H.R. Percy: 'Rising Young Writer' at 65

The diabolical obsession of Devendra Varma

George Whalley's critical legacy

And an interview with Phyllis Grosskurth
FROM YOUR HOME TOWN
TO EXPO 86!
YOU'LL FIND REGIONAL AND LOCAL INTEREST BOOKS IN ALL OUR STORES

VANCOUVER
PICTORIALS

Greater Vancouver:
Touch the Magic
A kaleidoscope of photographic images, signetizing that depict the uniqueness that Vancouver has to offer.
$34.95

Vancouver's First Century
A very special and entertaining portrait of an ever-changing city, and a fine tribute to Vancouver's photographers, yesterday and today.
$29.95

VANCOUVER
GUIDES

EXCLUSIVE TO
W. H. SMITH • CLASSIC

40% OFF
Canada From The Air
A fascinating collection of photographs that show the diversity of Canada as it is rarely seen from the air
REG. $44.95
NEW! $24.99

The Gastronomic:
A Menu Guide to Greater Vancouver & Vancouver Island. The diversity of cuisine, the exceptional quality and the numerous choices of restaurants make this guide essential.
$9.95

The Stanley Park Explorer
Here is the complete companion to Stanley Park - a guidebook and history, described in five fascinating walks.
$8.95

The Vancouver Guide
Here's all the what, when, where and how information you need to explore and enjoy the city's pleasures to the fullest.
$9.95

If your local W.H. Smith or Classic bookshop is out of stock of these titles, we will be glad to special order them for you. Prices are subject to change until Saturday July 19, 1988. Bookcase is a free periodically produced flyer obtainable in all local W.H. Smith & Classic stores.
FEATURES

7 Leo Bloomer. At 65, H.R. Percy is one of the country’s rising young novelists. By Harold Harwood

11 Pentimento of a Giant. George Willsher may yet emerge as Canada’s most enduring critical theorist. By Robert L. MacDonald

19 Critical Notice: Brief reviews of recent fiction, non-fiction, and poetry

REVIEWS

12 Gestures, by H.S. Bharsa

12 A Cheeky Lover, Q. H.R. Percy: Conventional Emotions, by Lesley Choche; Obadiah Harold, Good Luck, by Audrey Thomas

14 Finding the Cheyenne Colour, Q. Kevin Roberts: Dog Attempts to Draw Man in Saskatchewan, Q. Douglas Glover: The Picture on the Wall, by Parry James

16 Foreign Afflato, by Keith Fraser; August Nighting, by Hugh Head

17 Velcro & Violence: Introducing with Santeethukan Vhilore, edited by Doris Hills; John for the Apocalypse, by David Carpenter

18 Vancouver Fiction, edited by David Wilmot; The Secret Journal of Alexander Chantoun, by Brian Fawcett

30 Q.e-Q.Jat Uluks: Prose and Illustrate in Canadian Politics, by Ron Graham

33 Tens to the Ale, by Rachel Weit

35 Down to Earth: The Strife in Canadian Farming, Q. Carole Glassey

38 In the name of the Lordling: Fell Concepts of Outer Space, by Douglas Curran


DEPARTMENTS

4 Field Notes

6 English, Our English, Q. Bob Blackburn

34 First Yells, by Douglas Glover

36 Interview with Phyllis Grosskurth, Q. Sharie Possobonski

CONTRIBUTORS

Brian Borland is a Montreal poet and teacher. Neil Bissonnette’s Digging Up the Mountains (Macmillan) has recently been published in paperback. Bob Glickman writes frequently in these pages about English usage. Doug Brown has a degree in philosophy and classical Greek. Sylva C.J. Brown has a special interest in women’s studies. Mary Francis Coolly writes for the Catholic New Times. Lorne Laschuttoperl was the author of A Few Rustic Huts (Mosaic Press). Douglas Glover’s Dog Attempts to Draw Men in Saskatchewan (Talonbooks) is reviewed on page 14. John Goddard, former Canadian Press correspondent in Yellowknife, now is a freelance writer in Montreal. C.D. Godfrey is dean of arts and a professor of history at Mount Allison University. Bill Hill’s most recent collection of poetry is Why I Haven’t Written (Brick Books). John Harrold is an agricultural sales man for a large Nova Scotia cooperative. Helmut Holmstrom is a freelance writer in Saskatchewan. Don Wood, whose drawings appear throughout the issue, is a Toronto artist. Harold Herwood is a novelist and non-fiction writer in Australia. John Howard, in an article in Maclean’s, asserts that Head On was nominated for a Grolia in 1992. David Jordan recently moved to Toronto from Vancouver. Robin Kobrynski is a Toronto photographer whose work has appeared in Maclean’s and other publications.


EDITOR • Michael Smith MANAGING EDITOR • Fraser Sutherland
GENERAL MANAGER • Susan Trayer CIRCULATION MANAGER • Susan Aihoshi
ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER • Beth Bruder
CONSULTANTS • Robert Farrelly • Jack Jensen • Mary Lu Toms
CONTRIBUTING EDITORS • Eleanor Wachtel (West Coast) • K.G. Probert (Prairies) • Shirley Knight Morris • Paul Wilson • Ray Flit (Quebec) • Terry Goldie (East Coast)

Books In Canada is published nine times a year, with the assistance of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, by the Canadian Review of Books Ltd., 231 Market Street East, Peterborough, Ont., Canada K9J 1A9. Telephone: (416) 383-5428. Available in selected book stores and in all W.H. Smith and Classic Book Shops. Individual subscription rate: $14.05 a year ($17.50 elsewhere). Back issues available on microfilm from: the University of Toronto Libraries, 1200 St. George St., Toronto, Ont. M5S 3G9. Indexing in the Canadian Periodical Index. Member of the CPAA. Material is commissioned on the understanding that both parties are bound by the terms of the standard CPAA contract. The editors cannot be held responsible for unsolicited material. Second Class Mail — Registration No. 2953. Contents © 1986. Typography by Jay Tea Graphics Ltd.
Dr. Varma and Mr. Hyde

From his Halifax lair, one of the world's leading authorities on Gothic romance sets out to resurrect lost tales of horror

There was no howling on the moors when I arrived at the home of Canada's most renowned gothicist, Dr. Devendra P. Varma. No tempest swept the dull midwinter clouds across the face of a spectral moon, no Atlantic breakers hurled themselves against the placid shoreline of the Northwest Arm as I stepped from my taxi into the shelter of the carport. As the residence of one of the world's leading authorities on vampire lore, Varma's house has a somewhat fortified aspect, but it is hardly Gothic. A series of interlocking octagons built in 1969, it is modern to a fault. The absence of right angles reflects the eccentricity, if not the diabolical content, of Varma's literary interests.

