

A NATIONAL REVIEW OF BOOKS

BOOKS IN CANADA

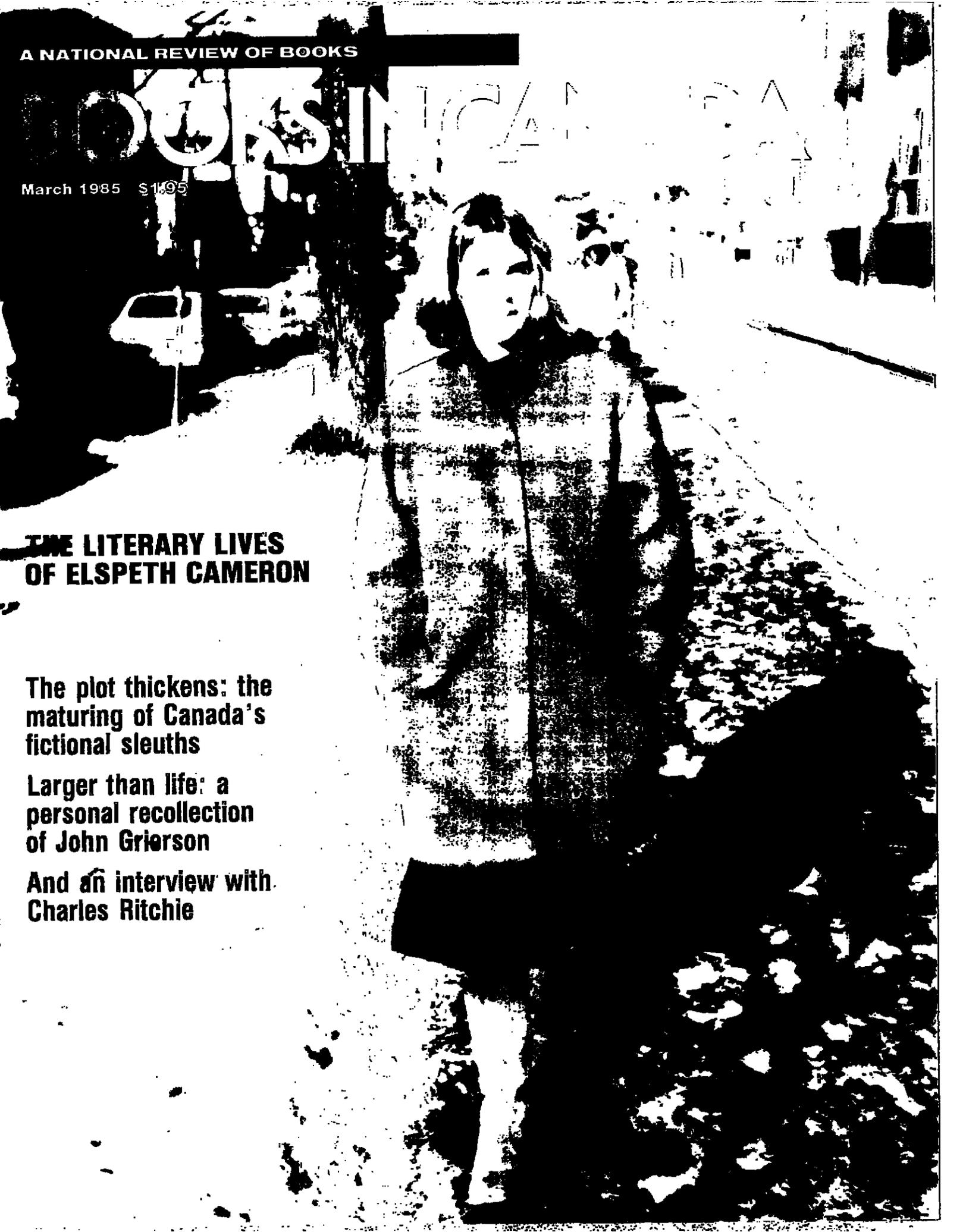
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THE LITERARY LIVES OF ELSPETH CAMERON

The plot thickens: the
maturing of Canada's
fictional sleuths

Larger than life: a
personal recollection
of John Grierson

And an interview with
Charles Ritchie



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Yesterday's news

Scorning the excesses of 20th-century writing, a new review seeks to reacquaint its readers with the spirit of 18th-century journalism

THE EDITORIAL offices are in these rooms," says David Warren with a sweep of his arm. He moves along the bannistered corridor. "This is the room where paste-up is done, and so forth. And this door is shut because that's our bedroom."

It seems appropriate that the newly established offices of *The Idler* reside in publisher David Warren's family home in Toronto, since he feels "a sort of post-partum depression" now that the first issue is out. That issue is a saddle-stitched, black-and-white paper of 32 pages and five advertisements, one of which is for *The Idler* itself. Warren refuses to divulge the review's paid circulation until a few months have passed, but he printed 5,290 copies of the first issue, a number he hopes to triple — his target is 15,150 — within three years. At a cover price of \$2.25, with a 12-issue subscription going for \$24, the target is ambitious — to say the least.

For January the tossed salad of topics included an assessment of the western democracies' knowledge of Depression-era famine in the Soviet Union, reflections on the way music reaches our ears through instrument and environment, and an anonymous look at the "Bland Election." The last begins, "The Regressive Preservative Party swept all regions of Canada to achieve the most astounding political triumph ever recorded by Barbara Frum."

The publisher and parent of *The Idler* is a small "p" preservative himself. Warren is a straight-haired, bespectacled man of 31 who smokes a steady chain of cigarettes and says he likes to shock people. His last full-time job abroad was as editor of a paper called *Business in Thailand*, and in Canada he has a reputation primarily as an economic journalist. By choice Warren has never spent much time in his homeland. He left Canada for Britain as soon as he was old enough to travel on his own, acquired a British accent, and spent a few years holed up in the London library acquiring an in-depth knowledge of the classics in lieu of a formal post-secondary education. Hard-bound

volumes on wooden shelves are the wallpaper of *The Idler's* offices. The only visible paperback is a two-volume set of John Locke's 18th-century essays.

The 18th century, in fact, is the ancestral home of *The Idler*, inhabited by essayists like Johnson, Addison, and Steele. The periodical from which *The Idler* takes its name was written by Samuel Johnson from 1758 to 1760 and inserted weekly in the pages of *The Universal Chronicle*. Warren chose to revive the name because Johnson is one of his favourite writers. He spent "about a month last summer immersed in *The Tatler*, *The Idler*, *The Spectator*, and so forth — completely neglecting the 20th century — in order to teach myself the spirit of 18th-century journalism."

The excesses of 20th-century prose and poetry horrify him. "I am tired of



opening a book of a poet's latest offering and seeing the word 'shit' in the middle of the page. I am even more tired if he thinks he's shocking me." What he appreciates are "stories operating on the highest literary level, but which never forget the entertainment they were supposed to be. Verse that is exhilarating just for being language." In Canada, he feels, that makes him part of a small but significant group.

The Idler's collection of what Warren calls "potential co-religionists" reaches out to a few established writers like Josef

Skvorecky, George Jonas, and Auberon Waugh but consists mainly of young, relative unknowns. Many contributions don't carry a byline but are part of a section the editor calls "The Idler's Notebook." "We work out of apartments and coffee shops in the way our ancestors did — the periodical essayists of the 18th century," states the introductory essay, "and like those gentleman-hacks of old, we are without secretaries to answer our 'phones. The capital for our venture has been raised from our own pockets, and the necks we expose are our own."

When Warren is asked to expound upon the premise of *The Idler*, his reply ticks to an Enlightenment world ordered by the Divine Clockmaker. "We believe in the philosophy of natural right," he says, "the idea that there are such things as good and bad, which man cannot know absolutely but which he can try to understand. We're a bit sick of 20th-century moral relativism." But the writers of *The Idler* also believe in "the dialectical process. I'm not interested in producing a paper that becomes 'us conservatives versus those liberals,'" says Warren. "That's a very mind-chilling sort of thing."

Twentieth-century eyes may have to refocus occasionally when reading a story that begins, "There was a time, well within living memory, when musical taste and connoisseurship habitually relegated the usage of ancient instruments and arcane performance practice to the substatus of antiquarianism." The reader sometimes finds himself on an exhausting hike when he started on an invigorating walk in the woods. Another 20th-century innovation *The Idler* could adopt is the occasional reference to "girls" as "women." Come to think of it, Dr. Johnson never called a female over 20 a girl, either.

But *The Idler* means more to Canadian letters than real-men-don't-eat-kitsch pedantry. It understands that the truly dedicated reader has a natural curiosity about almost every subject and deserves to satisfy it with articles of reasonable depth. It assumes that Canadians can read foreign and domestic writers for wit and learning without

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— BARBARA WADE

Jake and the id

WRITERS ARE mysterious creatures — evolutionary products thrown up to assist the race to survive." So contends Joseph Gold of the University of Waterloo, the only university in Canada that offers a credit course in bibliotherapy. An English professor for 15 years (he is a graduate of the University of Birmingham, with a doctorate in literature and communications from the University of Wisconsin), Gold now limits his academic work to twice-weekly seminars in bibliotherapy while he completes an internship with the Inter-Faith Pastoral Counselling Centre in Waterloo, Ont. To his knowledge, he will be the first therapist to combine a literary background with counselling training — the perfect combination, he feels, for use of bibliotherapy as an adjunct to traditional therapies.

Bibliotherapy is not new. The library at Thebes was inscribed "The Palace of Healing"; the medieval Abbey library in St. Gall, Switzerland, was called "The Medicine Chest of the Soul"; and in 1841 John Minson Galt wrote the first North American book on bibliotherapy — a book with a decidedly religious and moral slant. Later references appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1916, and in a 1949 doctoral dissertation by Caroline Shrodes, who defined bibliotherapy as "a process of interaction between the personality of the reader and imaginative literature which may engage his emotions and free them for conscious and productive use." Karl Menninger compared bibliotherapy to pharmacology, "to be withheld or prescribed specifically with the expectation of specific outcomes."

Joseph Gold holds that "literature exists to compress the greatest amount of information and experience for the benefit of the reader." He suggests its use is most appropriate for clients experiencing "feelings of depression, anxiety, helplessness to the normal range of stress situations — puberty, marriage, divorce, grief, and job loss." He emphasizes that it is unsuitable for more seriously disturbed patients, who would be better served by psychiatrists.

Gold became interested in bibliotherapy while working on a committee for the retention of compulsory

high-school English. His interest in the problem of illiteracy led him to wonder how story-telling affects people's lives. He points out that even traditional psychotherapy consists of a patient telling his "story"; the therapist is there "to give control and assistance in reshaping the story to coincide with the patient's needs and desires."

He believes his clients approach a writer with an openness and trust that few would bring to a therapist. "With books there is always the option of getting in and getting out." (He cites *Alice in Wonderland* as dealing directly with the fear of no-return.) He is gratified

when a reader displays what he calls "the eureka phenomenon" — the shocked realization that a writer has experienced and expressed something relevant to the reader's plight.

Matching the book to the client is "a very individual, intuitive thing. Not only does the book serve to release material for discussion, but it develops a sharing bond between therapist and client." Books that Gold uses for seminar discussions include *Diary of a Young Girl*, by Anne Frank; *Jake and the Kid*, by W.O. Mitchell; *Tex*, by S.T. Hinton; *Lives of Girls and Women*, by Alice Munro; and *I Am David*, by Anna Holm, but there is

no prescribed list of therapeutic titles. At the moment Gold is compiling a computerized directory of books of fiction for use by other bibliotherapists.

Some bibliotherapists regard Dostoyevsky as a therapeutic writer, because he explores the dark side of man's soul. Would Gold recommend him? "Not likely — or with great caution." Sylvia Plath? Gold strokes his beard. "She certainly would not immediately spring to my mind." Do his theories draw on those of Jung? "No. I'm not interested in patterns and systems in a story. A novel is uniquely itself." — HELEN PEREIRA

ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

War of words

'What is to become of us if there is not one person in the Commons who can be relied on to say precisely what he (or she) means?'

By Bob Blackburn

THE FORMER prime minister of Canada and now external affairs minister Joe Clark read a statement in the Commons recently in which he spoke of "reducing the danger of nuclear conflict." If we do have a nuclear war, I don't think anybody, even the mighty Joe Clark, can do anything to make it less dangerous. If he was talking about the threat, or the probability, or the possibility of nuclear war, he should have used one of those words. I repeat, this was a prepared statement (probably written by a committee) of considerable importance, not an off-the-cuff speech.

In the years since the beginning of live television coverage of the debates of the House of Commons, I have become accustomed (but not inured) to the grotesque maltreatment of the English language (to varying degrees) by all of our elected representatives, and I often wonder what is to become of us if there is not one person in that chamber who can be relied on to say precisely what he (or she) means.

But Clark is our nation's top diplomat. I was brought up to believe that diplomats were required to be very careful about their diction, since one carelessly chosen word could start a war. That was one reason that French, honoured for its subtlety and respected for the consistency imposed on it by the French Academy, was until very recently the language of diplomacy. (Does it make you giggle or scare the hell out of

you to imagine Joe Clark going all over the world negotiating our future in *his* French?)

Perhaps this comes down to a question of semantics, rather than diction. Doubtless Clark and his aides and writers could cite dictionaries that would support his use of *danger* in that sense. I have a friend and colleague, a writer and professional cruciverbalist, who has a roomful of dictionaries. When I challenge him on what I consider to be his misuse of a word, he always is able to find at least one authority to back him up. When I chided him for defining



emergent as *pressing*, he had no trouble finding a popular modern dictionary that supported him. Indeed, the *OED* cites, but says nothing to condone, examples of that use as early as 1706, but I suggest that the only thing that that indicates is that the misuse of words is by no means peculiar to modern times. If one wishes to say *urgent*, that is what one should say. *Emergent* means rising

out of a surrounding medium, and any figurative use of it should be based on the literal sense.

There exists, of course, danger that someone might start a nuclear war, and that, presumably, is the danger that Clark wishes reduced. But that is not what he said.

I am now prepared to be scoffed at by people who will tell me that it's perfectly obvious what was meant. I'm used to that, but the attitude of those who dismiss fine distinctions as inconsequential quibbles creates an environment that encourages dangerous misunderstandings.

Here is a sentence from a Toronto *Globe and Mail* report: "The report was immediately dismissed as a 'complete fabrication' by Mr. Mulroney's press secretary, William Fox." Is it perfectly obvious what was meant there? The writer might claim that it is, but even a careful examination of the context does not rule out the possibility that the reporter was quoting some anonymous person who had called Fox a liar.

This is a useful example of the pitfalls of the passive, a voice much favoured by journalists trained to put first things first. In this example, the fact that the report was dismissed was more important than the identity of the dismitter. The passive construction enabled the reporter to report in the descending order of importance, but it also resulted in ambiguity. And ambiguity can lead to lawsuits.

Or even wars. □

Other people's lives

'I try to be transparent, to drop away my own prejudices,' says Elspeth Cameron, whose approach to biography has made her a leading chronicler of literary personalities

By John Goddard

WITH A LITTLE slimming down and a snappy soft cover, it might rise to the best-seller list in the paperback trade," wrote Montreal poet Louis Dudek of Elspeth Cameron's biography on Hugh MacLennan in 1981. "But now we have it as a university press book, with three strikes against it as far as wide readership is concerned — fairly high price, modest edition, scholarly format. I hope it does find its readers anyhow."

It did. *Hugh MacLennan: A Writer's Life*, published by University of Toronto Press, was soon on the *Maclean's* best-seller list, remaining there for three months. Last April it went into paperback — all 421 pages. Praise from the critics was nearly unanimous. "Well-

researched and beautifully written," said Dudek in his review for *Canadian Forum*. "A major work," said William French in the *Globe and Mail*. "A model for literary biographers," said Ken Adachi in the *Toronto Star*. The book was a finalist in 1981 for the Governor General's Award for non-fiction, won in the end by George Calef's *Caribou and the Barren-Lands*. Cameron won the University of British Columbia's medal for Canadian biography.

The editors at *Saturday Night* took notice, inviting Cameron to write book reviews, then major personality profiles, beginning with Peter C. Newman. The Newman profile won her the 1982 Fiona Mee Award for literary journalism. Articles on Jack McClelland and Timothy Findley followed as Cameron carved out a niche for herself as a chronicler of Canadian literary lives. Now she is nearly through writing a biography of Irving Layton, scheduled to be released this fall by General Publishing and almost guaranteed to attract a mass audience.

"I was astounded that [the MacLennan book] was in any way popular," Cameron says. "I was only aiming to be accurate in a scholarly sense."

Elspeth Cameron

AT AGE 42, Elspeth Cameron has a firm, perfunctory handshake, a charming manner and stunning good looks, a mature version of what one high-school contemporary remembers as "smouldering, unusual beauty, like a heroine out of Hardy." On a bright, wintry day, she is in her office at New College, University of Toronto, where she teaches Canadian cultural history and is coordinator of a Canadian literature and language program. She has three writing projects on the go: a book review for *Saturday Night*; a profile for *Chatelaine* of Laura Legge, the first woman treasurer of the Law Society of Upper Canada; and the Layton biography, which is moving along at more than 2,000 words a day, three days a week. She also has three children, ages 14, 12 and 6 — two by her second husband and one by her third, Paul Lovejoy, chairman of the history department at York University and a professor of African economic history. "And we have no housekeeper," Cameron says, laughing, as if wondering herself how she manages to keep up.

She does it, she says, by being a good administrator. "It may not look it" (there are boxes of file folders on the floor, on a chair, and on a desk) "but I could put my hand on anything in this room." Both her parents were administrators. Her father, now retired, was general administrator of the Royal Victoria Hospital in Barrie, Ont.; where Cameron grew up, the eldest of three girls. Her mother took a job, when the youngest was 16, as secretary at the Simcoe County Museum and quickly rose to become its director.

"My parents were the kind of people who, when I asked about things, always told me the answers," Cameron recalls, sitting at her writing desk next to book shelves lined with Irving Layton books and supporting prints of Hugh MacLennan. "My curiosity was never stifled. They encouraged me to read about almost anything."

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN GODDARD



She was a top student, chosen in grade six to write her first book review (for a local radio station), and described by her former high-school English teacher as "unrelenting in pursuit of her goals." She was also a star athlete.

"I know it sounds odd," she says, "but writing to me feels like competitive swimming or playing basketball. I was very involved in sports. I was in ballet for 15 years, I was in skating, I have all the swimming stuff — you know, the bronze, silver, instructors', all that, both Royal Lifesaving and Red Cross. I set records in high jump and various track-and-field events in high school. And when I'm writing I feel the same kind of exhilaration, the feeling of moving forward, the sort of momentum that I used to feel when I was in sports. It's like, you know, three more laps to go."

In 1974, Cameron attended the Canadian literature sessions of the annual Learned Societies meetings in Toronto and heard poet Frank Davey speak passionately about the deplorable way in which bibliography and biography were being ignored in the study of Canadian writing. The speech struck a chord with her. By this time, she had acquired an honours B.A. in English at the University of British Columbia, an M.A. in Canadian literature at the University of New Brunswick, and a Ph.D. in Victorian literature at McGill (on advice, which she continues to resent, that she would never get a teaching job with a Ph.D. in CanLit). She agreed with Davey that the so-called New Criticism, with its concentration on the study of themes and images, had to be balanced with work of factual substance, with information about the author.

Davey's talk inspired her to attempt what turned out to be the first major biography of a Canadian writer. She first thought to write about Robertson Davies. Her M.A. thesis was on Davies and she had written a short book about him, now out of print and lost, she says, among the plethora of short biographical books that hit the market around 1970 when CanLit courses became the rage. But by now she was living in Montreal, teaching Canadian literature at Loyola College, and as a single parent with two small children she thought she had better write about a Montrealer. "Hugh MacLennan was the obvious choice."

"A lot of people make the assumption that I must be a fan of MacLennan's or I must be a groupie of Layton's, but that's not so. I've never chosen any subject either from admiring them excessively or disliking them excessively, only from the fact that they're important figures and we need to know more about them.

"I basically set out to accumulate information about MacLennan that was otherwise going to be lost. And I know that's true, because a number of people I interviewed for MacLennan and now for Layton have since died. I wanted to know: How did he get where he is? Where did he come from? What are the facts? People make rash statements about famous people, and they in a sense fall for the public image without knowing what really happened."

MacLennan consented immediately to cooperate — to give interviews and turn over his papers and letters. "Frankly, I doubted if she would ever get through it," he said recently. "A lot of people had come to me before with the same idea, and nothing would ever come of it. But Elspeth is tremendously industrious, very intelligent. She went everywhere — to England, Germany. She met a whole lot of people I hadn't seen for years. She knew more about me than I could remember. And that book is longer than anything I've ever written."

The research, crammed in with her other duties, took six years, twice the time she had anticipated, although she banged out the manuscript in five months. In the process, she found MacLennan was an excellent essayist, and as a by-product of the biography she compiled a collection from 400 he had written, published as *The Other Side of Hugh MacLennan*.

The biography mainly deals with the events of his life, the excruciating sadness of his first wife's death, the books that influenced him, the people he knew and corresponded with, and the difficulties of trying to write for a living in the days when Canadian literature had no public following. The book includes an extensive analysis of MacLennan's writing, and occasionally delves into his eccentricities and curious obsessions.

"He literally moved out of his home at the age of twelve and slept in a tent in the back yard, summer and winter, until he graduated from university. . . ." Cameron writes. "His Spartan father approved of the whole idea, thinking it would toughen him up. . . ." She tells how MacLennan continued to write to his father after his father died, a series of six letters that speak of the great force that Dr. Sam MacLennan had exerted on his son for so long.

Cameron's biography 'astounded me,' says Hugh MacLennan. 'It's meticulously accurate. . . . I'm lost in admiration'

She also describes MacLennan's zeal for tennis. He rarely lost, but when he did, "his reactions could be spectacular: throwing his racket away, he would fall down on the grass and tear it up with his bare hands, or pitch himself in fury onto the wire fence that surrounded the court, such was his frustration at losing."

MacLennan was pleased with the book. "It astounded me," he wrote to Cameron after receiving the first copy. "It's meticulously accurate. . . . I'm lost in admiration." But he didn't remember his performances over losing at tennis and he remains strangely obsessive about the tennis passage. "That never happened," he insists. "I never tore the grass with my hands. I was probably lying on the grass because I was tired."

Cameron is not defensive about his objections and prefers not to argue the point. But when pressed she gives a philosophic explanation that says something of the hazards a biographer faces when writing about a living subject.

"I think it's sort of a symbolic thing. Nobody really wants to think that his life has been contained in 400 pages and I don't see how you can avoid a negative response on some level. The same if someone does a portrait of you, you feel, 'Well, I look better than that,' or 'It's not the way I see myself.' And I think that detail for him has become the outlet for the negative response. I did double-check it afterwards. There was more than one eyewitness. But if the tennis hadn't been mentioned, I think he'd have fixed on something else."

WRITING ABOUT a living subject can be a "very tricky situation," says Clara Thomas, co-author of *William Arthur Deacon: A Canadian Literary Life*. "You have to get the person's trust, and that requires a special kind of temperament and patience, all kinds of charm and personal integrity. Elspeth has all that."

