedding and takes them in hand is the most sympathetic character in the story.

In *The Haunting at Cliff House*, by Karleen Bradford (Scholastic, 105 pages, \$2.95 paper), Alison and her widowed father are spending the summer in a gloomy old stone house on the coast of Wales. Alison is bitter and upset when her father reveals his growing interest in Meiriona, the village librarian, but even more disturbing is her discovery of a diary written in 1810 by Bronwen, a girl her own age who had lived in that same house, who seems to be reaching out desperately to Alison in the present. As the story progresses, Alison sees how Bronwen's problem parallels her own, and she finds the dangerous solution for them both.

*Wild Man of the Woods*, by Joan Clark (Penguin, 171 pages, \$14.95 cloth), is an adventure story involving the dark, subconscious forces hidden beneath our civilized veneer. Stephen is all set to enjoy a holiday with his uncle, aunt, and cousin at their home on a mountain lake, but the boys' fun is spoiled by vicious attacks from two neighbouring bullies. Then Stephen finds the Indian mask of the Wild Man of the Woods and puts it on to teach the bullies a lesson. But the power he summons up is beyond his control and he almost destroys himself.

*Ice Swords*, by James Houston (McClelland & Stewart, 149 pages, \$12.95 cloth), is a continuation of the unbelievable but entertaining adventures of Matthew Morgan and his Inuit friend, Kayak. The two boys first teamed up in *Frozen Fire* when they set out to find Matthew's father, a geologist, who was lost on the tundra. Their adventures continued in *Black Diamonds*, when Mr. Morgan and his friend Charlie tried to make their fortunes with an oil well that blew up at the end of the story.

In *Ice Swords*, the two men are still trying to find mineral wealth in the north. While they are out exploring, Matthew and Kayak spend some time at a research station established to study the migration and habits of the elusive narwhal. The chief scientist's daughter, a beautiful 16-year-old professional diver, teaches the boys deep-sea diving, and in a matter of a few days, they are joining her in dangerous under-ice surveillance of the narwhals. A series of hair-raising adventures, both on land and under water, keeps the action going, and although the reader doesn't learn very much about narwhals, it is a lot of fun.

Collier Macmillan has a series of high-interest/low-vocabulary novels for reluctant adolescent readers, all featuring realistic episodes in the lives of young people. For example, in one of their recent releases — *Take Off*, by Paul Kropp — Dan, who has had some experience as a runaway, decides to accompany his younger friend Jimmy, who is running away from home. Dan hopes to help Jimmy through the difficulties he knows he will encounter, and to make him see that running away is no solution to problems at home, however bad they may be.

In *Ice Hawk*, by Martyn Godfrey, Hawk loves hockey but must decide if he is willing to play the game at any cost. Can he accept the role of goon on the Junior A team he has been offered a chance with? Other recent titles are *Fire!* *Fire!*, also by Martyn Godfrey, and *The Whip*, by John Ibbitson. (All the books in this series are 92 pages, \$3.95 paper.)

Three Trees Press has a number of books designed for in-between readers, children who can handle a fair bit of text but who still appreciate lots of illustrations. Among their recent titles is *Billy at Eat*, by Martha Henry, illustrated by Mary McLoughlin (28 pages), in which a mysterious stranger helps Billy find the confidence he needs to excel at his favourite game. In *Who's Going to Clean Up the Mess?*, by Anita Krumins, illustrated by Carlos Freire (22 pages), the Gungler family discovers that even having a specially designed robot to help with housework doesn't solve the problem posed by the title. The hero of *Budley and the Birdman*, by George Swede, illustrated by Mary McLoughlin (24 pages), manages to find a compromise that keeps a lonely old man happy but stops him from trapping songbirds to keep him company. (All these books are \$11.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper.)

*Owl* magazine and Golden Press have two new picture-story books for young children. *Snow Eables*, by Eric Rosser, illustrated by Olena Kassian, shows baby

animals growing up in the North. *Night and Day*, by Catherine Ripley, illustrated by Debi Perna and Brenda Clark, tells a little about what some forest animals do during the day and at night. (Both these books are 24 pages, \$2.00 paper.)

Douglas the Elephant and Albert the Alligator, created by writer/illustrator Mark Thurman, are back for another adventure, *Old Friends, New Friends* (NC Press, 24 pages, \$10.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper). Albert falls in love, and Douglas, feeling deserted by his old friend, is jealous and sulky. However, Douglas meets a pretty girl and at last realizes that a true friendship can expand to include new interests and new people. □

## REVIEW

### Partners in crime

By Adrian Forsyth

In *the Rainforest*, by Catherine Caufield, Heinemann (General), 304 pages, \$23.95 cloth (ISBN 0 434 11208 9).

ASK A FEW Canadians what our most pressing environmental problem is, and I wager the answers will include acid rain, toxic waste, pesticides, the greenhouse effect, water pollution, and the slaughter of fur-bearing animals. These are all wrong answers. Problems such as acid rain and toxic wastes are huge and important, but their solution is already at hand. It is only a matter of how much we are willing to pay to correct them. In contrast some environmental damage is irreversible; species that go extinct can never be retrieved. Our most pressing environmental problem is the destruction of tropical rainforests and the ever-accelerating extinction of species that accompanies it. This problem is the subject of Catherine Caufield's book.

Rainforests are the greatest and least-known assemblages of species on earth, and they are being cut, bulldozed, and burnt at the astonishing rate of some 50 acres a minute. Caufield gives us an eye-witness account of this process. She travelled around the world recording the fate of rainforest in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Philippines, Bali, Sumatra, and Australia. She visited projects that range in size from massive hydroelectric power dams flooding more than half a million acres to roads serving subsistence Andean farmers clearing the forest for

planting of coca for the cocaine trade.

What makes this sort of activity a Canadian concern? Caufield points out that members of the developed nations are directly involved in this destruction in many ways. Much of the deforestation is the result of schemes by multinational corporations based in temperate-zone countries. The cheap tropical beef in our fast-food hamburgers, the orange juice, coffee, tea, chocolate, bananas, sugar, nuts, and other tropical crops we consume provide an economic incentive for rainforest clearing for agriculture. Our taxes, in the form of foreign aid, often go for such projects as road and agricultural development, which promotes land clearing and speculation, and pays little heed to concerns over conservation and ecologically appropriate land use. We may never set foot within thousands of miles of tropical rainforest, but we are reaping the benefits of its destruction and furthering the process.

Caufield notes that we must eventually pay a price. As the forests are destroyed we are losing a vast gene pool. Most of the undeveloped crop plants of the future are found in the tropics, a diversity not yet identified and catalogued. Many of the most potent anti-cancer drugs, such as vincristine, have only recently been discovered in tropical plants. Future discoveries are being traded for short-term gains. Caufield also discusses some of the global consequences that tropical deforestation may have, including contributions to the greenhouse effect, changing weather patterns, and the desertification of the type that has produced the current round of tragic and costly famines in Africa. Biologists believe that history and our descendants will record this destruction as one of humanity's most short-sighted follies — one they will be powerless to rectify.

Caufield describes the destructive process dispassionately. It would be easy to be shrill and moralize. Instead, she interviews people directly involved in the destruction and lets their own words tell the story. As a result, her cleanly written accounts are highly readable, and few overt opinions stand in the way of the narrative. She lets loggers, squatters, corporate executives, politicians, biologists, and environmentalists tell their story. The sheer scale and scope of what she witnessed provide all the drama necessary. I rarely enjoy reading books on environmental issues, but this book was an exception. Stylistically, it's the sort of book John McPhee would write on the problem.

Part of the book is devoted to the natural history of rainforests. Its intent is to point out that extremely little is

known about the biology of these forests save that they are complicated and fragile entities that do not recover from disturbance. But natural history is a relatively minor part of this book. People, politics, and profit, human striving, scheming, squandering are the focus of

*In the Rainforest*. Contrary to its title this book is not so much about what goes on in the rainforest as what is happening to the rainforests.

Caufield does not devote much space to solutions or optimism. Her intent seems to be to awaken and alert her au-

dience to the size and complexity of the problem. She succeeds admirably. Readers will come to the last page saddened and angered at having been made witness to the wasting of the richest and most intricate realization of life on our planet. □

## National dreams

The railroad may have united the country,  
but the catalogue civilized it

By Brian Shein

Christmas 1985: Canada's Greatest Gift Catalogue, Sears, illustrated, 448 pages, \$2.00 paper.

THE 1985 Sears Christmas catalogue is distributed free to some 4.1-million "qualified Sears customers" across Canada. It is also available, for a price, at major chain book stores in Toronto and nationally through Sears retail outlets. Thus, it promises to be one of our most widely distributed and best-selling books, and, as a mail-order catalogue, it forms part of a major, if generally unacknowledged, tradition in Canadian letters.

The first Canadian mail-order catalogue appeared in 1884. It was published by Timothy Eaton, prophet of cash payment in a wilderness of barter, apostle of the department store, and patriarch of a family still venerated by many loyal Canadians as partaking of the divine right of merchants. This Ur-catalogue was a 32-page booklet comprising lists and prices of dry goods. It was printed, in a staunch union of church and capital, by the Methodist Book Room and, in a canny merchandising strategy, handed out free at Toronto's Canadian Industrial Exhibition. In 1887 R.W. Sears published its first catalogue, followed by the Robert Simpson Company in 1894.

Over the years, the catalogue became a vital Canadian institution. Often the only book available, it imparted the essentials of reading, writing, reckoning, and remaindering to the hinterland. It coaxed the immigrant to puzzle out his first English phrases, relieved the settler's long dreary winter with study of the latest styles in everything from millinery to horse harnesses, and initiated the pubescent lad into the mysteries of the female undergarment. Then, after intensive use that perhaps no other book could boast, it retired with honour to the

outhouse where its pages performed a final, more fundamental task. The railroad united this land; the catalogue civilized it.

Here then is the latest example of the genre: 448 full-colour pages offering more than 12,000 items with prices ranging from \$2.99 (a package of refills for a gumball-dispensing machine) to \$20,000 (a handmade solid mahogany snooker table). Since this is a Christmas catalogue, all these items are proposed as gifts. Indeed, with copies being sold as a book, the catalogue itself becomes one such item; wrapped and festooned with ribbons, it too could be a festive offering.

*Christmas 1985* diligently continues the genre's educational tradition. There is a special section that categorizes gifts by price, from under \$75 to under \$5: an object lesson in budgetary sorting theory. There are pages that feature "Super Gifts" (microwave oven, black satin sheets) enclosed in a border that spells out Merry Christmas in a variety of languages, inviting the recent immigrant to participate fully in our multicultural society. Alphabetical coding clearly refers from the photographs (acres of acrylic, tons of terry-cloth) to the accompanying descriptive prose. The latter is occasionally sprightly ("Instill some twill..."), sometimes oddly suggestive ("Never a dull moment with this Wilkinson double knife set"), but in general a model of predictable catalogue style: a dress sandal is, of course, "the life and sole of the party."

Sears does not shirk the catalogue's prurient duties. Those wishing to avail themselves of the lingerie section may turn immediately to pages 67-70. (Heterosexual women and gay men will, however, search these 448 pages in vain for a glimpse of male bun or basket.) Even the catalogue's traditional hygienic role

is referred to: an array of toilet seats in a range of decorator colours, each personalized with family names or initials.

Those family names are illuminating: the Browns, the MacDonalds, the Robertsons, and the token Bouchard. They evoke an imaginary Canada largely populated by happy Anglo families much like the one on the cover of *Christmas 1985*: Dad, Mom, brother, little sister, and pooch, gathered invitingly in the white-pillared wreath-bedecked doorway of their home. They are both the perfect consumers and — in all the promise of their spick-and-span faces, perfect poly-cotton outfits and solid brick dwelling — the ultimate commodity. *Buy us, they say, be us.*

By my count, throughout this hefty volume crowded with hundreds of smiling models, there are only one black male model, one black female model, a few assorted black and oriental teens and children, and one black Cabbage Patch Kid. Even the family dog on the cover is white. In the land of the MacDonalds and Robertsons, this is once again a white Christmas.

In 1670, Charles II granted a charter enabling a Company of Adventurers to shop for furs, minerals, timber, fish, and the like in what is now Canada. Established for marketing purposes as a nation, Canada — 9,976,139 square kilometres of raw resources, the highest per capita rate of foreign investment of any country — continues to be the world's largest department store. Its current head salesclerk, Brian Mulroney, invites yet more extensive shopping from abroad. As we celebrate this Christmas in what promises to be the world's bargain basement, it is fitting to consider the Sears catalogue. It contains much of our history and, perhaps, a confirmation of our destiny. □

# No laughing matter

Humour, like sex, is an intensely personal pastime. Laugh, and the world laughs with you, but never reveal what you're laughing at

By Jack MacLeod

*Tell Pa I'm Dead*, by Andy MacDonald, Doubleday, 163 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 23142 3).

*This Bear and Fine Country*, by Ray Guy, Breakwater, 140 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919519 49 0) and \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 919519 51 2).

*File 23: The Shocking Truth About Canada*, by Orland French, Methuen, 240 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 99860 2).

*No Axe Too Small to Grind*, by Joey Slinger, McClelland & Stewart, 205 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 8206 1).

IN HIS SHREWD foreword to *The Best of Modern Humour* Mordecai Richler quotes an actor on his deathbed as saying, "Dying is easy. Comedy is difficult." Richler also muses: "Humour, after all, is a very serious business — as a rule, the easier it looks, the harder it came." Knowing that many people inevitably would quarrel with his selection ("He left out Dorothy Parker!"), he might have added that comedy, like sex, is an intensely personal thing, as subjective a matter of taste as your favourite perfume.

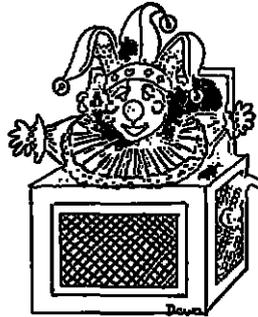
Maybe that's why I lose friends and get into punch-ups, not over the relative literary merits of novels, but over whether certain writers are funny. Laugh, and the world laughs with you, but don't say what you're laughing at or half the world may stare at you with blank incomprehension. "Life is tough, and then you die — with only the possibility of laughter in between," sighed a friend. I was about to buy him another round on that when he paused and asked me why I thought Flann O'Brien was amusing. May he parch in hell.

Look, I enjoy a boisterous literary argument as much as the next guy. If you are unhinged enough to believe that Saul Bellow is a "better" writer than Brian Moore, we will grapple, but amiably. If you are rash enough to assert that Margaret Atwood is as good a novelist as she is a poet, or that she is as fine a novelist as Richard B. Wright, you strain my credulity, but we can still talk. However, if you think Robertson Davies's worst book, *The Rebel Angels*,

is funny, don't come to me for remedial therapy. Nor would I expect you to believe that an otherwise respectable citizen of my warm acquaintance does not consider *Catch-22* a comic masterpiece. . . . What? You, sir, you believe it? Ohmygawd. Now we're into it. Hold my coat. Next you'll deny that George Bowering's *A Short Sad Book* is as luminous a comic gem as Ray Smith's neglected *Lord Nelson's Tavern*. Is there no bottom to your depravity?

Wait. Before we meet at dawn to choose weapons, let's consider some more recent examples of humorous writing by Canadians. There's a whole lot going on here that we can squabble about.

New Brunswick's Andy MacDonald is an undoubted success. His *Bread and Molasses* sold an amazing 70,000 copies, yet few parochial Upper Canadians have ever heard of him. His new book, *Tell Pa I'm Dead*, has jacket copy that describes him as a "character." Undoubtedly he must be, or else Doubleday wouldn't have risked another extended press run. He is charming, guileless, direct, eccentric. What he isn't is funny. After reading the book I flipped through the pages a second time looking for something — anything — to cite as witty, but all I could find was pleasant crumbs from the cracker-barrel. Down-home stuff. Like some good wines,



maybe he doesn't travel well. Beats me.

No less a regional celebrity is Newfoundland's Ray Guy, whose books are seldom given shelf space in Vancouver or Montreal, yet he slays them in St. John's and has won a Leacock Medal. *This Dear and Fine Country*, his new collection of sketches, originally written

for CBC-Radio, demonstrates that he is clever, diverting, and revels in local colour and provincial lore. On firing off a muzzle loader on New Year's Eve:

I dare say I fired off two dozen shots, all told. . . . I know I put the third load right through Aunt Prissy Condom's bedroom window, and that sent her right into hysterics, poor foolish woman. . . . The Mountie feller served me with papers. "Skipper Abe," he said, "you never welcomed in no brand New Year. You shot the shagging shit out of it. That wasn't one bit civilized, that wasn't."

Agreed. It isn't. More than high spirits and a blunderbuss are required to create good comedy. Still, one man's wit is another man's Weetabix.

To be fair, I got a chuckle out of Guy on unemployment:

There's hundreds of people making the best kind of living out of unemployment. Welfare officers and politicians and the insurance crowd and them task forces and whatnot. What's all this foolish cry about putting an end to unemployment? If we does away with unemployment it'll put too many people out of work. That's our biggest industry, unemployment is.

Overkill. Folksy, that, and a good shot, but I think what disappoints a reader "from away" who didn't hear it on radio is that Guy's humour is mostly about jokes. The real stuff of humour writing, to satisfy, needs more than jokes. There must be flow, context, something to get you inside of, and caring about, a situation that goes beyond the local dialect, the predictable rib-nudging, or the mere inversion of the familiar. The incongruities must relate and snap. If you "had to be there," you aren't.

That may be why I picked up Orland French's *File 23: The Shocking Truth About Canada* with such elevated hopes. French attempts a 1066 and *All That* type of romp through the whole history of Canada, and we've all been there, certainly, and there's enormous space for comic manoeuvres. However, the book is a crashing disappointment. There'll be those who find it droll to learn that among the early explorers was a relative of the author, Malcolm Demers

## Son of Scrooge

By Nanci White

**God Bless Us Every One!: Being an Imagined Sequel to A Christmas Carol**, by Andrew Angus Dalrymple, Methuen, 144 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 99430 8).

IT IS STILL safe to say that the coming of Christmas brings with it a time when we can suspend for a moment all our anxieties and enjoy good friends, good food, and good cheer. Although festivity has reduced devotion and worship to a ghost of Christmas past, the holiday "spirits" are still alive in a number of institutions that could almost be called religions. Next to Santa Claus and turkey dinners, one such institution that remains dear to us is Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. And although the pecuniary side of Scrooge persists as the best reflection of Christmas commerce, our hearts continue to be warmed by fond reflections on hot buttered rum, the mild-mannered goodness of Bob Cratchit, and Tiny Tim's memorable words, "God bless us, every one."