I thought Varma in the flesh might inspire the same ghastly foreboding as the subject of his study. One expects a man who has spent a night in Castle Dracula to carry with him a whiff of the tomb, but it is difficult to conjure a Gothic frisson from a man who drives an Oldsmobile and who offers you a Ten-Penny ale as he expounds on the undead. He avers, indeed, that he is tired of being asked about vampires — although words such as "Dracula" and "necromancer" still command his tongue.

This theatricality recalls a younger Varma who staged Shakespeare in Kathmandu and Damascus, A distinguished man of 61, with an intense gaze and a well-fed belly, Varma speaks with the elaborate phrasings and precise enunciation of a scholar educated in British India and London. He was born in the northeast state of Bihar, in Darbhanga, a Himalayan village with a view of Everest, nestled in a valley on the border with Nepal. While head of the English department at Ranchi University, Varma was selected under the Colombo Plan to help establish Tribhuvana University in Kathmandu, following the 1950 Nepalese revolution. When British personnel quit the United Arab Republic during the 1956 Suez crisis, he was transferred to Damascus and thence to Cairo. The last move, he says, resulted from the intercession of President Nasser, who had witnessed Varma's Shakespearean pro-

Varma's time in the Middle East "was a great experience for me, but it was not academically satisfying." He was looking for a position in the United States when he heard of an opening at Dalhousie University in Halifax. He arrived in 1963, intending to stay for a couple of years. That he has remained here since he attributes in part to the support of former Dalhouse president Henry Hicks. The Arno Press collection of Gothic romances in the Dalhousie library bears an inscription from Varma to Hicks: "whose kind patronage enabled me to light a taper at the long-neglected 'gothic' shrine."

Since he was a student, Varma's love has been to till the "unploughed field" of Gothic romances, those sensational fictions that predominated between 1760 and 1820, when some 800 of them were published. "Priced beyond the means of middle-class readers, as much as $5 an apiece, these fantasies were rented from circulating libraries for a penny a day and eagerly read by young ladies, the "leisured fair." Late 18th-century moralists fulminated against their corrupting influence. "Madam, a circulating library in a town is an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! It blossoms through the year!" blustered Sir Anthony Absolute in Sheridan's comedy, The Rivals. "And depend on it... that they who are so fond of handliag the leavgs will long for the fruit at last."

Varma borrowed Sheridan's phrase for the title of his 1972 study of circulating libraries, The Evergreen Tree of Circulating Knowledge. Also for scholars, few examples of the Gothic genre have survived. "Because the books circulated very fast, from hand to hand," notes Varma, "they were reduced to pieces, just like the papabacks of today." Varma's major accomplishment has been the "resurrection" of lost Gothic romances, such as the "seven horrid novels" referred to in Northanger Abbey, Jane Austen's pastiche of the genre. So utterly had these novels vanished that scholars doubted they had ever existed. Varma found his first solid evidence while researching The Evergreen Tree, when he discovered a review of Francis Lathom's The Midnight Bell. Over a period of 13 years, working through the network of antiquarian booksellers and collectors, continuing work begun by Michael Sadlee and Montague Summers, he assembled all seven novels, which were published as a set by Folio Press in 1968.

The rarity of Gothic romances partly accounts for their scholarly neglect. "Everybody reads Walter Scott, Jane Austen, Fielding, and Richardson," says Varma, "but not Ann Radcliffe or Horace Walpole. They bypass these names. 'Oh, she wrote Mysteries of Udolpho end he wrote Castle Of Oran-lo.' Nobody reads those novels because they are not available." As a Ph.D. student in England, Varma met Prof. Bonamy Dobrée, who "introduced me to the delights of the Gothic romance."

"My researches are archival," says Varma, who likens his work to reconstructing a broken urn. "You'll find 40 pages in one treasure room, another 40 with a collector, the title page somewhere else." Once the text has been reassembled, the next challenge is to find out something about the author. "There is not a single line written anywhere in the history of English Literature about Francis Lathom," outside of one reference in the letter from Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra. Varma hired a British lawyer to search the birth and death records in England's Somerset House, through hundreds of Francis Lathom's, for the novelist. This led Varma to a small village near Doncaster, where he found Lathom's tomb and an obituary notice listing all of his books. Such labours lie behind each of the more than 200 Gothic romances he has resurrected.

Varma's publications include The Complete Works of Sheridan LeFouy, in 52 volumes from Arno Press (1977); 36 volumes of Gothic Dissertations; and an essay, "The Genesis of Dracula," in Peter Underwood's Vampire's Bedside...
Companion. The Gothic Flame is a textbook history that published in 1957 and now, going into its fourth edition. Varma's Dalhousie course on the literature of horror and terror is unique in Canada, one of only two in North America. There are, he says, "only three people living in the world who know about this spectrum of literature."

He now is working on what he intends to be his final project before retiring. The Gothic Galaxy, a study of the minor Gothic writers. The finished work will be more than 600 pages. "They were not all great writers," he notes. "Posterity has not condescended to call any one of them great, but the colour of life was reflected on them by their readers."

Leaving aside academic accomplishments, much of Varma's notoriety derives from his enthusiastic pursuit of the arcane. "Books are not only tomes of learning," he says. "They are also toys to till an idle hour." Gothic romances are "the literature of the night," intriguing "not only in themselves, but in the peculiarly graphic way they relate to the development and dispersal of sexual and social inhibitions." Varma has served as a consultant to producers of horror films, a genre he sees as the heir of the Gothic tradition. His own achievements often have a cinematic flair. In March he hosted a Transylvanian Weekend at Dalhouse, a similar extravaganza to one organized in 1973.

As well as the literature, Varma explores the physical landscapes of Gothic fantasy. He has conducted vigils at such sites as Castle Frankenstein, and Lauenstein castle in Thuringia, frequented by the spectre of the Bleeding Nun. "What are the folklores, the sagas, in the countryside, how have the authors utilized these for their novels? The sociological, anthropological elements, that is a part of my research."

And the purpose of such vigils? "The value is that it is not all fiction: you think that there was a person who tried to manufacture a monster; there was a prince who was as bloodthirsty as Dracula; there is still a castle that is haunted by the phantom of the Bleeding Nun. What is the reality behind it? It is not a fable or a fairy tale: this is what I want to establish."

In the living room of Castle Varma are statuettes and images from Hindu, Egyptian, and European mythology. A reading lamp takes the form of a Egyptian funerary assemblage. Surrounded, as in a tomb, by the trinkets of death, one senses not a oppressive morbidity but a faith in the continuity of life. "Death is not the end of life," affirms Varma. "It is the opening, a gateway to a new life: an ecstatic experience. Nothing is lost."