She needed all that to deal with the mercurial Irving Layton. Layton read the MacLennan biography, and in the fall of 1981, when he was writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto, he invited Cameron to write a biography about himself. Cameron had been toying with the idea of writing a mystery novel about a biographer who discovers her subject has committed a crime. But publishers were calling with offers for another biography, and Layton's invitation was too good to refuse.

At least, that's how Cameron remembers the events. Layton tells the story to his own advantage. "One day when I was writer-in-residence at U of T," he says, "she came over to me when I was having lunch and asked if she could write a biography about me. It took me by surprise, and I think my

face registered surprise, but then it must have registered agreement. I had an idea she was letting herself in for a great deal of work, but I said, 'yes,' not something sensible like, 'Let me think it over for 24 hours.'

Now Layton has reservations about the project. "I've read most of the profiles she's done, and I thought they were very well done. And the MacLennan book I thought was very good. But I've read a lot of biography, and hers is not so much a biography as a story. To me, she is telling about the external events of his life. Hugh's life was quiet, sedentary, untumultuous, compared to my cross-starred life. I thought, how was she going to be able to handle the compulsions, the obsessions, the dark spots, and the lighter spots too, to make it clear what it is that drives a person? Any biography should do something like that — how a writer's work comes out of the swamp, the matrix of his life, the sewer-laden stream, and gets transfigured into poetry."

One critic had had reservations similar to Layton's about the MacLennan biography. "[Cameron's] discreet accuracy is bought at a price: vitality," wrote Mark Abley in *Maclean's*. "The accumulation of orderly facts and the scarcity of disorderly anecdotes gives this biography a strangely abstract, bloodless quality. . . . Hugh MacLennan's inner life remains a closed book."

As if anticipating a shortfall in Cameron's work, Layton, while continuing to cooperate with her, has also begun writing his memoirs. *Waiting for the Messiah* it is to be called, chronicling his youth to 1943. He says it will be in the book stores about the same time as Cameron's book.

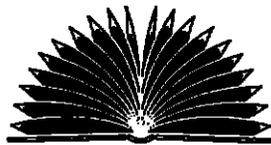
CAMERON IS aware of the challenge of trying to capture Layton, and as she discusses this in the late afternoon at her office she illuminates the more creative, subjective side of her own personality, and something of the struggle a biographer goes through.

"I think that in MacLennan I was able to have the book reflect the person," she says, resting her chin on one hand. "The images in the chapter titles, for instance — The Voyage Out, Charting a Course, Storm at Sea — those are MacLennan's images, they reflect MacLennan. Writing a biography isn't just a question of chronicling facts, it's a question of representing the facts in such a way that they somehow express the personality. It's a question of getting the facts straight first and then somehow finding the form, style, pace, narrative, all the things you would associate with creative writing. I would not want to be creative to the point of skewing the facts, but I want to make it entertaining to read, like a novel, and to make the form and style expressive of the subject."

"Now, Layton is a completely different kind of person from MacLennan. Layton is a Romanian Jew. MacLennan is a Nova Scotia Scot. Layton came from a very poor family. MacLennan came from a wealthy family. They're miles apart in terms of upbringing, the kinds of ideas that are going to be floating around, the kind of life options that are going to be presented, and so on. Even the pace Layton lived at is completely different from MacLennan. Therefore it seems to me the book on Layton has to be different in pace if the feeling of Layton is going to come through."

Faced with trying to convey the personality of the subject and the atmosphere of his times implicitly in the prose style, she says, a biographer virtually has to become the other person. "I try to be transparent, to drop away my own experiences and prejudices, and in a sense live the other person's life."

"It becomes a kind of obsession. You get to the point where you know in advance what that person would think on some subject, even when you don't know what the person actually said about it. If you asked me what would MacLennan think about something, or what would Layton think, I would probably be pretty accurate." □



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The City of Toronto Book Awards consist of \$5,000 presented annually to authors of books of literary excellence that are evocative of Toronto. This year's winner(s), selected from the above list, will be announced on Thursday, February 28, 1985.

Personal deductions

Unlike his English and American counterparts, the sleuth himself has become a central character in Canadian crime fiction

By Wayne Grady

Murder on Ice, by Ted Wood, Charles Scribner's Sons (John Wiley & Sons) 182 pages, \$18.95 cloth (ISBN 0 684 18134 7).

Smoke Detector, by Eric Wright, Collins Publishers, 186 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 00 222643 X).

Murder Sees the Light, by Howard Engel, Penguin, 240 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 670 80304 9).

THOSE WHO WERE disappointed by Ted Wood's award-winning first novel, *Dead in the Water* — the weary, stale, flat (though not unprofitable) account of the exploits of Reid Bennett, chief and sole member of Murphy Harbour's police force — will find little cause for celebration in this second instalment of a threatened tetralogy. Bennett, flat as cardboard in the first book, has thinned to tissue in this one, and the plot, which at least aspired to two dimensions in *Dead in the Water*, chugs along a single linear line in *Murder on Ice*. Bad Guys kidnap Carnival Queen, Good Guy goes out, kicks a few heads and brings her back. The limp twist, by which the Bad Guys turn out to be Bad Gals, members of something called the Canadian League of Angry Women (CLAW), who have been the dupes of even Badder Guys from the city, spreads the plot to even thinner proportions, but deepens it not a jot.

Bennett is a comic-book hero — a cross, perhaps, between Superman and Sergeant Rock. He swings like an automaton from scuffle to scuffle, from snowmobile chase to hand-to-hand to scout car to hand grenade, with a mesmerized singleness of purpose that is at times embarrassingly difficult to take seriously. At one point he puts a neat bullet hole in the forehead of an assailant who is downstairs from him in pitch darkness; at another he catches a grenade, runs with it through a crowded room and tosses it into a conveniently opened safe in the back office. He goes through these motions with a military thoroughness (he is, as we are tediously reminded, a Vietnam veteran); the few

attempts to develop him as a character are like attempts at endowing Mr. T with personality. In fact, the whole novel reads like a plot outline for an episode of *The A Team*.

Murder on Ice would have been helped, though not saved, by a few sub-plots and some local colour, but Woods seems totally uninterested in the genre of detective fiction. During a recent radio interview, he defined the difference between a "thriller" and a "mystery" as follows: "Women read mysteries, men read thrillers." The complexities of parallel or dove-tailing sub-plots would no doubt prove too demanding for a writer with so little understanding of, and so great a contempt for, his own craft.

It is not as though Wood *can't* write. His book of short stories, *Somebody Else's Summer* (Irwin), contains some very fine writing. Here is the opening paragraph of a curiously Faulknerian short story, "Out of the Rain":

The afternoon light had dimmed to a sulphurous yellow and a sudden frightened wind had sprung up, spinning the roadside maples. Dust eddied along the shoulder of the road and a cloud of fragments tore loose from the load of straw to fly over George's head and away down the long concession that stretched in front of his tractor.

In *Murder on Ice* we get this:

I hit the snow rolling, all my soldier's instincts taking over automatically. It was harder in my parka than it had been in my combat fatigues in Nam and the snowshoes were almost impossible to turn, but I shucked them quickly and tossed them against a tree where I would be able to find them again if I had to.

How's that for action? It is unfortunate that Wood feels he doesn't need to write well to write thrillers for men.

Eric Wright understands the intricacies of plot, sub-plot, character, and locale, and the result — a series of well-written, evenly paced novels based on the career of Charlie Salter of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Department — is a welcome addition to the

narrow shelf of Canadian detective fiction. Salter is a middle-aged, flabby, kindly, troubled man who works along established procedural lines to arrive at three or four plausible conclusions, one of which may be the correct one. He is solid rather than brilliant, rather like John Reeves's Inspector Coggin, or a more provincial George Smiley.

In *Smoke Detector*, Salter pursues an arsonist who has killed the owner of a cheap second-hand furniture shop on Bloor West. The novel is a quiet, ruminative, deductive quest — not the high-speed chase we got from Ted Wood, nor an intellectual conundrum solved by Sir John Appleby or Gervaise Fen — and the search is tied up with and at times interrupted by Salter's concern about the growing disaffection between himself and his adolescent son, his anxiety about his wife's new career, the little plastic wheel on the patio door that keeps breaking, and his own failing health. Salter is, in fact, a character; we care about him. The crime is almost secondary to our interest in Salter's life; it bothers us because it bothers Salter.

And therein, ironically, lies the novel's shortcoming. The crime tends to get short shrift. There is not enough description: the scene of the crime, the police routine, the body itself, the suspects. We see it all through Salter's somewhat preoccupied eyes, and he has seen it all before: "The room was charred and blackened and still dripping with the water that had been poured into it." This is the basement of a junk shop on Bloor West?

There is also a small problem with method that it would be unfair to investigate here. The point is that too many questions are left to dangle until the last few pages of the book, by which time the reader, caught in the web of Salter's personal life, has lost track of their importance.

The suspects in the case — among them George Kemp, "the independent old Newfie who regarded Canada as another country"; Gene Tanabe, a Japanese Canadian who had been

evacuated from Vancouver in 1942; Murdrick "the twister"; and Darling the Cabbagetown sandblaster — form a kind of microcosm of Toronto's cosmopolitan social substructure. A more studied portrait of their interrelationships might have done for Toronto what Jan van der Wetering, for example, did in his novel about a Japanese businessman in a Western capital city, *Outsider in Amsterdam*. But *Smoke Detector* works well as a detective novel, and the series is shaping up into what one hopes will be a long-running acquaintance with Charlie Salter.

Murder Sees the Light is the fourth and best of Howard Engel's Bennie Cooperman books. In the earlier instalments, Cooperman was presented as a kind of aw-shucks parody of the American private eye, self-effacing instead of brassy and pushy, inept and mother-ridden rather than omniscient and independent. It seemed at times as if Blake Edwards had cast Woody Allen in the role of Lew Archer. It was funny once, but wouldn't do for a whole series — yet another return of the Pink Panther.

The new Cooperman is quietly self-confident, likable rather than pitiable, and incidentally more effective as a private investigator. Instead of stumbling over the solution to a crime, he now interprets clues and manipulates suspects in true detective style. He is no longer the gumshoe, teetering on the edge of self-parody, though he is still a far cry from Albert Campion. He has not lost his humorous cynicism — the running chopped-egg-sandwich gag, for example, is still there, but it has been absorbed into Cooperman's personality rather than included as part of his repertoire. The snide asides and tough-guy one-liners have also been pared down to become part of Cooperman's style:

I found a quiet corner by a bookshelf that contained copies of *National Geographic* going back to before Columbus. Behind one of them I recognized the elder of Kipp's two boys. He told me his name was Roger, and he was thirteen. Before I asked him he told me that his mother was laid up in Bennington with hepatitis she had caught eating at a vegetarian restaurant.

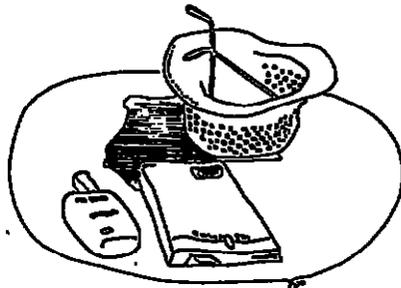
Though both *Murder Sees the Light* and *Murder on Ice* take place in approximately the same area — Algonquin Park and nearby Muskoka cottage country respectively (Murphy's Harbour is supposed to be Port Severn) — the differences between them are significant. Wood's caper takes place in winter; Bennett has to keep moving, as though to slow down for five minutes would mean freezing to death. Cooperman, on the other hand, swelters, fully dressed, in

midsummer heat. He spends whole pages in a tin boat, pretending to be fishing while keeping a private eye on Norris Patten, an American cult leader who is hiding out in the park. The long wait poses a problem for Engel — he has to fill up the silence with words — and he solves it tolerably well:

Nothing moved. My head was getting hot. I should have worn a hat. That made a pretty picture as I closed my eyes against the magenta light creeping through my eyelids. My normal hat would suit the north woods like a bikini at the opera . . . I took off my shirt, removed the undershirt and dipped it into the lake. After wringing it out, I fitted it to my frying brow. For a minute or so, refreshing rivulets of lake water ran down my shoulders and disappeared into the folds where my belly rested on my belt. . . .

Like Cooperman himself, Engel's prose style is unpretentious, workmanlike. It gets the job done.

The second half of the novel, however, fails to maintain this slow, rambling pace, and the novel suffers for it. Things suddenly happen, scenes become obligatory rather than rising out of demands made within the text. Cooperman is attacked and, for no good reason, not killed. This is always bothersome in crime novels: one poor sod gets an axe through the head while a potential witness to the act is merely knocked out and left for dead. It is a bit like ask-



ing why Hamlet didn't just march into the castle and stick his bare bodkin into Claudius's gullet: because then there would have been no play. But the dissembling has to be convincing, and at times even in the best of detective novels it is not.

Our suspension of disbelief becomes more and more strained. Toward the end of *Murder Sees the Light* there is a seduction scene that is so totally unnecessary and pointless that even Cooperman feels bad about it. And there is a variation on the death-bed confession that ought not to be used except as a last resort in a novel that has become too convoluted to be unravelled any other way, which *Murder Sees the Light* is not.

Yet Engel has written a good novel;

like *Smoke Detector*, it works on levels other than that of pure mystery, and this may be the direction Canadian detective fiction will take. When other detective writers want to write character novels, they generally leave their detectives out of the book altogether — Ruth Rendell's *The Lake of Darkness*, for example, or P.D. James's *Innocent Blood*. Both Wright and Engel have moved toward "straight" fiction but have centred their books on their detectives. In the English mysteries it is the murder itself that fascinates — the sealed room, the remote country house, the plethora of suspects, the intertwined motives — and though George Orwell may have bemoaned the decline of the actual English murder, fictional English murders are as gruesome and gratifying as anything ever perpetrated by Dr. Crippen.

The English detective remains a remote, austere figure with little private life at all outside the confines allowed by his profession (or hobby): Albert Campion collects rare first editions; Peter Wimsey seems to know a lot about wine. Even though a sort of cult has been built up about him, very little is known about Wimsey's personal habits and his immediate family — information we do get about him reads like excerpts from Debrett's Peerage. In American crime novels the detective is often indistinguishable from the criminals he pursues: he acts outside the law, a kind of guide to the underworld, like a demented Virgil dragging us through the Inferno. Though it serves equally well as a description of the main action in the *Iliad*, my plot summary of *Murder on Ice* — Bad Guys kidnap Carnival Queen, and so on — adequately sums up American popular fiction from *The Deerslayer* to Hollywood. There is little development of character type from Daniel Boone to Humphrey Bogart to Clint Eastwood.

It may be that Canadian mysteries will be a blend of the two types, not unlike European models — the police procedurals of Nicolas Freeling, Per Wähloo, van der Wetering — in which the detective develops from novel to novel much as the protagonist in straight fiction would do, while the murder is merely something that happens to him that either aids or impedes his development as a character. Canadians do not share the English fascination with murder, nor do we idolize gangsters as the Americans do. What is left for the Canadian detective novelist but to explore our interest in the development of an individual identity, through due process and within the confines of a social order, a field that has been so carefully and wonderfully searched by the Dutch and Swedish writers? □

The Canadians

A probing yet affectionate look at the land and the people.

Andrew H.
Malcolm

Correspondent for *The New York Times*



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Top of the Hill

By Bruce Allen Powe

The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier, by Sandra Gwyn, McClelland & Stewart, illustrated, 514 pages, \$34.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 3736 8).

ON READING Sandra Gwyn's account of how Ottawa's upper crust amused itself in the years 1865 to 1911, I began to think what a useful backgrounder it would have been for the raw Tory hordes who arrived in the fall of 1984. For, as Gwyn points out in her colourful, intricate narrative, Ottawa is a unique society in North America based on its origins as "a raw little colonial society with a viceregal court perched on top as a coronet among pinecones."

To appreciate the forces that have shaped the peculiar character of our national capital, the newcomer can learn much from Gwyn's fine plunge into social research. I wish it had been available when my wife and I joined a long line of predecessors in shocked disbelief when we arrived on the Ottawa scene in 1951.

Having arrived fresh from Edmonton and university — with an M.A. in economics and a starting salary of less than \$2,600 as an administrative officer trainee — I couldn't believe that this dump was our national capital. Row upon row of gloomy red brick buildings (invariably trimmed with dark green or brown paint), narrow pot-holed streets, rickety streetcars, poor shopping, no restaurants of any note, were characteristic of this run-down city. Among all the other overeducated, underpaid expatriates from across the country, we were thrown into a perpetual housing shortage, forever moving from one dingy flat to another. The only compensation was that our lowly incomes threw us into the midst of the less affluent Ottawa natives who spoke with Irish and French accents and became lifelong friends.

For official government errands we were grandly supplied with streetcar tickets, not cab slips. Possibly it is nostalgia for the lean, meek civil service of 30 years ago that, partly at least, motivates the Tory cutbacks today.

It wasn't until I got a job on the Hill that a new world of limousines, government planes, receptions, and cabinet gossip opened up glimpses of power that

have always lured young people into the frantic life of the ministerial aide. While there was no doubt that the cabinet and senior mandarins were the power centres, the top of the pyramid, at least socially, continued to remain at Rideau Hall.

It is to that pervasive influence over the years that Gwyn brings her sharp powers of observation:

In the matter of politics the kind of governor-generalcy Dufferin (1872-1878) invented came to its end during the King-Byng crisis of 1926. As wielder of social power, though, the Dufferin style persisted right up to our own time. Indeed, some of the difficulties that Governor General Edward Schreyer experienced between 1978 and 1984 in his efforts to impose a more populist and lower-keyed approach to the office, stemmed from the fact that Canadians, without realizing it, had come to expect that their governors general would forever behave as the Dufferins had once behaved.

While Gwyn concedes the viceregal court lent to Canada a touch of class missing in Washington, she leaves little doubt of her feelings on that score:

The arrogance of the viceregal court cowed Canadians and so, by extension, prolonged the nation's immaturity. It took us until 1952, only fifteen years short of our centennial, to summon up sufficient nerve to appoint a Canadian Governor General.

And the appointee, Vincent Massey, was hardly your typical Canadian.

The strong presence of the Rideau Hall court is a recurring theme as Gwyn takes us back to 1865 when, to this muddy, stinking shantytown, came the first 350 or so civil servants to get ready for



the new Dominion. The Ottawa of the 1950s was a paradise in comparison. The new arrivals suffered even greater cultural shock at the poor housing, odorous drains, lack of running water, constant danger of fire, swarms of flies, mosquitoes, and rats. Fevers ran rampant. It was terrible.

Through the diary of one Edmund Meredith, a professional civil servant transferred from Quebec, we are taken through the early days as the capital gradually took shape. Then, as Meredith

fades from the scene in 1879, Gwyn resumes the story mainly through the eyes of a lively woman society columnist, one "Amaryllis" who, with "a streak of elegant bitchiness," was a sharp observer of local foibles. (Like reviewers of mysteries, I can't disclose Gwyn's detective work to uncover the woman's real name).

What saved Ottawa society from utter misery was a succession of imperious British governors general who became the focal point of that unique viceregal court. Oddly enough, it was these displaced aristocrats, trying to make the best of it, who lent popularity to winter sports: tobogganing, skating, and skiing. Celebrities like Anthony Trollope, Oscar Wilde, Winston Churchill, Charles Dana Gibson, Lily Langtry, Guglielmo Marconi, and Rupert Brooke pass across an extraordinary social scene.

With the Edwardian era came the New Woman, the first of the emancipated who rode bicycles and dared to take lovers. While the "multi-layered clothes of the day inhibited the quick assignation," an active sexual life went on, and one unfortunate cabinet minister was actually chloroformed and gelded by a cuckolded doctor.

Dull it wasn't, and neither is the lively narrative that Gwyn has constructed from diaries and other sources. With the eye of one of our best political journalists, she also relates long-ago events to today, including a fascinating parallel between Lauriermania after 1896 and Trudeaumania in 1968.

"The parallels between the two are almost uncanny," she writes; except that Laurier was a much smoother conciliator and was well coached by Emilie Lavergne, who was probably his mistress. She taught Laurier manners and dress, how not to blow on his tea, and showed him "how to understand [English Canadians] so that he could use them."

Gwyn describes her book as a "social history." Not really. Rather, it's a history of society, of the upper strata. Only fitfully do we get glimpses of the lot of the ordinary folk as the glittering parties pass them by. Her approach, too, is from a feminist perspective (she describes Amaryllis as "a kindred soul"), and the book ends on a lament:

At about the time Amaryllis stopped writing (1902), Ottawa began to decline noticeably as an environment favourable to women. Here, as elsewhere in the country, women reverted more and more to being the "Childlike Woman" In the capital, the descent was particularly steep and continuous, all the way down to about the mid-1970s, when the women's movement began to assert itself.

After the careful writing in the rest of the book, the statement is out of context, a parting shot that she hasn't attempted to substantiate. Yes, I remember when my wife (no "childlike woman") was one of the first married women to be hired by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, and was prohibited from advancing beyond the clerical level. This was in 1951. But I also recall that women aides were often the power in ministerial offices. And Charlotte Whitton, Ellen Fairclough, and Judy La Marsh (from 1960) were notable exceptions to Gwyn's thesis.

Finally, about the book's design and format. The publisher has chosen a Chemistry Two textbook layout with wide margins filled with footnotes and postage-stamp photos. It's an unusual treatment, but I must admit that it gradually begins to work on the reader and allows one to follow along instead of flipping pages for photos and notes. The cover design, though, is a clutter of conflicting type styles and graphics, and surely someone could have thought up a better title than *The Private Capital*, with its intimations of an economics text.

These quibbles, however, do not seriously detract from what is sure to become a landmark in popular history writing in Canada. A rather cute epigraph — "The End of the Beginning" — hints at a sequel. Let us hope so. □

REVIEW

The nationalist dream

By Ramsay Cook

Jean Lesage and the Quiet Revolution, by Dale C. Thomson, Macmillan, 501 pages, \$34.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9797 5).

WHILE MOST provincial premiers leave only a shallow footprint on the sands of Canadian time almost every Quebec premier, at least in this century, has left a mark that will not quickly wash away. Sir Lomer Gouin presided magisterially over Quebec's first industrial revolution and kept the nationalists in their place. Maurice Duplessis played at being a nationalist while ensuring that the industrial revolution continued without any interference from the state. Jean Lesage brought Quebec's public institutions into the 20th century and started the nationalist hare that René Lévesque has been attempting to run with ever since. Lévesque has been an impressive personality, but his government has not made much impact either on the province or the country: the PQ Union Na-

tionalized; the independence movement in disarray; even Bill 101, important as it is, is less than meets the eye.

Quebec premiers, then, are *pas comme les autres*, partly because of their personalities but chiefly because they lead the only Canadian province with a French-speaking majority. Consequently in political practice, though not in constitutional law, it is a province unlike the others. Running a province and a *nation* at the same time is a trying business. It drove Jean Lesage to drink and a minor heart attack. It contributed to the early deaths of Daniel Johnson and Jean-Jacques Bertrand. It often seemed to frighten Robert Bourassa and it now threatens to exhaust René Lévesque. Every Quebec premier since Mercier in the 1880s has been concerned not only with the administration of a province but also with the defence of French-Canadian culture. Almost every Quebec premier has found it politically convenient to play upon the nationalist feelings and insecurities of French Canadian voters and to do battle with Ottawa. And almost every premier from Duplessis to Lévesque has discovered that the nationalist tiger, once aroused, runs where he chooses.