Taking Tiny Tim's blessing as the title for a new novel, Andrew Angus Dalrymple now gives us an "imagined sequel" to the famous story that looks ahead to Christmas, 1843. The book opens in the offices of Chapman and Hall, where the youthful Dickens is in the throes of publishing *A Christmas Carol*. Messrs. Chapman and Hall are truly enchanted with the tale, but feel that the fictional names given by Dickens to the characters (Flintlock, Lame Joe) would be infinitely more effective if they were replaced by the names we have come to know and love.

The stage is set, and Dickens must attempt to solicit releases from Scrooge, Cratchit, and Tiny Tim, who have changed considerably since he wrote their story. Cratchit, now the affluent senior partner in Cratchit and Scrooge, is aiming for knighthood; Tiny Tim is a misdirected adolescent; and Scrooge, having given away most of his money, has been reduced to living in a closet behind Cratchit's front door.

Dalrymple's scenario has all the elements of a good modern-day Dickensian romp. And to his credit, it should be granted that his reproduction of scenes and characters reminds us of the good old days of Pickwick and Nicholas Nickleby, where evil was humorously

deBoisvert, "known as simply Mal de Mer," and that among the early ships were the *Nina*, the *Tenna*, and the *Tenna-Thirty-in-Newfoundland*. My own response is, "Don't step in that, Elmer."

With a desperate sort of cutesy over-reaching, inanity is piled on inanity. The Fenians:

In swarms of two or three to the whiskey bottle they raided Canada at strategic border points: Fort Erie, Ontario, to get to the race track, and New Brunswick, looking for cellars of hidden potatoes, an ancient Irish treasure.

Trudeau writing to Lévesque:

I have been meaning to write to you for some time to congratulate you on your splendid victory last November. Alas, I did not get a round tuit. Nobody gave me one for Christmas! A round tuit, René. It is an English joke. I guess you would not find it funny.

Me neither.

French wallows in one of the worst school-boy vacuities, comic names — a recent Premier of Alberta is "Peter Lubehead" — and relentlessly bashes at the inevitable quiz questions:

- In 200 words or less, describe in detail the four or so decades of Tory rule in Ontario. Use adjectives to stretch out your answer if necessary.
- Name one good reason to visit London, Ontario (don't waste time thinking of an answer).
- Where did Agnes Macphail go where no woman had sat before, and why didn't she use the urinal?
- Does Pat Carney have a sister named Chillicon?
- Does Milla Mulroney turn off the plastic nightlight when she goes to bed or does Brian sleep in another room?

Some may find that sort of thing witty; others, offensive; to me it is merely jejune. On a scale of 1066, you'd have to stretch to rate it a 499.

Happily, these minor antics are by no means typical of the best recent comic writing in Canada. There's a new spunky spirit abroad in the land that should cause us to unbutton and rejoice. For decades, as Northrop Frye once observed, our humorists (notably following Leacock) were "quiet, observant, deeply conservative in the human sense"; they were gentle, restrained, somewhat avuncular.

In recent years, however, the tone of our best comic writers has become more stinging, flamboyant, swashbuckling. It's as though the writing now flows not only from the familiar Freudian well-springs of sadness and anger, reflected in adolescent jibes and one-liners, but also from the will to embrace the ridiculous and the absurd with glee, ready to take

the larger adult risks of creating entire risible worlds, cocking snooks at the preposterous fantasies of social orthodoxy and mooning them with a brave butt. Reread Jack Hodgins's *Invention of the World*, Leon Rooke's *Shakespeare's Dog*, John Metcalf's *General Ludd*, Robert Kroetsch's *What the Crow Said*, and you enter worlds that welcome and celebrate the bizarre, where "quiet desperation" has become raucous and exuberant.

Currently, two books (both flawed but fine) realize this new spirit of comic extravagance-for-the-hell-of-it: Trevor Ferguson's *Onyx John* (McClelland & Stewart) and Paul Quarrington's *The Life of Hope* (Doubleday). Each eschews the knee-slappers and the simply jokey, but lets the smiles accumulate until you are caught in a wild and wacky microcosm where truths are heightened by quixotic twists. And that, not mere whimsy or funning, is what it's all about. As E.B. White said, "Humour plays close to the big, hot fire which is truth, and the reader feels the heat."

My favourite humorists are usually intellectual grown-ups who retain a child-like sense of wonder, cherishing the ridiculous, responding to life's ambushes with poignant insouciance. Such a writer is Joey Slinger. *No Axe Too Small to Grind* is a selection of his columns from the *Toronto Star*. They are grand fun. Included are several nature-walk pieces that are hymns to the joy of living, but the prevailing spirit is delightfully impertinent. I'm biased, because he's a friend, but the most demanding comparisons to columnists like Russell Baker and John Leonard of the *New York Times* tell me that Slinger is better. He can be off the wall, even over the wall, yet when he's on, he's bang on. His imagination makes startling leaps and cracking connections, his ideas prance, his prose tickles the mind. Possibly I exaggerate? You judge. On breakfast:

People who talk during breakfast have serious emotional disorders. And people who talk before breakfast are perverts.

Advice to the lifelorn:

Be born into a wealthy family. . . . The next best thing is to find a wealthy family and hang around with them. Show up for meals. Stand outside the bathroom in the morning holding your toothbrush and waiting your turn. Wealthy people have little interest in details. Before long they will conclude you are one of them and buy you a pony.

Capering around the truth — *homo ludens* — is the sort of devilry that refreshes. As Mark Van Doren wrote, "Wit is the only wall/Between us and the dark." The best Canadian humorists, praise be, are becoming more luminous. □

dismissed and conflicts ended with weddings and newborns.

However, it is difficult to know who will appreciate *God Bless Us Every One* the most — or the least. In many ways, some of the more subtle allusions and Dickensian echoes seem intended for students of the 19th-century master. In other ways, the slapstick, the bald anachronisms, and the whatever-happened-to look at Dickens's memorable cast is dedicated to a mass audience who grew up on Alistair Sims's screen portrayal of Scrooge or the abridged version in *Classics Illustrated*.

This is not to suggest that the novel cannot work on some levels for the dedicated Dickensian as well as the general reader who, although vaguely tuned to 19th-century plot and characterization, ultimately seeks entertainment. The Cratchits' major domo, Creep, brings back a subtle suggestion of the sulking Uriah Heep, but his relentless tipting and animated independence add a truly accessible and engaging dimension to Dickens-like characterization. The Axworthys, who preside over Paradise Hall — a poor man's home offering "loving care for the Elderly and all other unfortunates," where Scrooge is incarcerated — are as greedy and connivingly obsequious as the Bumbles. But one does not have to know *Oliver Twist* to appreciate their darker contribution to the novel's ram-bunctious twists and turns.

Despite such examples, those not intimately acquainted with Dickens will probably not appreciate the depiction of the perky novelist. Nor will they catch the echoes of dialogue that refer us back to the novel itself. For the student of Dickens, the anachronisms verge on overkill, and lack the subtlety that John Fowles was able to achieve in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. More than anything, the truly sinister elements of *A Christmas Carol* that made Scrooge's conversion that much sweeter are entirely missing. We know that as soon as there is a calamity, *God Bless Us Every One* will resolve it. It's just a question of how much we can be entertained by the staged conflicts and humorous larks before the novel moves to its ultimate and rosy end.

Given a choice, it would probably be better for anyone to go back and read the original, if even for the third or fourth time. However, the Christmas spirit of Dickens still lives. All is jolly, hot pudding and "Oh, the Goose!" Our hearts are warmed if our minds are not completely fulfilled. And if as a youth on a snowy evening my father had sat me down to read *God Bless Us Every One*, I would not have been entirely disappointed. □

## REVIEW

# The birds and the beasts

By John Oughton

*Mammals of the Canadian Wild*, by Adrian Forsyth, Camden House, illustrated, 352 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920656 40 4).

*The Wonder of Canadian Birds*, by Candace Savage, Western Producer Prairie Books, illustrated, 212 pages, \$35.00 cloth (ISBN 0 88833 136 3).

HUMANS HAVE MORE in common with the beaver than busyness: unlike most animals, both species tend to make large-scale changes to their environment. But even Canada's national animal stops short of massive interventions like the James Bay project.

For those humans who advocate large-scale changes to the environment, both these books should be required — nay, compulsory — reading. We should preserve, not destroy, the complexity of behaviour, adaptation, and interdependence that Adrian Forsyth and Candace Savage demonstrate among birds, mammals, and the rest of nature. The trees that went to make these books (both printed in Canada, incidentally) will not have died in vain if even a few readers improve their attitudes about pollution and development-for-profit of wild areas.

Savage is trained in literature, Forsyth in biology. Both present photographs of their subjects taken by leading wildlife photographers. Forsyth's book is longer and more detailed; his aim is to present all of Canada's more than 150 wild mammal species in a manner useful both to general readers and to naturalists. This demands a careful balance, so that the text is neither too scientific to be enjoyed by non-biologists nor so simplified as to be useless to the scientists. From this non-scientist's point of view, Forsyth strikes the right compromise.

He transmits a good deal of information that can be absorbed without too many trips to the dictionary. He is particularly illuminating on the behaviour of his subjects: it was news to me that female ground squirrels pass on their territory to their daughters, that moles attack wasps' nest underground, and that walrus "walk" across ice floes on their tusks. (The Latin name of each species is translated; for walrus, the result is "tooth-walker.")

As well as sections on each order of mammals and the individual species,

Forsyth includes mini-essays on topics that relate to several species: for example, on rabies; on how mothers can influence the male-female balance of their broods; on how northern animals walk. This well thought-out reference work should add lustre to Forsyth's already impressive reputation as a naturalist who can write.

Candace Savage has taken a different route, choosing to concentrate on 55 of the best-known Canadian bird species. Her book is aimed more at the amateur naturalist, and offers some useful hints on how to locate some of the species. (Give a dead tree with woodpecker holes a sharp rap, and a saw-whet owl may answer from one of them.)

Like Forsyth, Savage includes distribution maps and behavioural descriptions for each species. Her writing is chattier in tone, but she does transmit some surprising information about even well-known species: blue jays apparently get relief from skin irritations by rubbing acid-exuding ants over their feathers, and in a pinch will substitute mustard or even burning cigarettes.

The reproductions are a touch less sharp than those of *Mammals*. But both books contain some remarkable close-ups. Savage's is probably best used, Roger Tory Peterson suggests in the foreword, as a companion to a good

## *This Dear and Fine Country*

More fine essays from a master's pen

Ray Guy is at his humourous best in this his most recent book. Hundreds of thousands of readers have read and followed Guy's work over the year's, admiring his satire and humour. Nothing is safe from Guy's sometimes vitriolic pen.

140 pages, 6 x 9 in. 15 x 23 cm  
ISBN 0-919519-49-0 \$16.95 cloth  
ISBN 0-919519-51-2 \$8.95 paper



general bird guide. Here the bird-watcher can learn more about a selected group of feather-bearers, including the American Bittern. That species glories in perhaps the most unlikely series of common names of any bird: stake-driver, thunder-pumper, barrel-maker, mire drum, and water belcher. Do they suggest any politicians you've heard recently? □

## REVIEW

### Beyond reason

By Jean Wright

*Not Much Glory*, by Dan G. Loomis, Deneau, 199 pages, \$21.95 cloth (ISBN 0 8879 118 6).

MEDICARE. THE Company of Young Canadians. FIRA. Reduction of regional disparities. Bilingualism. Canadian content. Petro Canada. The Canadian flag. The constitution.

You might have thought these programs were the work of a government intent on the Just Society. Not at all. According to Major-General (Rtd.) Dan G. Loomis, we have the *Front de Libération du Québec* to thank for all this progress, as well as for our current deficit, the unification of the armed forces, and reduction of our participation in NATO, among other things.

According to Loomis — commander, Western Quebec, during the 1970 October Crisis and a man with a distinguished service record — almost every recent important government activity was intended to ready the country for a showdown with Quebec terrorists, and to keep Quebec happy in confederation. Especially important were the unification of our armed forces and their peace-keeping operations abroad, both designed to prepare them to cope with civil insurrection at home.

After such huge preparations to win the hearts, minds, and bodies of Quebec, the dénouement must have seemed an anticlimax. Two men were kidnapped, one of them murdered. The purported army of thousands of highly trained guerrillas turned out to be a tiny band of disorganized misfits. Quebec went on to elect a separatist government and then to reject separation.

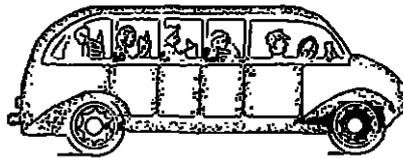
The federal government was certainly prepared for much, much more, according to Loomis. He says this vast reorganization of civilian and military life was instituted by a Nobel Peace Prize-winner, Lester Pearson, and com-

pleted by Pierre Trudeau. The Canadian forces were unified, then seasoned in Cyprus and Vietnam so they could defend the Canadian government from overthrow by home-grown guerrillas. Oddly enough, Loomis shows that as the government secretly mobilized for the coming revolution, the armed forces declined in numbers from 126,000 to 80,000. Lean and mean, perhaps.

"It had been a hectic time but by the spring of 1970, the army was prepared to defend Quebec on the shortest notice," he reports. "It was concentrated in time." Whew! "There were no troops in the main target area, Montreal. . .," he notes, so that, among other things, they would not become "corrupted by the environment in which they operated." Well, Montreal is a seductive city.

As one who lived there from 1964 to 1976, I believe the October Crisis was exaggerated by authorities for a variety of reasons, not least of which was to discredit and smash the legitimate separatist movement. The funeral of Pierre Laporte (a politician who, because of his rumoured propensity for taking bribes, was referred to openly, even after his kidnapping, as "Mr. Ten Per Cent"), with its circus-like canonization and Trudeau's arrival by helicopter, was just one example of government propaganda. Responsible ministers made irresponsible statements about hordes of trained terrorists. Trudeau frightened the nation half to death while calling for calm. So disorganized and unplanned was the whole "rebellion" that Laporte's kidnappers were actually en route to a Florida holiday when they heard of Cross's kidnapping; they turned around and headed back to get in on the action.

Loomis reveals that the Russian fishing fleet was hovering menacingly in the Atlantic during the events of 1970. What he doesn't deal with, however, is the RCMP's involvement in terrorism and destabilization. The McDonald Commission learned of barn-burning, bombing, dynamite thefts, the distribution of anti-government pamphlets, as



well as a curious episode in which the Westmount home of a prominent businessman was bombed and a Mountie found inexplicably injured by the blast. These acts, too, were preparation for the October Crisis, but they go unrecorded in this book.

The War Measures Act was declared on Oct. 16, 1970. All that had happened

at that point was that two men had been kidnapped. (Pierre Laporte's body was found the next day.) No other democratic country has suspended civil liberties and thrown itself into uproar for such small cause.

Loomis describes the "McGill Français" march in sensational terms. Danger is apparently in the eye of the beholder. I saw merely one of many student marches down Sherbrooke Street. At the end came a memorable sign, urging on one side "*Après les émeutes, mangez à Jo's*," and on the other, "After the riots, eat at Joe's."

Ultimately, despite the many arrests, only a handful of people were convicted, for such retroactive crimes as membership in the FLQ or for distributing pamphlets. The uncontrolled right of search resulted in a pitiful collection of weapons, including a sword. As NDP leader Tommy Douglas said, it was "a sledgehammer to crush a peanut." But if Loomis is correct (and his credentials are excellent), this is exactly what the government intended.

A distinguished soldier, Loomis joined the army in 1944 and saw post-war service throughout the world. He writes admirably workman-like prose. His factual material seems on the whole accurate, but he engages in many errors in logic: guilt by association, argument by analogy, *post hoc* reasoning, and unjustified inference and omission. At times his arguments are naïve. He twice puts forward as proof of the vast size of the FLQ the fact that their newsletters were published without discovery. I suspect even I could manage that.

Good soldiers must obey, and must believe in the absolute reliability of authority. Loomis is a good soldier. Authorities and their secret plans represent goodness, because their intentions are good. But he never entertains the possibility that an insurrection *anywhere* might be a good thing. How, one wonders, does he feel about the American Revolution? The Russian Revolution? The Riel Rebellion? The Mackenzie-Papineau Rebellion? As someone said: if you win, you're a hero; if you lose, you're a terrorist.

This book reminds us of important things. Our freedom, so hard won, can be swept away by a government backed by a loyal army. Canadians don't seem to mind. Not for us "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." We prefer "Peace, Order, and Good Government." We should be grateful for General Loomis's account of the manipulations that our seemingly open government can achieve without the electorate's knowledge. We have been told this many times before, but it always comes as a sad surprise. □

## CRITICAL NOTICES

### BALANCE SHEETS

**My Enemies: Inside Canada's \$86 Billion Insurance Industry**, by Ron McQueen. Macmillan, 416 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9693 6).

By *Dona Sturmanis*

THE INSURANCE business is one of those established, silent giants that are ever-looming, and like banking not often questioned by the layman. In this country it all began with Canada Life, started in 1847 by Hugh C. Baker, a Hamilton, Ont., bank manager, and has burgeoned into a megalithic enterprise. Thirteen million Canadians own life insurance policies, with an average of \$50,000 in coverage per household, making insurance the second most common financial investment in Canada.

McQueen, former business columnist for *Maclean's*, uses dramatic journalese and authoritative insight to reveal how complex and controversial the insurance business is. *Risky Business* is packed with facts, figures, and anecdotes to reveal everything from the strategies of the door-knocking, small-time agents to the corporate manoeuvres of the "high fliers of the Million Dollar Roundtable," as McQueen terms them.

*Risky Business* is not only energetic reading for those familiar with the world of high finance but also for anyone who wants to understand why their insurance agent visits them a week before Christmas and examines the greeting cards on the mantel. □

### BELLES LETTRES

**The Canadian Writer's Guide: Official Handbook of the Canadian Authors Association**, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 222 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 88902 901 6).

By *William Clayton Law*

THAT EVERYONE HAS a book in them, a few might dispute. The real question is whether that book is any good. But aren't we lucky so many people are willing to dispense their advice to novices? Whether it be a *Writer's Digest* book or the one under review, they are all the same. That is to say, they give advice on how to write and get published, and are in turn themselves appallingly written.

The essays in the first third of *The Canadian Writer's Guide* tread familiar ground, though the one that deals with

problems writers have with the Canadian tax system is pertinent. The rest are by hacks for hacks, dealing with how to write romances and so on. "A Canadian Literary Magazine," by Geoff Hancock, editor of *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, is outstandingly egocentric, pretentious blather, leading one to suppose the same qualities apply to his own periodical.