— ROBIN METCALFE

Words and work

THAT WRITERS WORK hard few would deny — least of all the writers themselves. But can they beclassed with stevedores, bricklayers, and lumberjacks? Tom Wayman thinks so. Wayman, a poet and teacher, is the best-known member of the Vancouver Industrial Writers' Union (VIWU), a loose-knit group that meets once a month to discuss what he calls "work writing."

"At one time," says Wayman, author of Inside Job: Essays on the New Work Writing (Harbour Publishing) and editor of the poetry anthology A Government Job at Last (MacLeod Books), "it was sex in literature that was taboo. But a detailed examination of daily work and its effect on people has up to the present been omitted from most of our imaginative writing."

Most of today's writing, Wayman says, is escapist — aimed at diverting readers away from the affairs of everyday life and into another world. "A literature that attempts to dull our perceptions so that we can get through the day should lead one to ask, why do we want to escape?" For example, an assignment he gave sociology students at the University of Windsor a couple of years ago — to interview workers doing the same sort of jobs they expected to have after graduating — produced staggering results. Some students changed courses, while others dropped out once they discovered the realities of their chosen field.

Such scrutiny of the working world is central to Wayman's poetry, reflected most recently in his collection The Face of Jack Munro (Harbour Publishing), which saves the president of the International Woodworkers Association, who has been accused of selling short British Columbia's workers during the public employees' strike of 1983. Wayman is all for solidarity. This summer the VIWU and Kootenay School of Writing will jointly sponsor the Split Colloquium (to be held in Vancouver, August 21-24), to which Wayman has invited 18 writers from Canada and the United States — among them poets Lorna Crech, Erinn Mouré, U.S. film-maker John Sayles, and Robert Carson of the San Francisco Waterfront Writers Association.

Wayman contends that a reader's attitude to the major object of imaginative writing in English — love, death, and nature — is largely shaped by the kind of daily work he does (or doesn't do). The amount of money, energy, and time available for a person to pursue romance or appreciate nature is a direct result of
his working conditions. By contrast, academic criticism reaches back to a co-c"lesical tradition that looked for wisdom in sources other than the secular world. The further a concern was from everyday experience, the more it seemed to speak from the divine font of knowledge.

Still, most of today's "work writers" do have university degrees. Indeed, some critics suggest that such writers are merely slumming. It is a "argument that annoys Wayman, but one that he only partially answers. For one thing, he says, work writing is not limited to blue-collar workers; and, anyway, many of today's blue-collar jobs are taken by university graduates. But if most of the writers are university-trained, don't they represent an elite and separate group among their fellow employees?

Whatever the case, Wayman believes that the new cultural taste-makers will emerge from the work-writing movement. An example, he says, is Andy Suknaski, whose poems, which document the settlement of the Prairies, are very popular in the Ukrainian community. An university professor applying to Suknaski the same critical techniques that he would apply to Margaret Atwood would find his poems simplistic, and uniterary. However, if Atwood's poems were shown to the Ukrainians, they might find them boring, dry, and overly cerebral.

"Do we have work writers that are good writers?" Wayman asks. "This is something the movement and the black movement wrestled with.

To a white person the black writer's work may appear clumsy. But the black writer says, "No, and a successful writer is ignoring a central fact of our existence.

"If you have literature that doesn't mention work," says Wayman, "it is a literature with a "enormous hole in the middle of it."

— Grant David Shilling

That empty feeling

Surrounded on all sides by ungrammatical medias, a language maven is vaulted into deciding whether to stand or evacuate himself

By Bob Blackburn

The news media are reporting an ever-increasing incidence of natural and unnatural events that make it desirable to evacuate the residents of a place.

I consider this an illogical use of evacuate, which means, simply, to make empty, but I can find no authoritative support for that opinion. The earliest (16th century) findings listed in the OED have to do chiefly with bodily functions. Early in the 17th century, we find places being evacuated of inmates, but, at about the same time, we find inmates being evacuated, i.e., removed. That makes no sense to me; evacuating a person is a job for the taxidermist. It simply indicates that writers of the 20th century have "0 corner 0" illogically, and I'm thinking, for instance, that Henry Wotton, author of the first sighting of this "se, had he lived another three-and-a-half centuries, would feel at home in a Canadian news-room today, debilitating good words with the rest of them.

Both the OED and Webster's Second put this use well down on the list, but neither suggests that there is anything improper about it. My faithful old Webster's College, however, recognizes only the uses I deem acceptable. One can never have too many dictionaries.

I had a happier time seeking and failing to find support for the all-too-frequent modern "se of vault as a transitional verb meaning to elevate suddenly the position of someone, as in "three birds and an eagle on the back nine" today vaulted him into third place. . . . That is a use that Sir Henry Wotton would not object to. "He vaulted into third place with . . ." would both correct the error and give the sentence more power.

Some input from readers:

Marcia Tannenbaum of Ottawa has sent me a welcome response to my asking if we really need maven—a meaning expert, one who knows a lot about a particular area of knowledge, but also, more importantly, one who understands . . . . The word comes from the Hebrew verb 'to understand.' In my experience, I trust that this information to persuade you that the language is indeed enriched by [the use of the word] maven.

I guess that provides some justification. I have always felt that expert bore some connotation of understanding, and, in fact, understanding, in one of its senses, means expert. However, understanding has a broader meaning, and, from what Ms Tannenbaum says, I am willing to concede that there is value in having a noun such as maven in English.

(If the truth be told, all this might have bee) cleaved up more simply were it not for my aversion to dictionaries published since mid-century. The only two references I have bee) able to find simply define maven as meaning expert, and I was inclined to dismiss it as a buzzword. I do not hate neologisms, I simply suspect them, and I distrust all dictionaries under 30.)

A careful reader of the Toronto Star reports that he is used to seeing it's for its, and recently saw her's for hers in that paper. He encloses a clipping in which their's appears in large type, and concludes: "I'm waiting for his'."

Another sharp eye noticed that one edition of the Globe and Mail contained both "surround my both sides" and "surround myself all sides." A TV viewer quotes an announcer a5 saying someone was "getting it from sides of the coin." (I presume this would include the inside and outside, in addition to the obverse and reverse, but it remains a ridiculous figure.)

During most of my life, media was the plural of medium. I' the television age, it became more and more misused, through ignorance, as a singular noun. More recently, it has been used consistently and willfully by an increasing number of respected (although not necessarily by me) writers, and I was becoming resigned to it. However, I was not prepared to hear what I heard only last night from the mouth of a U.S. network TV broadcaster: "[Television] is the most influential of the medias."
Late bloomer

At 65, after half a lifetime polishing his craft, H.R. (Bill) Percy is one of the country's 'rising young novelists'

By Harold Horwood

In a lovely old house on the estuary of the Annapolis River in Nova Scotia lives a former naval man who is known among tourists, as a friendly innkeeper and among his neighbours as one of the many who have chosen to spend their retirement in this most pleasant corner of the Maritimes. Nothing unusual about Bill Percy. He even looks the part, his trimmed beard setting off a face lined and tanned from gazing at far horizons, a wiry, athletic man in his 60s who likes to play tennis and paddle a canoe and tends his fruit trees.