That was certainly Lesage's experience. When this capable and ambitious federal politician took over the Quebec Liberal party in 1958 and led it to power in less than two years, his na-

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tionalism was indistinguishable from that of Laurier or St. Laurent. As a back-bencher in Ottawa he had made only a few nationalist noises to ensure that his talents were not ignored at cabinet shuffle time. He was elected premier on a platform that made the usual bows to provincial autonomy, but emphasized the need to reform and modernize Quebec's institutions. Nationalism was in disrepute, associated with the reactionary regime of Duplessis in the minds of most intellectuals and reformers. But once in power Lesage found, as his predecessors had done, that nationalism was a useful tool. It gave a kind of moral tone to arguments that might otherwise have seemed to be about nothing more than sordid things like cash and power. Explaining the economic advantages of a publicly owned hydroelectric system was difficult. Repeating and embroidering the emotionally potent slogan "*maîtres chez nous*," was simpler and more potent. Pressing Ottawa for more room in the direct tax system could be justified by Quebec's obvious need to catch up in educational, social, and public health policies after those years of neglect by Duplessis. But to add a little glitter to the boring statistics of federal-provincial finance, there was the claim to be speaking for a province that was also the national homeland of the French-Canadian people. How the other premiers, anxious to squeeze Ottawa, envied Lesage. All they had were the boring statistics, at least until "regionalism" was reinvented by scholars and poets and politicians and oil men. But not even Newfoundland nationalism was as saleable as Quebec nationalism, for Quebec really is different: powerful enough to destroy Canada.

Once Lesage and his ministers — aided and abetted by the new intelligentsia in search of government jobs and subsidies — had aroused nationalist emotion and harnessed it to a reform cause, others began to raise the ante. If Quebec was not a province like the others, as Lesage claimed, why should it be a province at all? *Egalité ou Indépendance* was Daniel Johnson's ambiguous demand; *Vive Québec libre* was Pierre Bourgault's — and Charles de Gaulle's. Wasn't that a free translation of *maîtres chez nous*? Lesage, always a federalist, never seemed to understand the connection. Surely it was possible to be a little pregnant. But René Lévesque and the new technocrats who swarmed around Quebec City in 1960s — Jacques Parizeau, Claude Morin, Louis Bernard, André Marier, and André Patry — thought they were presiding over a natural birth, a new nation. Once out of power in 1966 (defeated by the votes that

went to the separatist candidates) Lesage tried to call a halt to the process he had set in motion. But his coalition collapsed. Lévesque and the clear-minded nationalists went their own way, founding the PQ, claiming that only a sovereign Quebec could continue the Quiet Revolution. Trudeau and the clear-minded federalists went to Ottawa.

Dale Thomson's lengthy, detailed and sometimes repetitive account of Jean Lesage and the Quiet Revolution is the most complete compendium of facts about the Lesage years in power that is available. Each major development is examined closely: educational reform, hydro nationalization, federal provincial squabbles and finances, government economic planning, Quebec's international adventures, and the defeat of the Fulton-Favreau constitutional amending formula. (One, by the way, that would have served Quebec better than the present formula, adopted as a result of Lévesque's mishandling of the constitutional negotiations.) Thomson also provides a good deal of biographical information, including some quite frank comments on Lesage's increasing dependence on alcohol and (revealed for the first time) his heart attack shortly after his 1966 defeat. All of this is valuable.

Unfortunately, the sum of the book is less than its parts. One weakness is that the author was unable to decide whether he wanted to write a biography or a study of a government in power. The result is part of each, with the parts ineffectively integrated. Another problem is in documentation. Though Thomson has had access to the Lesage papers the revelations are surprisingly meagre. And, worse, the author does not always document his claims — when he



discusses some crucial details of the France-Quebec waltz, for example.

But the most disappointing aspect of the book is that it contains no real attempt to analyse the events it describes or to place the events of the 1960s on a larger canvas. Thomson hardly discusses

Quebec nationalism until the last chapter, where he offers a few unoriginal, cursory comments. Nor does he make any attempt to assess the social and economic forces that underlay the political events that he so fully describes. William D. Coleman's recently published *Independence Movement in Quebec, 1945-1980* should be read alongside of Thomson's informative but prosaic account of Jean Lesage's turbulent years. It provides the analysis that makes those years understandable. □

REVIEW

Departures and arrivals

By Barbara Novak

84: *Best Canadian Stories*, edited by David Helwig and Sandra Martin, Oberon Press, 177 pages, \$23.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 544 9) and \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 545 7).

Coming Attractions 2, edited by David Helwig and Sandra Martin, Oberon Press, 139 pages, \$21.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 540 6) and \$11.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 541 4).

"I DON'T HAVE the heart to go on writing more short stories; there is little market for them," announced David Lewis Stein in an introduction to four of his stories that appeared in Clarke Irwin's first collection of *New Canadian Writing* (1968). The market must have improved: his "The Working Class," set in Toronto during a teachers' strike, is among the dozen stories collected in 84: *Best Canadian Stories*.

In making their selection, editors Sandra Martin and David Helwig looked for stories that "were written to be read rather than merely admired or even envied We wanted stories that would expand the traditional narrative framework without sacrificing artistry or technique."

Though conservative, their selection is eclectic, and there isn't a weak story in the book. It could be argued that some, such as Frances Itani's "Grandmother," Audrey Thomas's "Elevation," or Mavis Gallant's "Lena" perfect rather than expand the traditional narrative framework. I have come to expect perfection from Gallant and Thomas, but Itani is a new writer to me. Her portrait of a deaf and mute grandmother came as a wonderful surprise.

Other stories succeed in expanding their authors' narrative frameworks. Carol Shields's "Home" departs from

the naturalism of her novels to the realm of the surreal, and she unleashes a fine sense of comic absurdity. A powerful coupling of poetry and prose in Gwendolyn MacEwen's "Letters to Josef in Jerusalem" propels this story into a literary dimension beyond that of the stories in her 1972 collection, *Noman*. Set against the background of the Mid-east wars, "Letters . . ." reflects on the imminence of a global nuclear night.

In "Mine," a chilling, well-paced story of a recluse, Nora Keeling exercises greater narrative control than in any of the stories in *The Driver*, her first collection. And Tom Marshall's control in "T" elevates this story about a professor terrorized by a pre-school boy to a level above the merely clever. By introducing a hesitant first-person narrator in the final sentence, the author forces the reader to reconsider the whole story: an interesting reverberation results.

Bonnie Burnard's "Moon Watcher" (about a woman contemplating whether or not to divorce her husband) and Elizabeth Spencer's "Madonna" (about a woman reflecting upon her infidelity) are both compelling, evocative stories. Robin Mathews has captured the cadences of Gabriel Roy's *The Tin Flute* in "Florentine Letourneau," but his story aroused my admiration more than interest.

Coming Attractions, Oberon's annual showcase of the works of relatively unknown Canadian writers, features some outstanding fiction this year.

As the editors note, the sensibility and scope of Michael Rawdon's writing is international. Two of his three stories included in this collection are set in Spain. One contemplates the nature of exiles from the point of view of a narrator who both admires and judges their behaviour. The other is an account of two orphaned brothers who are sent to live with their British uncle in Valencia. The third, "Paracursions," is set in North America and explores the impact of a teenage suicide on a variety of characters. All three stories are remarkably rich in texture, and are sophisticated, elegant, and (except for their titles) accessible.

Diane Schoemperlen's stories are cleverly conceived. Written in a deliberately flat style, they tend to distance the reader. "This Town," structured to resemble a Chamber of Commerce brochure or a sociological study, presents pertinent information under appropriate headings, such as Climate, Population, Hobbies, etc., with cross-references where necessary. Contrasting with this impersonal structure is the author's use of direct quotes and anecdotes, suggesting something much more intimate. One can imagine the towns-

people reading this story aloud in the local bar, nudging one another knowingly. Schoemperlen's other stories share similar characters, settings, tone, and a tendency to rely on the active voice and present tense. As the refrain in her third story goes: "What we want is a change of style."

A young girl growing up in the 1940s provides the first-person narration in each of Joan Fern Shaw's three stories. In "Transfer" she flees her parents' abuse and is confronted, on a Toronto streetcar, with a victim of Nazi atrocities. In "Red Sequins on Markham Street" she connects with an old, Jewish junk-dealer long enough to learn something of the truth about him (and more about herself). And in "Raspberry Vinegar" she confronts death with honesty and courage. None of these stories contains the faintest hint of sentimentality, though Shaw's choice of subjects could easily have led her into that trap. The author is too sure of her material to allow it to stray from her artistic intention.

The title of this series, *Coming Attractions*, suggests that these authors are in a developmental state, a sort of literary chrysalis. This is misleading. They may be new voices to the reading public, but they are nevertheless mature writers. They are not "coming" attractions. They have arrived. □

REVIEW

The fourth wise man

By L.M. Owen

Years of Impatience: 1950-1960, by Gérard Pelletier, translated from the French by Alan Brown, Methuen, 255 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 98270 9).

TO ME, INCOMPARABLY the most interesting development in Canada in our time has been the emergence of the new Quebec. We date the beginning of the transformation from 1960; what needs explaining is why in that year there was a group of distinguished and sophisticated people, mostly aged about 40, who were ready to step forward and dominate the political and cultural life of the province. How was it that a generation of such quality had come to maturity in a period that they themselves called the Great Darkness, and what had they been doing in the immediately preceding years to prepare themselves for the dawn?

That's the question that Gérard

Pelletier sets out to answer in *Years of Impatience*. He does it by means of a very personal memoir, the story of four friends and what they did in the 1950s. (With characteristic modesty he says it's a book about *three* men.) He starts with a very effective prologue, showing the four in 1961. Three of them — Pelletier, Jean Marchand, and Pierre Trudeau — are in a private room in a Montreal restaurant. They have been there for more than an hour, but the fourth, who made the lunch date, hasn't shown up.

And, even if we've been waiting more than an hour for René Lévesque, I still don't feel impatient.

My two companions do.

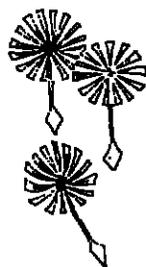
Marchand never could stand waiting for people unless there was good reason for it, and Lévesque never has good reasons for keeping people waiting: it comes naturally to him, like breathing. Trudeau, for his part, considers lateness a mark of contempt for those who are kept waiting. But he is resigned to it and has imperturbably ordered his lunch. We do the same, and here we are, all three of us, busy with dessert.

An hour later, Marchand is about to stamp out in a rage when "the door opens. René bursts in, his long forelock flying, an enormous briefcase under his arm, his tie crooked, a cigarette hanging from his lips, full of energy. 'Hello, guys! Eaten already?'"

Thus, deftly, in a few pages, the four personalities are established. Then we go back and learn when and how the author had met each of the others and how their remarkably disparate backgrounds and characters affected their alliance. The point isn't laboured, but of course a good deal of the interest of the book comes from the reader's awareness that 20 years later the central fact of Canadian politics would be the duel between two of these friends — one of them, in the 1950s, the least public of the four, the other the least interested in domestic politics.

The great events are all here: the return of Trudeau from his travels in time to join Marchand and Pelletier on the picket lines at Asbestos in 1949; the founding of *Cité libre*, and later of the Rassemblement; the belated politicizing of René Lévesque in the CBC producers' strike. They take on a new quality, for me, by being seen from the inside. The curious method of editing *Cité libre* fascinates me: each contributor would read his article aloud, and the rest of the group would challenge it sentence by sentence. One night a new young man came to a meeting with an article in his pocket. After hearing this intimidating process he crept away, the article still in his pocket. His name was Hubert Aquin.

What I most regret about those years is the blindness of the CCF to what was



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PENGUIN · SHORT · FICTION

The Day is Dark

and

Three Travellers

MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS

'All the writing of this extraordinary young woman is so individual, so unlike anything else being written on this continent . . .'

— Robertson Davies, *The New York Times Book Review*

The Day is Dark tells the story of an orphaned, despairing family whose members experience their moments of youthful love and also haunting tragedy and bitterness. The second novella, *Three Travellers*, is a variation of the traditional French triangle.



50th Anniversary

Penguin Books Canada \$6.95

going on in Quebec, and its consequent failure to become a significant force there. Pelletier makes this vivid; he recalls how in 1947, just back from Europe and quite ready to join a socialist, labour-oriented party, he had a long conversation with David Lewis. Lewis said firmly: "We don't cater to Quebec nationalism." Pelletier had to look up the English word "cater" when he got home. "My research revealed that David Lewis was missing the train." Against this, to be fair, should be set the almost total lack of interest in events in the rest of Canada displayed by Pelletier and his friends.

What was it that made the generation born about 1920 so different from its no doubt equally talented predecessors, and led it to create a society in which its successors would flower as they have? Pelletier suggests that the intellectual and cultural capital of French Canada was Paris; when in June, 1940, Paris was plunged into its own Great Darkness, French Canada was suddenly on its own. And after the war France was too preoccupied with its futile and disastrous effort to keep its empire to have much to offer to Canadians. So they made their own culture. Pelletier remembers Félix Leclerc in 1943, sitting on the floor with his guitar, singing his own songs for his own amusement. It hadn't yet occurred to him that they might interest the public. But it soon did. And when television came, he and others were ready to use it. It's a striking fact, by the way, that Duplessis avoided appearing on television, and expected his ministers to do the same; whereas Lévesque made his name as a television star.

Alan Brown's translation is admirable, and might have been perfect if there had been an editor to save him from the gallicisms into which translators almost inevitably fall sometimes, like "militantism" for "militancy" and "aggressivity" for "aggressiveness."

Now I'm impatient for the sequel to *Years of Impatience*, and also for other memoirs from this group. It's probably too much to hope that Trudeau will ever settle down to write a book; Lévesque is still busy with other things; Pelletier tells us that Marchand hates writing; but what about that formidable figure, so important in the political background and the publishing foreground, Jacques Hébert? I recall a long, tedious, and pointless meeting in Frankfurt, perhaps in 1970. Desperate with boredom, I observed out of the corner of my eye that Hébert, beside me, was busily writing short notes to his family and a long reflective letter to Pierre Trudeau. Now that he's in the Senate, he should have enough tedious meetings to write a whole book. □

Body language

As many women writers have discovered, personal experience need not be repressed in order to produce objective, 'universal' poetry

By Libby Scheler

Binding Twine, by Penny Kemp, Ragweed Press, 128 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 920304 32 X).

Gold Earrings, by Sharon Stevenson, Pulp Press, 111 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88978 147 8).

Beneath the Skin of Paradise: The Pinf Poems, by Judith Fitzgerald, Black Moss Press, 64 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88753 116 4).

DURING A DISCUSSION on feminist aesthetics at the last League of Canadian Poets annual meeting, two of us said we thought it was not possible to write well about childbirth unless one had had a child. Robert Enright objected that this meant authentic writing could only come out of personal experience, to which I responded, "The trouble with some male writing is that it's disconnected from experience — it's disembodied."

Our views weren't not really that far apart. Enright wasn't rejecting the value of personal experience as part of the writer's raw materials, and I am not of the opinion that Flaubert should not have written *Madame Bovary* because he was a man nor Doris Lessing *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* because she is a woman. The question is important, however, in determining the characteristics of a female aesthetic and a male aesthetic, if such animals exist. (The question of a feminist or masculinist aesthetic is a somewhat different subject.)

Female writing makes direct use of personal experience more often than male writing. Male writers are more likely to mediate their experience through a variety of devices, with the result that their dependence on it is often unrecognizable. It may be argued that great writers of either gender can write about experiences they have never had — such as childbirth — if they possess empathic genius. I'm not sure about this. I prefer to believe that language is an extension of the body, that it arises out of personal and social relations. Some of the most interesting current work in women's

writing freely explores the relationship between the body and language, experience and language.

On the surface, such generalizations (granting many exceptions) would seem to reflect the different ways women and men live, whether the result of social conditioning, biology, or some combination of these. Women, the cliché goes, are more able to express personal feelings. Why should art be any different?

The reason some male critics place a greater value on writing that is not obviously personal may be that they feel easier with work that functions more or less as they do. The value in a work is not how personal it may be, but in how well it expresses either the personal or the "other." Personal matters, expressed personally enough, with courage and honesty by a talented writer, apply universally — because none of us is unique in ourselves or in our experience. Personal experience plays an important role, but in very different ways, in the three books under review.

Binding Twine makes direct use of experience, telling the story of Kemp's custody fight for her children. After her marriage broke up, she tells us in the introduction, her son and daughter lived with her for six years, their father seeing them infrequently if at all, and not paying any child support until served with a court order. For four of those years Kemp raised her children on welfare.

The father eventually decided to spend some time with his son, and the boy stayed several months with him. When he wanted to return to his mother, Kemp says, he was not allowed. Her ex-husband and his new wife had decided to seek custody. Kemp reacted by taking the children out of the country for several months, then returned to battle to retain custody. She lost. The judge decided for the father, Kemp tells us, on the grounds that the husband and new wife had a better income than her and a more conventional life-style.

This is the raw material for a riveting

story. The other writing I have seen by Kemp centres on language experimentation, word-play, and fantasy, but the form she wisely chose for this book is a narrative, broken up into many short, connected poems. And the book is a good read, a page-turner. In her introduction, Kemp writes:

My task has been to transmute my personal experience into something larger, more accessible: to make my truth available so that a correspondence is set up with the reader. I don't know why the run-on lines of prose are considered more accessible than poetry. Poetry can say so much in a single phrase.

Kemp fulfils her intentions, but it's not the strength of single phrases that makes the book work. Indeed, as Phyllis Webb notes on the dust-jacket, Kemp "risks the plain, the prolix and the obsessional" in her narrative. The language is not rich; there is little description or imagery. Kemp carries us along with lean and simple phrases. She tells us what happened, what was said, how it felt. What comes through is the power of her love and the courage of her honesty.

I was tripped up a few times in the book by Kemp's fondness for puns and similar-sounding words. Sometimes this is witty and on target:

*Subtle digs I dug:
the kids called
unkempt, my name
undone.*

But sometimes it is superficial, at odds with the depth of the whole:

*Pain, pain go away. Come again
some other way.
Not this, Not this. Weary.
Wary. Worry. War. Were. Worn.
Oui.*

While the direct use of experience in writing seems simple — a form available to even a beginning writer — in fact it is difficult. There are several dangers. The writer might remain too close to the material to maintain her artistry. She might become too concerned about including all the details of what happened,

rather than the core truth. Or she might simply sink into a well of emotion and write sentimentally or melodramatically. Kemp avoids these pitfalls, sticking to the hard truth:

*What choice is there
Now, but a rough
humility, a ruthless
contemplation of
events.*

The distinction between confessional and personal poetry is important. Confessional poetry is an outpouring of emotion, which controls form and content. It is liable to be self-pitying. In effective personal poetry the poet is able to put enough distance between herself and her experience both to exert artistic control and to achieve an honest and "ruthless contemplation of events." *Binding Twine* does this, and is the kind of personal poetry that is personal enough, thereby transcending limitations.

Gold Earrings is the work of a poet at war with herself, a prolonged, unresolved conflict between two selves that are very far apart. Stevenson makes a valiant attempt to force all her work into a political envelope, but it is intellectual politics, not politics from the soul. Her personal, emotional self is not easily beaten down, however, and intrudes on her political discourse in strange ways, as in several lines of striking imagery that she then turns around and makes fun of. What you get is a kind of poetry *interruptus*, where the personal and lyrical insights are doused with cold water before poetic fulfilment is reached.

The story behind this book is important for an understanding of what is happening here. Sharon Stevenson was the daughter of a mineworkers' organizer and Communist Party member. At one time she planned to be a union organizer. She was a member of the Communist Party of Canada in her early 20s, got expelled, became estranged from her father, and later joined a far-left Maoist group, the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist).

When she was 25, *Stone*, her first book of poems, was published to a good critical reception. Later, when she was a member of the CPCML and an English student at the University of British Columbia, she wrote a thesis attacking her first book for petty-bourgeois self-indulgence. While in the CPC and in the period before she joined the CPCML, she openly wrote poetry, but as a Maoist, she denounced all that.

But she continued writing, secretly. She told one old friend to watch for her when she sold party newspapers on the street corner — if she was wearing gold

earrings, it meant she was writing poems. Hence the title of the book. In 1978, Stevenson killed herself by washing down 50 sleeping pills with a bottle of rum.

An article in the *Toronto Star* quotes Dorothy Livesay's assessment of Stevenson as "the first young woman in Canada to write about working people from a sense of experience." In my reading, this does not come through. The authenticity of experience and personal feelings that does emerge can be found in a poem about her father ("Holocaust"), in several feminist poems (such as "Dream"), and in lyrical and descriptive interruptions in the later political poems. But the infusion of a world-view with personal passion, which gives power to the work of many Latin-American poets, is not there. Stevenson's politics come across as something she thinks she ought to feel, rather than something from the heart. Her true poetic sensibility and personal authenticity are elsewhere.

Strangely enough, the most compelling part of the book is the poems written secretly while she was a Maoist, with awful titles like "Poetry Too Has a Class Nature," "Down with the Theory of 'Human' Nature," "The Native People Are Standing Up/The Working Class Supports Them." In the period before she took her life, the conflict within had heated up unbearably, and the result is a kind of shiny, bleeding language that the



poet attempts to nail down with multi-syllabic words and multi-clause sentences from her party's newspaper. Whole verses and lines are quite beautiful, interspersed with the heavy singing of mandatory praises of the party line. It is strange and painful to read, but fascinating.

Robin Endres has written an intelligent, insightful introduction to *Gold Earrings* which, although it perhaps praises too highly Stevenson's overall achievement, articulates the nature of the conflicts Stevenson put herself through:

For the Marxist poet, the law of cause and effect in history collides with the experience of synchronicity which is at the root of all writing. The poet must have the ability to suspend the sense of linear time and live — for moments at least — in a world where things like to happen together.

Endres further notes that Marxism tries to fit "all problems into itself." Stevenson tried to fit it all, unsuccessfully, into a Marxist aesthetic, and ran into some of the same problems that artists find themselves in today when they try to include everything into feminist dogma or a fixed definition of feminist aesthetics. A body of artistic work does not fit easily into a large, enclosed philosophical structure; it needs an open field.

The political, philosophical views will find a place *within* the body of work; if they enclose the work, they limit and damage it. Endres offers what might be seen as good-advice-too-late for Stevenson: ". . . the purpose of radical poetry is not socialism. The purpose of socialism is a world where more and better poetry is possible." Stevenson's repression of her personal experiences as artistic material, and her attempts to write in accord with certain moral and intellectual imperatives, prevented her from achieving a fuller realization of her poetic gifts.