The remainder of the book lists literary agencies, writing awards, and book publishers, as well as magazine addresses, though not phone numbers. In fact, all this information is available from other and better sources. This book is billed as the official handbook of the Canadian Authors' Association. It reminds one of Chairman Mao's little red book. Which, unlike this one, was not compiled by a committee. □

**In Flanders Fields: The Story of John McCrae**, by John F. Prescott, Boston Mills Press, illustrated, 144 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 919783 07 4).

By *Theresa Moritz*

FEW CANADIANS have written words so widely known as those produced by John McCrae on May 2, 1915, during the second battle of Ypres. His poem, "In Flanders Fields," has remained linked for generations with Remembrance Day and with reflections on the meaning of the world wars.

McCrae's life, by comparison, is little known apart from the sad fact that he did not survive the war that inspired his famous verses, but died of pneumonia at a field hospital in early 1918. John F. Prescott's biography answers the need for a brief, sound presentation of the story of McCrae, son of a military enthusiast from Guelph, who devoted his life to the two seemingly contradictory careers of soldier and physician, with poetry a modest hobby.

The book has many virtues: a good collection of photographs, explanations of issues in world politics and literature which touched McCrae's life, reliance on McCrae's private papers to present in the author's own words his experiences in the trenches and hospitals of the First World War, along with a sampling of his other poems. In many respects, it seems

#### NOTE

Particularly positive critical notices are marked at the end with a star. ☆

well suited to being used in schools.

Prescott concludes by saying, "This book is a further reminder that militarism and war are never answers to the dilemma of the human condition." Leaving aside the merits of Prescott's own convictions, he damages, rather than helps, his portrait of McCrae by attempting to link them to the testimony of McCrae's writings and actions. As Prescott himself is at pains to explain throughout his book, McCrae was a firm adherent to the tenets of British imperialism and a staunch believer in the justice of the Allied war effort. "In Flanders Fields," for all its poignancy, is a resounding demand on behalf of the dead that their example of service and sacrifice through warfare be honoured and followed. To understand in what sense modern Canada is founded on the deeds and thoughts of men like McCrae we must take care to identify rather than obscure the strong differences between their ideas and ours. □

**Glass Canyons: A Collection of Calgary Fiction and Poetry**, edited by Ian Adam, NeWest Press, 190 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920316 81 6) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 920316 83 2).

By *John Greenwood*

THE BLOODSTREAM of this anthology may well be throbbing with the modern city as the foreword suggests, but it's laden with white cells. Running through most of these short stories, novel excerpts, and poems is the theme of alienation; these are pieces about people surviving — and not surviving — in a harsh urban environment. And though there is a tendency among too many of the writers toward predictable visions of gloom, from a few we have some intriguing work.

A number of the stories deal with characters who exist at the fringes of sanity. The most successful of these, Michael Rose's "The Demilitarized Zone," is about a man who calmly stands by as his neighbour is beaten to death by a young thug. What stands out is the way Rose shapes this urban tale into a vivid depiction of evil. Edna Alford attempts a similar end with her story, "Transfer," about a psychopath who believes she is being followed, but Alford is gruesome rather than imaginative and doesn't quite pull it off.

The poetry is not the book's strong point; it's variable and apt to be dreary. But one very good poem is Christopher

Wiseman's "Calgary 2 a.m.," a refreshingly simple piece about being a poet.

Perhaps the best piece in the collection is Aritha van Herk's short story, "Waiting for the Rodeo." It's a curious and sometimes cryptic work that deals, like a number of others, with feminist issues, but setting it apart are some marvellous flights of whimsy. □

## CRIME & PUNISHMENT

**Pull Over, Please: What to do When the Police Stop You**, by Brian Lawrie and Ian MacLean, Doubleday, 125 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 385 23145 8).

*By Linda Fung*

FOR MANY, the numerous traffic violations issued daily seem far removed from lofty concepts of justice. However, *Pull Over, Please* suggests that the two are connected, providing a useful guide for drivers who, either alone or with help, wish to fight their tickets but are unfamiliar with a system where "the court assumes the defendant understands its process."

The authors advise how to act during every step between the initial contact with police and the trial's completion. For drivers uncertain of their rights, relevant ones include the right to prevent using as evidence statements made to police at the scene of the accident or offence; the right to refuse a blood test; the right to an adjournment; and the right to object to any invalid trial procedure made by the Crown.

Success depends on being prepared with supporting facts and evidence and not being intimidated. Despite the sound advice, one realizes early in the book that justice does not come easily. With or without a lawyer or agent, the costs include time, energy and money. Preparation for court occurs at every stage. (Agents such as Lawrie give certain legal advice and represent the accused in court for a fee. Agents are not lawyers and normally only handle non-indictable offences.) When charged with an offence, details of obstructions, signs, weather conditions, and witnesses must be noted. If the last are to be used, pre-trial discussions are required.

Regardless of court preparations, success stops short when the accused is guilty of a serious offence. If one has consumed alcohol and is stopped, the authors advise refraining from argument: one can no longer depend on one's judgement after drinking. They also warn of the courts' increasing severity when sentencing impaired driving convictions, and simply recommend that "the best advice is don't drive if you

intend to drink." Moreover, once charged "with an alcohol or drug-related offence, it is essential to get a lawyer." Neither defending oneself nor retaining an agent is enough. □

## FICTION

**Away with Them to Prison**, by Sara Woods, Macmillan, 222 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 333 39008 3).

*By Douglas Malcolm*

SARA WOODS'S book (the cumbersome title is from *Henry VI, Part II*) might as easily have been published 50 years ago. It has few of the staples of modern crime fiction — graphic sex, mindless violence. A Canadian resident since the 1950s, Woods (who died last month) sets all her books in England and writes in the style of what the jacket dubs the "Golden Age" of detective fiction. Her books chart familiar ground, the cozy, decidedly upper-class universe that existed in the works of Dorothy L. Sayers and Agatha Christie and in their readers' minds.

Woods's heroes are London barristers, an uncle-and-nephew duo named Sir Nicholas Harding and Anthony Maitland, who are called upon to defend two policemen unjustly accused of corruption. In the resulting trial, the novel's centrepiece, the defence appears stymied by the unshakeable lies of the Crown witnesses. But just when all seems lost, Anthony and Sir Nicholas follow a hunch that with typical courtroom drama allows them to clear the defendants and uncover the real villains.

*Away With Them to Prison* is told almost exclusively through dialogue: there is scant physical description, characters' appearances are sketched only briefly, and what little action there is takes place off-stage. This practice, however, fosters a sense of artifice that suits the novel, and helps make it an untaxing and slightly nostalgic read. □

**The Cartler Street Contract**, by Wayne Tefs, Turnstone, 202 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 88801 098 2).

*By Gary Draper*

THIS NOVEL'S AIM is to understand the October Crisis of 1970 in terms of the motives and actions of people swept up in the events. It is a story of love, idealism, hatred, and obsession. But while the aim is commendable, the effort is not wholly successful.

The two central characters in the book are Mark, a failed artist, and Tristan, a tough street kid. Their stories shift from first to third person with what some-

times reads like abandon; thus, on occasion, the "he" of one sentence is the "I" of the next. This is not the only self-consciously literary technique that grates. There are books in which a writer might get away with a character named Tristan, who was brought up on Pandora Street, and ends up working at Panache Electric. In fact, removed from its context there's a kind of whimsy to this throwaway symbolism that is quite charming. But the tone here is grittily realistic, so that the symbolism seems obtrusive and distracting.

There are other problems in the writing, arising from clichés of both speech and action. Thus Mark is made to say with a straight face, "For a man like me, love comes only rarely." Most of the novel's difficulties seem to arise from the creation of character. The story is populated with hyper-intense, romantic, earnest young people, who wear their grand gestures and their world-weary cynicism as if they were the latest fashion. Tefs may be right that these are the very people who get caught in the web of revolutionary activity; but having created such people, he is unable to make them interesting.

What's more, these characters are inadequately distinguished from each other; the sentimentality of one sounds much like the sentimentality of another. And in order to enforce distinctions, Tefs relies too heavily on a single tic: Mark, for instance, is fat, and his fatness seems to invest all his thinking. Besides, like everyone else in the book, he talks too much.

This is a good idea for a novel; but, at least for me, it remains no more than that. □

**Flitterin' Judas**, by Victoria Branden, McClelland & Stewart, 304 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 1508 9).

*By Sherie Posesorski*

GIVEN THAT Mazo de la Roche's tepid romances were dated even in her time, and even Harlequin has given up the punky-virgin genre, why Branden has decided to combine these dubious stylistic elements is the only point of interest generated by her novel.

The novel introduces us to Anne Fitzgerald, technically though ineptly deflowered by an offstage elderly husband, whose sexual defence strategies are definitely in the black-belt league. Brought up by a maiden aunt, Anne is forced by circumstances to work as a bookkeeper at a construction camp. Although she is surrounded by men who jump anything resembling life, Anne is protected and revered under her virginal halo.

Enter, twirling his moustache, her potential seducer, Edmund Richardson, a civil-servant investigator sent to examine the company's finances. In a megaphone stage aside, he announces his scheme to be put on the company payroll. However, blinded by the halo surrounding Anne, his scheme is soon forgotten, and after 304 pages of sexual teasing, the poor man is left with his impure thoughts — unconsummated.

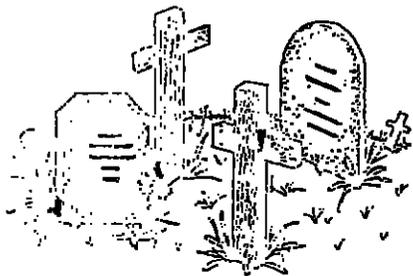
Brandon surrounds her inept couple with colourful, eccentric characters, whose pranks and frightfully rendered dialect provide a charivari chorus to the great non-event of the novel. Against competition like Rosemary Rogers's *Sweet Savage Love*, which at least generates sexual heat, the potential audience for this novel is more of a sweat mystery than, well, you know what. . . . □

*Inland Passage*, by Jane Rule, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 273 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 88619 075 4).

By Anthony Bukoski

RULE WRITES OFTEN about lesbians, but in these 21 stories her characters generally enjoy heterosexual relationships, at least after the first three stories, "Dulce," "His nor Hers," and "The Real World." Still, about one-third of the book concerns women finding each other, then falling in or out of love, as Ann and Nancy do in "Slogans."

In the lesbian stories Rule's women are never strident or pushy. Nevertheless, one notices her male characters serving as "unofficial guardians" of their women. Sometimes the men are "irritable" and do not take intelligent women seriously; other times they do not "allow" their as-yet-unliberated wives and lovers to make decisions. In the lesbian stories, happiness does not



necessarily repose in another woman's arms, however. In this Rule is reasonable and politic. Both homo- and heterosexual love, she says, are fraught with emotional and psychological dangers.

Something unintentionally funny occurs in the first story, "Dulce," when an antagonist, Lee Fair, becomes not

only a recognized novelist, but "one of Canada's best known lesbians." How does one read that line with a straight face? Its inclusion, I'm afraid, is symptomatic of a larger problem: Rule doesn't know when to cut passages, even entire stories, let alone individual lines. Five stories in a row involve the same middle-class family as they bring a hippie in out of the rain, invite "adopted" grandparents for dinner, await the children's own grandmother's visit, go trick-or-treating on Halloween, and experience the kindness of strangers at Christmas.

In this book Rule has little out of the ordinary to relate. As Thomas Hardy once wrote:

A story must be exceptional enough to justify its telling. We tale-tellers are all Ancient Mariners, and none of us is warranted in stopping Wedding Guests (in other words, the hurrying public) unless he has something more unusual to relate than the ordinary experience of every average man and woman.

Two or three good pieces grace the book — "A Matter of Numbers," "More Than Money," "The Investment Years" — but mostly Rule's stories failed to engage this reader. I don't think *Inland Passage* warrants other readers' stopping, either. □

*Mushroom Salad*, by Robin Green, Childe Thursday, 158 pages, \$10.00 paper (ISBN 0 9691203 8 9).

By Sherie Posesorski

THE ART OF THE short story, as demonstrated by Morley Callaghan and Grace Paley, is to focus on an inconsequential activity of daily life to reveal its cosmology. *Mushroom Salad*, a collection of short stories by Robin Green, is filled with the meaningless activities of daily life that remain meaningless. (Meaningless does reveal its own particular brand of cosmology, but Green is not Robbe-Grillet writing in the genre of the *nouveau roman*.)

The club-footed prose of "Suckers," the first story, sets the standard for the collection. It begins with an elaborate microscopic description of the foliage in Humber Park. Peter Baldwin, 35 years old, pretends to be a game warden to scare off an old man fishing for suckers while a commentary is supplied by the fish.

Given subsequent encounters with other members of the Baldwin family in the course of these interconnected stories, one begins to long for a return to the fish. Several concentrate on Lizzie Baldwin, Peter's mother, who murdered her husband and now lives alone on a farm. The highlight of "Doll's Eyes"

depicts Lizzie's giving a mohawk haircut to her granddaughter's doll.

The stories cover a 20-year span in the lives of the Baldwins, theoretically to demonstrate how they have arrived at their present stage. However, their traits are so inconsistent from story to story that it is difficult to recognize them as the same characters.

It is a bad sign when a reader keeps flipping to the end of a story to see how much longer he has to go on reading. In *Mushroom Salad*, a reader can't flip fast enough. □

*The Life of Hope*, by Paul Quarrington, Doubleday, 272 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 25004 5).

By Michelle Heinemann

FROM COVER TO COVER, *The Life of Hope* is the kookiest, zaniest, crackpottiest story I've read in a while. A third-time novelist, Quarrington has squeezed a satirical adventure out of a writer's pilgrimage into isolation. But for the central character, Paul, real life gets in the way when he stumbles — drunk — in Hope, Ont., in 1983, into a mystery that dates back to 1847 in Boston. As Paul solves the mystery, Quarrington pokes fun at small-town Ontario, progress, religion, sex, male exclusivity, and fishing. Coincidentally, Paul's retreat to "the old Quinton place" — scene of the murder of the town's founder, Joseph Benton Hope — coincides with his ejection from his Toronto home by his wife Elspeth. Paul turns to drugs and alcohol, grovelling to the lowest depths of despair. His state leaves the reader wondering if his far-fetched tale is mere justification for a novel unwritten.

Following his release from a Massachusetts jail on charges relating to "amorous congress," J.B. Hope — by profession leader of the Perfectionist religious cult, by occupation a satyr — settles with his followers in Upper Canada in 1862. The settlement of Hope proliferates rapidly and becomes wealthy. Everyone seems content to live happily ever after, until 1889, when J.B., serving the Holy Spirit, gets caught with his pants down (again). In the ensuing drama, he meets what wife Martha would certainly consider his just reward. His followers honour him by erecting a statue in the town square, where J.B. remains at the centre of things, rod upheld. Occasionally, the locals — and Paul — rub it for good luck.

The locals, not surprisingly, are nearly all descendants of the Perfectionists. They spend their time in a local bar called the Willing Mind, where Paul discovers them soon after he hits Hope. Near-nympho Mona, ventriloquist Big

(and Little) Bernie, and Jonathon Whitecrow, a visionary homosexual Indian, become friends. Edgar, the axe-rurderer, of Edgar's Bait, Tackle and Taxidermy, proponent of A.A., becomes an acquaintance and Harv, Paul's Toronto professor-friend and owner of "the old Quinton place," becomes a nuisance. But Paul doesn't care. He lives only to drink, do drugs, solve the town's mystery, and catch Ol' Mossbank, the town's 200-year-old talking fish who just happens to have a penchant for ponises. . . .

The references to ponises pop up everywhere. In Boston, among the Perfectionists, in the water, beside the lake, with young girls, with older women. . . . It gets a bit tedious toward the end, and whatever satirical poke Quarrington is trying to make gets lost in the muddle.

Throughout the story, clues to the mystery abound. Quarrington cuts back and forth between the sub-story of J.B. Hope in the mid-1800s and Paul's encounters. Quarrington successfully bridges the gap, using Whitecrow, a witness to much of what went on, and Ol' Mossbank, who talks to Paul while he attempts to catch the fish. It is a technique that works well.

*The Life of Hope* is not an outstanding novel, but it should not be dismissed outright. Quarrington's imagination is first-rate. His humour is not the kind that will leave you rolling on the floor. It is sharp, not razor-sharp, but cutting, nonetheless. *The Life of Hope* will make amusing bedtime reading, as long as you're not prone to nightmares — which in this case could well include ponises and fish. □

*The Suspect*, by L.R. Wright, Doubleday, 217 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 25001 0).

*By Janet Windeler*

THIS NOVEL IS Wright's first work of fiction in the mystery-thriller vein, but as in her previous novels the focus is on psychology rather than plot. Set in a small town on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia, the story opens in the sun-drenched living room of 85-year-old Carlyle Burke, seconds after he has been brutally murdered by George Wilcox, another octogenarian, who appears to have been Carlyle's friend.

A cantankerous yet likable old man who spends his days working in his garden, George soon realizes that he is going to "survive this astonishing thing," and despite a profound and burdening sense of guilt, he refuses to confess to the crime. Determined to corner George into a confession is the local

policeman, Staff Sergeant Alberg, a smart, sensitive, world-weary sort who is puzzled, as we are, by the motive behind the killing. Cassandra Mitchell is the town librarian: she is wise and full of heart, and finds her loyalties torn between the two men — her old friend, George, and her new romantic interest, Alberg. As Wright unravels the secrets of the suspect's past, she constructs a complex and absorbing emotional field around these people, and her skill is such that they emerge three-dimensional and entirely convincing.

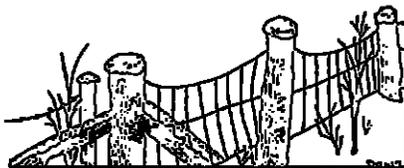
The dialogue flows naturally, the plot is neatly contrived, and if Wright edges dangerously close to sentimentality on one or two occasions, the book still ought to be read for the compelling treatment of its characters and its quiet acceptance of the world. □

*Tentacles of Unreason*, by Joan Givner, University of Illinois Press, 134 pages, \$11.95 cloth (ISBN 0 252 01203 8).

*By Cary Fagan*

ALTHOUGH ONLY TWO stories in this first collection have the same protagonist, they almost all seem to emerge from the same autobiographical material. An English woman has escaped her narrow-minded homeland only to find herself on the faculty of some isolated university in the Canadian prairies — a university where the faculty drink too much, grow veritable jungles of plants in their offices to compensate for the landscape, and instead of writing papers raise Siberian huskies. The stories shift back and forth from England to Canada, from childhood to adulthood, but this does not make *Tentacles of Unreason* an almost-novel or a series of linked stories. Each stands on its own.