There's just one odd thing about him. He happens to be one of Canada's 'rising young novelists,' a fiction writer who impresses both critics and readers more and more with each book he publishes. His second collection of short stories, A Model Lover (Stoddart), has recently appeared. His third novel, Tranter's Tree, is to be published next year by Lester & Orpen Dennys. His fourth novel is rapidly nearing completion. And in addition to publishing fiction, he has found time to write short biographies of Joseph Howe and Thomas Chandler Haliburton (both published by Fitzhenry & Whiteside). All this since the mid-1970s, when he announced his career was "just beginning."

Flotsam, published by Breakwater Books in 1978, won the Nova Scotia First Novel Award for H.R. Percy (as he's known on his dust-jackets; if you twist his arm he'll admit that the H.R. stands for Herbert Roland). An episodic saga, Flotsam was based in part on his experiences in the Royal Navy during the Second World War and showed the effects of his long familiarity with the short story: the book practically breaks down into a series of rather long short stories.

Before he wrote his first novel Bill Percy had been writing stories for about 30 years. He had been published in many Canadian journals and anthologies, had appeared twice in Vanity Fair and three times in Short Story International, and had published a collection, The Timeless Island, published by Ryerson in 1960. He was regarded in Canadian literary circles as a hobbyist, doing the occasional short story superbly well, but hardly a full-time writer.

Flotsam was barely on the press, however, when Percy had another novel ready. This one—Painted Ladies—reflected nothing of his own career, but a great deal of one of his private interests: Percy is an amateur painter in oils. A far more complex book than Flotsam, it begins with a dying artist, then proceeds to explore the many elements that went into the building of his career.

Impatient with delays at Breakwater, Percy looked the book to Toronto agent Bella Pomerantse. She promptly placed it with Lester & Orpen Dennys, who published it in 1983 to enthusiastic reviews. It was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award and republished by General as a New Press Canadian Classic. Long before it appeared, Percy was working on his third novel and preparing his second short-story collection. He has recently returned from Ecuador, where he went to collect background material for his fourth novel.

Percy works at his writing full-time during the winter in a cottage that he owns at Barefoot Bay, Florida. From May to December he lives at The Moorings, in Granville Ferry, N.S. The Moorings, known as a "bed and breakfast" in the tourist trade, is not only one of the handsomest Victorian houses in the region but is furnished with period furniture that Bill's wife Vina (short for Davina—she's Welsh) has made a hobby of collecting. Vina is the real innkeeper; she loves the job, loves the house, loves its surroundings, and dreads the thought of retirement. Bill, whose main contribution is keeping the place in repair, regards the job with some impatience, and is usually to be found in his private office, up the back stairs, pounding away at his typewriter.

Though Bill Percy's headlong career in fiction didn't begin until middle age, he always regarded himself as a writer. Born
Aug. 6, 1920 at Burhan, Kent, he grew up in a house full of books among a family of avid readers. His paternal grandfather was known locally as “the poet,” but nothing he wrote has survived. Bill can’t remember when he started reading, or when he first wanted to write. He recalls reading Dickens’s Bleak House before he was 10, and his mother taking him away because she thought it “too adult.”

“I never did get back to it. FIFA recalls, “In fact, the only Dickens I ever got to read was what I read as a child.” Joseph Conrad’s novels and short stories became the great love of his youth. (“I believe I devoured everything he ever wrote!”) He also read Henry James and Thomas Hardy at an early age, and many of the European classics in translation: Balzac, Dostoyevsky, Maupassant. His periodical reading was mostly Argosy, a magazine devoted entirely to short fiction. He first published in a school magazine at age 11, and was “enormously peeved by the school principal,” who demanded to know whether he really had written it himself. At school they also produced a magazine on a machine called a hectograph.

Naval careers were a tradition in the Percy family, and Bill went straight from school into naval apprenticeship. He was still an apprentice when the Second World War began, and graduated to his first posting during the Battle of Britain in 1940. Drafted to HMS Enterprise, a destroyer, he was on his way to join her at Gibraltar when the troop transport on which he was travelling was torpedoed and sunk in the Bay of Biscay. Rescued and returned to Britain, he was subsequently drafted to the battleship King George V, stationed in mid-Atlantic, and was present at the great chase and running battle in which the Royal Navy sank the world’s most powerful ship, the Bismarck. During the Battle of the Atlantic he got into Halifax once, and decided immediately that Canada was where he wanted to live.

He married Mary Davina James while on leave in Plymouth in 1942, but was then sent to the Far East on HMS Hawkins to join in the war against Japan. His son Jonathan was 14 months old when Percy saw him for the first time. Subsequently there were two other children, Roger and Pauline. Percy and his wife now have three grandchildren.

After taking part in the D-Day landings in Normandy, Percy’s ship was sent back to the Far East, and he was stationed at Hong Kong until his 12-year tour ended. During the war he had one play produced on shipboard by Arthur Lane, later a famous producer in London, and published an article on Conrad in a naval magazine — but that was all about it.

Before he could leave Hong Kong the Korean War started, and Percy refused his discharge and served another 18 months in the Pacific. Then he applied for a post in the Royal Canadian Navy, which just the was advertising for Royal Navy engineers. He got the Job, and he and his family landed at Halifax July 1, 1952. From Halifax he was posted to HMCS Cornwallis, a naval base within sight of his eventual home at Granville Ferry, and was then transferred to the desk navy in Ottawa.

At the end of the war Percy had joined a group known as the Forces Writers Circle, later The Twentieth Century Writers Club. Manuscripts circulated among members, and one of than liked his story “The Captain’s Lady” so much that he submitted it to the famous literary journal Vanity Fair, without consulting Percy. “Out of the blue,” says Percy, “came a letter of acceptance offering 15 guineas.” That, at the time, would have been an excellent week’s wages. The editor, A.Y. MacFleake, suggested the plot of another story. “The Timeless Island,” which he subsequently bought for 30 guineas. Bill’s illustrator at Vanity Fair was Ronald Searle, later famous as author of The Belles of St. Trinian’s.

At Halifax, Percy met a “well-known” Nova Scotia writer Bill Bird, Helen Creighton, Thomas Riddell, who introduced him to the Canadian Authors’ Association. Through the CAA Percy became editor of the Canadian Author and Bookman and got to know most of the well-known Canadian writers of the time — Louis Dudek, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Al Purdy — and occasionally a famous visitor. Dudek arranged a dinner in Montreal for Henry Miiia, and introduced this American enfant terrible to Percy and his other Canadian friends. But Percy’s favourite anecdote has him years at the magazine is a simple one-liner: “I had Peter Newman writing book reviews for me, for free.”