In *Beneath the Skin of Paradise: The Piaf Poems*, Judith Fitzgerald takes on the persona of the French chanteuse, Edith Piaf. The book's tone is confessional, except that the confessions are attributed to someone other than the author. This is a form that has been used successfully many times; often the writer has identified with the chosen character. A reading of some of Fitzgerald's earlier work, particularly the obviously autobiographical poem series "Past Cards" in *Split Levels*, indicates that she identifies with aspects of Piaf's life, and that her choice of this form is a method of mediating some of her own personal experiences. This can be seen in verses like:

*perhaps I'm tiny
but I've got strength
nonetheless
and I've been fighting
one thing after another*

*and one thing
after another's
been fighting me*

*and this small package
is dynamite*

"Past Cards" is a more successful work than the Piaf poems; its language and emotion are sharper. Fitzgerald is better when she is direct about what is on her mind.

An editor I was talking to last year complained that there was too much "I" in current fiction; that what fiction was really about was "we." This strikes me as a bit of an old-fashioned prejudice when the lines between autobiography and fiction, poetry and prose, and other forms are becoming blurred. The ques-

tion is not whether to make use of personal experience in writing, but how to do it well. Although much great literature does not make use of personal experience in any obvious way (of course it all does in some way), the attempt to disguise or repress personal experience out of a misguided concept of objectivity or universality can produce writing that lacks authenticity and power. □

REVIEW

Suffer little children

By Eva Nichols

The Book of Matthew: The Story of a Learning Disabled Child, by Betty Jane Wylie, McClelland & Stewart, 179 pages, \$13.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 9059 3).

MANY PEOPLE view the writing of an autobiography as an essentially self-indulgent exercise. After all, unless the author is someone particularly interesting or well-known, who, other than the author is likely to be interested? I do not altogether agree with this point of view, although I recognize that one soul's catharsis may indeed be another one's poison.

Betty Jane Wylie's biography of her son Matthew is not a run-of-the-mill autobiography. Mother as much as son serves as the heroine/hero of this story and it provides an interesting insight into an exceptional relationship. Of course, I may be biased. I enjoyed this book because my daily experiences involve me with many Matthews and many Betty Janes. And their relationship to one another and to society at large is one that should be repeated a thousandfold in the lives of other learning-disabled children and their families.

But how will the reader react who does not even know what a learning disability is? We cannot assume that books about groups or individuals with special needs will be read only by others with similar needs or those with at least an intimate knowledge of them. While I find it hard to judge this clearly, I do sense that the puzzle created by the idea of learning disabilities for those who do not know this particular hidden handicap would not be clarified by *The Book of Matthew*.

Wylie has had previous successes with autobiographical books. But the difference lies in the fact that her other experiences, such as widowhood, although no less painful for her, are more readily comprehended by the lay reader. Having

a learning-disabled child is an experience shared by about 10 per cent of the population, and even for them the concept of learning disabilities may be confusing.

Yet even those who are involved and knowledgeable, who truly care, have complained about one aspect of this book. Wylie's son, Matthew, is a *brain damaged* young man. Brain-damaged is a term that Wylie uses interchangeably with learning-disabled, perceptually handicapped, and mentally retarded. Clearly she does recognize that there *are* differences between these labels, but since they had all been used at one time or another to describe Matthew, she does so as well. Unfortunately, this has provoked a negative reaction in those who have for years been trying to fight the idea that learning disabilities are synonymous with retardation. I wonder if thereby she has lost her potentially most sympathetic audience: the parents of other learning-disabled youngsters.

So what is a learning disability? It is a communication disorder that strikes about 10 per cent of the general population and results in messages being mixed up in the brain. It tends to occur in people with predominantly average to above-average intelligence. It may manifest itself in numerous ways ranging from the best-known one, dyslexia, to

really obscure conceptual and social difficulties. It may impact on one's life in one discrete area, such as reading or writing, or cut across all aspects of daily life, such that the learning disabled person cannot apparently function well at any time.

Matthew Wylie was and continues to be fortunate in having a mother who will fight for what she believes in. The sympathetic reader can laugh with, but never at, Matthew. She may shed a few tears with Betty Jane. But no truly sympathetic reader will be untouched by the simple prose:

"I asked how he [Matthew] felt when he was sad."

"I feel lonely," he said. "What do I do with lonely? I try to be unlonely."

And again:

I asked him

"Would you like to be born again?"

"Probably not," he said "I'm okay as I am."

If only one could be sure that all learning-disabled children could become "unlonely" and could feel that they are okay as they are. Please, if you have a soft spot in your heart for a child, any child, but especially one who has to fight to live in spite of incredible odds, read this book. The Matthews of this world need all the understanding and help that they can get. □

PENGUIN · SHORT · FICTION

Café Le Dog Matt Cohen

'Eight funny and elegant stories . . . *Café Le Dog* is an enjoyable collection which masterfully combines objective reality with the luminous, larger-than-life truths of the human heart.'

— Maclean's

With a new introduction by Matt Cohen, *Café Le Dog*, presents a selection of seven stories plus a novella. This is a refreshing collection that sparkles with Cohen's unique sensibility, at once earthy, wise, and ironic.



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ARTS & CRAFTS

Contemporary Canadian Photography from the Collection of the National Film Board/Photographie canadienne contemporaine de la collection de l'office National du Film, by Pierre DesSUREault, Martha Hanna, and Martha Langford, Hurtig, illustrated, 176 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88830 264 9).

By John Oughton

THERE'S A SENSE of both urgency and elegy to this collection of photographs from the stills division of the NFB. Elegy because, after 43 years in the NFB, the stills collection is being transferred to the National Museums of Canada; and urgency because, under the twin shadows of the Mulroney culture-cutters and the Applebert report, the future of the whole NFB seems in jeopardy.

This collection has therefore been produced for reasons of politics as much as to give Canadians "long-awaited access to this great photographic treasure" (as the cover blurb asserts). Yet there has been no dearth of excellent and well-received books produced by the NFB stills division, particularly during Lorraine Monk's rule. What this collection offers is a survey of work since 1950 that did not fit into previous exhibitions and publications, as well as some that did. Some photos were from NFB assignments, and thus reflect a photojournalistic method; others are "art" pictures purchased after the fact.

If that seems a rather unfocused approach to editing a book that will, in some ways, act as the stills division's memorial, the editors themselves don't offer a clearer methodology than their choice of "the best." This does sidestep charges of lack of geographic balance (photographers east of Toronto seem poorly represented), comprehensiveness of leading photographers (Karsh is included but not Beny), and originality (the brilliant B.C. photographer Tamio Wakayama is left out). Some of their chosen images are memorable; the first five plates are brilliant, but the next few fail to live up to the same standard. Perhaps the task of winnowing 150,000 entries down to 127 representative photos demanded a more defined editorial approach than this book took.

NOTE

Books that receive a particularly positive critical notice are marked at the end with a star. ☆

Generally, the production quality is good, although some of the colour plates seem slightly washed out. □

Sunlight in the Shadows: The Landscape of Emily Carr, edited by Kerry Mason Dodd, Oxford, illustrated, 84 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 19 540464 5).

By John Oughton

THIS ELEGANT, well-printed little collection is a tribute to Emily Carr. It combines sensitive colour photographs by Michael Breuer of the exact B.C. locations she used in her paintings with apposite and previously unpublished extracts from her letters, notes, and journals.

As the manager of the Emily Carr Gallery, Kerry Dodd is thoroughly familiar not only with Carr's art but also with her unique approach to writing. Carr used simple words and an economical style to express complex thoughts and overwhelming emotions. A single Emily Carr sentence often gives the reader more than a whole page of art criticism, as the samples chosen here indicate: "Canada is a land of spacey sweeps of thousand mile spreads of fir trees, wild mountains, tearing rivers, a land of terrific silences."

Were it done with less taste, this book could be accused of second-guessing the artist; after all, her interpretations of the scenes are what should count. But what Dodd and Scheuer provide through their appreciative (rather than intrusive)



approach is both a celebration of Carr's genius and an interesting way to evaluate how she *used* the alternately lush and stark beauty of the B.C. coast. Particularly for those who have never visited Canada's lotusland, this is a good way to see Carr's work in the context of the nature she loved so much.

For the Carr devotee, it offers new passages from her writing that in themselves make this book's modest price worthwhile: "To have been per-

mitted to give pleasure by writing and painting the plain simple things of my life fills me with the deepest gratitude; that these things spoke so that I might hear and in a language I understood even a little of." ☆

BELLES LETTRES

Remembering Orwell, compiled by Stephen Wadhams, introduction by George Woodcock, Penguin, 227 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 14 007 4589).

By Ray Fillp

BORN ERIC BLAIR, Orwell was groomed to be a member of the gentry. The Eton boy spent five years as a colonial cop in Burma at the "dirty end of Empire." The injustices he was trained to enforce left him with "an enormous weight of guilt." Noblesse oblige, Blair turned into a bum, became Orwell, and went on "tramping expeditions" in search of poverty. Privileged friends found his Don Quixote complex frightfully amusing. Coal miners continued to call the 6'4" King's scholar in rags "sir," and he never wore his tramp's gear around Southwold in case his father should spot him.

He only managed to shock himself. *Down and Out in Paris and London* was rejected by Cape and Faber. T.S. Eliot, one of the readers, claimed the novel was "too loosely written." Orwell miserably unhandled his manuscript to Mabel Fierz, whose Hampstead Garden house served as a base camp for the Blair-Orwell rich-poor costume changes.

It took a bullet in the neck in Spain, the lazy in-fighting of *mañana* Marxists, and Stalinist violence in Barcelona to convince Orwell that workers were not angels. However, his Spanish experience did not shatter his faith in the "English genius," in a revolution without a civil war, where "a lion and a unicorn would still grace the buttons of the uniforms of England's post-revolutionary socialist soldiers."

Orwell's utopian vision was not influenced by the sci-fi socialism of H.G. Wells (who called him "that Trotskyite with big feet"). The English countryside and the Tory table talk of 19th-century rural radicals such as William Cobbett contributed more to Orwell's sense of healthy community and Peter Porcupine Proletarianism.

Orwell was upset when *Animal Farm* became the favourite fable of anti-communists. Likewise, *1984* was meant as a cautionary tale satirizing the *perver-*

sion of ideals in 1948. Michael Foot, former leader of the British Labour Party, mentions Orwell's "As I Please" column in the socialist weekly journal *Tribune* as "the only column ever written in Fleet Street by a man who came into the office deliberately every week with the idea of offending as many readers as possible."

As for Orwell's personal life, his death-bed marriage remains a macabre accomplishment. The blonde beauty Sonia Brownell, "like a painting by Renoir," remedied Orwell's "repulsive" self-image at a late stage in the game. But they were happy in their brief-ever-after fantasy world together.

Friends and enemies speak of Orwell's large gloomy presence. Big Writer Is Watching You. Yet the name on his hospital door, as on his tombstone, simply refers to a certain Eric Arthur Blair. A strange sad circle of triumph. □

Women and Words: The Anthology/ les femmes et les mots une antologie, edited by the West Coast Editorial Collective, Harbour Publishing, 287 pages, \$10.95 paper (ISBN 0 920080 53 7).

By Lorraine Johnson

THE TITLE is suggestive, as if tapping all of the post-modern, French, feminist, and psychoanalytic resources. It implies that women somehow are initiated into the world of language differently from men and that they must affirm this difference by rejecting the language of their "fathers" and exploring the "openness" of "écriture *feminine*."

This Canadian anthology may borrow in places the language of post-modern thought — French — but it in no way approaches the philosophical rigour of this movement, a rigour that is necessary to substantiate any claims of linguistic and ontological difference. Instead, women's experience with language is displayed in the most banal terms; as if the point were only to "reach out to my sisters." This sentiment overruns the volume, with titles like "Earth Mother," "What We Want," and "We Brown Women."

After establishing "sisterhood," the anthology moves on to another over-worked battle zone of clichéd images and metaphors — role models. These simply cannot carry a story. Take Candis Graham's "Nothing Special," for example. Within the space of seven pages, there is a father beating his child in the apartment below, an obscene telephone caller, sexual harassment on the streets, and a working mother supporting her only daughter, who conveniently starts to menstruate on page 6. One waits for the consciousness-raising

party, the abortion, the self-defence course, and so on. The feminism of this anthology is gutless, wasting energy on the clichés of side issues while there is an almost complete absence of articulated theory.

Only Penny Kemp's poem "Simultaneous Translation" approaches a clarity of feminist statement. This poem serves as a kind of preface to the work, touching on the problems of Canada's divided linguistic community and then extending them to the feminist issue of both French and English as inherited, cultural (read patriarchal) baggage. In Kemp's provocative word-play, "*au langage masculin*" is acoustically transformed/translated into the astute "oh long age mask you lent."

Aside from this intelligent comment on women and words, the much-too-short introduction lapses into the same solipsism and self-reference that typifies the anthology. The editors selected works, the introduction tells us, that "reflect as fully as possible the cultural and linguistic backgrounds, race, age, sexuality, class and location of the women who submitted their work." This is collective preening; the selection process itself defines any homogeneity the anthology has, but the process is based on simply reflecting what they chose: a circle with an empty core. □

CITIES

More Than an Island: A History of the Toronto Island, by Sally Gibson, Irwin Publishing, illustrated, 324 pages, \$34.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7720 1446 9).

By Mark Gerson

"WHAT 'THE MOUNTAIN' is to the Montrealer, 'the island' is to the people of Toronto," historian G. Mercer Adam wrote in 1882. That the local obsession is alive and well a century later is shown by the flood of books about Toronto Island in recent years. Gibson's is but the latest and most complete of these. Pains-takingly researched, scrupulously indexed and footnoted, and attractively illustrated, it recounts in sometimes numbing detail the island's history from the days of French *coureurs de bois* to the legal and political wrangles of the present.

For anyone not familiar with it, the Island (actually a mini-archipelago) lies between the city and Lake Ontario. It was the defence potential of the Island, originally a peninsula joined by a narrow sandbar to the mainland, that helped favour Toronto for settlement. Once a bustling summer resort, complete with hotels, amusement parks, vaudeville

shows, a baseball stadium and more than 600 residences, it now is mostly parkland. The battles between the remaining residents, who want to maintain their tightly knit community, and Metropolitan Toronto, which wants to clear their homes for more parkland, have found their way to the provincial legislature and the Supreme Court of Canada. And the war continues.

Gibson's story is fascinating, particularly as it places the current dispute into historical perspective. As she tells it, Islanders have long had their hands full coping with municipal officialdom, and were grateful to be transferred to Metro jurisdiction, if only to be free of heavy-handed city politicians. Ironically, this occurred just as city sympathies began shifting in favour of the Islanders. This is not an objective history, at least not as it relates to the Islanders. But after reading it, it's hard to disagree with Jane Jacobs, who told a rally in 1980 that "when people defend a place the way you Islanders are defending this, that's the greatest argument of all" for preserving the community. □

Toronto Remembered: A Celebration of the City, by William Kilbourn, Stoddart, 336 pages, \$21.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7737 2029 4).

By Mark Gerson

THIS BOOK is among the literary gifts showered on Toronto in honour of its 150th birthday last year. Unfortunately it's not among the best of the sesqui season. Reminiscences and historical sketches by Kilbourn are interlaced with quotes, poems, and essays reprinted from various sources, and the result is an unfocused omnibus.

That isn't to say that individual pieces aren't noteworthy. Pierre Berton's moving tribute to Union Station, written when the railway terminal was threatened with demolition, Harry Rasky's colourful description of a Jewish neighbourhood, Michael Bliss's entertaining account of the city's Edwardian Methodist mafia, Bharati Mukherjee's run-in with racism, and Marshall McLuhan's clever analogy equating unscrupulous developers with airplane hijackers are all outstanding. So are Kilbourn's account of the absurdities of municipal politics and the excerpt from his biography of William Lyon Mackenzie, although some of his other pieces are not as successful. Also entertaining are the dozens of short quotations from the pens of Brendan Behan ("Toronto will be a fine town when it is finished"), Anna Jameson ("Toronto is like a fourth or fifth rate provincial town with the pretensions of a capital city"), and

the wag who wrote that "no one should visit Toronto for the first time."

The material, as fine as much of it is, is poorly organized and never gels into anything more than an excuse to toss a series of thinly related pieces into one volume. Perhaps Kilbourn should have prepared three books — a memoir, a compilation of Toronto quotations, and an anthology of the best essays written about the city — rather than the single jumbled collection that is *Toronto Remembered*. □

COMEDY & SATIRE

Characters Including Me, by I. Gordon Drysdale, Lancelot Press, 103 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88999 235 5).

By Kristy Eldredge

THIS AUTHOR did meet up with some salty characters in his Nova Scotia youth, but he's made a mistake in presenting himself as one of them. His own full but unremarkable life becomes the main focus of his reminiscences, and his narration gives little justification for self-interest. As far as one can gather from his conscientious but personally reticent account, Drysdale is an amiable, unassuming man who coped good-naturedly with a rugged rural boyhood and went on to do nothing noteworthy.

His interest in people has resulted in his remembering quite a few funny stories and conversational *bon mots*, and these are entertaining, but they're often presented in an odd, clipped manner instead of with the expansive ease of a born story-teller. Drysdale has an odd tendency to give details where they aren't necessary and to withhold them when they are. On the first page, he writes: "Usually everyone came home at noon, for a meal which we called 'dinner.'" A few sentences later, he speaks of hitching the horse up to "an old red pung" — a word that evidently strikes him as less odd than "dinner," for he neither comments on nor explains it.

The book is most interesting when it does what it purports to do: describe characters. One of these is Charlie Steele, a big, alcoholic woodsman who would drink anything from extract of lemon to shoe polish. With his brawling, his sexual prowess, and eventual marriage to the town slattern, he makes for the liveliest reading. Some amusement is afforded by Drysdale's account of the humourless, idiosyncratic citizens of Guysborough, N.S., where he settles, but his stories of the uneducated black people who live nearby are distinctly patronizing. The book does not present a large enough vision to have anything but a very limited appeal. □

The Leacock Medal Treasury: Four Decades of the Best of Canadian Humour, edited by Ralph L. Curry, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 359 pages, \$11.95 paper (ISBN 0 88619 086 X).

By Maria Horvath

NOT SURPRISINGLY, this collection of excerpts from each of the 37 winners of the Leacock medal for humour is great fun. Most of the pieces are nostalgic reminiscences of life in the varied neighbourhoods of Canada. They range from Farley Mowat's Newfoundland to Don Bell's Montreal and Morley Torgov's Northern Ontario towns, from Sondra Gottlieb's North Winnipeg to Max Braithwaite's small town in Saskatchewan. But humorous Canadians are not confined to Canada; Lawrence Earl visits Ireland, and Eric Nicol recalls his adventures in England and Paris.

Perhaps reflecting Canada itself, the humour collected here is quiet and smiling rather than loud and uproarious. Strikingly, almost none of it is like that of Stephen Leacock. There's little of that zany, slightly skewed view of life's absurdities that made Leacock one of the writers that Groucho Marx most admired.

While the book has only a few belly laughs, it is full of chuckles. Two excerpts stand out. Morley Torgov recounts a delightful tale about the search for a new leader of a Jewish community; like all great humour, it is a mirror in which we all see someone we know. Mervyn J. Huston tells the story of the trial of a local bootlegger who obviously is also one of the most popular men in town. What is the jury of his peers to do? The verdict is hilarious.

Unfortunately, Mordecai Richler is not represented. One can only wonder what criteria determine the Leacock awards so that one of Canada's funniest writers has never won one. Despite his absence, however, the others are a funny bunch. Only a handful failed to make me smile. □

FICTION LONG & SHORT

The Apostate's Tattoo, by J.J. Steinfeld, Ragweed Press, 134 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 902304 28 1).

By Veronica Ross

"WRITE AND perhaps the suffering will make sense," a character says in one of the stories in this collection. One hopes Steinfeld will heed this advice, because his is an important new voice in Canadian writing.

Of the 12 stories in this collection, only three have been previously pub-

lished. The writing is brisk, assured, fresh. Sometimes the tone is uneven, sometimes the endings are a bit pat, but these faults seem minor beside the strengths.

Some of the stories are existential, others are accounts of contemporary life, the rest deal with being Jewish. The existential stories are humorous, the contemporary ones moving, but the Jewish stories are the most powerful. They hit you in the guts and heart. Survival, memory, history, suffering, guilt, love: these are Steinfeld's themes, and they are weighty ones. For this reason, one feels, these are also the stories where the writer's voice hedges, where Steinfeld slides into a too-pat ending.

The title story, "The Apostate's Tattoo," is the strongest. An assimilated Jew, Sam Morgan (Shlomo Markovitz), becomes more and more troubled as he studies his own heritage. Finally he has his mother's concentration camp number tattooed on his arm. But it is *the wrong arm*: "I love you, I love you, Shlomo," his wife cries, which somehow does not sound right.

Similar problems exist in others, but the overall impression is that these are profound stories about complex situations. One hopes that Steinfeld's visions will lead to further exploration of these themes. Although the hand of the expert is sometimes missing, Steinfeld is obviously a writer with enormous talent and much feeling. □

Berlin Solstice, by Sylvia Fraser, McClelland & Stewart, 384 pages, \$18.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 3176 9).

By Sherie Posesorski

SERIOUS INTENTIONS don't necessarily make for fiction that can be taken seriously. Case in point: *Berlin Solstice*. This novel charts the fortunes of two Germans, Carmel Kohl, an entertainer, and Kurt Schmidt, a Hitler youth, during the Third Reich.

Fraser aims at creating a fiction that will seriously examine the political and personal mentality of the German Reich. She demonstrates her high seriousness in her oversaturation of epigraphs preceding each section, overscrupulous historical descriptions of place, and pop-in historical figures. None of it coalesces. Huge blocks of historical summary and detail stand out from the narrative, like the yellow-marked passages of a dogged student. Despite the length of the novel, it appears too short to carry the period covered, 1922-1945, which forces Fraser constantly to synopsise historical events in dialogue asides.

Her intention is the depiction of the emergence of the Reich mentality —

along the lines of E.L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*, which in masterly fashion explores the whirlpool of economic, social, and political events that created the mentality of 20th-century America. However, Fraser's linear narrative makes the history of the era logical and explainable — trivializing its impact. What the novel lacks is the swirling dynamic between the personal and the political. As Schmidt rises through the ranks of the SS and Kohl through the underground resistance movement, it seems less a political decision and more like historical train-hopping. □

Christopher Cartier of Hazelnut, Also Known as Bear, by Antonine Maillet, translated from the French by Wayne Grady, Methuen, 76 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 98110 9).

By Paul Stuewe

MAILLET'S *Pélagie-la-Charrette* (translated as *Pélagie: The Return to a Homeland*) won the 1979 Prix Goncourt, one of France's major book awards, and in so doing triggered a flood of better-late-than-never publicity from English-Canadian literati anxious to demonstrate that they'd known about her all the time. This belated explosion of interest in Maillet presumably accounts for the appearance of an English translation of her *Christopher Cartier*, a very short and very slight tale situated on the borderline between children's and adult literature.

In attempting to please readers of all ages, Maillet has created a fictional world in which her adult narrator romps with friendly animals in benign natural settings. The other major character is Christopher Cartier or "Bear," a young cub whose callow confusions supply sporadic moments of dramatic interest. Although he will inevitably be compared to that older cousin immortalized by Marian Engel, this bear is the stuff of gentle whimsy rather than erotic fantasy: Christopher Cartier may be a great practical joker, but his amatory efforts are confined to being cute and cuddly.