Givner writes about women: older women trying to cope, girls inwardly struggling to overcome their backgrounds or heredity. She seems interested in young girls and their grandmothers, as if genetic traits skip a generation or are suppressed by the



middle-aged, only to be revealed in the young and old. The narrative voice is articulate but dry, capable of irony but lacking in tension, like a clothesline drooping with the weight of too many shirts and trousers. The best of the stories are gently funny and reveal a very

personal kind of sensitivity.

In "Brains" an English girl being pushed through the prep school system is imprisoned by her mother's simplistic perceptions of her. A lovely moment occurs at the end when the girl, given some freedom for the first time when her grandmother leaves her a legacy, no longer accepts her mother's version of herself. "A Spectator Sport" has another English girl, this time holidaying in France, defy the strictures of home by eating horse meat. But here as elsewhere Givner sets up a good dramatic opportunity and then gets lost in less interesting tangents.

"Conversation Pieces" has a Jamesian situation — an American couple visit an English couple and find their temperaments and cultures clashing — but the story is marred by clichés of twangy Yankee voices and English snobbery toward servants. That's a shame, because anyone who can describe the English woman with "her bust . . . a big single unit, like a bolster wrapped around her chest" has proven she can do better. □

*Wise-Ears*, by Nancy Bauer, Oberon Press, 165 pages, \$23.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 585 6) and \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 586 4).

*By Louise Longo*

THIS DELIGHTFUL, tender-hearted novel hits the right note on several unexpected counts. It's *not* the cranky, *angst*-ridden or angry novel that we see so much of, and which many of us have gotten to like, possibly in self-defence. It's also not the young person's quest to "find" oneself, nor is it overtly feminist — though it is informed by a feminist sensibility and firmly placed in the 1980s.

Sophie Aspinwall, our 58-year-old heroine, has been a generous and intelligent wife and mother to her husband and three children, with few regrets. But with her children now grown ("Women like me should be shot as soon as the last child leaves home"), she is looking for some "good use" to turn her energies toward. She launches herself into volunteer work at a local women's centre, and although she does have a "natural gift for saying the helpful thing" cannot accept the director's position when it is offered to her. She decides instead (to her family's dismay) to explore several more personal projects: an elaborate and exotic redecoration of her son's bedroom (complete with mirrored ceiling) to elicit the grandchildren that haven't been forthcoming; taping imaginative, updated fairy-tales for her "future generations"; and writing an involved, episodic tale, with lightly por-

nographic details, that surprises even her. The book closes with Sophie making plans to grow tomatoes for their "decorative effect"; she wants to experiment with their range of colours.

Sophie's gentle, imaginative adventures are richly detailed. She is a marvellously "ordinary" character, and the incidental details of her life, which flesh out her inner searchings, are thoroughly charming. This is the sort of novel that is smiling to itself, and although it doesn't have a lot in the way of conventional plot, readers won't find themselves feeling deprived. □

## FOLKWAYS

*Explorations in Canadian Folklore*, by Edith Fowke and Carole H. Carpenter, McClelland & Stewart, 400 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 1909 2).

By N.F. Macdonald

THERE MUST BE some very good reasons why this book is such a mess. Perhaps it is the two editors, working at odds. Or maybe the country is just too big. Or was it the truce called between the academics and the impressionists. Whatever the reason, *Explorations in Canadian Folklore* reduces a wonderful subject to bare readability.

Of course the idea for a genuinely Canadian folklore text is a good one, and there are certainly more than enough original texts still extant to supply good readings. Some of these are well-represented, such as the ubiquitous Helen Creighton, Emily Carr, and Paul Kane. Unfortunately, there is some academic writing bad enough to make your eyes gag, and some spurious analysis by non-Francophones on the "living folk traditions of Quebec." Oh Brother.

The real problem with this book is that so little original work was commissioned for it. There is no attempt to draw any conclusions about the role of folklore in the national mosaic; indeed there is no consideration of non-Caucasian/native folklore. There is not even any kind of overview. The stunted introduction seems to be an apology for not fulfilling what was the book's real mandate: to draw a nationalistic cloak from our admittedly rich folklore heritage so that we can shield ourselves from the continuing American cultural onslaught.

Not that *Explorations in Canadian Folklore* is worthless; it's just that it is not very good. It is badly organized, has undistinguished selections, and is somewhat overpriced. All in all, a botched job. □

*Legends from the Forest Told by Chief Thomas Fiddler*, edited by James R. Stevens, Penumbra Press, illustrated, 109 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 920806 64 3).

By Lenore Keeshig-Tobias

THIS BOOK IS a collection of 34 stories reaching up from "the pale" and into the present where, through generations of retelling, they touch the primary story-teller and actually involve him. The 80-year-old Thomas Fiddler himself is probably considered a legend.

Each of the eight chapters is prefaced with historical references (such as Hudson's Bay Company journals) and/or rhetoric on the Third-World status of native people and the impact of the Judeo-Christian concept of life on them. Unfortunately, such rhetoric has to be included.

As well, there is Stevens's commentary on native art and the inclusion of 20 or so illustrations by six native artists. Apart from breaking up the monotony of type — giving the artists warranted exposure — I am not so sure the illustrations or the commentary work within the context. Story-telling is a self-sufficient art, even though native story-tellers in general use few descriptive words, and their stories are, oddly enough, rather mechanical. Their magic and artistry come not only from the story-tellers' hold on an audience but also from the listener's — and in this case the reader's — imagination.

The stories illustrate an organic view of existence, an essential for those inhabiting the boreal forest. From the mythological Weesakajac (teacher and



fool) to the medicine battles between clans, the feats of the Yorkboat men of the Hudson's Bay era, and the heroes like Old Young Lad, "Great Northern Captain Assup," and James Linklater, these story-tellers dramatize the socio-cultural dynamics of their homeland.

They give the how-and-why, mysticism, mystery, and madness.

Not necessarily rational or conclusive, nor always with a purpose other than simple enjoyment, these tales reflect the common features in and the absurdities of human nature, even for the great shaman from the boreal forest. □

## FOOD & DRINK

*Nancy Enright's Canadian Herb Cookbook*, James Lorimer, illustrated, 146 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88862 7 89 0), and \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 88862 788 2).

By S.A. Newman

THE WIDE GULF between food writing and being a chef is clearly shown in this unimaginative, drably illustrated cookbook. The cuisine here is not specifically Canadian, and the cookbook cannot even be considered particularly herbal. One should expect from a herb cookbook interesting recipes for jams, jellies, sauces, and dressings, yet in all its pages there is only one — for herb vinegar.

Each chapter opens with a brief legend of the herb, how and where to grow it, its properties and uses. Though these paragraphs are interesting and informative, they are hardly a legitimate excuse to add recipes that are neither unique nor exciting. Many of the recipes are standards — reliable and credible — some even have potential, like Beef Stew with Provençal Herbs or Roast Pork with Sage Stuffing; however, none are brilliant. Possibly the most enticing dishes are those prepared with ginger, which incidentally is a spice, not a herb.

The decision to divide recipes into chapters on individual herbs, although novel, may not have been wise. Main courses are jumbled under one title together with appetizers, desserts, and vegetables, all for the sake of one element of the recipe — a single herb. For example, Bechamel Sauce and Aunt Marg's Pressed Beef (on the same page) have bay leaves in common.

Some dishes require more than one herb, such as Layered Lamb Stew — if one can only recall whether it falls in the Mint, Thyme, or Rosemary category. At the same time, Chicken with Coriander, Ginger, and Garlic should not be confused with Chicken Breasts Stuffed with Ginger, Garlic, Tarragon, and Ham (two separate chapters) — just as Fresh Tomato Sauce with Herbs (under Sage) is not to be confused with Herbed Tomato Sauce (in the Thyme section). It hardly seems worth the effort of searching to find a recipe only fleetingly remembered as having culinary possibilities. □

## HEALTH & WELFARE

The *Healthsharing Book: Resources for Canadian Women*, edited by Kathleen McDonnell and Marianna Valverde, Women's Press, 200 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 88961 093 2).

By Ann Luftis

THIS IS THE "OFFSPRING" of a group of Canadian feminists who publish a quarterly women's health journal of the same name. A kind of *Whole Earth Catalog* for feminists, it contains useful information about films, books, pamphlets, and organizations that women might want to consult or join. Each chapter includes one or more articles written by feminists, for feminists, and praising the work of feminists.

The editors apologize in the preface for being unable to include all the sources and information they discovered. With only a year to research and assemble the book, they say, many potential contributions were probably overlooked. But had the editors dropped some of the articles in favour of more resources, they might have produced a better book.

Most of the articles are very general and offer few, if any, new ideas. They are also full of jargon. Phrases such as "self-positive women," "emotional toxins," and the "self-healing capacity of the body," seem trite, and mask the human complexity of women's issues behind meaningless, abstract terms.

The essays worth salvaging are those that focus on a specific area of Canada or highlight issues and concerns that are unique to Canadian women. Ellen Adelberg's article on women in prison, Friscilla Simard's and Millie Barrett's insights into the health problems of native women, and the essay on the Northwestern Ontario Women's Health Education Project lend credence to *Healthsharing's* claim to be the "first and only health resource guide produced specifically for women in this country." □

## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

*On Trial: Reagan's War Against Nicaragua*, edited by Marlene Dixon, Synthesis Publications (Between the Lines), 269 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 89935 042 9).

By Ian Young

THE UNITED STATES first financed anti-government insurgency in Nicaragua in 1909 when the liberal Zelaya regime was overthrown with help from the U.S. Marine Corps. From then until the popular revolution that ended the

Somoza family's dictatorship in 1979, Nicaragua was politically and economically a U.S. satellite.

U.S. policy toward Nicaragua has stubbornly followed the prescribed course toward Third-World countries: bolstering vicious and unpopular authorization regimes to the bitter end, and when they are finally overthrown, exploding in a tantrum that ensures mutually harmful hostility.

*On Trial* is a compilation of documents and "testimony" placed before a private international tribunal. It is unashamedly one-sided; only 19 pages are given to the U.S. rebuttal (by a court-appointed defence lawyer whose heart is obviously elsewhere). If documentation were needed to support the Nicaraguan government's contention that the counter-revolutionary insurgents are financed and directed from the U.S., it is amply provided here, complete with the requisite atrocity photos. In addition, there is a long anti-U.S. "poem" by the Nicaraguan minister of culture — also an atrocity.

A depressing book all round, and the U.S. has only itself to blame. Marlene Dixon is the editor of the journal *Contemporary Marxism*. □

## MIXED MEDIA

*Nobody Calls Me Mr. Kirck*, by Harvey Kirck with Wade Rowland, Collins, 228 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 00 217466 9).

By Monica Pastor

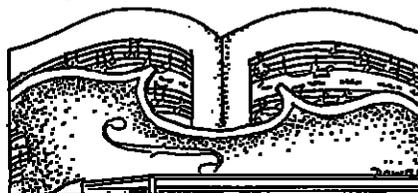
IN THIS MEMOIR, Kirck is quick to point out that he hasn't retired. When the co-anchor of CTV's national news gave his final telecast on April 27, 1984, viewers used to his pudgy, solid, perennial presence had the feeling that it was the end of an era. But if anything, this familiar TV personality has been keeping busy — contributing segments to *Canada AM* and the like, which, for an old-hand journalist/broadcaster, is a return to old turf.

Kirck's chatty autobiography, co-written with CTV news writer Wade Rowland, reads like a tight script for every journalist's dream. Over and over again he finds himself offered the jobs he little dared to hope for.

With the compression of hindsight and the conscious effort to make this a career chronology, scant few facts about the "real" Harvey Kirck come out, save embarrassing details that everyone knows about, such as his highly publicized conviction for drunk driving and a paragraph or two about his naïve attempts at marriage.

The intimacy Kirck spares us, he

makes up for in anecdotes of his progress from poor northern Ontario farmer's son to becoming a national voice. His exploits at radio stations across the country are engagingly told, and give an insider's look at the rise,



fall, and resurrection of broadcast empires like CHUM. He has hardly a sour word, which is almost saintly in an industry not known for benevolence on either side of management's door.

The fraternity that nurtured Kirck is never so evident as when pranks are recounted. Kirck describes an oft-used scam that one broadcaster, Pete Griffin, had going at CKXL in Calgary. One night shift, Griffin went out for coffee and doughnuts while the station ran a recorded segment — and got locked out of the building. He had to crawl in a window with a borrowed ladder to meet the horrific *kshew, kshew* sound of the disk repeating. As though nothing had happened and after 10 minutes of near-dead air, Griffin came back on and gave a time check and station break.

The book's most poignant moment derives from the death of Clark Todd, CTV's London bureau chief, in Lebanon. The news of Todd's death came in the midst of personal tragedy — Kirck's mother's death, and the deaths of several co-workers at CFTO. These led to Kirck's opting out early on his final contract. □

## THE PAST

*Frederick Haultain: Frontier Statesman of the Canadian Northwest*, by Grant MacEwan, Western Producer Prairie Books, 198 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 88833 147 9).

By Richard Sherbanluk

NOW VIRTUALLY FORGOTTEN, Sir Frederick Haultain (1857-1942) was a frontier lawyer, premier of the Northwest Territories for eight years, a member of the territorial and Saskatchewan legislatures for 25 years, chief justice of Saskatchewan for the 25 years after that, and chancellor of the University of Saskatchewan for 22 years. MacEwan contends in this well-written, well-researched book that Haultain was the finest statesman western Canada ever produced, the man who did the most to bring responsible government to the Prairies at a time when eastern

Canada treated the inhabitants of the territories like the serfs of Siberia. But for the partisan enmity of Laurier, says MacEwan, Haultain might have become prime minister.

In describing in detail Haultain's battles from 1895 to 1905 with an evasive, ignorant, and hesitant Ottawa, MacEwan reveals the long roots of western alienation. He also gives the flavour of life on the Prairies at the time, from the eccentrics and remittance men ("Lord" Lionel Brook, Jerry Potts, Harry "Kamoose" Taylor) to a loathsome explicit recipe for the "trade whiskey" Indians were given in return for buffalo hides. There are some good anecdotes and character sketches, particularly of a very young and ferociously ambitious R.B. Bennett, and a lot of detail (a little too much, perhaps) about the mechanism of territorial government and issues of local concern.

In the end, this book is not only a recounting of the career of a distinguished public servant of considerable skill and unimpeachable honesty, but an extended "what if"? What if Haultain had been a little more ruthless, a little less decent, a little less principled? Alas, it's a futile question. But in telling this now-forgotten politician's story, MacEwan reminds the reader of the men like Haultain who took a wilderness and established a flourishing, civilized society within their own lifetimes. MacEwan's plain prose and his obvious fondness and respect for his subject, combined with Haultain's granite-like integrity, makes this an oddly moving book. ☆

**A Fur Trader's Photographs: A.A. Chesterfield in the District of Ungava, 1904-84**, edited by William C. James, McGill-Queens University Press, 113 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7735 0593 5).

*By M.T. Kelly*

STARK, REALISTIC, and at times breathtakingly poignant, Chesterfield's photographs show us the world of the Inuit and Cree, and the people themselves, with startling, almost shocking vividness.

These pictures are essential for anyone who has ever travelled in the James Bay or Hudson Bay region and wondered how the native people *did it*, how they lived, and what their culture looked like. The traditional canoes, the clothing, although certainly affected by contact with white men, come across, not as artifacts, but as weathered, useful, and beautiful objects, almost frightening in their simplicity and grace. Here is an invaluable record of how it was at a time that people were starving, yet still re-

tained many of the old ways with marvellous pride.

This is also how it was with the Inuit, less involved with white men, but their turn would come. Chesterfield's photos of starving Indians uncannily foreshadowed Richard Harrington's photographs of gaunt and starving Inuit, taken between 1947 and 1953. It is uncomfortable when looking at this book to be party to the parasitic process of photography, when technology gives distance to what is heartbreaking. But whatever unease Chesterfield's photos create, they remain a remarkable testament to their subjects.

Unfortunately, the text, by William C. James, a member of the department of religion at Queen's University, doesn't match the photographs. James is all too capable of writing sentences of earnest banality, which echo with vague moralistic hectoring. "The photographs . . . document Bert Chesterfield's maturity, both photographically and in terms of his assuming adult responsibilities and a more serious outlook."

Serious outlook or not, Chesterfield was an unremarkable, dour man, a writer of doggerel verse, and seems to have been a kind of cranky *idiot savant*. All his emotional cards were held close to his chest, but in a sense that's what gives his pictures strength, for his subjects speak for themselves.

James also relies too heavily on Susan Sontag for ideas on photography, but he does give one quote that sums up these marvellous pictures: "The ultimate wisdom of photography is to say, 'There is the surface. Now think — or rather feel, intuit — what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way.'" □



**An Arbitrary Dictionary**, by John Pass, Coach House Press, 74 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88910 284 8).

*By Richard Sherbanulic*

PASS'S EIGHTH collection of poems is broken into two sections. The first, consisting of 35 poems, supplies the title of the book; the second, with 21 poems, is called "Baby Shouts Dao."

In his afterword, Pass says that the titles of the poems in the first section, their "governors," were chosen at random, eyes closed, from the Oxford dictionary, out of "a desire to be writing coupled with a despair of subject." He also says that he tried to push against the authority or tyranny of these randomly chosen words like a novice fisherman, "learning to play the word with grace

and without injury, true to its liveliness and my practice," exploding "the possibilities for responsive and responsible play."

In this he has largely succeeded, although in this day any overtly stated pronouncement about engaging in word-play can, with good reason, strike dead into the heart of a reader. Pass's exploration of these randomly chosen words is artful and insightful; very rarely are these poems obscure or overly worked, and some, like "Consistence" and "Tuck," combine an elegance of thought with a leanness of expression that is quite remarkable. It's nice to find a poet who regards poetry as something (to borrow from Frost) that should be played, like tennis, with a net. Only one modest complaint: do so many of these poems have to refer to the act of writing and the significance of words? Like theatre-goers, most readers prefer not to be made too much aware of the contrivances that make the whole thing work.

The poems in the second section are largely concerned with Pass's efforts to build a home and with his two sons Forrest and Brendan. These also are well done, particularly "Poem for the New World," "The Stars," and "Home." This collection will reward anyone who makes the effort to read it with attention. □

**Ask Again**, by George Johnston, Penumbra Press, 67 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 929806 66 X).

*By Peter Sanger*

MOST OF US need advice from an admirable triton. Johnston offers it in "Lesson One":

*Bees don't like to be jarred.  
Lesson one, a hard one:  
go gently; likewise get  
proper gloves; likewise let  
not your hand be hurried  
by numbers in the world.*

*Ask Again* contains 36 other equally gentle, deceptively casual poems ranging in form from clipped syllabics, which slip into free verse when conversational tone requires, to intricate constructions of eye rhyme and off-rhyme, wittily stopped at each strophe's end by spondees.