While working for the Canadian navy Percy entered an essay contest: “What I Like About Canada” won 5100, which bought a new sewing-machine for Vina, and Bill was invited to lunch by the minister of national defence. (“Lunching with the minister of the Crown — in Britain that would be almost in a class with an invitation to Buckingham Palace!”)

In 1972, the year after his retirement from the navy, Percy went searching for a house in Nova Scotia. Friends in Annapolis Royal mentioned The Moorings. He took a look at it, and immediately was asked by the owner, who was living in New Jersey, Vina Percy didn’t even see it until the day they moved in, but the house and the location, immediately across the river from Annapolis Royal, have been her first love ever since. Her success as an innkeeper financed their second home in Florida.

DURING HIS YEARS in Ottawa Bill arrived at a new writing method. Instead of starting with a plot, a theme, a background, he’d begin writing from a mere germ of an idea and let the story grow on the page. The plot would then arise out of the necessities created by the characters as they grew and developed. It was a method familiar to D.H. Lawrence, who never knew what a novel was about until it was half written.

The structure, Percy says, arises from the necessities of the story. “You write yourself into a box, and the you have to
write yourself out again." There's a certain penalty for this kind of writing. The narrative becomes convoluted, folded backwards and forwards in time, creating difficulties for the reader. Fortunately, Vina Percy is a reader, not a critic, but able to tell Bill when the thread of his narrative has disappeared and had better be fetched out again.

"I don't usually rewrite," Percy says. "I revise as I go, chapter by chapter. But in the case of Poster's Tree Vina convinced me that the middle part of the book was obscure. It was necessary to rewrite it. I can no longer write a simple chronological sequence. I often start near the end of a story, and then have to go back time and again to explain how things got to be the way they are." The method shows up very strongly in Painted Ladies, where the flashbacks happen quite naturally, because they are required to explain what is happening in the present. As a result, no artificial device is required to introduce them -- it smells that evoke the past, snapshots in an album, or the like.

Poster's Tree follows this structure to an even greater degree. It is set in present-day Nova Scotia, and is concerned with such issues as protection of the environment and the quality of life (issues Percy has been fighting about with the Nova Scotia government for many years), but it covers two centuries, and includes a lot of history in the present. In Grandville Ferry and Annapolis Royal history is the present.

"Writing a lot of short stories does something to your fiction in general," Percy says. "For one thing, it creates a habit of compression. You get used to defining your characters in a few swift strokes. You get used to bringing up information obliquely. But I find every major book a departure and a challenge. The character grows on the page. And what you demand of the character in the story will dictate what his past has been. So you have to invent and design his past. It's a fascinating process to watch, and when I'm forced to be away from the writing for a period I can't wait to get back to it to find out what's going to happen next."

Percy is something of a purist. When he writes in his own voice he doesn't dangle participles. He has escaped the morass of floating adverbs that has happed most of his contemporaries. If he splits an infinitive he does it intentionally. His prose is not only correct, but colourful, imaginative, and fresh. He admits to "a passionate love affair with language," and believes that "the way a thought is expressed not only defines the thought but helps to shape it."

This may sound like heresy in a period when the language one picks up on the street is supposed to be good enough for the most Olympian poet, but Bill Percy spent half a lifetime learning to use the language, and only then began to do his major work in fiction. "Young writers all too often discover that they have nothing to say, but with me, in some mysterious way, the 'something to say' grew out of the ability to say it."

That "something" can come from anywhere. He looked at an ancient tree on the road that runs past his door; he began writing about it, and a whole novel grew up around it. Two men he saw working on a roof became the powerful psychological story "Tearing Her Down." A man sitting in a window with a pair of field glasses turned into a horrifying study of rape, "Failing for Mavis."

It's magic -- and Percy calls it that, unblushingly. It is magic drawn from the ordinary affairs of life, but it is far more than ordinary. You do not achieve magic by portraying the surface of life -- only when you illuminate its depths.

From the day he published his first short story, Bill Percy has had as fine a prose style as any fiction writer in Canada, but in other respects his writing has grown with each book. Those who have read Poster's Tree in manuscript say it is even better than his earlier novels. His fiction has become more subtle, more complex, his art more finely tuned with each publication. His admirers will continue to find new strengths in this developing writer.
Dog Attempts to Drown Man in Saskatoon
by Douglas Glover
Urbane, stylish, and slightly off-beat, the stories in this collection touch on the lives of a wide variety of people: an abbot and a tramp on a Mexican train; a retarded farm boy and his incontinent dog; alienated singles; North American seekers living-and dying-in an Indian ashram.
$8.95 from TALONBooks
Order from U of T Press.

TIME OF THEIR LIVES
THE DIONNE TRAGEDY
by
John Nihmey and Stuart Foxman
A true-life fairy tale that became a living nightmare
224 pp; $19.95 Cloth
ISBN 0-921043-00-7
A NIVA Book
Distributed by Macmillan of Canada

VARIETIES OF EXILE
The Canadian Experience
Hallward Dahle
Fiances Brooke, Joseph Skvorecky, Mavis Gallant, Wyndham Lewis, and Malcolm Lowry-these are some of the authors discussed in this book, the first tidy of the theme of exile in Canadian literature.
$22.50

The University of British Columbia Press
303-6344 Memorial Road
Vancouver, British Columbia V6T 1W5

GALAPAGOS: A NATURAL HISTORY GUIDE
by M. H. Jackson
"Jackson tells delightful little stories throughout this unusual natural history guide. This guide belongs in every nature lover's library."
M. Mironowicz
113 pp include, 80 black & white photos and illustrations
16 page full color insert, soft cover
The University of Calgary Press
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, AB, T2N 1N4

FORBIDDEN HIGHS
The Nature, Treatment, and Prevention of Illicit Drug Abuse
By Reginald G. Smart
- Fully Referenced
- 26 Tables
- 9 Illustrations
- 234 Pages
$12.95

Order from Marketing Services, Dept. Q
Addiction Research Foundation,
33 Russell St., Toronto M5S 2E1.
Tel: (416) 595-8036

Jesperson Press
26A Flavin Street
St. John's, Nfld.
A1C 3R9
(709) 753-0633

You're the Bumble in My Bee
Tamney Palmer
ISBN 0-920502-74-1
$6.95 (Softcover)
Some poets remember... but their work does not delight the reader. Some poets are remembered, because their work does delight the reader. Tamney Palmer definitely falls in the latter category.
FEATURE REVIEW

Footprints of a giant

Though overshadowed by the catchier teachings of McLuhan and Frye, George Whalley may yet emerge as Canada’s most enduring critical theorist

By Robert L. McDougall


GEORGE WHALLEY, poet and scholar, died in 1983 at the age of 68. For his work on Coleridge, meticulous and perceptive and sustained over most of his working life, he was recognized internationally as being quite simply the best. For his other major concerns, which had to do chiefly with the pro of the literary imagination and the civilizing agencies of humane studies, he was less widely known; and the fact that he had few ardent followers is not after all surprising since it is clear that the idea of anything like a literary cult was foreign to the master’s beliefs about the true nature of critical inquiry.