As the book meanders on through a series of innocuous and occasionally inane occurrences, some amusement is provided by the verbal interplay between bear and narrator. "Laugh on *Tayne*" as a pun on La Fontaine and malapropisms such as "metaphor" for "meteor" and "Winnifred" for "infrared" are good for several laughs, although I doubt that younger readers will be much taken with them. This conclusion also applies to the book as a whole, which takes an adult perspective on an idealized children's world and makes a generally bloodless and uninvolved story out of it. The publishers have contributed to this atmosphere of

bemused unreality by asking \$12.95 for an unillustrated book of 76 pages, five of which are to no evident purpose completely blank. □

Fury, by David Watmough, Oberon, 152 pages, \$21.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 542 2) and \$11.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 543 0).

By Robin Metcalfe

IN THIS VOLUME David Watmough continues the memoirs of his fictional alter ego, Davey Bryant. A complex, original creation, Davey follows the author's own footsteps from beginnings in Cornwall to maturity in Vancouver. The successive volumes do not form a chronological progression, but assemble parts of Davey's life as might a jigsaw puzzle. The nine stories in *Fury* fall into two groups. Five, closely linked, describe Davey's boyhood in Cornwall and London. Later, as the narrator's youthful self-absorption gives way to an adult interest in those around him, the biographical conceit wears thin. These Vancouver stories stand as separate works, in which the continuity of narrator seems incidental.

The title story, about a beloved pet ferret, develops themes that unite this rambling collection: human betrayal, the failure of compassion, and the predator that lurks beneath the skin. How readily, Davey learns, we human animals indulge the crude satisfactions of bigotry and violence. "Nelly Moriarty and the Jewish Question" treats these blind hatreds with a wry humour. Other stories, such as "Incident in the Forest," depict young Davey's horror at his own capacity for brutality. In "Where do I Weep When Your Sad Song is Sung?" it is memory itself that betrays us.

Although Watmough has woven the life of Davey Bryant from the threads of his own, they do not form a single garment. The facts are varied from one story to the next to dispel the illusion of autobiography. Like all of us, Davey remembers not one, but many, contradictory lives. All memory is fiction. □

The Gates: Three Stories & A Play, by Marion André Czerniecki, Mosaic Press, 126 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88962 256 6).

By Mark Gerson

THE FOUR PIECES in this unusual anthology — three short stories and a full-length playscript — revolve around the Holocaust. Each is a tale of survival, not only of the atrocities of genocide, but of the bitter, cruel choices survival demands, the guilt it imposes, and the scars it inflicts. Marion André Czerniecki's survivors are plucked randomly

from the human mass. There is never a reason why one is spared and another not. Precautions, such as hiding or purchasing forged credentials, are useless in a deadly game in which someone else holds the wild cards. Those who escape — be it for a week, a month, or a lifetime — are forever paying for the expensive miracle that set them free. They pay in damaged psyches, soured relationships, and thousands of smaller ways that are only noticeable in their cumulative effect.

The first two stories in the collection, "The Gates" and "The Saviour," are brief, well-crafted incidents that evoke the horrors of an era, the terror of individuals facing destruction, and the trauma of those who are spared. "The Leave-Taking" is a longer, more cluttered piece. The only one set in the present, it relies on flashbacks and reminiscences to flesh in the details of Henrietta Blum's relationship with her son — a relationship molded during her struggle to keep the two of them alive and free after her husband and daughter are taken by the Nazis. In the play, "The Aching Heart of Samuel Kleinerman" (produced last year both by CBC-Radio and Czerniecki's own Theatre Plus in Toronto), a Jewish family must decide whether it can afford the moral toll its survival would exact. While the power of this drama is diluted by some uneven dialogue and by superfluous narration, the play retains much of its impact.

Czerniecki is himself a survivor, and his tales possess a moving authenticity that suffers in this book not from a lack of objectivity but from the unfortunate distraction of too many typos. □

The Promise, by Wanda Blynn Campbell, Pulp Press, 129 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88978 141 9).

By Debra Martens

CAMPBELL'S 12 stories rough up the reader's emotions, like sandpaper on old wood. In three of them we learn the hunting values of Northern Quebec: wild animals are killed for their meat. Although this may seem obvious to all but tourist hunters, Campbell presents it in the same way that Laura views the carcass she skins in "Rabbit": "with feelings that were clean of pity or remorse." The difference of values between city and country is highlighted in the same tale when a Montreal drama student who likes to read de Sade aloud while dressed in thigh-high boots gets sick over a skinning that is for Laura "the exercising of a skill, a ritual as unextraordinary as sitting down to supper." This dancing is taken up again in the excellent, mildly ambiguous

"Birthday Party." Maude is visited by a daughter who got rich in the city and appears only at Christmas and on her mother's birthday. After the latest boyfriend is introduced, and the daughter adds, "He likes you, Ma," Maude cuts through pretensions with, "I been wondering when you were going to drop this Mother business." Yet it is unclear whether Maude is playing up to her guests' expectations. When they leave, she ignores the gifts she will eventually give away, and resumes mopping the floor. In "Thaw" Magda is a large, tough woman who falls in love and begins to tell people just how she feels, and in "Kisses" a servant-like wife learns to tell her husband to "kiss my ass." The wonder of it is that we *hear* her transformation through the gossip Vera exchanges with her neighbour. □

Stories by Canadian Women, edited by Rosemary Sullivan, Oxford, 395 pages, \$10.95 paper (ISBN 0 19 540468 8).

By Libby Scheier

IT IS A pleasure to see this impressive collection of women's short stories. An historical overview of Canadian women's fiction, suitable — and this is not a dig — for use in the university classroom, is long overdue.

The anthology begins with such 19th-century writers as Isabella Valancy Crawford and Sara Jeannette Duncan, and ends with young women like Aritha van Herk and Dionne Brand. In between are most of the women whose fiction has received critical acclaim. An honour roll of those Sullivan would have included if she'd had more pages (and adding another volume might not have been a bad idea) is listed in the introduction.

My only quibble with this fine anthology is that it might have included more women whose writing is a bit more off the beaten path stylistically (Gail Scott, for example) and a few newer, less established writers. The only writer represented whose prose is not already well known is Dionne Brand. (I should add, however, that an attempt was made to include Donna Smythe's story, "Red Hot," from the *Bakers' Dozen* short fiction anthology, but permission to publish was denied by Women's Press, which held copyright.)

As Sullivan points out in her intelligent and useful introduction, most of the major "women's themes" are included in these stories (motherhood, pregnancy and abortion, the power politics of personal relationships), as well as other frequently used themes of literature: "love and hate, progeny, culture, politics and power." Sullivan

notes that when these authors write about women's experiences, they do not do so from a "crabbed, eccentric" viewpoint, but a universal one. Pondering the meaning of this coexistence of women's themes with more traditional subject matter, Sullivan offers an interesting view of a contemporary female aesthetic, one defined historically rather than biologically. Or, to update my vocabulary according to current academic style, Sullivan sees a socially constructed but not essential female aesthetic (at least in this discourse). Noting that the traditional "universal" viewpoint has been "expanded" (my emphasis) by these women to "incorporate the perspective of the previously silent majority," Sullivan says: "This declares that the human story is being rounded out; it is no longer androcentric." Instead of seeing a female aesthetic as narrower than a male one, or simply *other*, Sullivan suggests that, at this point in time, it encompasses a male aesthetic and then adds some. This is a striking notion and Sullivan makes a good case for it. ☆

HEALTH & WELFARE

Afraid to Ask: A Book About Cancer, by Judyline Fine, Kids Can Press, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919964 79 6) and \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 919964 56 7).

By Lorraine Johnson

DEMYSTIFYING FEAR is the main intent of this book. Yet in purporting to write for an adolescent audience, Fine is caught in a familiar trap; the tone of the book wavers between an encouragement *for* life and acceptance *of* death.

Perhaps this is a necessary paradox when dealing with cancer, particularly when trying to reconcile a young audience to this illness. But is it a useful tactic to place a chapter on prevention near the beginning of a book whose main readers will probably already have contact with a cancer patient? For some young readers, this might simply add to the feelings of anger and resentment which many psychologists find prevalent among children of cancer patients. But it might also direct other readers to the more positive and encouraging decisions they can make within their own lives.

Whatever the effect, Fine is clearly concerned for her audience, and her compassionate yet direct writing will certainly appeal to teenagers. The medical exegeses outlining different bodily functions are balanced with various personal stories and thus, the language of melanoma and sarcoma and chemotherapy is translated into people and families and caring.

Yet this is not a blinkered account of success stories alone. Although the word "death" does not even figure until page 14, the reader is eased into the idea with the whole process described — both physically and psychologically. Fine does not attempt to valorize death by speaking of heroes and victims and battles, but she does try to make it accessible to young adults, stressing that many others have shared the same experience, felt similar emotions and worked through the guilt of another's death. □

MIXED MEDIA

History on the Run: The Trenchcoat Memoirs of a Foreign Correspondent, by Knowlton Nash, McClelland & Stewart, 349 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 6700 3).

By John Goddard

KNOWLTON NASH was 12 years old, standing with an armful of newspapers on a Toronto street corner in June, 1940, announcing France's surrender to the Germans. "France surrenders! Read all about it!" he shouted, showing an early enthusiasm for broadcasting that led eventually to his current job as anchor for CBC-TV's *The National*.

Nash still has a lot of the newsboy in him, judging from *History on the Run*, his memoirs as a Washington correspondent during the 1950s and 1960s. Once, when filming the Oval Office, he "couldn't resist sitting down in the big leather presidential chair." And he admits to asking Winston Churchill "a useless question . . . just to be able to say I'd once talked to the great man."



Nash's analytic skill is boyish too. Of John F. Kennedy he writes: "it seemed clear to me that it was his image, not his philosophy, that won the crowd."

The narrative skips from flat anecdote to shallow commentary to naïve expression of awe as Nash strains to look over the heads of prominent U.S. reporters at newsmakers of the day. Never is there a feeling of overhearing a private conversation or peeking through the crack of a door. Nash rehashes events of the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson eras, while dealing only perfunctorily with topics he was best placed to address: the

challenges to a reporter in CBC-TV's pioneer days, and how TV changed the news business. □

THE PAST

Forced March to Freedom: An Illustrated Diary of Two Forced Marches and the Interval Between January to May, 1945, by Robert Buckham, Canada's Wings, 98 pages, \$11.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920002 25 0).

By Steve Lulits

AS THE momentous sweep of great historical events recedes into the past, we can leisurely look at their effect on the lives of ordinary people. The Second World War has produced many such unpretentious records. Buckham's short diary of two forced marches across Germany as a Canadian prisoner of war during the closing months of the conflict is unusual because it is illustrated with his pen-and-ink drawings.

A commercial artist turned bomber pilot, Buckham was shot down and imprisoned in Stalag Luft III, scene of "the great escape." But when the Germans forced the 20,000 Allied airmen to march west, away from the advancing Russians, the senior camp officer ordered his men not to escape. Their chances of survival were better if they stayed together and waited for the liberating armies to rescue them.

One of the few exciting moments in Buckham's otherwise low-keyed narrative happens early in the march, when fatigue, diarrhoea, and freezing weather make him lag behind and he struggles to catch up with his comrades. Otherwise, his words and sketches offer only detached glimpses of the undoubted suffering endured by the marchers. A tone of restrained endurance pervades this modest little book. Self-control, studied curiosity about the passing scene, and an appreciation of those whose ingenuity can scrounge or construct the humble necessities of life hold the story together. There are also surprising moments of distracting humour, like finding a bathtub with hot water in a Prussian castle. Buckham's pleasure in such simple things relieves the understated misery of the events he has carefully recorded. □

Sound Heritage: Voices from British Columbia, edited by Saeko Usukawa, Douglas & McIntyre, illustrated, 276 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88894 443 5).

By Brad Adams

IN THE EARLY and mid-1970s, when money still gushed from the public well, many universities and archives estab-

lished oral history programs. Some set down the memories of the high and mighty; others chased the remembered past of a more humble citizenry. In Canada, the most energetic and accomplished proponent of the second approach was the project devised by the provincial archives of British Columbia. The best of its journal, *Sound Heritage*, has been gathered in this attractive, well-produced volume. While more eclectic and inferior, as a form of popular history, to the more crafted works of Studs Terkel or Barry Broadfoot, this spirited collection provides a rich slice of British Columbia's colourful, often turbulent social history.

As those who have dabbled in this sort of history know, the end products frustrate as they tantalize. When the material is fresh, the interviewer informed, and the editor sensitive, the results do satisfy. The first section on B.C.'s native peoples is especially effective; and the most stimulating piece of all in *Sound Heritage* is an elderly Indian woman's recollection of a turn-of-the-century mission school. For other practitioners, oral history is a record of exploitation and struggle: the memories here of workers in the lumber camps, mines, and fisheries of British Columbia do not stand so well on their own. In one glaring instance, the respondent does not remember the way the editor wants him to remember.

At other times, oral history fails to be anything more than story-telling by people with unusual lives and a gift for the gab in front of a microphone. Good and not so good examples appear here as well. Best read in small and digestible lumps, *Sound Heritage* succeeds as a collection of plain tales. But it demonstrates the pitfalls — and not just the strengths — of a genre of history it is meant to celebrate. □

POETRY

Confabulations: Poems for Malcolm Lowry, by Sharon Thesen, Oolichan Books, 41 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88982 072 4).

By Kathleen Moore

THE COMBINED gifts of actress, analyst, and anecdotalist are essential to create convincing biography. Add to these the eventful language demanded of a poem, the compression, the crystallized insight, and the task may approach heroic dimensions. Dramatic identification with a morbid genius such as Malcolm Lowry was, must be especially difficult to achieve; no less the sustaining compassion from which a sensitive portrait must arise.

Lowry's experience limns in a black light the extremity of self-aggravated alienation. The disintegration of his mind and body, its tedious and wilfully sluggish regress can, in Lowry's case, only be accounted for by a diagnosis of pathological masochism. That Lowry's talent for transmitting his mordant vision has been internationally celebrated with cannibalistic fervour, suggests to me the decayed spiritual health of the scatological voyeurs who rejoice in and feast upon his misery rather than weep that such personal horror is intellectually titillating and commercially viable. Thus, the historical and literary contexts in which Thesen has to struggle for a re-vision of this man, themselves demand perceptive analysis and comment.

Confabulations defeats dramatic development by uncritically shifting viewpoint from omnipotent narrator to first-person in the voice of Lowry. This creates a nebulous perspective. Clichés abound, and too many participles drain the cycle's potential energy, negating the subterranean tensions that must account for the volcano's gradual incandescence and eruption. Emotional identification is absent, and thus the sympathy is formal rather than special. Criticism of society's response to the man, and its part in creating him is virtually unattempted.

Thesen's painting of Lowry must, finally, compete with his own 10-year laboured image of himself: the language of *Under the Volcano*; the dramatic texture. So considered then, Thesen may not be entirely to blame if her treatment of one of the century's most complex and self-destructive personalities falls short of revelation. □

Words for Elephant Man, by Kenneth Sherman, Mosaic Press, 88 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 88962 3).

By Ken Stange

FOR THE READER who likes books — unified, complex objects — Kenneth Sherman's *Elephant Man* is a major, substantial contribution to the world's library, and a handsome, thoughtfully designed book whose visual appeal is augmented by a number of superb etchings by George Raab. This book is your proverbial "good read": by the second page you know you'll not be walking the dog or taking out the garbage until you finish it. The subject matter, of course, appeals to one's prurient interest (which is at least partially why Broadway and Hollywood made so much money with their versions of Merrick's life), but this morbid curiosity is not the central appeal here, but rather in the words, the writing. Sherman is capable of extremely

graceful shifts of tone and style, mixing historical quotations with epigrams and his own protean verse to create a kaleidoscopic and engrossing metaphor from the tragedy that was the Elephant Man. This book is too much of a piece for any quotation to do it justice. Suffice it to say that it is a book so fresh, different, and absorbing that it negates all reasonable expectations of the humdrum. □

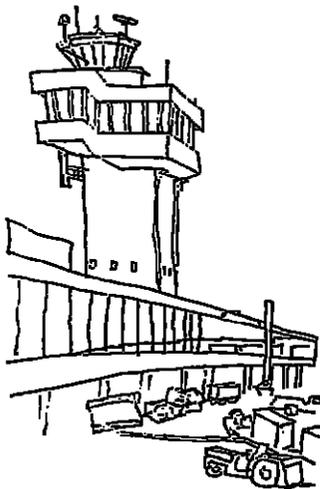
SCIENCE & NATURE

Harvesting the Northern Wild, by Marilyn Walker, Outcrop (Raincoast), illustrated, 224 pages, \$12.95 paper (ISBN 0 919315 10 0).

By Liza Vandermeer

WALKER INTENDS her book to be "a trail guide and source of practical information" about edible plants of the Northwest Territories. But with its accurate, attractive line drawings and maps, descriptions of habitats, and uses of plants, the book also contains much that would appeal to those who have no desire to eat anything wilder than the occasional blueberry.

Walker is an anthropologist, and she briefly describes different groups of Dene people, their ranges, and major food sources. These descriptions, along with a section on "The Northern Landscape," form as good an introduction to Northern ecology and inhabitants as I have seen outside of Thomas Berger's reports on the Mackenzie Valley. Many



excerpts from the writings of such European explorers as Samuel Hearne and Alexander Mackenzie are included, providing facts about indigenous peoples and explorers alike. An annotated bibliography of books on the North, and a separate "recommended reading" list are also attractive features of this multifaceted source book.

For each plant discussed, there is a meticulous drawing, details on where to search for it, which portions are usable and in what way, and comments on medicinal or other properties. My faith in Walker's knowledge was confirmed by her comment that the root of the yellow water lily is "impossible to eat." Most "edible wild" specialists cheerfully assert that morsels similar to Chinese water chestnuts can be obtained from this plant, although I have found that no amount of trouble produces anything worthwhile. The recipe section is slanted toward things to do with berries (raspberry vinegar is very simple) but also includes savouries and that staple of wilderness travel, bannock. ★

Sea of Slaughter, by Farley Mowat, McClelland & Stewart, 438 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 6556 6).

By Liza Vandermeer

MOWAT'S LATEST book deals with the region of Canada that has gained worldwide notoriety for the great ice seal hunt. The international indignation over the East-Coast seal fishery has perhaps been unmatched by any similar conversation cause, probably because the visual images of fluffy white baby seals, bloody ice pans, and men with clubs have an emotional impact that is hard to better. The object of this book is to draw attention to other animals that once dwelt, or still exist in, the varied habitats between New England and Labrador.

Although few of the species Mowat discusses (and they are numerous, ranging from lobsters to polar bears) would make as good media copy as baby seals, they have all been subject to man's propensities that, in Newfoundland sealers, have been called greed and brutality. It is depressing to realize that no wild animal, no matter how hard-pressed, will ever receive the same human advocacy as these cute, lucky whitecoats, but Mowat hopes his book will "help to change our attitudes and modify our future activities" with regard to nature as typified throughout the Eastern Seaboard. Such attitudes are exemplified by the "managing" of carnivores to extinction to leave more game for sportsmen, or the increased catch of undersize shellfish, now that the large, breeding-size individuals have become scarce.

Drawing on an impressive mass of historical research, each chapter describes the pre-1600 population and range of an animal, and the human activities that reduced it to present status. Pictures of the various animals described (especially uncommon birds) would have increased the impact of such descriptions.

Although his subject is grim, Mowat does surprise us with some facts; that, for example, animals now thought arctic indigenous, such as the walrus, were once very common around the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Mowat quotes one source as saying that polar bears used to "infest [habitants'] houses" — which must have been a nuisance. In any event, even if skeptics believe that Mowat's facts are only half-accurate, he makes a powerful indictment of human attitudes toward other species that share our planet. ★

SPORTS & ADVENTURE

Tiger: A Hockey Story, by Tiger Williams with James Lawton, Douglas & McIntyre, illustrated, 172 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88894 448 9).

By Brad Adams

NOW A SPENT veteran, Dave "Tiger" Williams hooked, chopped, and scrounged his way to notoriety as a pug-nosed forward with the Toronto Maple Leafs and Vancouver Canucks. His brash and outspoken autobiography, penned by Vancouver sports writer Jim Lawton, tells us — unexpectedly — much more about the heart, muscle, and warts of the sport than do countless hymns to hockey greats and even Ken Dryden's *The Game*. Except to single out a few wanton goons, Tiger makes no apology for his brand of hockey, and little for an era in the 1970s when the game fell to the level of blood sport. Williams cannot be let off quite so easily. But he is all too right to claim that nastiness, for better or for worse, is part of hockey, and that players and teams without the talent to free-wheel have to tough it out in the trenches.

Tiger's assessments and comments about teammates, coaches, and life in the NHL provide lots of fuel for change-room chatter. But his story is of wider relevance. For Williams, as for nearly all professional athletes, the big time is a gilded lunch bucket. The depiction here of growing up poor in Weyburn, Sask., of rough-and-tumble Prairie hockey towns, and of his great determination to make something of himself are starkly realistic. And there is more than a touch of the Horatio Alger hero in Tiger: his story is sprinkled with rough-hewn homilies to the work ethic, self-discipline, and loyalty to team, fan, and family. Daggers are hurled at teammates who took fat contracts but cheated their promise on and off the ice. With its bombast and abrasive honesty, Jim Lawton's bump-and-grind prose is the perfect match for Tiger's gritty and sometimes likable intelligence. □

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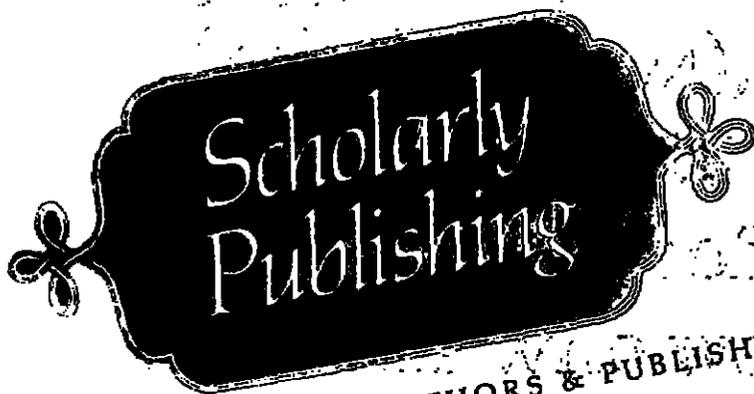
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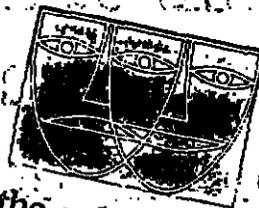
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How the West was won

By Mark Abley

The Canadian Prairies: A History, by Gerald Friesen, University of Toronto Press, 524 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 2513 7).

HISTORIES OF the Canadian West tend to begin from the comfortable assumption that the region had no history worthy of the name until the appearance of white men, first as explorers, then as traders, finally as settlers. The first great merit of Gerald Friesen's comprehensive revision of Prairie history is his concentration on native culture and ways of life. He gives the Indians their due not as noble savages but as people whose adaptation to a tough environment was enduring and intelligent. In so doing, he also destroys a few common ideas about the past. The Red River battle of 1816 was *not*, it turns out, a massacre of whites by the bloodthirsty Métis; Indian society on the great plains did *not* simply collapse

at the advent of white civilization; and in 1885, Indians and Métis did *not* form a coherent force of resistance against British-Canadian settlement. In the 19th century as in our own, native peoples were bedevilled by their inability to grasp and use white men's ideas of property. What finally drove most the Métis out of Manitoba, a province where for decades they formed a majority, was not so much overt prejudice as sharp business practices that resulted in the confiscation of their land.