*There is room in his work,  
the spirit ranges wide  
and meets  
not limits*

*but everywhere form,  
imagination's home  
and hearth  
on Earth.*

Part of the delight taken in any Johnston poem (as in the poetry of

Stevie Smith) has always arisen from seeing this kind of match between what is said and how it is said, leaving room for castaway sallies.

The book is divided into three sections. The first and second celebrate private and public occasions. They contain verse letters and gift poems for marriages, birthdays, retirements (among them, Johnston's own). The second also offers three elegies, with lines as fine as these:

*Much gets remembered: the good she did; how she did it, as though, What else but do good? Small things too, the tilt of her gait and smile, a way she had of turning up without warning. That was her way of going.*

The third section of *Ask Again*, perhaps the one to which readers will return most frequently, contains 15 nature lyrics, influenced by Johnston's translation of Norse poetry:

*Trod-on Earth turn for us anxious ones into dusk, deepen into dark kindly, clearing off cloud vestiges, vapour trails that vex heaven, had purposes hovering westward.*

*Wake eastward: wide-face moon emerge.*

Those lines, their weight and movement (as distinct from the element of pastiche evident) have implications as interesting as those in Johnston's translations of the poems in *The Saga of Gisl* (University of Toronto Press, 1963). They offer some alternative to the rhythmic vacuity and obtuseness, the tiresome diffuseness of much recent Canadian verse.

In *Ask Again*, Johnston may (to use Lyly the Euphuist's words) govern an island of only small compass, but his great civility, his wit, his willingness to experiment with possibilities of sound and form make that island one which many should visit. It is a place where "Moonrise/over Kelsey's apple trees/blazons winter's onset." ☆

*The Blame Business*, by Robert Eady, Ouroboros, 48 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 920301 05 3).

#### By Gideon Forman

THE STATUE of Liberty, a baby's bottle, and a soldier poised to fire adorn the cover of this volume of prose poems. The images are apt ones. Although Eady occasionally departs from it, the tenor of his book is political.

The poet writes of nuclear war, prejudice, the exploitation of nature. All themes are not of equal importance in this latter half of the 20th century, but

what Eady has chosen to examine does in fact need examination. The question is whether his examinations of these crucial issues have artistic power. The answer is, often.

What Eady does in his best pieces is ask the reader to imagine what one would prefer not to imagine: life in a bunker, a city's collapse during nuclear war, the post-holocaust world. The poet's effort is toward making an abstract notion into something sensuously real. It is one thing to think about suffering, and another to see and feel it: "The shards of shrapnel under paraffin skin. Machine gun bullets rattling like peas in bellies bouncy as baby." Similarly, in "Moose Restoration," the poet wants us to know what we are actually killing when we hunt. And his technique is to show us the animal's every part: bone, fur, head. He writes: "Any person who's tracked a femur fragment or glued together even a square foot of moose hide will no longer look on a moose as a simple source of protein or a potential wall decoration."

The poems that falter are those which, though dealing with significant themes, give simplistic analysis. The title poem, for example, reads like an eighth-grader's guide to the workings of prejudice. It tells us nothing new, and makes one gross error: the implication that men and women are equally guilty of sexism. "A Short Cromwellian Fable" and "The Lie" bear this quality of over-simplification as well. The former gives a four-paragraph account of the history of a Third-World country; the latter reminds us there is much deception in our society and that the truth, were it allowed out, would be ruinous. These pieces work neither as social commentary nor as humour. □

#### SCIENCE & NATURE

*Wet and Fat: Whales and Seals of Newfoundland and Labrador*, by Jon Lien, Breakwater, illustrated, 136 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 919519 76 8).

#### By Richard Sherbanluk

APART FROM ITS delightful title, "Wet and Fat" is an engrossing read, even for those who remain dry-eyed at the plight of endangered whales or who believe that if baby harp seals looked like lobsters nobody would give a damn how they died. The author, who belongs to the Whale Research Group at Memorial University, provides readable, easily accessible information on 16 types of Atlantic whales and seven types of Atlantic seals — where to find them, how to identify them (the numerous illustrations by Newfoundland artist

Don Wright are very handsome), what they eat, and how they are born and raised.

To Lien's credit, his book is straightforward and scientific, having just enough colour and detail to engage the reader without getting into those seemingly infinite polemics about man's cruelty to the rest of animate creation that characterize so many books on the subject. Besides including intelligent interviews with a professional whaler and a professional sealer, *Wet and Fat* also features an interesting glossary, with everything from "plankton bloom" and "euphausiids" to the rather sinister-sounding "lunge feeding." There is also a list of 13 films, six teachers' aids, and seven books on whales for children, as well as an extensive bibliography.

With Lien's obvious expertise, and his talent for non-academic prose ("Dead marine animals smell horrible"), it is probably impossible to find a more comprehensive, readable reference book on the whales and seals of the Atlantic coast. ☆

#### TEACHING & LEARNING

*The Bright and the Gifted*, by Fred Speed and David Appleyard, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, 177 pages, \$10.00 paper (ISBN 0 7713 0171 5).

#### By Terence E. Doyle

MOST OF US have had neither the privilege nor the problems of dealing directly with superior intelligence or talent. Some readers might contest that assertion, though a simple figure proves the point: "the bright and the gifted" are, by definition, only two to three per cent of society. For the vast majority the pinnacle of academic and creative skill will always be a distant point viewed unclearly, and coloured, not surprisingly, with a touch of envy.

But there remain quite a few people — not just "the bright and gifted" themselves but also their parents and teachers — for whom formidable intellectual and creative ability is an everyday fact of life, increasingly recognized to be as great a challenge as it is rare. They point to the special demands made upon the extremely talented, including consistent excellence and above average maturity, and to the special skills needed to encourage this same group when they suddenly — but very naturally — fall short of expectations. They also decry the broad feeling that "the bright and gifted" are spoiled enough without receiving special treatment as well.

These are some of the issues treated in

this book: by two Toronto teachers with generous wisdom and a fluid style entirely in keeping with their subject. They convincingly discuss the nature of high intelligence (they prefer an *ability to learn* to any amount of *fixed knowledge*); how to recognize it *fairly*; how to nurture it successfully; and the great cost to society as well as to individuals if this great resource is neglected. They range freely and faultlessly from educational history and child psychology to social analysis and cultural trends in their arguments to stimulate more thought and settle more questions than is common in books 10 times this length.

As if all this were not enough, they wrap up their reflections with three appendices that should grip anyone looking for studies, groups, or tools to enhance the learning of any child. The ultimate impact of this feat is to retrieve "brains" and "cleverness" from their usual suspect, albeit envied, position and make them as exciting and desirable as brute strength or a fleet foot. Even if only a tiny percentage of their recommendations are followed by parents as well as schools, many more of us may soon expect close encounters with remarkable minds. ☆

## REVIEW

### Art and artifice

By John Oughton

*A Compendium of Canadian Folk Artists*, by Terry Kobayashi and Michael Bird, Boston Mills Press, illustrated, 244 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 919783 32 5).

*Contemporary Stained Glass: A Portfolio of Canadian Work*, by Joel Russ and Lou Lynn, Doubleday, illustrated, 192 pages, \$50.00 cloth (ISBN 0 385 23330 9).

*Der Kitzvah*, edited by Sarah Silberstein Swartz, Doubleday, illustrated, \$60.00 cloth (ISBN 0 385 19826 4).

"VISIT ANDY'S DUMMIES!" proclaim hand-lettered signs along the highway to New Brunswick's Cape Tormentine, ferry terminal to Anne-of-Green-Gables-land. Obey the sign, and you'll find that Andy MacDonald, a transplanted Cape Bretoner, has strewn a wooden boat in his yard with almost life-size dummies in an arresting blend of environmental, naïve, and commercial art.

Commercial, because MacDonald's display has more than artistic motives:

he also sells copies of his autobiography to tourists disarmed by his cheery Maritimes monologue. And it raises a problem of definition: is Andy a "folk artist"? Not according to Bird and Kobayashi, who attempt a definition in the introduction to their compendium. They offer the term "yard artist" for cultural workers of Andy's ilk, but don't include him in their listings. Their chosen folk artists either work within their "ethnic-traditional nexus" or are "individual creative...unschooled artists."

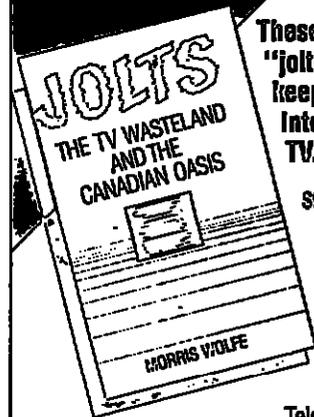
Folk art can be recognized in an instant: a fanciful wood-chopper sent into motion by the wind, gaily painted Javex bottles spinning on sticks, houses with naïve murals. But drawing the dividing line between folk, amateur, and professional art is difficult, particularly now that some professional artists deliberately avoid "professional" technique in their work. Although William Kurelek was a self-taught artist whose art shows some "naïve" techniques, he is not listed in the compendium, but Yosef Dreenters — a much-exhibited sculptor and painter who was a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Art — is.

However, such quibbles don't negate the accomplishment of producing the first encyclopedic guide to Canadian folk artists. Since folk artists labour in obscurity, and exhibitions of their work (such as the excellent touring show *From the Heart*) are a recent phenomenon, the scholarly literature on folk art is scanty. As collectors, authors (*Folk Treasures of Historic Ontario; A Splendid Harvest*), and organizers of exhibitions, Bird and Kobayashi know their field. The book has some amusing anecdotes (one carver's first project was harnesses for a flock of pigeons meant to carry him aloft; he landed in the manure pile) and a generally sympathetic approach to the work. The choice to use a relatively small number of only black-and-white illustrations can be defended since the book is modestly priced for a useful reference work.

The story of how Canadian work in stained glass has risen from a craft to a legitimate art, sharing elements with sculpture and painting, is part of what makes *Contemporary Stained Glass* interesting. An international post-war revival of stained-glass art has borne fruit in Canada as well, and the samples of work from the 17 artists included show influences ranging from Mondrian and Miro to constructivism and abstract expressionism.

The other selling point of this book is the beauty of the work and the reproductions. Since stained glass can contain such a wide range of colours and

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relative brightness, it is notoriously hard to reproduce. Many of the photos are the work of the stained-glass artists themselves, rather than professional photographers, and the printing of the book shows the same loving care. The variety and imagination of the designs shown here should compensate for the relatively low profile of the art in Canada. Its fragility and the fact that most commissions are intended as windows mean that few exhibitions tour the country.

The introduction offers a brief history of stained-glass art, and is followed by sections on each artist's work, including an interview and critical appreciation. Oddly, given the quality of the colour photography, Joel Russ's black-and-white photos of the artists often lack sharpness and are poorly lit. This is the only real flaw in an otherwise sumptuously produced book.

The fondness of Christians for images of saints and saviours provided the original stimulus for stained-glass work. Judaism, by contrast, is more concerned with the continuity of community, observance, and written word. One of its major rituals is celebrated in *Bar Mitzvah*, a book that is at once a moving tribute to tradition and a clever marketing ploy.

Bar Mitzvah literally means "son of the commandments." The marking of a Jewish male's 13th birthday, it initiates him into his responsibilities as part of a family, a community, and a heritage. The editor, the Toronto writer Sarah Silberstein Swartz, combines an anthology of stories (Ted Allan, Arthur Miller, Sholom Aleichem), history, and poetry (A.M. Klein) with excellent art and photography relating to this rite of passage. The shadow of the Holocaust weighs on the book (as it must on any Jewish history), but to Swartz's credit, she has not included only solemn and uplifting work; among the contents are one-liners and Mordecai Richler's hilarious screenplay for a Bar Mitzvah film from *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*.

Several pages are included for the Bar Mitzvah boy to fill in himself. Here is the marketing touch: Bar Mitzvahs are traditionally times for expensive recording of the ceremony, so what better gift than a \$60 book in which the lucky lad can inscribe his personal facts, genealogy, and guest list?

In orthodox Judaism men are usually the celebrants and women (at least in the synagogue) are the supporting players, but those on the alert for evidence of sexism will be glad to hear that the editor's next project is a similar book on the female coming-of-age ceremony, the Bat Mitzvah. □

## REVIEW

# Murder, she wrote

By Jack Batten

*Not Above the Law*, by Heather Bird, Key Porter, 240 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 919493 55 6).

*A Canadian Tragedy*, by Maggie Siggins, Macmillan, 512 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9695 2).

IT'S UNFAIR TO compare these two books about the Colin Thatcher murder case. Unfair, that is, to Heather Bird. Her book, a paperback quickie, was written to catch the early market. Given the circumstances, it's not bad, a swift, readable account that manages to touch on all the pertinent details and to throw in one or two intriguing new facts. But her book is the *hors d'oeuvre*. Maggie Siggins's is the whole, lavish, succulent, six-course feast.

Siggins, for those to whom her name may be new, is an intelligent and dogged investigative reporter from Toronto who happened to be living, working, and teaching in Saskatchewan when the Thatcher drama was being played out. During Thatcher's trial for the murder of his ex-wife, Siggins reported regularly to CBC-Radio's *As It Happens* on each day's events, and in every broadcast she gave us insights and juicy tidbits that other reporters seemed to miss or pass up. Now she's collected everything she learned about the case and its background in one very fat book, and — talk about juicy — this book is all juice.

The research that's gone into *A Canadian Tragedy* is staggering. Siggins did not, of course, interview the two principals in the case. One of the two, JoAnn Thatcher Wilson, was dead, beaten and shot in the garage of her home in Regina on the evening of Jan. 21, 1983; the other, Colin Thatcher, was in jail and keeping his mouth shut. But Siggins talked to almost everyone else who touched on the horrible crime. The judges, the lawyers, the police officers, the witnesses, Wilson's parents and second husband, her friends and Thatcher's political colleagues — Siggins spent hours and days and weeks with all of them.

She must have been an extraordinarily persuasive questioner because she drew out of these people information and admissions that are frank enough to take your breath away. Indeed, many members of the Saskatchewan bench provided Siggins with revelations of the

court processes that tell us more about the Canadian judiciary than we — and probably they — had any reason to expect.

Emerging from all of this research, in addition to a totally compelling book, are a couple of conclusions that seem indisputable. The first is that Colin Thatcher, scion of a wealthy family, successful rancher, and a cabinet minister in Saskatchewan's Conservative government of 1982, must be, by instinct and personality, a monster. The second is that many people in high places in Saskatchewan had a chance to blow the whistle on Thatcher before he took the ultimate step that ended in his former wife's murder.

As for Thatcher, Siggins lets us know that it wasn't entirely his fault that he became such an unrelenting bully. He was an only child, and he could never please his father, the one-time Liberal premier of Saskatchewan, Ross Thatcher. The old boy wasn't exactly a sweetheart himself, and his goading domination of Colin turned the child into a man who, as Siggins documents the case, was a thief, a womanizer, and a liar, irrational, violent, and cruel.

"What you have to understand about Colin Thatcher," Siggins quotes from Serge Kujawa, the crown attorney who won a conviction at Thatcher's trial, "is that he isn't crazy. He's evil."

Plenty of important Saskatchewan citizens in effect conspired to allow this "evil" man to pursue a course of action that ended with JoAnn Wilson's bloody death. Thatcher was determined that his former wife would not get custody of their three children nor collect on the large cash settlement she was entitled to. All of the courts ruled substantially in the ex-Mrs. Thatcher's favour. Thatcher defied the rulings. And few people stood up to him — not the politicians, the attorney-general's office, the newspapers. All appear to have been, as Siggins dopes out the situation, afraid of Thatcher and his perceived power.

Siggins reports one telling conversation between two men who were drawn into the case in different ways. One was Mr. Justice M.A. "Sandy" MacPherson, the judge who heard the Thatcher custody case, and the other was Richard Grosse, Saskatchewan's deputy attorney-general. MacPherson was incensed that Thatcher had gone to calculated and extravagant lengths to avoid his order that JoAnn Wilson have custody of the second Thatcher son. MacPherson persuaded the province's chief justice to request that the then-NDP attorney-general lay criminal contempt charges against Thatcher. The attorney-general's office backed off for reasons that aren't entirely clear but that

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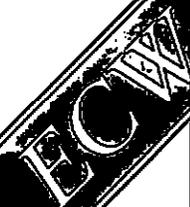
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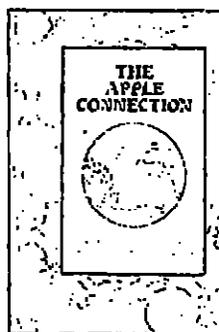
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seem to smack of politics. Not long afterwards, JoAnn Wilson was murdered, and a few days after the murder, MacPherson and Grosse had their conversation at a cocktail party.

"Well, Sandy, what do you think of that?" Grosse asked, referring to the killing.

MacPherson was furious.

"Do you realize that if you had done what the judges asked you to," he said, "this guy would not believe he was above the law — and this woman would still be alive."

It's that kind of inside stuff — and there's much more of it — that makes *A Canadian Tragedy* one of those rare books about a true crime that ranks up there at the very top of the heap with *Fatal Vision*, *By Persons Unknown*, *Serpentine* and a handful of others. It's entirely, irresistibly engrossing. □

## REVIEW

### Foil to the Chief

By Richard Clippingdale

So Very Near: The Political Memoirs of the Honourable Donald M. Fleming, McClelland & Stewart, 2 volumes, 585 pages (ISBN 0 7710 3155 6) and 768 pages (ISBN 0 7710 3157 2), \$50.00 set.

DONALD FLEMING more than just reviews his political career in these massive volumes; he practically relives it! However, undue length aside, he gives us the best insider's account of the Diefenbaker years and a fascinating self-portrait of the Chief's most able minister.

Fleming rose from modest origins, and with impressive intelligence and exceptional energy began a promising law career in inter-war Toronto. But school board, city council, and then federal politics seduced him increasingly from his profession. He was elected the Progressive Conservative MP from Toronto Eglinton in 1945. The later '40s and early '50s were lean Tory years, but the scrappy little self-confident workaholic quickly won a front-bench spot.

Under leaders Bracken, Drew, and Diefenbaker, Fleming was one of the chief tormentors of the governing Liberals, especially C.D. Howe. In a heavily Anglo caucus he was ahead of his time with effective mastery of French and a tolerant sensitivity to Quebec concerns. But he could not find a viable national constituency in his party for his leadership campaigns of 1948 and 1956,

and had to be content with the finance portfolio in Diefenbaker's new administration in 1957.