Studies in Literature and the Humanities brings together the fruits of these other concerns, which until now have been scattered in periodicals and journals. The results are impressive. Although perhaps overshadowed in his lifetime by the catchier teachings of Marshall McLuhan and Northrop Frye, George Whalley may yet emerge as Canada’s most persuasive and enduring critical theorist of the 20th century.

Brian Crick of Brock University and John Ferns of McMaster seem to have begun their work on this volume at about the time of Whalley’s final illness. Some correspondence and a few meetings were all they managed, but these were enough to add affection to respect for the clear and civil spirit prefigured in the writings. In an admirably restrained introduction they accept the view central to Whalley’s rendering of Aristotle’s Poetics (which is one of the included papers) that the work they are approaching is “acrosomatic,” meaning “something to be listened to,” hence the less tempered with the better in its dynamic unfolding. After the brief introduction, nearly half of it made up of key passages quoted from Whalley himself, they therefore withdraw. Apart from source identifications, the only notes, full of learning and marvellous to read, are Whalley’s own ruminations on his texts.

There are 11 pieces here, ‘and with only two exceptions they belong to the last decade or so of Whalley’s life. Although all of them were to find places in magazines or collections, most of them had their origins in oral presentations, which is to say lectures, addresses, and papers. And the stamp of their origins remains: in their restricted length (uniformly 20-23 pages, which is an hour’s delivery time and about tight for most audiences) and in the tone and rhythms (which show a classical scholar’s awareness of the devices of Ciceroonian rhetoric). This is no loss. Whalley was a fluent and compelling speaker (he is the only man I have known who could speak ex tempore in perfect paragraphs), and the person-to-person voice retained in these pieces highlights both the sinuous flow of their arguments and the cardinal principle of his aesthetic that words do not mean but persons do.

Four of the 11 pieces are specifically targeted and might be called “practical criticism,” although Whalley would dislike the association of the phrase with I.A. Richards, whom he saw as a less than benign influence on the development of contemporary criticism: one on Coleridge’s The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,* one (a review) on Frye’s (a poem or a novel, for example, being not a thing of metres and rhymes or plots and characters but a kind of mindset to be discovered by the writer and rediscovered by the critic), I must add that they are also hortatory since most of their persuasive energy is directed toward diverting wandering and wasteful notions about the nature of scholarship and research, the teaching of literature, and the role of the humanities into the straight and true channels that a proper understanding of language as a human and humanizing instrument provides.

Consistent, compact, and immovable, the basic tenets of Whalley’s aesthetic support all of these theoretical discourses and are of course the underpinnings of the targeted pieces too. There is bound to be some repetition, but the continued play of wit and intelligence keeps boredom at bay. The important thing is that the essential Whalley is here, and there is no mistaking it. It is so simple, as Whalley once said slyly of one of Aristotle’s propositions, as to be almost indescribable.

I like this essential Whalley, as I loved the man. Here, all that lives is holy. Dead things, indeed all things that dehumanize literature and the use of language, get short shrift. In criticism, this means dissection, manipulation, categorization, pigeon-holing, even Frye getting high on anatomy. In civil life, it means jargon, gobbledygook, and blind faith to technology.

Although I see no evidence of a doctrinal framework for Whalley’s aesthetic, the mood enjoined for it is religious; language is a sacred trust and one approached the sanctuary, which is literature, with prayer and much fast. The starting point is “innocence of intent”; the proper feelings are “delight, wonder, respect, quietness.” The works of literature we examine being “things in the making, coming into being, finding themselves,” the proper mode for the critic is heuristic. “We sadly need a philosophy of heuristics,” Whalley says.

* “A study of the ways we hunt for and find things when we aren’t certain what we are looking for.”
A friendly Aristotle is at our side, for his Poetics is a paradigm for all those critical procedures that seriously seek to discover the nature of what they are examining, that seek to release with accurate definition the energy contained within what precise shaping limits." Coleridge is there, too, with his thoughts about "seem a little hat."

Whalley's world is elitist, and there are penalties for that. He may sometimes seem judgmental, intolerant, and coldly intellectual. His ghost has struck more than a flicker of pain in me as I write this review. Then there is the question of the study of Canadian literature. Whalley's dictum that it is "more profitable to study the works of giants than of dwarfs" is in keeping with his aesthetic and is difficult to refute. But with such easy dismissal he does not address the problem of a colonial or emergent literature as E.K. Brown did, for example, and with some success.

George Johnston, who sometimes turns his hand to writing wonderfully sympathetic portraits of his friends, has an acrostic poem on Whalley that goes in part like this:

Whether gifts or not, they are not given free
hand work they cost, neglect, uncertainty,
anguish of worshipping Perfection's face
lo, in her unattainable place, lovely, alluring, and beyond embrace.
Elegance be her surrogate while
years as we do, make elegant our style.
I think George Whalley may have paid a price for setting us the best he knew.

The art of compromise

By Douglas Glover

A DARK SUBTEXT of the resurgence of Occupied Europe after the Second World War was the presence, often hidden and unacknowledged, of hundreds and thousands of Nazi collaborators, profiteers, anti-Semites, men and women who served against the Allies during the war or participated in German atrocities. Revelations following the capture of Klaus Barbie have shown how the Allies were willing to cooperate with and conceal known war criminals who might prove useful against the Soviet Union. And nowadays you can buy food processors made by Krupp, a company once famous for its armaments.

One can't talk or read about this without feeling unclean—the world of collaboration and espionage, the weighing up of punishment for atrocity against economic or political gain. Ethics against power, is an ICH of the complexity of the question of human goodness and evil, of human values by political utility, of the corruption of the age. But this is the theme of H.S. Bhabha, Bham has chosen this stylish and authoritative novel.

Gestures is the fictional memoir of Jeremy Burnham, a minor British diplomat, a consul, "an ordinary, honourable Englishman." (By the end of the novel, this innocent-sounding phrase has become freighted with irony.) It begins with his assignment as a young man to the consulate in Venice in 1923 just as Mussolini comes to power. Burnham's first serious official business is to cover up the brutal murder of an Englishwoman by her Fascist lover in order not to offend the new government in Rome and, incidentally, to save the life of a Jewish friend whom the local police threaten to frame as a "crime. This is Burnham's initiation into the rites of power, the odd monastic discipline of compromise and trade-off.