Throughout *The Canadian Prairies* Friesen seems to take a quiet relish in demolishing persistent myths, the long familiar stereotypes. He emphasizes pioneer mobility, for example, against the customary image that Old World wanderers reached the West and settled down for good. The truth was somewhat different. In the area around Neudorf in southern Saskatchewan, nearly one in three settlers failed to make a go of farming; what is more surprising, though, is that about one in two of the successful settlers also moved away within a decade of gaining title to their land. As many as 800,000 immigrants had already left the Prairies before the Great Depression began. Even the farmers who stayed in the West often supported their families by working in labour crews or as hired hands to aug-

ment the unpredictable income from their farms. Fifty years ago, an astonishing 75 per cent of the agricultural labour force in Alberta gained a living from wage labour as well as from farming. For all the region's fertility and size, it has never been easy to farm its land for profit.

Inevitably, most histories of the region have focused on the farms — on the dreams of settlement, the hardships of the pioneers, and the endurance of those who outlasted the Dirty '30s. Friesen does not neglect such topics, yet he throws an equal light on the urban history of the Prairies, and the extent to which they have always been subject to social divisions. His perspective on Victorian missionaries is refreshing: "Though it was not their goal to create race and class divisions, this was the result of their work." The virtual (and to me, depressing) unanimity of conservative opinion in present-day Alberta can easily obscure a history of struggle and poverty there. I was amazed to discover, for instance, that in the federal election of 1945, 54 per cent of voters in the coal-mining town of Blairmore cast their ballots for a Communist candidate.

Despite a valiant effort to explain such arcane phenomena as the Crow Rate, Friesen seems most at ease with social and political history. One of his best chapters describes the waves of immigration onto the Prairies, and the varying adaptations to the British West. (The Icelanders, for instance, blended into the mainstream of Prairie culture much faster than the Ukrainians.) Although Friesen should at least have mentioned the importance of American immigration, particularly to Alberta, for the most part he tells a complex story with confidence and occasional flair. It has been far too easy to dismiss the culture of immigrant groups as ethnic folkways, quaint reminders of a bygone time that are doomed to disappear after a generation or two; this kind of attitude distorts understanding of the true patterns of Prairie life even today. The region often surprises outsiders by its sheer diversity of culture. It is less than half a century since a federal census revealed that more than 90 per cent of Ukrainians and about 70 per cent of Germans still spoke their own language in the homes of central Saskatchewan.

The only instance where the author seems less than just to any class or group concerns his treatment of French Canadians and the French language in the West. "Fainter hearts would be deterred from western migration," he suggests, "by Quebec newspaper attacks on 'Ontario fanaticism' which allegedly resulted in assaults on French rights during the 1869-70 troubles, the 1874-5

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debates concerning Riel's amnesty, the 1879 Norquay ministerial crisis, the 1885 Territorial uprising, and the Manitoba school and language legislation of 1890." That ambiguous word "allegedly" casts doubt on the unquestionable prejudices to which French Canadians have long been subject on the Prairies. Even after their religion had ceased to be anathema to a majority of western society, their language continued to be a catalyst for bitterness and fear. Furthermore, Friesen phrases his sentence in a way that seems to blame the cowardice of Quebec people and the rhetoric of Quebec journalists for the refusal to move to a region where French Canadians could expect to face hostility.

In the early part of this century, he observes, "a powerful new regional image . . . transcended earlier definitions of the national mission: the promise of the west became the promise of Canada." (Of English Canada, that is; the mission and the promise were different in Quebec.) Readers from outside the Prairies may be surprised to discover the grandiose hopes with which English Canadians once saw the West. "It would become the centre of gravity of all Canada; and, if it ruled Canada, and Canada led the empire (as it soon would), then, as anyone could see, the west would lead the world." A detailed study of these dreams and delusions has not, to my knowledge, been written. It would be interesting to know when and why the dreams began to fade, and what replaced them. A tradition of righteousness, infused with the odd messianic illusion, runs through Prairie politics even today.

The virtues of *The Canadian Prairies* far outweigh its deficiencies, and there appear to be remarkably few errors for a work of its weight and scope. I can't help regretting the ponderous style, with a plethora of passive verbs, into which Friesen occasionally lurches (" . . . as novelist Margaret Laurence's creation in *The Diviners* would have put it . . ."). More seriously, Friesen suffers from the urge to arbitrate all the important academic disputes in Prairie history, and to pronounce a judicious verdict each time. He suggests, illogically, that "The number of scholars on each side of the issue suggests that we should call it a tie." There is something amiss with his choice of emphasis when the historian V.C. Fowke appears on nine times as many pages as Tommy Douglas. A few more character studies of the region's most important public men, such as Douglas and John Diefenbaker, would have leavened the prose considerably.

Such drawbacks notwithstanding, Friesen has produced an important as well as a useful book. His own curiosity,

his personal love of the subject, are constantly shown. Without ever indulging in mystification, he shows that the Prairies have experienced a much more complicated, less straightforward history than we are normally led to believe. □

REVIEW

All in the family

By David Latham

Fielding, by Dennis Cooley, Thistle-down Press, 86 pages, \$16.00 cloth (ISBN 0 920066 74 7) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 920066 71 2).

Ambergris Moon, by Brenda Niskala, Thistle-down Press, 79 pages, \$16.00 cloth (ISBN 0 920066 72 0) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 920066 69 0).

Kiss Me Down to Size, by Ken Rivard, Thistle-down Press, 77 pages, \$16.00 cloth (ISBN 0 920066 70 4) and \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 920066 63 1).

THE SIMILARITY among these three books of poetry by three new poets from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba has more to do with video and the microchip than with their authors' prairie environment. Forty years ago E.J. Pratt explained how poetry was accommodating the environment of the industrial world: "Dynamos, lathes, drills and turbines are just as much material for poetry as lilies and carnations and cuckoos, and they are humming their way into the measures of verse with the same ease and intimacy as the former reaping hook, the wheel, and the plough." Now, as an accommodation of the world of the microchip, surrealist imagery is the staple of even the most conventional contemporary poet.

Surrealist imagery is less an escape from the brazen world than a reconstruction of it. Brenda Niskala writes of a woman who sees the huge eyes of familiar cows gazing across the pasture; with a blink of her own eyes she sees a man with an empty coffee cup watching her from across the breakfast table. When she dreams of escaping from the responsibilities of the office or the lecture hall to the nostalgic images of the farm, the images remain ones of hardship. When she dreams of herself as a swan "swaying in the music lake," a "walrus flaps away from the mirror."

Ken Rivard constructs a fantasy world by projecting life into the imaginary worlds of paintings, dreams, cloud formations, and calendar scenes that "might come alive." His father, watch-

ing a Marx Brothers movie on television, drifts into the studio lot during a commercial to teach the brothers "how to be funny." Rivard too often forces his imagery into metaphysical metaphors that offer little insight into human nature. In one poem, clouds, comets, sky, and moon are personified as a scene of dancers and fiddlers at a country hoe-down. In another, the falling raindrops are compared first to "an orchestra of tin cans," then to a sage "spitting carefully, of course clearing its throat beforehand," and finally to a "hobbling . . . cripple in a trance." Such metaphors suggest that Rivard identifies with his portrait of a beleaguered Donne:

*John Donne wears a baseball cap
and a poem-filled mit.
he can't make it to first base
with a small magazine editor.*

The title of Dennis Cooley's book reminds us that technology is only catching up with what is now old poetic theory. *Fielding* alludes to the "open field composition" preached by Charles Olsen in 1950 and later practised by Robert Duncan in *The Opening of the Field*. What Duncan demonstrates in technique — that an image must beget yet another image — and in theme — of separation and regeneration — is just as much evident in the work of Niskala and Rivard as it is in Cooley. Thematically, the love that all three write about is not one of romantic passion but rather one of family pride and family bondage. Cooley and Niskala honour their parents, while Rivard celebrates the awakening new experiences of his young daughter.

Writing a long open-sequence elegy on the death of his father, Cooley creates a field (sun, wind, snow, and sky) for a collage of images. The organizing principle is the dream framework. After leaving his father on the farm to drive his young family back to Winnipeg, the son appears in a jetliner on an airport runway daydreaming about his return to his dying father. Images of his father as a baseball-bat swinger, running through the open field, are juxtaposed with those of him as a coal-mining pick swinger, digging on his knees in a narrow tunnel. The epilogue concludes with a dream of his father as a young man in bed alongside his father as an old man dying. But when the poet awakes, he finds himself in bed beside his wife, Diane. This allusion to the goddess of dawn completes the archetypal progression from the death in February, through a thaw in March, to a recognition of renewal in April. Cooley's word play — "not now/not know" and "carbon phases/your phrases" — epitomizes Robert Duncan's demand that poetry must yoke the personal with the cosmic.

Beyond the call of duty

By Roy MacLaren

We Went to War: The Story of the Japanese Canadians Who Served During the First and Second World Wars, by Roy Ito, Canada's Wings, 330 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920002 30 7).

THE STORY of Japanese Canadians in the Canadian army during the two world wars ranges the full spectrum from the heroic to the ludicrous. The ludicrousness arises from the reaction of the Establishment, especially in British Columbia, to the repeated efforts in both wars of the Nisei to enlist. In the First World War "no yellow men need apply" might have been the banner over recruiting offices until the incessant demand for cannon fodder was no longer to be denied. In the Second World War it was only the value placed by British and Australians on the unique services which the Nisei could perform that finally led Ottawa to reconsider its bull-headed rejection of such loyal Canadians for general service. The heroism at the other end of the spectrum includes that of the Japanese Canadians who fought and died at Vimy Ridge and beyond, and who, during the Second World War, survived in the uncertain and volatile world of Malaya, French Indo-China, Burma, and the Dutch East Indies.

Roy Ito's *We Went to War* leaves one torn between laughing and crying. The anecdotes from the First World War are many, most underlining the persistent attempts of the Nisei to be accepted into an army that desperately needed men but was opposed to granting those of Asian background a place of equality in its ranks: such a step might imply a place of equality in the post-war world. Nothing daunted, the Japanese Canadians formed themselves into amateur military units in Vancouver in 1915, paying for their own training expenses. The Colonel Blimps of the day would, however, have none of it. Only when the *Blutbad* of the Western Front demanded any two-legged creature able to walk were Japanese Canadians in any numbers reluctantly accepted. Ito recounts from personal recollections, diaries, letters, and official records the Flanders odyssey of the Japanese Canadians. Fifty-four were killed and several awarded the Military Medal (it was un-

Brenda Niskala explores the progress of a youth growing up among tough farmers, hardened by parents who had no time from work to indulge in loving relationships. Thus a child's "first lesson in strength" is how a daughter's need to be mothered can anger her mother. A much later lesson is learned when she must care for her now-feeble mother who has sacrificed so much of her life to save her daughter from the suffering that provides such strength. As she offers her mother assurance, the daughter stands "here not feeling strong." She is torn between her personal inadequacy to be strong and her mother's exemplary indifference to sentiment.

Niskala's poems document a struggle between what she associates with family relationships — didacticism, responsibility, guilt, and respect — and what she associates with sexual relationships — distraction, selfishness, defensiveness, and alienation. As a "pathmaker's apprentice" she is torn between looking backward and looking forward, between the preservation of tradition she's inherited from her family and the invitation to revolution she receives from her lover:

*I want to walk worn cattle trails
feel the smooth bed of a hundred
seasons
the destiny tradition paves
you hold the shovel that carves new
paths
the rod that searches them out
the conviction you want me to share.*

Originally from Montreal, Albertan Ken Rivard betrays none of the concern for family roots that so haunt Niskala and Cooley. The eclectic nature of Rivard's collection — ordinary observations about children, mundane experiences of blue-collar workers, metaphysical metaphors that project a fantasy world, mental and emotional correlatives for the Albertan landscape — suggests that Rivard has not yet found his forte. His poems about the working class and tenement low-life smack of the cub reporter or the bright college kid keeping notes for a journal during a summer job. If he means to write more in this working-class vein, then he must develop a more endearing persona, as Tom Wayman has done. But Rivard may be better advised to explore, as he does in "First Chapter of Its Blood," his interest in decoding the prairie landscape:

*The prairie's semblance of code
comes from the mud of centuries.
the product belongs only to the coyote
and the coyote who waits will die
without having said a word.* □

thinkable, of course, that any would be commissioned).

Following the war the Nisei community erected a memorial to its war dead that still stands today in Vancouver's Stanley Park, but the inter-war years brought little else in the way of recognition of their heroism. Only in 1931 did the B.C. Legislature — by a margin of one vote — open the way for the veterans to have the right to vote. All other Japanese Canadians remained disenfranchised as a result of the continuing bigotry and prejudice then so prevalent in the province.

The inter-war years were not reassuring for the Japanese Canadians. As Japan moved from being an ally of Britain to a potential enemy, their plight became even less happy. From September, 1939, the Nisei repeatedly volunteered for service in the Canadian Army, but as Ito graphically portrays through anecdotes and lively vignettes their commitment to Canada was consistently denied and shunned. A few, a very few, made it into the army, but only by travelling as far away from their native British Columbia as their ingenuity and limited resources would allow. Jack Nakamoto travelled in box cars from Vancouver to Quebec City in 1940 before his repeated efforts to volunteer at every stop en route were finally accepted by the Royal Canadian Engineers. Nakamoto and a few others who later served with distinction in Europe were the exceptions: Mackenzie King endorsed the recommendations of his B.C. colleagues (and a committee of public servants) that Japanese Canadian volunteers not be accepted into the armed forces. After Pearl Harbour their exclusion was if anything even more pronounced, despite the fact that Japanese Americans were being enrolled in their own units in the U.S. Army.

All in all, it is not a pretty story that Ito tells. With the expulsion of Japanese Canadians from the Pacific Coast and their concentration in camps in the interior, across the Prairies, and in Northern Ontario, the prospects for any to successfully volunteer disappeared entirely. The fact that eventually a few Japanese Canadians were permitted to join the army came, paradoxically, from pressure from Australia and Britain. Within the total resources of the British Commonwealth those who could speak Japanese — or who could be readily taught Japanese — were few. Incessant demands from London and Canberra induced a still reluctant Ottawa to open the way for a few Japanese Canadians to enter the army for special duty as translators, propagandists, sabotage agents, and guerrilla instructors and, later, for general service.

Before any saw combat, however, the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the war to a halt. Post-war service in the uncertain world of the Southeast Asia Command nevertheless carried its own unique dangers as anti-colonial movements attempted to forestall the return of the metropolitan powers. Here, amidst the disintegration of colonial empires, Canadian Japanese served with distinction, as their fathers had done in the First World War. Yet even these veterans, some of whom returned home as late as 1947, encountered still the travel restrictions and disenfranchisement of pre-war and war-time Canada. It was only in 1949 that Japanese Canadians were finally granted the right to vote — and the commitment to Canada that the Nisei had demonstrated from Flanders to Singapore was given full recognition.

A veteran himself, Ito tells his story well. Occasionally a little discursive, he nevertheless follows his theme of the commitment of Japanese Canadians to their home with perseverance and comprehension. His handling of a disgraceful story is muted and sensitive. His book is a fine account of the courage, patience, and rare commitment of brave people who have served Canada well. □

REVIEW

Wolf in peer's clothing

By Fraser Sutherland

Black Wolf: The Life of Ernest Thompson Seton, by Betty Keller, Douglas & McIntyre, 240 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88894 439 X).

FOR THOSE like myself for whom the drawings of Ernest Thompson Seton were central to their childhood's iconography, this book is a good introduction to the artist-naturalist. Keller's biography does not go deep, but she does ably trace the career of an extraordinary Canadian.

Or was he English? Or American? Born Ernest Evan Thompson in an English town on the River Tyne in 1860, he came to Canada at age six when his father, a ship's broker of declining fortune, immigrated. The elder Thompson spawned 10 sons before failing as a farmer in Lindsay, Ont., and becoming a low-rung bookkeeper in Toronto.

Seton revered his excessively pious Presbyterian mother but sustained a

lifelong "passionate, implacable hatred" for his father. For a Victorian, Joseph Logan Thompson was not that bad an old duffer, Keller implies. But to Seton he was "the most selfish person in history," sharing the writer's enmity with General George Custer (unkind to Indians) and St. Paul (keeping women down).

Keller says that it was Seton's maniacal ambition to succeed where his father had failed. To that end, he studied art in Toronto, London, and Paris, homesteaded in Manitoba, and after moving to the United States became rich on the lecture circuit promoting books like *Wild Animals I Have Known*, in the process becoming "the most widely read animal story writer of all time." As a young man, he ineffectually claimed descent from a 16th-century Scottish peer, Robert, 6th Lord Seton, and after several name changes, ended up calling himself Chief Black Wolf, founder and leader of the Woodcraft Indians youth movement. In this incessant switching of identities there is a fascinating parallel — which Keller does not explore — with the Englishman Archie Belaney's masquerade as Grey Owl.

For a restless workaholic, Seton was in some ways a slow starter. He only gained prosperity at age 36 after he married a well-off American society lady, Grace Gallatin, who became a writer and naturalist herself. At age 71 he became a U.S. citizen and remarried at 75, this time to his long-time adoring secretary, a New York Jew named Julie Moss Buttree, *née* Moses. Standing four-feet six to Seton's six feet, she and Seton adopted a daughter, Dee, when the author was 78. Dee was taken on the lecture stage "dressed in a diaper, a wide ribbon, and a war-bonnet." Today she maintains Seton Village in New Mexico, once the location for her father's experiment in teaching the Navaho way of life, but now a U.S. historical site.

In many respects, Seton's life was a matrix of cross-purposes. He had ambitions to become a great artist, naturalist, and leader of North American youth. Yet it's arguable whether he truly succeeded in any of those fields. Certainly, his credentials were frequently doubted, and his authority undermined. Although he considered himself a strict realist, he was often accused of arrant sentimentality in writing anthropomorphized biographies and "life histories" of the animals he studied, like the grizzly, silver fox, arctic fox, and grey squirrel. As a pioneer wildlife artist, he was bound by the conventions of the high-mimetic mode and hence outside the main currents of 20th-century painting. And the story of how Sir Robert Baden-Powell — a grasping Victorian worthy of inclu-

sion in George MacDonald Fraser's *Flashman* series — cleverly absorbed Seton's 100,000-member Woodcraft Indians into his own Boy Scouts is the comic highlight of Keller's book.

Absurd, self-deluding, brilliantly observant, a genius with his hands, tirelessly active (he once canoed 2,000 miles in the Arctic and was still lecturing at the time of his death, aged 86), Seton's life was a continuous conflict between freedom and captivity, conformity and eccentricity. At first as trigger-happy as any other Victorian outdoorsman, he became an ardent conservationist. But perhaps his most lasting memorial lies in the tattered, dusty volumes in countless basements and attics — quick pen-and-ink sketches of a sandhill stag, head erect, and of a wolf hunkered down in snow. □

REVIEW

On the beach

By Brad Adams

1944: The Canadians in Normandy, by Reginald H. Roy, Macmillan, illustrated, 420 pages, \$29.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9796 7).

Bloody Victory: Canadians and the D-Day Campaign of 1944, by J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton, Lester & Orpen Dennys, illustrated, 240 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88619 046 0).

WITH THIS volume, Reginald Roy follows firmly in a tradition of writing best exemplified by C.P. Stacey, Canada's most eminent military historian. Harnessing enormous research and organizational discipline to strong narrative form, theirs is an appealing — if demanding — style of history. In exacting detail, Roy retraces the progress of the Canadian divisions from the Normandy beach-head through to the frustrating battles around Falaise that closed the first phase of the Allied assault on Hitler's Fortress Europe. *The Canadians in Normandy* lacks the broad strokes and masterly perspective of Stacey's larger *Victory Campaign*, but Roy brings to his smaller canvas an even more finely honed sense of military planning and operation. Indeed, the scale is so minute, and the narrative so dusty and crammed with detail, that the reader may occasionally lose the line of the account — just as many a Canadian platoon stumbled among Norman hedgerows in 1944. It is thus especially a

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pity that operation maps, redrawn from Stacey's official history, are not fresher and larger and — in the case of two end-maps — more sensibly placed.

In his conclusion Roy offers some balanced, if gentlemanly, judgements of the Canadian achievement in the summer of 1944. Although rightly ignoring more strident and ill-informed controversies, he finds that there were delays, some inadequacies, and a few bad mistakes. But he reminds us how crowded, heated, and narrow was the Canadian front in Normandy, and that greenhorn Canucks were ragged by some of the most hardened and vicious of Hitler's divisions in Europe. Roy's book serves as an exhaustive and authoritative record of how the Canadians learned quickly, overcame these obstacles, and got the job done.

In contrast, *Bloody Victory* is a popular, commemorative account of the Canadian D-Day landings on June 6, 1944, and of the grinding inland push in the months that followed. Although this is mainly a pictorial album, J.L. Granatstein and Desmond Morton provide a crisp, vigorous text. Readers familiar with the reputation of these gifted and prolific historians will not be disappointed: they neatly compress the background of Canada's contribution to the war; they handle with ease and authority the thrust and strategy of battle; and they succinctly analyse the Canadian accomplishment in Normandy. Most important, they catch the lives and courage of ordinary soldiers, and what it meant and felt like to be there.

This breezy history is the perfect complement to the folios of full-page photographs and art work. Some of these are old favourites, but most are new treasures, and highlight the tiny detail of army life and of men and

women under the pressure of war. The authors provide bouncy, informative, and often witty captions that entice the reader to linger and look again. Both text and pictures present an unusual feel of freshness. *Bloody Victory* will bring back the experience of war for veterans and rekindle their well-earned sense of pride. As well, it serves as an easy introduction for younger readers who need to know that, as the authors say, "the Normandy campaign of 1944 ranks among the decisive battles of the twentieth century and perhaps of Western Civilization." □

REVIEW

Unequal partners

By Kathleen Moore

Adam and Eve in Middle Age, by Rona Murray, Sono Nis Press, 47 pages, illustrated, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 919203 52 3).

Sheba and Solomon, by Karen Mullahen, Eleftheria Press, 44 pages, \$8.95 paper, no ISBN.

A TREE DIED for Murray's book. It must have been the Tree of Knowledge, for the Tree of Life (conferring immortality) languishes untongued amid these clichéd leaves and debilitated didactics. Making Eve speak, Murray betrays her own technique: "So I strum, /indifferent to stress and rhyme, /for fun. . . ." Maybe her fun, but not the reader's. Clubfoot iambs and tyrannical trochees pervade

this simplistic post-exilic exposé, emphasizing the careless, ambiguous, and contrivedly archaic language. A flat tire rolling down a gravel road could be mistaken for a loud reading of this book.

"Who brings the bloody bacon home?" cavils Adam cavalierly. "Taxes wring the liver out," he snorts when accused of neglecting the pruning. "Do you not hear eternity's fine equipage/hurrying near?" he rebukes as Eve puffs alight yet another carcinogenic butt. *There's* a new slogan for the Lung Society.