Fleming was a key participant in all the major achievements and crises of Diefenbaker's ill-fated regime, and provides voluminous coverage of them: the Avro Arrow cancellation, the Anglo-Canadian confrontation over the Common Market, the Coyne Affair, the Conversion Loans, and economic and military relations with the U.S. Fleming is never modest about his own role, but credibly reinforces his reputation as the most solid foundation stone in what came to be the crumbling edifice of the Diefenbaker government.

In particular, it is good to have on record his careful and reasonable account, from that regime's point of view, of its conflict with James Coyne, the governor of the Bank of Canada. Fleming's position on Coyne's extraordinary behaviour is truly "unrevised and unrepentant." It is also massively convincing on the merits of the government's basic position about where final authority in Canadian monetary policy must lie. The Diefenbaker ministry's tactical mishandling of Coyne's removal from office ought not to obscure that fact.

It is Fleming's detailed depiction of Dief's demise that is the chief interest of these memoirs. Very early he was appalled by the prime minister's casualness in policy planning, especially on the financial side. He asserts, with possible applicability to today's Tories, that the 1958 landslide sadly turned Diefenbaker into a hoarder of impossibly broad popularity rather than a decisive governing leader seeking the public's long-term respect. Unemployment seems to have "terrified" rather than challenged him. A sensible Fleming university-grants agreement with Premier Paul Sauvé to Quebec is said to have fallen victim to the Chief's petty jealousy. Throughout, Fleming records, Dief's promises "came to rest on my plate," and he was "a difficult man to work with because he was so temperamental. At times he could be charming, at times infuriating. I endeavoured for the sake of the collective performance of cabinet to supply the stability that unfortunately was lacking in him."

Diefenbaker's drift eventually doomed his government and finished Fleming's career. After the razor-thin minority of 1962, Diefenbaker's failure to carry through on nuclear arming of the Bomarc anti-aircraft missile split the cabinet and brought about parliamentary defeat. Fleming laments "what had almost taken on the quality of numb torpor" in Diefenbaker, but he himself "followed John" at the time without

decisive confrontation on the defence issue until it was too late to avoid political disaster. It was in character that he was astonished when his naïve leadership bid of 1967 foundered on Diefenbaker's own last-minute candidacy.

The tragedy of Donald Fleming's career was that while he had the perceptiveness to be a memorable critic of his leader for the history books he was no match for him politically. Dief's "vision" failed, but Fleming and other party rivals were unable to replace it and him with a program and leadership that could win significant public support. Diefenbaker truly made the Progressive Conservatives a popular national party in his day — and he then un-made that achievement. All of the administrative ability and personal integrity of other party figures and ministers such as Donald Fleming did not count much in that situation. □

## REVIEW

### Arms and the man

By Desmond Morton

Sir Arthur Currie: Military Genius, by Daniel G. Dancocks, Methuen, illustrated, 294 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 456 99560 6).

ON THE WHOLE, Canadian generals have not staked much claim to military genius. The erratic and volatile Guy Simonds might count in their number; so might Andy McNaughton, had his age, ego, and inexperience not led to his removal in 1943. Only the enormous, plum-shaped, ex-real estate dealer from Victoria had an unquestioned claim to be first among Canada's wartime commanders.

Arthur Currie was living proof that at least some Canadians were ready for war in 1914. At 39, he had risen from the ranks of the militia, commanded first an artillery and then an infantry regiment, and passed all the courses he could muster. From the chaotic battle of Second Ypres to the final stages of the Hundred Days in 1918, Currie showed much the same scarce qualities: open-minded acceptance of information, a voracious appetite for detail, a sound judgement, and an unshakable sense of purpose once he had made up his mind.

Like the Canadians he eventually commanded, Currie combined natural talents with the time to learn a complex technical business. Beginning as a brigadier at Ypres, he had 20 months to show

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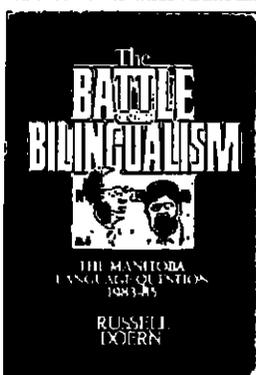
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his ability at the head of the First Canadian Division before his elevation in June, 1917, to command all four divisions of the Canadian Corps. He had been given a military organization that his predecessor, Sir Julian Byng, had shaped, trained, and given the confidence of victory at Vimy Ridge in April. It was Byng who demonstrated to the Canadians — and to many British generals bright enough to pay heed — that painstaking planning and rehearsal plus careful use of artillery and other supporting arms could capture German trenches, albeit at a heavy cost. That might fall short of genius, but it was a big advance on woolly metaphysical claims for “fighting spirit” and “the fight of the bayonet.”

Currie's own contribution was a shrewdness in picking objectives for his corps and a tough-minded willingness to stand up to British superiors. Being “degummed” for challenging the wisdom of Sir Douglas Haig or any of the uninspiring generals who commanded the five British armies was not a fate the Canadian Corps commander had to fear.

These points and many others have been made before, notably by G.W.L. Nicholson in 1962, by John Swettenham in 1935 and, of course, by Currie's official biographer, Hugh Urquhart, in 1950. Perhaps it is understandable that Daniel Dancocks, a young Calgary author, wants to add his homage to a great Canadian. Beyond some interviews that add a golden glow to his faultless hero and a very detailed account of Currie's Port Hope libel suit in 1928, Dancocks's research appears to have broken little new ground and to have trampled over aspects of Currie that make him interesting as well as admirable.

Was Currie popular with his troops? Without opinion polls, no definite answer is possible. Recollections, gathered 60 years later, are no substitute for a stream of letters, diaries, and memoirs that suggest that he was a cold, remote, unloved figure to most of his men. W.D.B. Kerr recalled Currie as a “regular Paul Pry” who insisted on hunting through a soldier's haversack for a towel. Charles Vining, interviewing his former general in 1928, confessed the prejudices he and fellow Legion members had to set aside. Grandiloquent “Orders of the Day” may impress Dancocks and relieved Currie's own frustrations but they annoyed battle-hardened Canadians.

Even geniuses are not always right. Currie's postwar management of the Canadian Corps led to at least one rout (at Nivelles in Belgium). His re-jigging of the demobilization plan (at one stage, to make possible a grand

review on the Plains of Abraham) contributed to other mutinies in England. All this is more visible in retrospect than it was at the time, but it is part of the truth.

So was Currie's theft of \$10,883 — no trivial sum — in 1914. The facts are that he took a government cheque, destined for a Scottish clothing company, and paid it into his personal account. Beyond a brief attempt to get Victoria friends to cover the amount, Currie seems to have forgotten the “debt” until June, 1917. How he extricated himself from this crisis (as well as its cover-up by politicians and historians) was fully revealed in 1979. To call the affair, as Dancocks does, “a regrettable misuse of regimental funds,” is to prolong the cover long after it has been blown. The documents are complex and voluminous but they are public.

Sir Arthur Currie remains a remarkable and impressive Canadian. He had failings and he made mistakes. There used to be a Victorian tradition in biography that all weaknesses be concealed lest tender minds be disturbed. Dancocks has written a biography in this tradition. Those who want a more adult history of Currie will have to be patient. □

## REVIEW

### By persons unknown

By Ann Luksits

**Cardiac Arrest: A True Account of Stolen Lives**, by Sarah Spinks, Macmillan, 256 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 19546 X).

THIS IS THE second book by a CBC reporter about the baby deaths at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children. Ted Bissland, a colleague of Sarah Spinks, published *Death Shift* (Methuen) after sitting through every day of the Grange inquiry last year. Whether Spinks was so deeply immersed in the story is not clear. The publisher emphasizes her background as a student Registered Nursing Assistant (RNA) at the hospital more than her reporting career.

Not surprisingly, Spinks and Bissland produced similar books. Like Bissland, Spinks retells the story of the 36 suspicious baby deaths and the events that followed the arrest on March 25, 1981, of nurse Susan Nelles. Spinks even uses a writing style similar to Bissland's, presenting most of the material as if it were a feature story.

Spinks also focuses most of her attention on the lengthy Grange inquiry. But where Bissland ended his book with the close of the inquiry (*Death Shift* was published before Justice Samuel Grange released his final report), Spinks includes a discussion of the report. She also mentions more recent events, such as the appointment of lawyer Ian Scott, who represented the hospital during the inquiry, as attorney-general of Ontario. Scott recently offered Nelles \$190,000 compensation and overturned a key Grange recommendation by freeing her to seek restitution through a civil suit.

Perhaps the most troubling similarity between *Cardiac Arrest* and *Death Shift* is that both books leave the impression that nurse Phyllis Trayner might have played a part in the deaths. Fearing a libel suit, Bissland only hinted at what he thought; Spinks is much more blunt. “Marking score cards on who looked more guilty,” Spinks notes after the Grange inquiry was over, “Phyllis Trayner came out the loser.”

The same comment could be made about Spinks's book. Despite Trayner's excellent performance on the witness stand (she “certainly did not sound like a murderer trying to cover up her tracks”), and assurances that “not a shred of direct evidence linked Trayner to the crime of murder,” Spinks is unable to counter the impression she creates that Trayner is a strange, if not downright suspicious, character. But the body of “evidence” she stacks against Trayner makes Spinks seem a bit careless.

To a large extent, Trayner is responsible for raising suspicions. She was on duty for all 36 deaths. When she was absent from the hospital, the deaths stopped; when she returned, they resumed. Whether Trayner was disturbed by this knowledge is difficult to judge. When probed for an explanation, she calmly told the inquiry: “I worked on the floor. I was there full time and I was there when the deaths occurred.”

Trayner was remarkably controlled on the witness stand, “displaying a good memory and an eye for detail.” Yet Spinks depicts Trayner as a highly emotional and often irrational woman who was “obsessed” by the deaths. Other nurses thought Trayner's team was “jinxed,” Spinks says, and were relieved when she resigned.

Spinks also raises suspicions that Trayner might have been responsible for the bizarre events that occurred after Nelles's arrest. To satisfy her need for attention, Spinks suggests, Trayner placed heart pills in food that she and another nurse were about to eat. Trayner is also suspected of marking hospital lockers with a lipstick “X,” of

making threatening calls to nurses and, on one occasion, to her own bank manager. Trayner's many-sided personality prompted one lawyer at the inquiry to ask "the real Phyllis Trayner please [to] stand up." Still, Spinks seems to go further than necessary in building a case against Trayner.

Spinks complains throughout the book about the sexist manner in which the nurses were treated. "There was a widespread feeling that the hearing had unfairly picked on women," she says. But Spinks is capable of being sexist, too. She points out more than once that Trayner "wasn't as pretty as Nelles." (To her credit, Spinks refers to Nelles as the "petite, blonde nurse" only a few times.)

It seems a bit disingenuous on the part of Spinks to pity Trayner's husband, but she does. "Nobody spoke to him. Unlike Jim Pine's fiancée [Nelles], who evoked a stream of compliments from the witnesses, Michael Trayner's wife was called bossy, over-emotional and obsessive. That he was there at all was probably a credit to the man."

If Spinks seems unduly harsh on Trayner, she presents a more balanced account of the botched police investigation. She depicts the police as obstinate in their refusal to consider that they had arrested the wrong person despite overwhelming evidence to suggest they had. Susan Nelles will find much in the book to bolster her decision to sue former attorney-general Roy McMurtry.

*Cardiac Arrest* is billed as the "story which has never before appeared in print." In one form or another, however, most of it has been published before. Spinks doesn't produce any startling new insights, but she does fill in some gaps. Despite a prose style that is sometimes a bit coarse (at one point she describes toxicologist George Cimbura as "a man pretending to be oblivious to the fact that he'd just farted in a crowd"), Spinks describes some moving scenes.

Her account of what happened to Jackie and Brad Cook after learning



that their son Justin had died is unforgettable. The Cooks left the hospital and found that someone had taken a crowbar to their car. Driving home later, they were stopped for speeding. As the officer wrote out a ticket, he noticed

everyone in the car was crying. He asked why and Brad Cook replied, "I just lost my son." The officer cancelled the ticket, "mumbling apologetically that he wasn't a mind reader."

The book concludes in much the same way as the Grange inquiry, with the unsettling feeling that we will never know who murdered the infants. Spinks notes that "Phyllis Trayner's reputation was the one most seriously damaged by the inquiry's findings." Trayner's reputation isn't helped by Spinks's book either. □

## REVIEW

### The art of the state

By Bruce Whitman

Towards a Canadian Literature: Essays, Editorials and Manifestos, edited by Douglas M. Daymond and Leslie G. Monkman, Tecumseh Press, 2 volumes, \$24.95 paper (ISBN 0 919662 02 1).

ON THE EVIDENCE of the essays and editorials collected in the first volume of Daymond and Monkman's *omnium gatherum*, writers in Canada spent much of the first 150 years of print in the country riding two hobby-horses. The first — and it is a bugbear that continues to haunt us to some degree — was the basic question as to whether there was, in fact, a distinctive Canadian literature, and if not, why not. The answer was variously yes or no, depending on whether the writer posing the question was fulfilling the role of booster or blaster.

As for the corollary to the question — how one was to explain Canada's literary immaturity — the answers were diverse: there was too much work to do pulling down trees and pushing up buildings to leave any time for the writing and reading of books, there were too few persons of wealth and leisure, the British to the East and the Americans to the South overpowered native talent, Canadians were basically conservative and philistine, etc.

The second fixation, inherited from 18th-century English criticism but ultimately deriving from Horace, was a view of literature as pleasure and instruction. From the hope expressed by Brown and Gilmore in 1764 that *The Quebec Gazette* should publish work "as may at once please the Fancy and instruct the Judgement," to Charles G.D. Roberts's admitted aim 120 years later "to furnish instruction and wholesome

entertainment" in *The Week*, even to P.K. Page's chiding Ralph Gustafson in 1942 for his editorial emphasis on "pleasure" in the *Anthology of Canadian Poetry* (at the expense of work that dealt seriously with social problems), the current runs deep and becomes tiresome.

One arrives with some relief at the lively iconoclasm of Leo Kennedy, whose image of Canadian literature as "a lusty but quite inarticulate brat constrained in a too-tight swaddling . . . sired by Decorum out of Clap-trap," if too well-known, nevertheless clears away a good deal of stuffy air. (Kennedy's pieces are rife with bon mots. In a 1936 essay, for example, he writes: "For generations Canadian poetry was the off-hour killcare of Empire Loyalist persons, who pursued their halt iambs and cornered their unresisting rhymes with all the zest of professional soul sleuths" and "Too many of our poets regard reality as a deplorable deviation from the philosophy of Peter Pan and Wendy.")

In spite of the repetitiveness of these *idées fixes* in volume one of *Towards a Canadian Literature*, the pieces selected by Daymond and Monkman do much to debunk the common assumption that 19th-century Canadian literature and writing about literature is dull and best forgotten. The sections from Charles Mair's "The New Canada" and W.D. Lighthall's introduction to *Songs of the Great Dominion* embarrass by their superficial jingoism. (The latter concludes with this invitation into the anthology: "And now, the canoes are packed, our *voyageurs* are waiting for us, the paddles are ready, let us start!") But presumably they are representative of an endless zoo of such specimens that the editors have chosen not to reprint, and I suppose it does no harm to acknowledge that such gushing existed and must be dealt with.

Overall, the selections from McGee, Duncan, Campbell, and Lampman are spritely and acute, and although the choices are not definitive ("At the Mermaid Inn," for example, seems inadequately represented) the territory is well covered. The only major issue not addressed is the copyright question, which had enormous implications for the development of Canadian literature and publishing throughout the whole of the 19th century.

The first volume ends at the Second World War, and volume two continues the selection up to 1983. The modern period (1914-1960) is represented by largely unsurprising choices from the files of such magazines as *Canadian Forum*, the *McGill Fortnightly Review*, *Contemporary Verse*, and *Northern Review*, as well as from such key books

as Smith's *Book of Canadian Poetry*, John Sutherland's *Other Canadians*, and so on. Perhaps the only major book ignored is W.E. Collin's *The White Savannahs* (1936), and with so much to choose from the editors have wisely decided not to include bits of the more forgettable anthologies compiled by Campbell, Garvin, Pierce, and the like.

On the basis of their choices, Daymond and Monkman seem to view the post-modern period as being dominated by the nationalist debate, and such essentially non-Canadian developments as feminist and semiotic criticism are therefore ignored. Much of the material gathered in volume two is readily available in print in other collections, but certainly no other book covers the ground so generously.

One might justifiably complain of a lack of apparatus in this compilation. The editors have supplied brief headnotes that provide a context for the selections, but even a modest amount of footnoting would have gone a long way toward elucidating some of the more obscure references in the articles. When, for example, Leo Kennedy expresses dissatisfaction with the present state of Canadian literature and notes that the editors of *The Canadian Mercury* "gather behind our colophon, which at least symbolizes vigour and a modicum of intellectual health," it would be helpful for most readers to be reminded that the magazine's insignia was a picture of Mercury with his thumb to his nose. The bibliographical references could have been fuller, and the lack of an index seems to me a serious oversight.

An article by Sara Jeannette Duncan published in *The Week* in 1886 begins baldly: "We are still an eminently un-literary people." (She says in the same piece that "The province of Ontario is one great camp of the Philistines.") The work that Daymond and Monkman have chosen to represent the 19th century proves that even at that time, she was not entirely right. Although Canadian writers produced no masterpieces before the First World War, there nevertheless existed accomplished writers who could think lucidly and write engagingly about literature generally and the literary scene in Canada in particular. It took more than a century and a half of print culture in Canada to prepare the way for the genuine literary culture that is reflected in the second volume of *Towards a Canadian Literature*. No one would argue that the "writers about" made possible the "writers of" such as Sinclair Ross or E.J. Pratt. But such articles as are gathered in these volumes go a long way toward exposing the archaeological context out of which the best Canadian work came to be published. □

## REVIEW

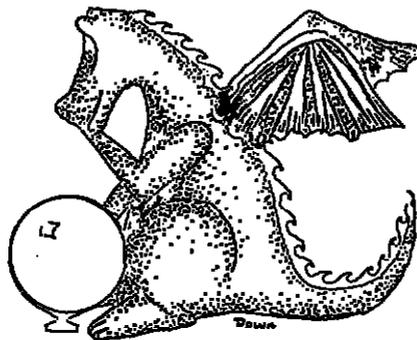
# Themes and variations

By Rupert Schieder

A *Maggot*, by John Fowles, Collins, 455 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 00 223042 9).