In the second half of the novel, Burnham finds himself in post-liberation Amsterdam in 1945, helping with the economic reconstruction of the Netherlands. Through the intervention of the Jew he raved in Venice, he discovers a British plot to cover up the participation of Holland's wealthiest industrialist in forced wartime deportations of slave labour to factories in Eastern Europe. Out of loyalty to his country, he goes along with the plan, finishes out his career with a knighthood, and retires to write his memoirs at 83.

This is absolutely the bare bona of a lush and complex plot. I've left out any reference to the density of detail, the romance, the intriguing characters with which Bhabha fills his pages. Burnham himself is a quite invention; a marginal person on the edge of power. He resembles John Le Carré's Smiley in his bureaucratic wisdom and his loyalty to the state he happens to serve. He is a "realist," as he keeps telling us in so many different ways (Bhabha does go on a bit too much about Burnham's philosophy of life and politics), which means he can countenance all sorts of injustice and dishonourable behaviour for what appears to be the greater good of the polity. He's a behind-the-scenes man who yet feels, falls in love, marries, sees his wife die, loses a son in the war, and dies a little himself with each trade-off he makes.

Bhabha's theme, life in the dead zone of real politics, is not a new one. Edmund Blunden, Le Carré, and Frederick Forsyth have all dealt with somewhat similar material. And, actually the unravelling of the industrialist-war criminal's identity seems a little old hat. (This is a problem with every thriller I've ever read.) The fun of Gestures is getting there, the world Bhabha creates around his narrator. And this he makes all his own, writing in a curiously quaint, perhaps Edwardian style (quite properly, of course—these are Burnham's memoirs) that reminds me a little of the novels of Charles Morgan—say, The Fountain.

This is a fine book from a novelist who promises to be prolific and attain international stature (his books are coming out in England and the United States as well as Canada).}

Thinking small

By Joel Yanofsky


Unlike novels or poetry, the short story does not lend itself to being separated and pulled apart for critical analysis. It is self-contained—defined by its smallness. "The whole story is the meaning," as Flannery O'Connor said, "because it is an experience, not an abstraction." Regrettably, it is an experience many publishers and readers today have chosen to forgo. But if the market and the audience for short fiction has diminished, it isn't because of a lack of material, To their credit, Canadian writers in particular refuse to give up on the form.

Even H.R. Percy% A Model Love, the most uneven and inaccessible of these three new collections, demonstrates the challenges as well as the limitations of the short story. Among the 18 stories are all manner of tales: from the conventional ("The Rendezvous") to the supernatural ("The
Like all good story-tellers, he is especially adept at writing first sentences - at drawing the reader directly and immediately into the narrative. The opening line of "Inheriting the Earth" is typical and irresistible: "It's Sunday morning, I'm seventeen years old and I've discovered I'm impotent."

Without "attempting the impossible" or aiming too high, Choyce writes stories that are restrained and intimate - that make the most of their smallness. Whether he is composing a comic tale of suburban anthropology ("Conventional Emotions") or a compassionate portrait of the dead-end life of an unemployed Cape Breton man ("An Island to Stand On"), Choyce's instincts for what works and what doesn't are sound. Even in simple, throwaway stories like "Life Saving Techniques," he is able to hit his mark and move on.

Written mainly in the first person, the stories are arranged and linked chronologically. They follow the interchangeable, autobiographical narrators from boyhood to adolescence to adulthood. Variations on the same supporting cast of characters - delinquents, drop-outs, hitch-hikers, and disillusioned hippies - appear throughout the collection. Echoes of the idealistic '60s also filter in and out of the book. (In "Touch of a Vanished Hand," the narrator is plagued by LSD flashbacks.) Through it all, Choyce's middle-class landscape is liberally dotted with enticing girls, irresistible teachers, and broken-down cars.

Concerned primarily with youth, innocence, and "the rituals of rebellion," Conventional Emotions is gentle, self-deprecating, and predictable. But there are also some hard-edged observations on growing up and being trapped:

You graduate from high school.
You drink a few beers. Screw around a bit, somebody gets knocked up, you get married and go on UNCEF Welfare for life. Somewhere along the line you are supposed to get fat and useless.
There are variations on that schedule.
Sometimes the order is shifted around but nobody seems to escape.

Nobody escapes in Goodbye Harold.

Good Luck, either; Audrey Thomas sees to it. Combining Choyce's facility and Percy's ambition, Thomas writes about day-to-day regret and loneliness with an unflinching eloquence. It's almost as if she's testing the resilience of her characters, particularly the females. Edging their way out of a failing marriage or a bad relationship, they discover that independence brings with it a whole new set of restrictions. In the title story, there is this revealing description of a woman on her own: She had felt safe, or at least safely defined, so long as her

Percy's have in common. Conventional Emotions is slight, unpretentious, and engaging. In fact, if this collection has a failing, it may be that it is too likable. Too safe. Still, Choyce has a casual, confident touch, an offhand sense of humour, and a talent that is well-suited to short fiction.
daughter was with her. But now in the lounge of the inn Franchise was exposed for what she really was—a woman alone in a bar.

In the introduction to Goodbye Harold, Good Luck Thomas confesses, “I tend to think of myself as a novelist, but... I must admit that people seem to like my stories better.” Comparing this accomplished book with her last novel, Interstitial Life, an uneven, difficult work, it’s easy to see why. Like Alice Munro and Mavis Gallant, Thomas is at her best working within the boundaries of the short story; she is at her most effective creating a fiction that is subtle and fragile, that is made up of hard choices and vivid moments.

“Breaking the Ice” is a typical Thomas story. Focusing on a familiar theme—a single mother starting a new job, searching reluctantly for something better or, at least, new—it is tough and vulnerable at the same time: full of tender ordinariness and quiet pain. It shows just how much can be accomplished with a good plot and action—with an ear for dialogue, an eye for detail, and a steady hand. A simple incident like waiting for a call from a prospective lover is invested with awkwardness and hope, with a tension that the reader can genuinely feel:

Yet each time the telephone went, her heart began to pound. She scolded the way she would scold the car or a child if it were impatient... There, the phone again. Let it ring. One. Two. Three. Then slowly pick it up.

Although Thomas is obliged to observe the boundaries of each individual story, the collection as a whole reveals an impressive range. Along with the heartbreaking scenes, there are also cynical wisecracks: “A young woman told me that, if you have the sperm, you can impregnate yourself with a turkey blaster. I laughed and laughed and she was hurt.” A feminist but not a feminist writer, Thomas is “interested in points of view,” even points of view she sees as “cumbersome, silly or unenlightened.” This is evident in “Compulsory Figures,” a quirky tale about a high-minded foot fetishist, who “likes experienced feet,” and “Local Customs,” a poignant story told from the perspective of a lonely 12-year-old boy.