Eve dithers and shrills, evoking vibration of this reviewer's uvula and soft palate — that is, a resounding snore. "When I regained consciousness," (to quote Sergeant Renfrew), I found on page 30 a "padlocked shark." Is this the Canadian Bank Manager's new hold-up deterrent?

While Eve, at one end of the book "pauses on the brink/of memory,/and of other places" (like Quixote, she's off in all directions at once), Adam, at the other, complains of those who

*read old testaments and sweat
to find Salvation in report
of devil's numbers on a papal hat
signifying the antichrist. . . .*

Devil's numbers on a papal hat? Sounds like Sunday Bingo in the episcopal basement.

Bemoaning her matronly investment in the upbringing of her Edenic offspring, Eve whines, ". . .and having peeled my bare bones bare,/having stripped skin from onion skin. . . ." Surely bare bones needn't be "peeled"; and the next line is neither metaphor nor simile but sheer absurdity, unless we suppose her to be making chicken soup.

Ah, but "Lives roll out themselves/like spendthrift film/and always have," while the "machine of" Eve "reaches

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out,/withdraws,/battens its hatches down,/battens upon. . . /Success or failure all one." They certainly are, if you can get stuff like this into print.

"I wish I may, I wish I might/complete the poems/I write tonight," sighs Eve-Murray. I wish I didn't have to complete this book, sighs the reviewer, boggled while reading of Eve's raped daughter, ". . . the small hairs/scarcely warm between her thighs,/a little cygnet, coasting unafraid." The girl's just had her arms chopped off, yet the "small hairs" — that are, no doubt, pudendum follicles — are a fearless baby swan; trusting, of course, that we have not imputed meaning not explicit in the lines. Who knows? According to Eve, "Only the heron/on the kelp head knows/ — amanuensis/without motion;/water sift/calligraphy" — in other words, a scribal seabird is motionlessly taking down exact dictation from a "water sift."

As Adam "opens the dialogue" he observes:

*Cheats flourish in their enterprise,
boast vacant canvasses, wretched pots,
chase an empty line, then plume
themselves like strutting turkey-cocks.*

This book would make a wonderful gift for your favourite cabbage-patch doll, both being stuffed with fluff, turkey-plume or otherwise.

Sheba and Solomon misses three great opportunities. All, or any one of them, could have inspired a fresh reflection on the legendary relationship. Mulhallen has passed up the rare chance to explore the political, sexual, and spiritual levels of an encounter between woman and man, both as equals and powers in their own realms.

Historical speculation suggests that had such a queen as Sheba undertaken the 1,200-mile trek from southwest Arabia to visit her northern colleague, she would have been motivated primarily by commercial interests, threatened by Solomon's hegemonic expansions. The rumours of Solomon's wisdom, magical powers, and prowess with women no doubt spiced the prospect of the economic parley. Mulhallen's cycle neglects this potent debate, and the intoxicating possibilities inherent in the negotiations preceding and probably consummated by the mythical affair.

The love-relation was no doubt also enlivened by the immemorial spiritual struggle: the power of the god versus the power of the goddess. The biblical prophets continually rail against pagan faiths, particularly those featuring the love-goddess, to whose worship Solomon seems to have been naturally predisposed. Also, the Sabaeans of Sheba's day (her subjects) had adopted the god Attar, male counterpart of

Babylonian Ishtar. How did the Queen feel about this? Did she clash with the priests of her own retinue? Did she seek sympathy and support from Solomon? Did she promote a goddess cult to this northern Suleiman, taking full advantage of his evident receptiveness? Mulhallen tosses all this potential out the window with her one reference to Sheba in the religious aspect of her role as Queen: ". . . I am Sheba your eternal priestess. . . ."

Frank eroticism is also absent from Mulhallen's book. What is probably not widely realized, is that the *Song of Songs* (from which Mulhallen filches her best lines) erotically praises *the man* at great length in the *bride's voice*. I have found disappointingly little erotic indulgence and delight in women's poetry about men — their bodies, their looks, their sensuality. (Ann Sexton's writing is an exception that comes quickly to mind.) Mulhallen has not challenged this bland tradition. She approaches the sexual and the sensual obliquely or with cumbersome restraint. We are left to imagine everything for ourselves, with little help from lines like ". . . here got the Queen of Sheba with child. . . ."; "The voice the touch the texture/which renews"; "bright horse/bright rider." We may strain ourselves to find consummation in "prepotent velvet/to velvet," where the sublime union of this exquisitely dynamic couple is veiled by the insinuation that they still retain their royal robes.

The book lacks imagination; the characters for whom it is named are flat and unknown to us by the final page. The language is clichéd and sparse rather than spare. (It's a thin book.) The diction is often ambiguous ("Thou art bent on thy horizon"; "Where will I find you?/With you"), and sometimes just bad: "Solomon, who are you?/I can see



only your clammish shell." And somehow, a Celtic archaism and an extinct pachyderm materialize in the midst of the sun-drenched Judean landscape: "Sweep on wing/ken the mammoth's sorrowings/With the whirl/No mere swirl. . . ." The voice and viewpoint are inconsistent; but most of all, for the "love affair" touted on the back cover is substituted Sheba-Mulhallen's high-schoolish ruminations: "Is finding someone the same/as falling in love?"

Sheba, the Queen, the priestess, the

experienced lover and guardian of her land's fertility, still sleeps between the unplumbed lines of mythic innuendo. □

REVIEW

The temptations of Big Bear

By James Garratt

Big Bear: The End of Freedom, by Hugh A. Dempsey, Douglas & McIntyre, 227 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 8032 1668 8).

THE IMAGE reproduced on the dust-jacket of Hugh Dempsey's book is from one of the most poignant photographs in the Public Archives of Canada. It is of a Cree chief, Big Bear (1825-88), shortly after his arrest for his presumed role in the failed Riel Rebellion. His weather-beaten face gazes undaunted, though not without sadness, at his captors. Although he had never been an opportunist, a hint of desperate opportunism is now present in his eyes. In his left hand he holds a pipe, a talisman from his recent past. We see the chains of imprisonment trailing from his right arm. The image gains in pathos as we read of the events that brought Big Bear to the end of freedom.

Big Bear was a chief of the Plains Cree who, once entirely a woodland people, had migrated to the prairies "in the early 1700s, when, armed with guns and tools from the traders on Hudson Bay, they had become middlemen in the great European fur hunt." This migration brought the Cree into intensified conflict with the plains-dwelling Blackfoot tribes, and in the years 1824-26 a major war raged between them. The warring nations finally forged a treaty, but the litany of tragedy brought upon them by white settlers was just beginning.

In 1837 a smallpox epidemic broke out. The disease had been carried into Indian territory on an American Fur Company boat. Its effects were devastating, killing as many as two-thirds of the Blackfoot.

Immediately after the smallpox epidemic, Big Bear had a vision. . . . in this vision he saw "the coming of the white man, his purchase of the land, the bounteous presents from the Great Mother," [i.e. the Queen] and as it was sarcastically described in later years, "the generosity of the new-coming race to his."

Big Bear himself caught the disease, and "it was his first real gift" from the white man.

Stranger than fiction

By Fraser Sutherland

Getting to Know the General: The Story of an Involvement, by Graham Greene, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 206 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88619 076 2).

THE WORLD'S greatest living novelist in English has given us an enchanting little book that is either an unreliable memoir or a fragmentary novel — or both. The plot is pure *Beggar's Opera*, with Greene as winsome, sweet-voiced and extremely naive Polly Peachum. The dashing Captain MacHeath who romances him in 1976-80 is generous, quixotic, and likable General Omar Torrijos, the Panamanian "Chief of the Revolution." As in any good operetta, there is also a comic servant, one Chuchu, a sergeant in the General's security guard and Greene's "guide, philosopher and friend." Chuchu is

a good and kind man with a human wisdom much greater than my own. I think my deep affection for him began . . . when he was too drunk to drive with safety. He broke through the lights and ran into a parked car. . . .

Chuchu, who has a "rather vague number of children by several women" took Greene at the General's behest "wherever I wanted, whether in Panama, Belize, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, whether the trips entailed a plane, a helicopter or a car." The Nicaraguan-born Marxist is in fact depicted more vividly than the elusive General. He exports bullets to revolutionary neighbours and mismanages a complicated sex-life, as well as figuring as a character in the novel Greene was writing at the time; he takes a keen interest in his fictional progress. *On the Way Back* never got finished — or possibly *Getting to Know the General* is it.

A "sense of fun" prompted Greene to take up Torrijos's invitation to visit Panama. The General also displayed humour, Greene winningly admits, when he appointed the novelist to be an official delegate — Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a mutual friend, was another — to the signing of the 1977 treaty that gave Panama sovereignty over the much-disputed Canal Zone. But the comedy ended tragically: Torrijos was killed in 1980 when his small plane crashed in the Panamanian mountains.

Dempsey proceeds to document succeeding "gifts" from the white men, and to reveal Big Bear's valiant effort to stem the tide of tragedy engulfing his people. Always he sought spiritual guidance in his struggle to retain their freedom. His intense religious faith gave him the willpower to resist the temptations offered by the Canadian government, who swindled away the lands of other tribes. The government, however, was quite determined to give its gift of a better life to the Indians:

Those who were on reserves would be encouraged to plant crops; those who had signed treaties but still lived by the hunt would get as little support as possible, so that starvation would ultimately drive them home. Starvation would force the non-treaty chiefs to sign. . . .

Dempsey shows how the government used starvation as a deliberate strategy to civilize the Indians. The government knew it had received a great windfall when, in the late 1800s, the buffalo were exterminated. With the Indians' primary food source thus eliminated, the government could afford to ignore their complaints.

This policy reached the breaking point on the morning of April 2, 1885. On that day in the village of Frog Lake, Alta.,

Suddenly three shots rang out, and moments later Man Who Speaks Our Language . . . burst through the door to announce excitedly that the white people were being killed. Big Bear jumped to his feet and rushed outside, shouting, "Stop! Stop! Don't do it! Don't do it!" But his words fell upon deaf ears, for the slaughter had already begun.

On September 11, at the subsequent trial of Big Bear, "Seven witnesses testi-



fied. . . . Of these, six spoke in Big Bear's favour." Even so, "The jury tool: only fifteen minutes to decide on a verdict of guilty, with a recommendation for mercy." Big Bear's freedom thus came to an end. The flower of civilization could bloom.

The fact is, Big Bear was right in almost everything he claimed and everything he tried to do. From 1876 until the rebellion, he was unyielding in his attempts to wrest from the government a better deal for his people. The fact that he failed did not reflect badly on his own greatness, but on the government's inflexibility and insensitivity to the needs of a people from a different culture. □

To the author, Torrijos had "the charisma which comes from hope" and a "romantic dream" of social democracy in Central America that would be "no menace to the United States, but completely independent." A romantic the handsome Torrijos certainly was. Although married to an American Jewish woman for 25 years, he thought nothing of jetting off to Bogota to keep a date with one of his many women. Chivalrously, he also conceived a derring-do plot, never executed, to spirit Isabel Peron from her Argentinian house-arrest.

Without our giving the U.S. State Department too much credit for sagacity or laudable motives, it's hardly surprising that the Americans were suspicious of the General. After he'd deposed the dynastic Arias family in a 1968 coup, he expelled 400 members of the U.S. Peace Corps, frequently chatted with his amigo Fidel Castro, maintained strong links with rebels in El Salvador and Samoza-run Nicaragua, and organized his own band of irregulars called "The Wild Pigs." (You knew you'd gained the good graces of a Wild Pig when he asked you to "Come and shit with me.")

Yet the General was no orthodox Marxist but a "populist" evidently adored by most citizens of Panama, a tiny anomalous country that the United States created in 1903 to ensure its own profitable use of the canal. Despite protecting left-leaning Latin American political refugees, he retained members of the old regime on staff, and gave special privileges to National Guard officers, defending the latter act: "If I don't pay them, the CIA will." Probably both of them did.

Erratic, sentimental, death-haunted, Torrijos captivates Greene, and not just because he'd bankrolled the writer's jaunts and freely poured the Johnnie Walker Black Label. As the fictional general in *On the Way Back* tells a female American reporter, "You call us Latin Americans because you won't look deep enough inside yourself — where you would find us too." The General whom Greene gets to know is some concealed part of himself.

Was Greene "used" by Torrijos and his guerrilla friends in El Salvador and Nicaragua? He anticipates the charge. "I have never hesitated to be 'used' in a cause I believed in, even if my choice might be only for a lesser evil. We can never foresee the future with any accuracy." To that end, he consistently defends the Sandinistas. After the latter seized power and removed the Miskito Indians from a war zone on the Atlantic coast:

Tomás Borge, the Minister of the Interior, himself admitted to me that the

Sandinistas had behaved clumsily. They had not explained properly to the Indians, he said, the reason for removing them to camps outside the zone. However, [an] American nun had visited the camps and she denied the truth of their ill-treatment. She found them well housed and well fed and better cared for medically than they had ever been before.

We need not equate the Sandinistas with Stalinists to detect an ugly echo here of the Soviet '30s: "We will pen you in a camp for your own good."

As for Torrijos's death, the novelist hints darkly in a postscript that "I have been perhaps unduly sceptical of any part played by the CIA . . ." His

evidence for new suspicion is two documents harshly critical of the General, one "apparently a minority report" (minority of what?) "dated 11 June 1980 addressed to the State Department in Washington," the other issued about the same time by something that calls itself the Council of Inter-American Security.

So it is that I begin to wonder whether the rumour current in Panama of a bomb concealed in a tape recorder which was carried unwittingly by a security guard in Omar Torrijos's plane is to be totally discounted. I cannot but remember the explosive EverReady torch and Walt Disney picnic box which I saw in Managua. The plane was a

Canadian plane and Canadian experts examined the wreckage. I would much like to read their report. I am told that they found no sign of engine trouble which leaves us with the alternative, a pilot's error or a bomb.

Earlier, Greene admitted that the General's plane went down in very nasty weather, which surely disposes the evidence in favour of an accident. Still, if "the Canadian experts" read this review, would they please write Graham Greene c/o Lester & Orpen Dennys and give him something substantial instead of this muddle of hearsay? Then again, it is worth remembering that a great novelist never stops being a novelist. □

FEATURE REVIEW

Larger than life

A diminutive time-bomb perpetually about to explode, John Grierson brought to his public career much more than a mere interest in film

By L.M. Owen

John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda, by Gary Evans, University of Toronto Press, 347 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 2519 6).

John Grierson and the NFB, ECW Press, 165 pages, \$14.00 paper (ISBN 0 920302 80 X).

AN UNLIKELY THING happened to Canada in the fall of 1939: not the outbreak of war — that had been all too likely — but John Grierson, a phenomenon smaller in size but more immediately explosive. His appointment, to the newly created post of government film commissioner, was perhaps the most uncharacteristic that the Mackenzie King government ever made. Its impact was great; just how enduring it was is shown by the publication of two books on the subject 45 years later.

In 1939 it was only 10 years since Grierson had made for the British government Empire Marketing Board his film of the herring fishery, *Drifters*, which is regarded as the foundation of documentary as a genre. There had been precursors, of course: among them Cavalcanti's *Rien que les heures* (1926) and Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) and *Moana* (1926). The term *documentaire* had been used as the French for "travelogue," but it was Grierson, not yet himself a film-maker, who applied "documentary," in a review, to *Moana*. What he did with *Drifters* was to take the method Flaherty

had used to portray primitive societies and apply it to the industrialized world — or, as he used to enjoy saying, "We told Bob we could find enough savages in Whitehall." (This sentence, with its impartial tactlessness toward Eskimos, Polynesians, and bureaucrats, was so characteristic that I'm surprised not to find it in either of these books.)

Documentary, then, was still a young form when its creator arrived in Ottawa. It was chiefly produced in Britain by Grierson's former organization, the EMB, later the GPO Film Unit, which in the war moved to the Ministry of Information under the name of the Crown Film Unit. Its nearest rival was Henry Luce's *The March of Time*, which wedded the techniques of documentary and newsreel.

The act establishing the National Film Board had been devised by Grierson as a visiting consultant. When the minister of trade and commerce introduced it in the spring of 1939, he pictured the Board as a coordinating, not a producing body, with "only one paid man in the organization," and not in competition with private business. Famous last words. But perhaps it would have turned out this way if it hadn't been for the outbreak of war, and if Grierson hadn't been called back to take the job — for six months, it was said — until a Canadian could be found. When he actually left, six years later, NFB had nearly 800 employees, producing about 250 films a year.

These two books with nearly identical

titles provide a satisfactory survey of the facts and significance of those six years. Gary Evans, who was one year old when Grierson left Canada but came to know him well during the last two years of his life when he had returned as a visiting professor at McGill, gives a conscientious history. This is nicely supplemented by the other book, which contains the proceedings of a John Grierson conference held at McGill in 1981. In it we hear from many of Grierson's associates, including some who were in the NFB in his time: Lou Applebaum, Jim Beveridge, Tom Daly, and Margaret Ann Elton.

It should be understood that these books are not just, or even primarily, for people with a specialized interest in film: Grierson is a much larger subject than that. The son of two Scotch Presbyterian teachers, and the pupil of Walter Lippman, he gave his life to public education. In a sense his whole career was an effort to answer Lippman's gloomy prognosis that the world was becoming too complex for sensible decision-making by ordinary people, so that democratic control was ultimately impossible. Film was Grierson's usual medium, and he had an extraordinary feeling for its aesthetic, but he never confused the medium with the message — unlike some. (Did he and McLuhan ever meet? That would have been a spectacle worth watching.) In Ottawa he had his great opportunity; not only as head of the Film Board, but from January, 1943, to January, 1944,

as general manager of the Wartime Information Board, he dominated the information apparatus of the country.

This part of his career makes a fascinating study in its central problem: the question whether government-sponsored propaganda can be — as the Nazis said it was — also public enlightenment. (Evans is perhaps inflating things a little when he says that “the Second World War was at least on one level a chess game between the Goebbels and Grierson teams,” but one sees what he means.) Wartime was a time of unusually broad consensus, when party differences were minimized, and as long as Grierson and his disciples remained, as he loved to say, “one inch to the left of the party in power,” they could deal with social issues with less danger of raising party hackles than at any other time.

In all this, Grierson's personality was a powerful asset among his employees, whom it turned into disciples; it was also, among the politicians and mandarins who employed him, a disaster perpetually about to happen. For the former aspect, see Graham McInnes's description, quoted by Evans from an unpublished typescript, of his first interview with Grierson: “He was wound up tighter than a watch and gave a tremendous sense of controlled strength, of bounding energy and bursting vitality barely held in check by the diminutive body.” That's exactly how he struck me when he interviewed me for a very junior job in WIB.

Not everyone became a disciple, of course. He found this rare phenomenon baffling when it occurred. Once, speaking to me of Stuart Legg, most dedicated of his directors, he contrasted him with W.H. Auden, who had worked with him on two films in the 1930s but had left him. “Auden said, ‘But I've got to go. They're applauding *The Dog Beneath the Skin* in the West End.’ And he went.” And he looked at me with genuine incredulity that Auden could have felt a higher imperative.

As for his relations with his masters, Evans speaks of him as moving “adroitly through the corridors of politics and power.” I think a more accurate adverb would be “luckily.” He barged through those mine-strewn corridors with a confidence in his star that perhaps derived from his three years on a minesweeper in the other war. Evans gives some hair-raising examples. When he went away, soon after his appointment, to fulfil some previous commitments in Australia and New Zealand, he chose as his temporary replacement Colonel Cooper, the head of the Motion Picture Distributors' Association. He thought this was a clever idea as it would prevent Famous

Players from working against him. Unfortunately Colonel Cooper was a dedicated anti-King Tory and a friend of the dissident Liberal premier of Ontario, Mitchell Hepburn. The consequences were appalling, and it was a miracle that Grierson wasn't blown out of the water then and there. Again, late in the war, he wrote to Mackenzie King to urge him to dismiss his minister of labour and take the portfolio himself. Walter Turnbull, King's principal secretary, wisely filed the letter before the old man could see it.

My own favourite memory of Grierson is of a winter evening when two of us were working late. Grierson burst in, homburg on the back of his head, his face shining with triumph and alcohol. He had been before the Treasury Board that afternoon, defending his NFB employees against the charge that their appearance and manners were discreditable to the public service. He had answered, he said, “Yes, I know they leave a black ring round the bathtub. But take shit, gentlemen. You know what shit is, gentlemen? It's nasty stuff, dirrrrry stuff. But if ya ain't got it, ya ain't healthy.” I silently doubted whether he had made many friends that day.

The slurs that clung to him after the Gouzenko affair were of course absurd. Inevitably, many of the people he attracted to NFB and WIB were socialists, and inevitably a few of these were Stalinists — they were on our side at the time, if you remember. Grierson himself was far too eclectic in his views ever to have been a Communist. And Grierson as a spy is unthinkable. That profession requires concealment and discretion, skills utterly beyond his reach.

It's curious that the publishers of both these books chose the same picture of Grierson to adorn the jacket of the one



and the cover of the other, since it happens to look entirely unlike him. I think it's a picture of Hitler, trying out a new moustache before escaping to Argentina. □

REVIEW

The tenure of the times

By Michiel Horn

Seeking a Balance: University of Saskatchewan, 1907-1982, by Michael Hayden, University of British Columbia Press, illustrated, 379 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7748 0194 8).

MICHAEL HAYDEN'S STUDY of the University of Saskatchewan will be welcomed by those interested in the history of the province as well as in the history of higher education. This fine book is, he tells us, institutional rather than social or intellectual history. Yet we learn a good deal of social and political history in reading it.

In its early days the university had much independence. It was state-supported but not state-controlled. Hayden traces the gradual erosion of independence since the 1930s, culminating in the University Act of 1974, and writes that this bill has placed the university in constant danger of government interference. This book is not only a history of the university but a defence of institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

Hayden focuses on the four presidents from 1909 to 1974. The original University Act gave the president a great deal of power, which became amply clear during the crisis of 1919, when the first and most successful, Walter Murray, had little difficulty in ridding the institution of four senior faculty members who had attacked his leadership. Murray's influence — he served until 1937 — helps to explain why even during the Depression neither faculty nor students seemed very radical. The faculty, Hayden notes, “have never been famous or infamous for their radical views.”

In order to gain continued public support for the university, Murray and his successors stressed service to the community and the state. Such research as took place — and in agriculture it was of key importance from the beginning — tended to be applied rather than theoretical. The humanities and social sciences never ranked high, and stood lowest under J.S. Thomson, president from 1937 to 1949. His successor, the biologist W.P. Thompson, was taken aback when federal funds became available in the late 1950s to build the long-delayed Arts Building. Even though arts professors were three to four in one

office, Thompson saw no urgent need for such a building.

Thompson was followed by John Spinks, whose tenure (1959-74) was "a time of crisis." Separatist tendencies in Regina College led to independence in 1974. Student unrest in the late 1960s and early 1970s proved disruptive; so did Liberal Premier Ross Thatcher's attempt to influence spending within the university. Faculty members became increasingly critical of the administration and governing board. When the New Democratic Party gained office in 1971 dissen-

sion within the two-campus institution had reached the point that externally imposed change seemed necessary. Hayden deplors the form that change took, however, and he is particularly critical of the government's dismissal of Spinks.