SINCE JOHN FOWLES'S first book appeared 23 years ago, his fame has mounted continuously. It is by his fiction (although it makes up less than a third of published works) that he has carried all before him. *The Collector* (1963) and *The Magus* (1965) won him a popular audience. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) established his reputation on a different level, that of a serious contender in the field of contemporary experimental fiction. The secure position thus established has left Fowles free to pursue his whims and quirks. It has often seemed as if he has set out to see just how much the reading public would swallow. In 1964, he said, "I do not intend to walk into the cage called 'novelist.'"

It has always been obvious that Fowles was not interested in the novel of realistic characters and plots set solidly in a specific time and place. Although he has constantly used the term "novel," he would surely be more comfortable with the more inclusive term "fiction"; for his narrative works have been marked by characteristics of other forms



of prose fiction set out by Northrop Frye: the romance, the anatomy, and the confession.

In *The Ebony Tower* (1974) he linked five disparate puzzles or quests, one significantly entitled "The Enigma," and spoke of his "variations" on certain themes and narrative procedures, pointing out the importance for him of the Celtic romance. *Daniel Martin* (1977), written "quite deliberately . . . with all

its awkwardness and length" — 629 pages — "as a defence against . . . the recipe novel, the product novel," presents Fowles at his most garrulous and self-indulgent. In *Mantissa* (1982) the writer probed the loyalty of his most avid readers with his definition of the title: "An addition of comparatively small importance." Here the characteristics of the anatomy and the confession overwhelm those of the novel.

By this time Fowles had escaped from the "cage" of the novel to pursue his whims and quirks in 12 books of assorted genres. These included *The Aristos* (1964), "a self-portrait in ideas"; the *Poems* (1973), "an autobiographical footnote," which he found "an enormous relief from the constant play-acting of fiction"; and the conjectures of *The Enigma of Stonehenge* (1980).

Fowles speaks of his latest, his seventh fiction, *A Maggot*, as a "novel." (Unlike *Mantissa*, it is firmly anchored in place and time.) It begins in Fowles's own west country of England, on April 30, 1736, moves to Manchester in October, and jumps to Feb. 28, 1737, for the birth to Rebecca Lee, a cunning whore turned irrepressible prophet, of Ann Lee, the founder of the Shakers. Fowles encases the central incidents, the disappearance of a young lord and the death of his deaf-mute servant, in the elaborated machinery of a legal investigation by Ayscough, a skeptical, prurient London barrister. The verisimilitude of the question-and-answer transcriptions of the "examination and deposition" of eight key witnesses is buttressed by additional documents: letters, newspaper articles, and monthly quotations from the "Historical Chronicle" for 1736 in the *Gentleman's Magazine*.

Having built up this elaborate realistic apparatus, Fowles, in the prologue, says that although his book "may seem like a historical novel . . . it is not." This denial he repeats in the epilogue, although he declares his admiration for Defoe, whose approach he has obviously been adopting, in part. Fowles provides the reader with his own label, "a maggot," supplying two obsolete meanings of that word: a "whim or quirk" and a dance-tune or air. The latter, like "Variations," the original title of *The Ebony Tower*, and like this work, results from an "obsession with a theme."

The theme can be stated in overlapping antitheses: the relation, in Ayscough's investigation, between truth and lies; in a more inclusive sense, between truth and illusion; between different kinds of truth, the rational and the instinctive; and in the construction of Fowles's work, between fact and fiction,

between the elements of the novel and the romance. For as the investigation proceeds, what the reader receives is a set of conflicting accounts of the same incidents, centring on those that took place at Stonehenge and in a cave in the west country. Grounded in the factual, the narrative progresses to the fantastic, from the novel elements to those of the romance. Three-quarters through the book, the events move into that special area of the romance, science fiction.

Near the end, Fowles abandons his elaborate apparatus. All the voices that have sounded throughout the narrative are silenced except two, that of the 18th-century barrister and that of the 20th-century narrator. The characteristics of the anatomy and some of those of the confession, which have always been

lurking in the side-lines, now move to centre stage, shouldering aside the novel and the romance.

As these two voices speculate, the reader is left, like Ayscough, not with Rebecca's "lies," nor yet with "the substantial truth," but with "the most probable truth," with an "enigma" — Fowles's recurrent word. Then the 20th-century voice of the narrator, not a persona, but John Fowles, speaks directly to the 20th-century reader in the last pages and the epilogue.

Analysing the irreconcilable conflict between Ayscough and Rebecca, basing his analysis on a theory of the influence of the domination of either the left or the right lobe of the human brain, Fowles confesses his admiration for both Ayscough, the rational thinker, and

Rebecca, the instinctive. It is his obsession with the latter that led him to his "affection and sympathy for the Shakers," one of his reasons for writing this work.

*A Maggot* is a mosaic constructed of pieces of different kinds of fiction. The resulting pattern is flawed, however, for the contrasting factors overwhelm the complementary, producing a final imbalance. *A Maggot* is Fowles's most complex work to date. His works that I admire most are some of the straightforward narratives in *The Ebony Tower* and *The Collector*; those that I admire least are the over-complicated *Mantissa* and *The Magus*. In between stands *Daniel Martin*. This new work I rate higher than those last three, just below *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. □

## FIRST NOVELS

### Snob appeals

Two new novels among a trio about Canadian expatriates see exile as an opportunity to display sneering cultural superiority

By Douglas Glover

**T**HE ARTIST BEGAN as ANONYMOUS, a mouthpiece of a god — the cave painters at Uascaux, the countless tellers and singers before Homer, the artisans of Chartres. Romanticism made the artist a hero (Byronic, clubfoot and all). Freud discovered that he was a neurotic. Television made him a celebrity. Now, like Jesus Christ, he is just another metaphor for man, life, spirit, struggle, meaning.

Each of these three first novels deals, in its way, with art (respectively, music, poetry, and film), artists or quasi-artists (a cellist, a poet, a film journalist), and the artistic milieu — which is to say, implicitly, that they are about the sensitive seeker in search of his/her soul in the modern world. Interestingly enough, all three are also about expatriates — a literary echo of the old saw about making it in Canada by making it in England or the United States, which in turn may be a redaction of the exilic hero myths (in the beginning we all have to suffer, wander, and find our homes again).

Ann Ireland's *A Certain Mr. Takahashi* (McClelland & Stewart, 224 pages, \$19.95 cloth), winner of the Seal first novel award, is the most appealing and accessible of the three. It is the comic, bittersweet story of an adolescent crush that turns into a destructive sexual obsession.

When 35-year-old concert pianist

Yoshi Takahashi moves into the house across the street, 12-year-old Jean Hopper (the cello-playing heroine) and her sister Colette, 13, are smitten. For the next four years, they court him with all the innocent yet knowing guile of which little girls are capable. They turn their own home upside down in adopting their version of Japanese culture, they experiment with Japanese boy-friends courtesy of the University of Toronto's international student centre. Their passion culminates at the end of Yoshi's sojourn in Toronto when they accompany him to a concert in Montreal. That night the three of them have sex — a strange, uncomfortable scene that tests the reader's credulity.

We shift then to the present. Jean is 22, living in New York, trying to advance her career as a cellist, teaching part-time a college extension course for old people. Her crisis of faith comes when she accidentally discovers Yoshi and Colette together on a club dance-floor. Her teenage fantasy (the three of them together) is shattered — her sister has betrayed her by carrying on a secret affair with the lover they had once shared — and she stops playing the cello. By various plot manoeuvres, all the characters are brought together for the finale in Victoria. Jean suffers, hates, seeks revenge; Colette confesses; the two women meet Yoshi one last time, seeing him now as no longer dash-

ing or even sinister, but shallow and trapped inside the prison of his own celebrity.

Plot summary does little justice to this book. A certain lightness of tone and the author's obvious affection for her characters (which she effectively transfers to the reader) save it from sinking into turgid melodrama. The scenes dealing with the girls as teenagers are especially charming. Ireland's style is terse and lyrical:

A tall, slim shape is pressed flat against the shoreline, the posture so familiar Jean could sketch its silhouette without looking. She waits until she feels the sureness of the sand beneath her feet and nearly speaks. But a flurry of words screams through her head like a flock of birds, knocking her off balance. She strains at the darkness hoping to be masked a while longer.

The interweaving of the Japanese cultural themes is both cute and exotic, yet expansive — for a Japanese legend about two brothers, one killing the other, is used as the culminating redemptive myth-image that heals the rift between Jean and her sister, her other self.

Robert Walshe's *Wales' Work* (Stoddart, 288 pages, \$19.95 cloth), goes for the brain, not the heart. A satirical novel of great ambition and technical virtuosity, stylistically it falls in the Joyce-Borges-Nabokov camp (word games,

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mystification, and the Nabokovian false document narrative: each chapter is an "envelope" containing notes toward a future biography of the eponymous Wales) while aspiring to be an anatomy of sorts (as in Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*) on the impossibility of being a poet in the modern world.

Saskatchewan-born Robert Racine, expatriate, ex-poet, has become an editor at the London publishing house of Wales and Wales. Wallace Wales, the current chairman, appears suddenly to decide to destroy his reputable old firm by bringing in American partners and hiring a "trilogy" of commercial managers. Then he dies, or appears to die. Racine, as Wales's literary executor, is assigned to supply information for a biographer. He begins to receive strange messages (they read like crossword puzzle clues) from the elusive Wales, sending him on various missions and wild-goose chases. Meanwhile, Racine loses his exalted editorial post, and finds himself relegated to the Wales and Wales coal cellar, equipped with candles, scissors, and paste, expunging all the Greek-derived words from the firm's edition of the Bible. Eventually, Racine suffers a nervous breakdown, then retires to France where he begins to make a living by painting Turner seascapes for the tourists.

Walshe's style is lapidary and epigrammatic; he has witty and startling things to say on topics ranging from Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* to horticulture. Sometimes he's hilarious, as in his riff on Greek derivations in the Bible (which he translates *The Bedside Screw*); sometimes he's wise ("... humanity has always been more than the sum of its warriors' bones"). Playing on the theme of purifying English of abstractions, Americanisms, and Greekisms, he enforces some surprising and poetic images. The world turns, here, on its "axle" not its axis; a chimera becomes "lion's head, goat's body, serpent's tail" (footnoted, of course).

In contrast, Ron Base's *Matinee Idol* (Doubleday, 224 pages, \$18.95 cloth) is a sloppily assembled detective melodrama, written in televisionese, with a curiously insulting anti-Canadian, anti-Toronto, slant and snide *roman à clef* tendencies. The artist theme is repeated here but in its most debased form, the cult of celebrity, the film-maker seeking fame and big bucks instead of his soul or his art.

Tom Coward, a film journalist (who never touches his typewriter except to carry it through airports) with a New York news syndicate, discovers that his former girl-friend (a Canadian woman with artificially inflated breasts) is dating a man he suspects of having com-

mitted an unsolved murder. Since the girl-friend won't heed his warning, Tom is forced to solve the murder. The setting for his investigation is the seedy underbelly of Toronto's (Hollywood North) film community where, wouldn't you know it, everybody's into drugs and weird sex. Tom traces his gaggle of misfits and movie freaks back 20 years to a University of Toronto film society and, in so doing, trips over more bodies, watches some weird sex, does drugs, catches up with the murderer (surprise ending here), and finally gets to sleep with his girl-friend one last time before they become good friends forever.

The plot of *Matinee Idol* might have worked were it handled with more crispness and verve. Though the kick-off murder is mentioned in the first chapter (the Toronto girl-friend calls Tom in L.A. to tell him she's found a body), Tom doesn't begin a conscious investigation until chapter seven. The fundamental hook of the detective novel is suspense. Base squanders his suspense by having Tom go on about his business as a reporter for five whole chapters. If Tom Coward doesn't feel any urgency about who the killer is, why should the reader?

Worse still, Base freights the atmosphere of his book (usually one of the delights of detective fiction) with a kind of overdone malice that is bound to offend many readers. For example, the second paragraph of the book begins with this amazing non-sequitur: "Willy Conlon was a Canadian boy, Toronto born, and thus was narrow-minded, naïve, nasty when provoked, as well as being 'not badly off,' as he was prone to telling people."

This brings up a telling point of comparison. Base, Ireland, and Walshe are writing about Canadians in diaspora. (Notice how the focus of outward attention shifts from one imperial power to the next — England, United States, Japan — a shift, I assume, which corresponds to the relative ages of the authors.) When it comes to describing their own country, however, both Base and Walshe suffer a failure of aesthetic nerve, exhibiting an embarrassing streak of snobbery.

Base portrays his home city ("a town run by provincial villagers"; "a city lacking in originality or excitement") and its people (including a cruel caricature of a bald, moustached, Elwy Yost-like movie buff) with weary contempt. Walshe, oddly enough for a writer so gifted, falls down the same rabbit hole. When his narrator, Racine, returns to Toronto on a mission for Wales, he lapses into a mocking pseudo-Canadian dialect that reads like a prolonged verbal sneer:

Magnificent. Spectacular. Somehow words aren't adequate. Many people consider Turonna one of the most beautiful cities in the world. And over to the east, Ward's Ferry. The shortest ferryboat ride in the world.

This is hyperbole and cliché masquerading as cultural criticism.

Unlike Base, I hasten to add, Walshe reins himself in; only a few pages of this ill-mar his work. Yet both their books

are damaged, to a greater or lesser extent, by this sense of exclusivity, cultural demagoguery, snobbism. Both authors seem to think they are buying themselves a ticket to a larger cultural arena (and market) when in fact they are merely exhibiting a certain poverty of spirit.

Ireland, on the other hand, treats Toronto, Victoria, Montreal, and New York with equal clear-sightedness and

affection. They are all parts of her literary universe; she doesn't appear to feel the need to disparage one side of her life in order to make herself secure in another. Though her heroine cloaks herself in Japanese culture, then moves to New York, she isn't so much denying her nationality as professing her citizenship in a trans-national world of emotion, art, and myth. Canada as crossroads, not backwoods. □

## INTERVIEW

### Paul St. Pierre

'Landscape alone is not sufficient for going back and back to a place. It's the people that make a country'

By Robert Stacey

**B**ORN IN Nova Scotia in 1923, Paul St. Pierre has been a columnist for the Vancouver *Sun*, script-writer for the CBC-TV series *Cariboo Country*, and from 1968 to 1972 Liberal MP for Coast-Chilcotin — a riding one-third the size of France. He is also the author of three books that have been reissued in paperback by Douglas & McIntyre this year: a novel, *Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse* (1965); a collection of short stories, *Smith and Other Events* (1983); and a collection of *Sun* columns, *Chilcotin Holiday* (1972). His adventure story for 12- to 14-year-olds, *Boss of the Namko Drive* (1955) is to be reissued next year. Described by the *Denver Post* as "an unsung literary giant of the grand populist mold," St. Pierre recently completed a promotional tour that took him as far as San Antonio, Texas, where he received the Western Writers of America's Spur

Paul St. Pierre



Award. He was interviewed in Toronto by Robert Stacey:

**Books in Canada: How did you discover the Cariboo country?**

Paul St. Pierre: I grew up in Nova Scotia during the Depression. My mother, who had been a prairie schoolteacher, had never been to the Cariboo, but knew about it. She used to say, "Oh well, don't worry. No matter how bad things get, we can always go out to the Cariboo, and we can run a ranch there." Purely the stuff of dreams. So the word, the word if nothing else, was in my head when I went out there, which was one of the first things I did when I could afford a car. I found people with habits of mind and speech and styles of living I liked.

**BIC: Obviously you were attracted to the landscape itself.**

St. Pierre: Oh, yes. Some see it as bleak and inhospitable. I don't. But it's the people that make a country. Landscape alone is not sufficient for going back and back to a place. Landscape alone will take you somewhere once.

**BIC: Are you at last beginning to break into the eastern Canadian market?**

St. Pierre: I think so. I don't know anything that is quite so dismaying as to look at the quantity of English-language books coming along. There's about 40,000 new English-language books published in the States this year; 25,000 in England; 5,000-7,000 in Canada. Over 70,000 in all. I'm a person who reads a lot, I think, but I read 150 books a year, maybe 200. I'm falling behind by 69,850 books with every year that passes. So I always say to myself, how in hell is some poor son of a bitch in Toronto, once he's walked into a book store, where he'll have at least 20,000 books in front of him on that day, old

and new — why's he going to pick Paul St. Pierre? How am I going to get him ever to pick the thing up and let it fall open so he reads a page in the first place? I really don't know.

**BIC: There's also the problem of your being categorized as a writer of cowboy stories.**

St. Pierre: That's a perversion of thought that is common to Toronto, and in the States to New York. There are probably very few people as parochial as a New Yorker. He can conceive of himself as metropolitan, but he knows practically nothing about how his own country operates or even what it looks like. To some extent, that's also true of Toronto.

**BIC: There's a great deal in the quality of your humour and tone that makes me think of Leacock.**

St. Pierre: Humour is by far the hardest thing to write. I can't define Leacock's humour — don't even think there's any point trying. I laugh when I read it, and so do most people. What I write I like to think of as "western humour." But western humour is of two types, which are quite opposed. Normally understatement: harsh realism, then an understated reaction that's actually a form of boasting. Or else absurd, Paul-Bunyanesque humour. It seems to vary from understatement to hyperbole.

**BIC: One gets the feeling that the "western humour" you work with really does come out of the mouths of the people. It's the way they talk as much as what they say.**

St. Pierre: I would hope so. No, I don't exaggerate. In fact, there's scarcely anything in there that doesn't come from my notes. If I put in an evening in a ranch-house kitchen, before I go to bed I will probably fill about a page with three-word, four-word, occasionally

full-sentence statements, not necessarily connected. They're the clue to what speech constructions are like, or perhaps to a lengthy anecdote. While I'd forget the anecdote completely if I had no notes, if I've got half-a-dozen key words, I can look at it five years later and the whole anecdote will come back. **BiC:** *Some years ago you recommended that the young short-story writer should write for television. Is that still your opinion?*

**St. Pierre:** I would say that if he wants to make some money out of story-writing that is still the place to go. But I personally get more satisfaction from something in print than I ever had from television or film.

**BiC:** *What was writing for TV like?*

**St. Pierre:** In about 1952 I was poor, counting every goddamn nickel. The CBC offered a \$250 prize for the best 25-minute, 26-second script written for them in Vancouver, and I entered *The Window at Namko*. That, as it developed, was the first of about 25 or 30 half-hour and one-hour scripts that ran on *Cariboo Country*. I went into the business of writing scripts on that country, about those people. I got more than \$250 after a while, and they graduated from three-wall sets and kinescopes to actually taking films out in the country. You do see a great many technical flaws

— the sound will fade in and out, or the light would be wrong — but I think the CBC did an excellent job on the series. The producer was Phil Keatley for the later shows, and we had an ambition that people could switch on their sets and not be entirely sure if they were watching a drama or a documentary. I kept going on that pretty well until I went into politics.