The balance between study and service has been lost, Hayden concludes, just as the institution's unity and independence have. He takes rather a dark view of the future. As for the past, he has chronicled and analysed its accomplishments and failures with care. His style is a bit

laborious, but the story he tells is fascinating. Not only presidents but also faculty and students get plenty of attention. There are some curious holes in the bibliography, possibly the result of Hayden's background as a historian of Europe, rather than of Canada. His failure to discuss changes in the terms of academic tenure at Saskatchewan is disappointing. Some readers will find Hayden's conclusions too alarmist. Nevertheless, this is a useful book that is also, given its length and the many pages of photographs, reasonably priced. □

FIRST NOVELS

Local characters

Whether Newfoundland or Yorkville, the 'authentic' settings of two new novels do little to overcome their slender plots

By Alberto Manguel



WILLIAM GOUGH'S *Maud's House* (Breakwater, 138 pages, \$9.95 paper) is a one-character novel. Maud, a spirited Newfoundland woman, is traced from youth to later middle age in a struggle to find both her position in society and her identity as a person. The other people in the book act as mirrors that reflect Maud's thoughts and actions, witnesses to her changes and her growth.

We come across Maud at the age of 40: flashbacks illuminate her early days, memories of her first daring excursions

into the world, coming to seek employment in the house that will one day be her own, as the title reminds us. Everything has to be learnt once again: new conventions, new codes of manners. Maud must learn what door to use (kitchen or front), where to eat (not with the family but in her room), what the people of the house require. Maud has courage, Maud is strong: several reminders in the novel make it clear that she is equal to any man — that she can wield a hammer or shake hands with vigour, mend furniture or apply paint to the walls.

Curiously, the author has chosen to give his character a Gothic-novel setting: not in the plot but in the devices of the genre. There are, for instance, the strong family clans — first Maud's own family, then that of her employer. Maud's leaving home as a young girl brings to mind that early Victorian world of strong conventions. "If you goes," her irate father says to her, "never set foot back home again." The Skipper, the old patriarch Maud has gone to work for, exerts his power on his two sons and his daughter-in-law, but not on Maud. Maud has the courage of the Gothic heroine and quickly secures her own ground.

Early in the novel Maud finds out that the sister-in-law, Bessie, had also "gone into service" and then married Ern, one of the Skipper's sons. Maud will follow Bessie's footsteps (even though the villagers don't know what to call her — they can't call her Ern's "Missus," as that title corresponds to Bessie, now dead). But death interrupts Maud's carefully constructed life: the accidental death of Ern, whose memory will haunt her from then onwards.

I am told that Gough's re-creation of Newfoundland language is correct; I am not certain that it suffices to lend true life to the character. The Gothic devices work but also make the slim plot foreseeable. The flashbacks add a little suspense, as the reader follows Maud's memories piecing together her life.

Certain passages and descriptions of people and events as seen through Maud's eyes are written with strong dramatic sense:

For Vince the world has stopped and is watching him. He knows the curtains

FIRST NOVEL AWARDS

AS IF ANY further proof were needed, the flourishing state of Western Canadian writing was amply demonstrated in 1984's crop of first novels. Three of the six finalists for the ninth annual Books in Canada Award for First Novels — which offers a prize of \$1,000 for the best first novel published in English in Canada during calendar year 1984 — are books set in the Prairies. (And two — one set in the Prairies, the other not — are, for whatever reason, by and about Mennonites.)

The six titles on the short list are: *Country of the Heart*, by Sharon Butala (Fifth House); *Precious*, by Douglas H. Glover (Seal); *Dazzled*, by John Gray (Irwin); *I Hear the Reaper's Song*, by Sara Stambaugh (Raincoast); *Perdue: Or How the*

West Was Lost, by Geoffrey Ursell (Macmillan); and *The Salvation of Yasch Siemens*, by Armin Wiebe (Turnstone).

This year's short list was prepared jointly by writer-translator Paul Wilson and editor-critic Alberto Manguel, both of whom have contributed columns about first novels to *Books in Canada* during the past year. The other judges are: Dan Mozersky, manager of Prospero Books in Ottawa; Leslie Peterson, currently on a year's leave from her post as book review editor of the *Vancouver Sun*; and novelists Leon Rooke, writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto, and Carol Shields of Winnipeg. Their verdict and comments will be announced in a forthcoming issue. □

are back from all the windows around the point. He knows that old women are calling old men to come and take a look. He is aware of his different-looking suit, the slope of his shoulders, the scuff of dirt to the side of the trousers, the suitcase huge as a boulder near him, and Maud blocking the way into the door. The pastor gone, he has hurt his hand, and the only way out doesn't offer much dignity.

But there lacks a vaster vision to passages like this: a larger story that Gough has chosen not to tell. One wishes to know more about Maud and her people, more of their history, more of their landscape. Perhaps *Maud's House* is only a beginning.

If *Maud's House* remains discreet, unobtrusive, *Yorkville Diaries*, by Don Lyons (Elephant Press, 206 pages, \$5.95 paper), sprawls all over the place. As its title correctly states, these are the diaries of a Yorkville character, a 14-year-old kid who roams Toronto between Bay Street and Avenue Road. The blurb compares Lyons to Saroyan and Jimmy Breslin; there is little indication of either in the page-after-page teenage anecdotes that deal in a quite conventional way with drugs, sex and of course, violence.

Yorkville Diaries is set in the 1960s, that Disneyland time of joy and enlightenment. The characters' activities can be summed up in a paragraph, such as the one dated "Oct 1965":

School's been back six weeks and I've gone six times. What I do is head down to the Village, drop my books off at the Supertest and hang out with Larry and Stormin or roll in sweet Sue's arms. Around three in the afternoon I collect my books (what a joke!) and head for the Dutch Sisters where I put in a few hours.

Back and forth through the world of Yorkville, the characters spend their time visiting new hang-outs, meeting "chicks" and trying to decide who is gay and who is straight. Bikers get a share of the story (one girl hides not one but two knives, one in her bra, the other in her pocket) and the book ends with a biker's jaw being wired up in hospital.

The characters are caricatures: Here is a dialogue with a French girl, Elvira:

During tonight's meal I asked Elvira, who lives across the hall from us in this tiny room, if she was F.L.Q. It was one of my brighter moments.

"Non. Non, I am being from Thiers, France. Where is F.L.Q. please?"

"It's not really a geographical place. It's more like a state of mind."

"OUI! OUI! In United States you say? I comprehend."

Neither the humour of its prose nor the intricacies of its plot sustain the reader's attention: *Yorkville Diaries* reads like a watered-down script for *Animal House*. □

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INTERVIEW

Charles Ritchie

'I don't believe in an artificial separation between interesting people and ordinary people. I don't believe there is any such differentiation'

By George Galt

CHARLES RITCHIE, distinguished Canadian diplomat and diarist, was born in Halifax in 1906. He attended Oxford and Harvard, then joined the department of external affairs in 1934. He has served as ambassador to Bonn, permanent ambassador of Canada to the United Nations, ambassador to Washington, and high commissioner to London. *The Siren Years*, his war diaries (1937-45) were published in 1974. Since then his publisher, Macmillan, has issued three more diaries — *An Appetite for Life* (1977), *Diplomatic Passport* (1981), and *Storm Signals* (1983) — covering the years before and after his diplomatic career and including his lifelong friendship with the novelist Elizabeth Bowen. Now retired, he divides his time between London, Chester, N.S., and Ottawa, where he was interviewed by George Galt:

Books in Canada: How conscious were you when you were writing your diaries that they might someday be published?
Charles Ritchie: When I was actually writing them I wasn't conscious that they'd be published at all. It seems rather hard to believe that anybody would be foolish enough to go on doing

Charles Ritchie



this in this obsessive way without thinking they'd be published, certainly not consciously. God knows what goes on in your subconscious. I think the first time the subject really came up was when I read the war diaries to Elizabeth Bowen in the year before she died, 1972. She encouraged me. She said, "You should publish these diaries," the war ones. She never saw the others. I think that was the first time I really thought that perhaps I'd take a shot at it.

BIC: Had you never read your diaries to her before?

Ritchie: No, never.

BIC: There's an interesting tension in your books between candour and discretion. You write explicitly that nothing to do with official secrets was included. Obviously a lot of your private life wasn't included either. Was it edited out before publication, or did you simply choose not to write about such things?

Ritchie: Well, some things were left out, but compared to what was left in, very little. I think it's a very candid case history, but it isn't a true confessional, so to speak. I would find it very difficult to write about intimate emotional relationships or conversations. I didn't write all that down.

BIC: So you didn't treat your diary as a kind of confidant.

Ritchie: It was more like this. I think that perhaps there was some therapy in it. It put things at a slight distance from me, to write them down. This became a sort of addiction, a habit. It sometimes took the pain or the heat out of a situation. I don't mean I only did it for that purpose, but I think this had some part in it. But the prime motive, I think, was to pin down a moment, a scene, and had I been able to do so, a personality. You know, my mother, who had a great influence on me, was a marvellous mimic. If she were in this room she could bring the dead to life. The voice was exactly right. The gestures were exactly right — a bad mimic is the worst thing in the world. I think in my writing I wanted to do rather the same thing she was doing: to bring that person or that scene or that moment to life, in movement. Of course, it's a very difficult thing to do. But this was the impulse.

BIC: Did you write every day? One supposes not.

Ritchie: No, not every day. Sometimes three or four days later. Very seldom, though sometimes, at night, but usually in the morning. Sometimes early, sometimes in an interval of work in the morning. When I wrote at night it was noticeably quite different. I'd had a drink or two by the time I wrote the night ones and they were, if possible, worse than the day ones.

BIC: So it wasn't so much a discipline as...

Ritchie: As an addiction.

BIC: Did you read other diarists?

Ritchie: Yes, I did. Any diaries I could get hold of. I rather like diaries by obscure people. Not the Pepys of this world or even the Virginia Woolfs. I'm fascinated by the odd diaries that were kept by people who didn't attain great fame. For instance, I remember reading a diary by some woman — I've forgotten who — an American who married an Englishman in about 1830 and went to Italy, and there she met an old girl who'd known Byron. This old woman said to her, "I can still hear the sound of his foot dragging on the marble staircase as he came up these stairs." Things like that are fascinating.

BIC: Was Elizabeth Bowen a strong literary influence?

Ritchie: She wasn't a literary influence in the sense that I never aspired to write like her. Having no capacity as a storyteller or novelist myself, I don't think that my style was ever affected by knowing her. But she certainly was a great influence.

BIC: Could you say in what ways?

Ritchie: Well, humanly speaking. And quite apart from my devotion to her, she was the most terrifically good company. She wasn't like the real Bloomsburys who grew up in a tiny little coterie sheltered from the world in a sort of goldfish pool where they all lived together. She hadn't had that kind of life at all. She'd lived quite a lot in the country in Ireland, and she hadn't got a formal education. There was much more of ordinary life in her. She wasn't a hypersensitive, hypersophisticated product of the English upper middle classes

PHOTOGRAPH BY MILLER OF WASHINGTON

of the Strachey-Bloomsbury connection. I think that gives a tremendous savour to her writing. It makes it different. Also very funny. Extremely comic.

BiC: *Did you have any interest yourself in writing fiction?*

Ritchie: Well, I tried. I've occasionally tried short stories. I began once a novel, but I soon put it aside. I realized this wasn't a thing I could do, and if I couldn't do it well I didn't want to go ahead with it. It just died on me. I realized the scrap basket was really the only place for it. It was a different thing from the diary. It sprang from different motives: the story, the plot. It was what I was after, but I hadn't got it.

BiC: *And yet you have so many of a novelist's sensibilities, the keen eye for character and for detail. . . .*

Ritchie: Well, I found a form, I stumbled on a form in which I could put anecdotes, personalities, reflections, scenes, and so on, together. There used to be those scrap screens. I don't know if you ever saw one. People cut out things and put them next to each other in juxta-

position. Perhaps one piece would be a scene of the Bay of Naples and the other would be a photograph of their grandfather.

BiC: *A collage.*

Ritchie: A collage, yes. That's what I'm really seeking after, rather than a scrap screen.

BiC: *There's something of the collector in that, isn't there?*

Ritchie: Yes, trying to pin the thing down before it slides away, trying to get the word for it and nail it down. Yes, I suppose that's right. There is a part of the collector in it.

BiC: *Did you ever think of leaving external affairs to take up writing full-time?*

Ritchie: No, no. I was very lucky. External affairs gave me a good opportunity. And then there was the famous-names department. There are a great many scattered around, though I trust not dropped, through my books. They're very good copy, and they helped the books to be published. But fundamentally I'm just as interested in my cousin Susie in Halifax as I am in, well, I

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CANWIT NO. 100

FEW FIGURES of speech are so pointedly foolish as the oxymoron, that bittersweet expression that conjoins two seemingly contradictory ideas, such as "jumbo shrimp," "military intelligence," or "Progressive Conservative." That was the premise of probably our most successful CanWit — No. 29 — way back in 1978. To celebrate CanWit's 100th instalment (Dear God, can it really have been 10 years?), we're repeating our great oxymoron contest for a whole new generation of contestants. And — as we did in 1978 — we'll double the prize to a whopping \$50 for the best collection of sly oxymorons received before April 1. Address: CanWit No. 100, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9.

Results of CanWit No. 98

OUR REQUEST for punning titles for books by real writers provoked an avalanche of entries, a number of which linked Charles Lynch with capital punishment, Brian Fawcett with plumbing, and Roch Carrier with hauling stones. The winner is Joan McGrath of Toronto for a list that includes:

- Run for It*, by Carol Bolt
- Why Ain't You Rich?*, by Elizabeth Smart
- Million Dollar Workout*, by Fred Bodsworth
- L'Aure*, by Janet Lunn

- Bondage for Beginners*, by Jan Truss
- Figure Eight*, by Ann Blades

Honourable mentions:

- Nirvana*, by Michael Bliss
- A Guide to Anatomy*, by A.R.M. Lower
- Unsightly Skin Problems and Their Treatment*, by Harry Boyle
— Dean Jobb, Halifax
- A Basement Full of Relatives*, by W.P. Kinsella
- My Experiences with the Fat Lady*, by Irving Layton
— Michael P.J. Kennedy
Vanscoy, Sask.
- Obscenity, Profanity, and Parliamentary Procedure*, by Sir Charles G.D. Roberts
— Tara Daniels-Draper, Toronto
- A History of Prophylactics*, by Carol Shields
W.M. McLaughlin, Windsor, N.S.
- The Wolf at the Door*, by David Gurr
— Rosalie I. Tennison
Carman, Man.
- Shakespeare's Bird*, by Leon Rooke
— Barbara Wade, Toronto
- A Walk in the Country*, by John Metcalf
— June K. Thicke, Ladysmith, B.C.
- The Happy Motor Mechanic*, by Bliss Carman
— David J. Paul, Lucan, Ont.



PERDUE

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was going to say President Kennedy. That's not a very good example, but I don't believe in an artificial separation between interesting people and ordinary people. I don't believe there is any such differentiation.

EIC: But you wanted to keep the so-called interesting people a part of your life?

Ritchie: Yes, I did. Perhaps when I was young I thought interesting people were a different category.

EIC: How interested were you in foreign policy?

Ritchie: Very much so. And from a very early age. Very curious, I have a diary I found the other day that I wrote when I was 13. There's quite a lot about foreign policy in that. Quite a lot about the

attempted Russian invasion of Poland. What that had to do with me, living in Halifax and going to Trinity College School in Port Hope, I really cannot imagine. But it did interest me.

BiC: You're still finding diaries.

Ritchie: Well, I found this little volume. It's childish, really. There are quite a lot of them down in the cellar. But I can never find the one I want.

BiC: Are you still writing them?

Ritchie: Sporadically. I can go for weeks without writing, and then suddenly something sparks and I begin again. I never quite know what sets me off. □

RECOMMENDED

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

FICTION

Ladies of the House, by Sandra Birdsell, Turnstone Press. Never the superior Author, Birdsell replaces moral judgements with the patience, thoughtfulness, and concern of a good-natured god who loves his children but nevertheless must remain silent. Her down-to-earth images produce 10 stories of remarkable richness.

NON-FICTION

Eldorado: Canada's National Uranium Company, by Robert Bothwell, University of Toronto Press. More than a corporate history — of which it is an excellent example — this is a first-rate examination of the role and management of crown corporations. Bothwell's observations should be in the minds of those in Ottawa now contemplating our economic future.

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:

Aggressive U.S. Reciprocity Evaluated with a New Analytical Approach to Trade Conflicts, by R.J. Wonnacott, Institute for Research on Public Policy.
Anna's World, by Marie-Claire Binis, translated by Sheila Fischman, Lester & Orpen Dennys.
Banff/Breaking, by Charles Noble, Longspoon.
The Better Part of Heaven, by Ken Norris, Coach House.
British Columbia Heritage Cookbook, by Mary Evans-Atkinson, Whitecap.
Canadian Medicine: A Study in Restricted Entry, by Ronald Hamowy, Fraser Institute.
Canadian Studies, edited by Patricia McLaren-Turner, British Library.
Child of Lazarus, by M.J. Losier and C. Pinet, Goose Lane.
The Christmas Birthday Story, by Margaret Laurence, illustrated by Helen Lucas, M & S.
The Collected Poems of Miriam Mandel, edited by Sheila Watson, Longspoon.
Conflict or Compromise: The Future of Public Sector Industrial Relations, edited by Mark Thompson and Gene Swimmer, Institute for Research on Public Policy.
The CPR West, edited by Hugh A. Dempsey, Douglas & McIntyre.
A Difficult Faith, by Richard Lemm, Pottersfield Press.
The Discovery of Insulin, by Michael Bliss, M & S.

The Domestic Mosaic: Domestic Groups and Canadian Foreign Policy, by Elizabeth Riddell-Dixon, Canadian Institute of International Affairs.
Dostoevsky and Solzhenitsyn, by N.N. Sheidman, Mosaic Press.
Edmund Morris: Frontier Artist, by Jean S. McOill, Dundurn.
Elizabeth Bagshaw, by Marjorie Wild, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Embers and Earth (Selected Poems), by Gaston Miron, translated by D.G. Jones and Marc Plourde, Guernica.
Environment and Economy: Essays on the Human Geography of Alberta, edited by B.M. Barr and P.J. Smith, Pica Pica Press.
Exit, Révolte et Désidence, par Richard Giguere, Les Presses de l'Université Laval.
Focus on the Canadian Dollar, by John E. Floyd, Fraser Institute.
Historic Inns of Quebec, by Marvin Fremes, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
How to Profit from the Coming Hyperinflation, by Henry B. Zimmer and Dave Greber, Methuen.
Iceberg Guides: Canadian Colleges and Universities, edited by David W. Williams, Iceberg Press.
Images of the Land: Canadian Book Prints, 1919-1945, by Patricia Ainslie, Glenbow Museum.
Impromptus, by Ralph Gustafson, Collichan Books.
Islands at The Edge: Preserving the Queen Charlotte Islands Wilderness, by the Islands Protection Society, Douglas & McIntyre.
J. Armand Bombardier, by Carol Precious, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Japanese Business in Canada: The Elusive Alliance, by Richard W. Wright, Institute For Research On Public Policy.
Jill and the Big Cat, by Erho Rothstein, Black Moss Press.
John McCree, by John Bassett, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Kate Rice, Prospector, by Helen Duncan, Simon & Pierre.
Kenneth Clark: A Biography, by Meryle Secret, Holt Rinehart & Winston.
Kevin's Story, by Dvora Levinson, IPL.
Lena, Wild, Lean, by David Walker, Collins.
Life in Glass, by Rhona McAdam, Longspoon.
Loneliness, by Reuben P. Bulka, Guidance Centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.
Lost Islands, by Henry Stammel, UBC Press.
Managing Canada's North, edited by Louis-Edmond Hamelin, Institute of Public Administration of Canada.
The Mulgrave Road, by Charles Bruce, Pottersfield Press.
The Mysterious Mummer and Other Newfoundland Stories, by Bert Bastone, Jasperson Press.
Nanome Bay Suite, by Kevin Roberts, Collichan Books.
The New Majority: Adult Learners in the University, by Duncan D. Campbell, University of Alberta Press.
Northern Ecology and Resource Management, edited by Rod Olson et al., University of Alberta Press.
Not Above the Law, by Heather Bird, Key Porter.
Notable Canadian Children's Books, 1982 Supplement, edited by Irene E. Audrey, National Library of Canada.
The Objectives of Canadian Competition Policy, 1889-1983, by Paul K. Gorecki and W.T. Stanbury, The Institute for Research on Public Policy.
The Ontario Collection, by Fern Bayer, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
open is broken, by Betsy Watland, Longspoon.
Penumbra, by Susan Kerlake, Ays Press.
A Pictorial History of the Canadian Film Awards, by Maria Topalovich, Stoddart.
The Politics of Energy, by G. Bruce Doern and Glen Toner, Methuen.
Private Bank Lending and Developing Country Debt, by Pierre Sauvé, Institute for Research on Public Policy.
Public Non-Profit Budgeting: The Evolution and Application of Zero-Base Budgeting, by James Cui and Richard Ritter, Institute of Public Administration of Canada.
A Question of Loyalty, by Barbara Greenwood, Scholastic.
Ravished by the Spirit: Religious Revivals, Baptists, and Henry Alline, by G.A. Rawlyk, McGill-Queen's University Press.
The Rebel in the House (revised), by Leo Heaps, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Salut John on the March: A Bicentennial Publication, Saint John on the March.
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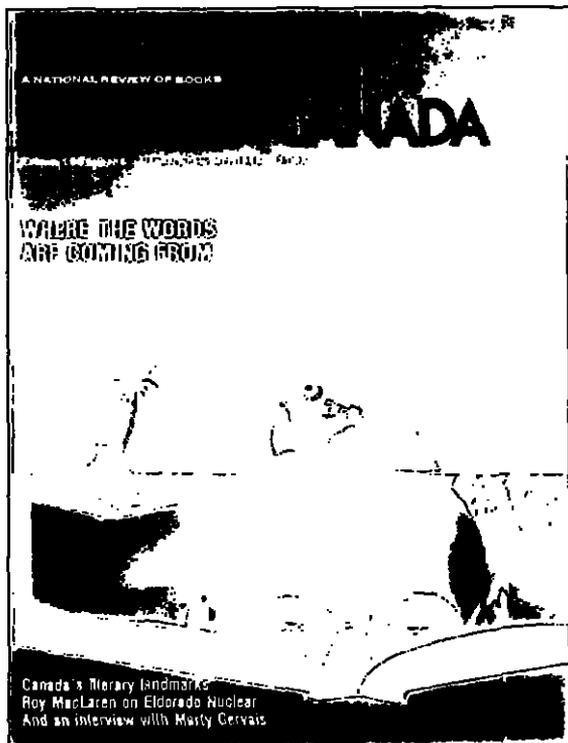
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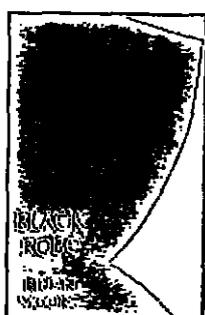
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