**BiC:** *When did you come to write these scripts in short-story form?*

**St. Pierre:** Scott Young was charged by Ryerson Press with finding 10 books for children. He said, "How'd you like to try one?" I took a script and pitched it at the 12- to 14-year-old audience; it was called *Boss of the Namko Drive*. Not one of my favourites — that group's a hell of a hard age to write for — but I'm not ashamed of it. Exactly half of the stories in *Smith and Other Events* — six of them — had been *Cariboo Country* scripts, and the long one, "How to Run the Country," had been a stage play. The other six are ones that I would have written for *Cariboo Country* had I stayed at it.

**BiC:** *Do you have any new work coming out?*

**St. Pierre:** No. That is, it's so far in the future. I've started another book, but I don't feel pushed about it, and I'm not going to let myself feel pushed about it.

**BiC:** *Well, you don't want to saturate the market.*

**St. Pierre:** Hell, I'd be happy enough to saturate the market. I think you've got to have about 10 books out, including three or four flops, before you're established. □

## LETTERS

### Desperate measures

IN HIS "Desperate Measures" (October) Mark Abley delivers his own verdict on the October, 1970, crisis by saying that in his view the War Measures Act did not destroy the FLQ, nor did it discover James Cross's kidnappers or Pierre Laporte's killers.

He goes on to say "It was responsible for restoring to millions of frightened Canadians a confidence that their government remained in control." But there were probably not nearly the numbers of frightened Canadians Abley supposes. And even if there were, a War Measures Act was no way to deal with such fright. The unjust arrests and detentions outweighed mere palliation of fright, and the invocation of a temporary police state may by now be

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generally considered to have been an anxious over-reaction.

According to Abley's own views, Louis Dudek, John Glassco, Ralph Gustafson, Irving Layton, Hugh MacLennan, and F.R. Scott may be diagnosed as having been wrong, while members of a younger group — Sheila Fischman, Gérald Godin, D.G. Jones, and Ronald Sutherland — were right. But right or wrong the hero of the piece seems to have been Paul Chamberland, who stood against both the government and the FLQ in the name of life and love.

David Lawson  
Westmount, Que.

#### THE OTHER SIDE

RE: M.G. VASSANJI'S letter (November) in reaction to my review of *A Meeting of Streams* (August-September). I do not wish to get involved in a polemic with Professor Vassanji. I gave his book as much attention as I thought it deserved in the limited space available to me for the review of three books.

I do wish to reply to his charge that I "summarily" dismissed Bharati Mukherjee. If my memory serves me correctly — I do not have a copy of the book before me as I write this — Mukherjee is briefly mentioned once, maybe twice, in *A Meeting of Streams*, and that mention rather airily dismisses her as being of secondary importance. I do not wish to leave the impression that I in any way wished to dismiss Mukherjee, a writer whose work I hold in high esteem. The extensive treatment I gave her wonderful *Darkness* is proof enough of that. It is vastly more than she got from Professor Vassanji's collection of articles.

Neil Bissoondath  
Quebec, Que.

#### ESCALATING A TREND

IN HIS REVIEW of *The Handmaid's Tale*, (October), I.M. Owen loosely compares Margaret Atwood to the likes of George Orwell and Aldous Huxley. According to Owen's review, Atwood, like her better-known predecessors, is attacking a dangerous trend that is beginning to occur in the author's own time. In Atwood's case, this trend has something to do with men reading passages from the Bible and then forcing women to bear babies.

Is forced childbearing really a trend, as the plot of Atwood's novel suggests? Is she warning of something real, when an average 4,000 abortions are performed in the U.S. every day? Is Atwood aware that forced birth control and abortion, not forced childbearing, is routinely practised in totalitarian societies like Communist China?

In *Survival*, her critical analysis of

Canadian literature written a number of years ago, Atwood quoted extensively from George Grant's *Technology and Empire*. Perhaps she hasn't read Grant's new book, *English-Speaking Justice*, reviewed in *Books in Canada* (June-July). In that forceful and thought-provoking work, Grant warns of dangerous trends in modern liberal thought that could lead from the denial of the rights of the unborn to a ghastly future where the very concept of inviolable human rights has lost all meaning. Perhaps Grant's view of the future, based on what is happening now, is more frightening than the fantasy future that exists largely in Atwood's mind.

Robert Eady  
Kanata, Ont.

#### RECOMMENDED

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

#### FICTION

*Road to the Still House*, by David Adams Richards, Oberon Press. In his new novel, Richards asks us to advance along a country road "sown with thistles." It is a measure of his artistry that he is able to take us there and illuminate what we would sooner ignore.

#### NON-FICTION

*Inside the Gestapo: A Jewish Woman's Secret War*, by Helene Moszkiewicz, Macmillan. More than a suspense story, Moszkiewicz's memoir of her double life — as a Resistance member and secretarial assistant in Gestapo headquarters — candidly portrays an intelligent woman who survived the war with her sense of balance and humour intact.

#### POETRY

*Shop Talk: An Anthology of Poetry*, by the Vancouver Industrial Writers' Union, edited by Zoë Landale, Pulp Press. Too much poetry consists of dry, intellectual artifacts, not works of life. This anthology helps to redress the balance by fleshing the bones of work with muscular poetry that sweats life.

#### 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:

*Academic Festival Overtures*, by Daryl Hine, Collier Macmillan.  
*After Six Days*, by Keith Harrison, Goose Lane Editions.  
*Agenda for Canada: Towards a New Liberalism*, by John Roberts, Lester & Orpen Denays.  
*Ahi belle chi!*/A Beautiful City ABC, by Stephane Poulin, Tundra Books.  
*The Alchemy of Clouds*, by Mark Frutkin, Goose Lane.  
*The Alternative Guide*, by Monty Reid, RDC Press.

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The Apple Connection, by Beatrice Ross Baszek, Nimbus.  
 Arctic Waters, Les Sacs, by W. Gillies Ross, Irwin.  
 Atlantic Spectrum '85, edited by Leslie McKillop, Guidance  
 Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.  
 August Nights, by Hugh Hood, Stoddart.  
 Book of Attends, by Jean Bruce, Macmillan.  
 E. B. White, a Poem, by Dennis Jones, Stoddart.  
 The Practical and Lectures on Near-Brussels Literature, by  
 Malcolm Ross et al., Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount  
 Allison University.

Find Them, by Kenneth Sherman, Mosaic Press.  
 Canada and the Birth of Israel, by David J. Bercuson, U of  
 T Press.

Canada: The Milling Years, by Patricia Pierce, Stoddart.  
 The Canadian Common Market, by Katie Macmillan,  
 Canada West Foundation.

Canadian Culture: International Dimensions, edited by  
 André Fenton Cooper, Canadian Institute of International  
 Affairs.

Concise Averbach, by Sarah Spinks, Doubleday.  
 A Chapter of Writing, by Don McVicar, Ad Astra Books.  
 Clouds Fly by Before the Eye, by Harry Thurston, Goose  
 Lane Editions.

Company: The Company Appraisers, by Jean Paré, Company's  
 Creative Publishing.

Cooper's Junior High Guidance, by Margaret Urquhart,  
 Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.

Concord in this Culture, by Victor Jerrett Enns, Fifth House.  
 The Creative Poem: A Step by Step Guide to Writing and  
 Appreciation, by Susan Iannone, Wordwrights Canada.

Constitution of Canada: The New Democratic Party and the Quest  
 for the Holy Grail, by Michael Bradley, Summerhill Press  
 (Collin Macmillan).

Culture Critiques: Raymond Dumont and New Quebec Socio-  
 logy, by Michael W. Weinstein, New World Perspectives  
 (Oxford).

Dancers: Vienna, Thistle-down Press.  
 Democratic Sufellon: The Challenge of the Eighties and  
 Beyond, edited by Donna Wilson, New Star Books.

Days, Days, Days: The Rise and Fall of Colin Thatcher, by  
 Garrett Wilson and Lesley Wilson, James Lorimer.  
 The Engineer of Human Souls, by Josef Skvorecky, Totem.  
 Luffitt, by Steven G. Palfy, Canadian Stage and Art Publica-  
 tions.

Escape to Honour, by Larry Harris and Brian Taylor,  
 Pottery Press.

Escapes to History: William Isaacson Cameron, Frontier  
 Journeys, edited by R.H. Macdonald, Western Producer  
 Prairie Books.

Exam Experiences in Western Canada, by K.K. Klein et al.,  
 Canada West Foundation.

Final Decree, by George Jonas, Totem.  
 First First, by Maryna Godfrey, Collier Macmillan.  
 La Florina, by Alvin Chamberland, VLB Editeur.

Focus on Employment Equity, by Walter Block and Michael  
 A. Wolf or, Fran. or Institute.

Frontier Affairs, by Keith Fraser, Stoddart.  
 Fractals: An Anthology of the Writing Program, The Banff  
 Centre, School of Fine Arts.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly, by Lorna Crozier, M&S.  
 Guy Bonaparte, by Ian Young, Stubble-jumper Press.  
 Given Up for Dead, by Francis H. Jones, Cheneliere Editeur  
 (Academic).

The Gravelly Land Market Cookbook, by Judie Glick and  
 Fiona McLeod, Talonbooks.

## CANWIT NO. 107

*Lady Chatterley's Lover*. D.H.  
 Lawrence's classic love story about  
 an English paraplegic and his wife.

JUDGING BY THE way the weekly  
 listings sometimes capsulize the plots  
 of televised movies, unwary viewers  
 may not always realize what they're  
 in for. Contestants are invited to  
 compose brief, misleading TV listings  
 for Canadian books that might have  
 — or have — been made into movies.  
 The prize is \$25. Deadline: February  
 1. Address: CanWit No. 107, *Books  
 in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East,  
 Toronto M5A 3X9.

Results of CanWit No. 105  
 IS THERE LIFE after fiction? In  
 Canada, apparently not. (Publish or  
 perish, we suppose.) At any rate, our  
 request for reports on the future life  
 of fictional characters produced few

entries, most of which summarized  
*sequels* to Canadian novels, rather  
 than bringing us up to date on one of  
 their characters. The winner is  
 Sandra M. Casey of Halifax, whose  
 update is reproduced below:

They seemed an unlikely pair: the  
 one, a man of the cloth, shabbily  
 dressed; the other, a successful,  
 flashily-dressed businessman. The  
 latter led the walk through the  
 woods with an air of excitement; he  
 was a man with a mission. Upon ar-  
 rival at the lake, he stopped and  
 took in the panorama of natural  
 beauty with misty eyes, hesitated,  
 then spoke. "This is it, Father — it's  
 all yours; for you and the boys." The  
 priest choked back tears,  
 speechless. "All I ask," continued  
 the man, "is that I remain anonym-  
 ous." The priest, hugging him,  
 cried: "You're a saint, Mr.  
 Kravitz!"

The Great Canadian Character Anthology, edited by Bill  
 Brownstein et al., Eden Press.

Great Canadian Lives: Portraits in Herosim to 1867, by  
 Karen Ford et al., Nelson Canada.

The Harrowsmith Landscaping Handbook, edited by Jen-  
 nifer Bennett, Camden House.

The History of Emily Montague, by Francis Brooks, Corle-  
 ton University Press.

Heartwood, by Gerald Hill, Thistle-down Press.

Hockey: The Illustrated History, by Charles Wilkins,  
 Doubleday.

How to... , by Eric Nicol, illustrated by Graham Pils-  
 worth, Macmillan.

If I Were a Cat I Would Sit in a Tree, by Ebbitt Cutler, illus-  
 trated by Rist Arnold, Tundra.

"I'm Not Making This Up, You Know": An Autobiography  
 of the Queen of Musical Parody, by Anna Russell,  
 Macmillan.

The Insect Zoo and the Wildest Hero, by Lee Taylor,  
 Scholastic-TAB.

Inside the Bank of Canada's Weekly Financial Statistics: A  
 Technical Guide, by Peter Martin, The Fraser Institute.

Instant Poems and Stories, by Anne Sarnigalecki, RDC Press.  
 Isak Dinesen's Africa, Douglas & McIntyre.

It Never Pays to Laugh Too Much, by Gertrude Story,  
 Thistle-down Press.

"It's Really Quite Safe!", by G.A. Rotherham, Hangar  
 Books.

Jack of All Trades: Memories of a Busy Life, by J.V. Clynne,  
 M & S.

Jasper Park Lodge, by Cyndi Smith, published by the author.  
 Jubilation: A Celebration of Favourite Recipes, The Junior  
 League of Toronto.

Language, Society and Identity, by John Edwards, Basil  
 Blackwell (Oxford).

Letters of a Businessman to His Son, by G. Kingsley Ward,  
 Collins.

Line Street at Two, by Helen Forrester, Academic.  
 Looking at Photos, by David Suzuki, Stoddart.

Master and Maid: The Charles Massey Murder, by Frank  
 Jones, Irwin.

A Matter of Trust: Power and Privilege in Canada's Trust  
 Companies, by Patricia Best and Ann Shortell, Viking.

Members of God, by Clement Lebovitz, Lone Pine Pub-  
 lishing.

Milstones II: The Music and Times of Miles Davis since  
 1969, by Jack Chambers, U of T Press.

Mob Rules: Inside the Canadian Mafia, by James Dubro,  
 Macmillan.

The Native Speaker is Dead!, by Thomas M. Paikeday,  
 Paikeday Publishing.

Natives and Newcomers, by Bruce C. Trigger, McGill-  
 Queen's University Press.

A Nature Murder, by Bruce Whiteman, Poets & Painters  
 Press.

Nature Puzzles, by Pauline Philp, Scholastic-TAB.

The Need of Wanting Always, by Gertrude Story, Thistle-  
 down.

Noman's Land, by Gwendolyn MacEwan, Coach House.

North Atlantic Cat, by Don McVicar, Ad Astra Books.

Northern Provinces: A Mistaken Goal, by Gordon Robert-  
 son, Institute for Research on Public Policy.

Northrop Frye: A Vision of the New World, by David Cook,  
 New World Perspectives (Oxford).

Not Much Glory: Quelling the F.L.Q., by Dan G. Loomis,  
 Dutton.

Oil Patch Empire, by John Balkem, M & S.

On the Endangered List, by David Gurr, M & S.

Ontario Spectrum '86, edited by Daryl Cook et al., Guid-  
 ance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.

Perfect Flier, by Diane Fine, Macmillan.

Perspectives on the Atlantic Canadian Labour Movement  
 and the Working-Class Experience, by Eugene Forsey et  
 al., Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount Allison Univer-  
 sity.

A Portrait of War: 1939-1943, by Richard S. Malone, Totem.  
 Preparing for the Job, by John Nixon and Karen Kokoski,  
 Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.

The Prismatic Eye, by Doris Hillis, Thistle-down Press.

Quebec Spectrum '86, edited by Peter Regimbald and Linda  
 Montreuil, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of  
 T.

Requiem, by Pat Jasper, Goose Lane Editions.

Regional Identity: A Maritime Quest, by William B. Hamil-  
 ton, Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount Allison Univer-  
 sity.

Reigning Cats & Dogs, by Marvin Ross and David Shaw,  
 Housoun Press.

The Revised & Expanded Canadian Tax and Investment  
 Guide, by Henry B. Zimmer, Hurlig.

Rootless Tree, by John V. Hicks, Thistle-down Press.

Salut John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community,  
 by T.W. Acheson, U of T.

Samuel Maclure, Architect, by Janet Bingham, Horsdal &  
 Schubart.

The Search for Community, by George Melnyk, Black Moss  
 Press.

Sentimental Journey: An Oral History of Train Travel in  
 Canada, by Ted Ferguson, Doubleday.

Seventy-One Poems for People, by George Bowring, RDC  
 Press.

Spectral Evidence, by Eugene McNamara, Black Moss Press.

The Store, by Mike Schultz, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

The Swell Season, by Josef Skvorecky, Totem.

Tessamata: Canadian Science Fiction, edited by Judith  
 Merrill, Press Perceptic.

Tongues of Men and Angels, by Maggie Helwig, Oberon.

The Transparency of November Snow, by Roo Borson and  
 Kim Malman, Quarry Press.

True Blues: The Logolite Legend, by Walter Stewart, Collins.

Unhealed Wounds: France and the Klaus Barbie Affair, by  
 Erna Paris, Methuen.

Vancouver Fiction, edited by David Wainmough, Polestar  
 Press.

Video Movies to Go, by Achim K. Krull et al., Grosvenor  
 House.

The Way to Always Dance, by Gertrude Story, Thistle-down.

We Stand on Guard: Poems and Songs of Canadians in Bol-  
 tie, compiled by John Robert Colombo and Michael  
 Richardson, Doubleday.

"We Were the Salt of the Earth", by Victor Howard, Cana-  
 dian Plains Research Centre.

Western Spectrum '86, edited by Martha Colquhoun et al.,  
 Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.

Why It's Hard to Fire Johnny's Teacher, by Michael  
 Czuboka, Communicographics.

The Winter of the Fisher, by Cameron Langford, Mac-  
 millan.

With God Nothing is Impossible: A Canadian Life, by  
 Murray Dryden, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

Why It's Hard to Fire Johnny's Teacher, by Michael  
 Czuboka, Communicographics.

The Willow Maiden, by Meghan Collins, illustrated by  
 Lasso Gal, Greenwood.

The Winter of the Fisher, by Cameron Langford, Mac-  
 millan.

With God Nothing is Impossible: A Canadian Life, by  
 Murray Dryden, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

Zoom Away, by Tim Wynne-Jones, illustrated by Ken Nutt,  
 Greenwood.

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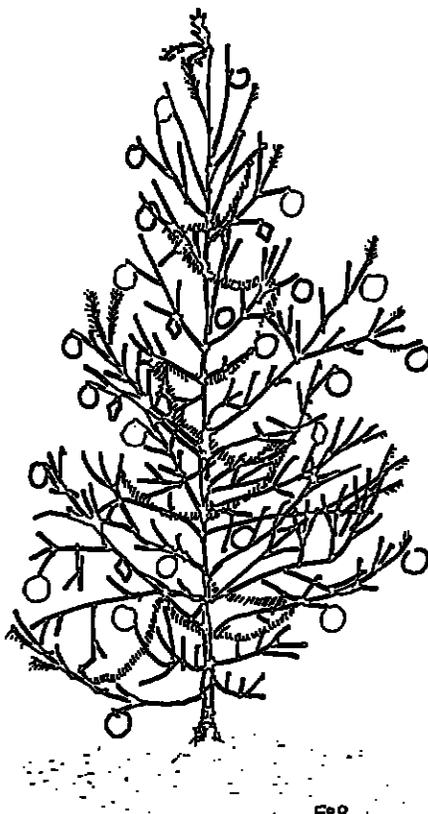
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