If as different as these books are, and despite their varying degrees of success, they have one thing in common: an innate faith in the tiny cracks of understanding and experience their stories can uncover. In the end, smallness is its own reward, because what lingers, what sticks, is a detail, an instant—like a middle-aged woman waiting impatiently for the telephone to ring.

**Flashes of vision**

**By Veronica Ross**


**THESE THREE** books—two collections of short stories from British Columbia and a novella from Newfoundland—could serve as examples of the variety of fiction being written in Canada. And the writers might be seen as typical in terms of accessibility. Punching their names into the computer terminal of my local library for citations of previous books, I found only Jane’s *House of Hate*.

**Picking the Morning Colour** is deceptively at first. Many of the stories appear to be merely entertaining, rollicking good yams. Even the cover of pink and yellow Rovers seems, at first, misleading, more suitable to a book of inspirational verse, say. It is only later, when the stories are thought about, that their true essence emerges, much as the flowers on the cover, upon closer inspection, seem to grow out of their black background.

Roberts lived in Australia until age 25. About half the stories are set in British Australia, where he now lives, half in Australia. They are further divided by mainstream prose—tales of ordinary people—and more subtle experimental writing. Interestingly, the two locations are separated by two pieces of experimental prose: It’s a wonderful structure. The metaphor and vision of these two pieces are like roadmaps to other stories.

The title story, “Picking the Morning Colour,” is about two university students earning money picking fruit in Australia. Misadventures, chicanery by bosses, and union matters abound, but the story is told with wry humour. Moves right along, you want to find out what happens next, and hey, you’re laughing. “We all burst out laughing. But nothing was really funny about it. Nothing at all.”

Similarly, in “Hang,” the wild doings of a bunch of expatriate Australians and New Zealanders sound wildly crazy.

The host’s Canadian wife is especially upset, and at the end she “shudder(ed) visibly” at the thought of next year’s “Hang” (a long barbecue). She knew it would all happen again.

I think that is the crux of Roberts’s stories. People ate moved by something they know well within themselves. Dreams are important in his fiction: a Vietnam veteran helps an old Indian to die and dreams of copulating with a deer; a fisherman dreams of a “beautiful green woman” whom he undulates under and away from him every time he tries to possess her; and in the excellent story “Catskill Hen,” an Australian boy obsessed with sharks dreams of “sharks mating. The male biting the dorsal fin of the female... and instantly the sea is full of almand shapes shadows circling in his mind.”

Roberts’s voice is strong, but it is the quieter flash of vision that makes his collection so vibrant.

The collection of *Dog Attempts to Drown Man in Saskatchewan* resembles the front page of a newspaper with scandalous come-ons for the reader: Constanze Heboyan, millionairess; Flo, ready to commit suicide; a couple about to part; and the lives, sexual and otherwise, of Teri, Annie and Philip.

Glover’s fiction is contemporary and sophisticated, and set all over the world. Detail is piled upon fascinating detail. One reads about North Americans immersed in eastern religion, a church dignitary, swinging singles, a lonely homosexual, the “Modern couple,” a ritzy old folks’ home. Each story shimmers memorably as a whole. And at the centre of all the detail, each story contains a fragile core: the loneliness of contemporary life.

“Dog Attempts to Drown Man in Saskatchewan” won the Canadian Fiction Magazine contributor’s prize for 1985, but all nine stories in this book are splendid.

Remembering Percy Janes’s powerful *House of Hate*, I was anxious to read *The Picture on the Wall*. Like *House of Hate*, the setting in Janes’s new novella is Newfoundland. But there the resemblance ends.

Knuckles and Jade are bored young down-and-outers who vandalize, steal, and generally lead disreputable lives. They have no money for beer, diversion, or food more interesting than canned spaghetti. By contrast, Norman and Edythe are older, middle-class, and sedate, and are slow and oh-so-carefully falling in love. Knuckles and Jade torment them because Norman fired Knuckles from his house-painting job.

It’s an interesting plot, but it reads more like an outline for a novel than a
THE DIFFUSION OF POWER
RURAL ELITES IN A BOLIVIAN PROVINCE
José Héctor

Based on data gathered during field studies of Province Belisario Boelto in Bolivia, this book is at once a case study of a particular micro-region and its power structure, and a fascinating look at the daily life of the Bolivian peasant.

University of Ottawa Press
603 Cumberland
Ottawa, Ont.
KIN 6N5

BUILD YOUR OWN PROFESSIONAL ROWING MACHINE
THE CHALLENGER 2000

THE BOOK — Step by step instructions, 80 pages, 61 photos, 37 diagrams, $24.95 plus $3.00 postage and handling.

THE KIT — Contains all parts and materials — tubing cut to length, plates, bent bike parts, seat and track assembly — everything. $310.00 + 7% PST + shipping and handling.

THE VIDEO — Follow format of book. 2 hour colour production. Make jigs, locate, drill holes, cut mirrors, assemble machine, learn how to row, $34.95 + 7% PST + shipping.

There is no excuse for not building your own ERGO. Get yourself fit at an affordable cost. For free additional info, write: Ergomania Publications, 114 Page St., St. Catharines, Ont. L2R 4A9-416-684-8492, 4 pm to 11 pm, 7 days.

FOXY AND THE MISSING MASK
short fiction for young adults by the 1984 Vicky Metcalf Award Winner

COLLEEN ARCHER

ISBN 0 920806 75 9 (paper) $6.95

Penumbra Press
PO Box 340 Moonbeam
Ontario POL 1V0

THE HARVEST
OF SORROW
Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine

Robert Conquest

Relying on Soviet and emigre sources, on social analysis by leading Soviet and Western scholars, Robert Conquest has finally given the whole fearful story of Stalin and the Soviet regime's treatment of the Peasantry and the Ukrainian nation from 1930 to 1933 which brought terrible suffering and death to millions.

Canadian Rights $24.95 cloth

The University of Alberta Press
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E8

Amway
The Cult of Free Enterprise
Steve Butterfield

A dramatic, yet witty account of one man's gradual indoctrination into the Amway way of life, with its rallies, Cadillacs, "positive thinking", fake love and plastic dreams. A warning to all!

Order from: University of Toronto Press

Julie
Cora Taylor
Winner of Canadian Library Association's Book of the Year for Children.

$7.95 paper

Western Producer Prairie Books
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
The beached star. Yes. she can make her fetching name, heir to the world of Ours. "The Foreign Affairs" as the title story. is a vivid, lively, and a mni mantra of the tale. The reader longs to hear the dialogue presented, I offered the reader more, and the story. The dialogue is presented with a clean, direct style, and the reader is drawn into the story from the first page. The story is a study of the character's mind, and the reader is left with a sense of discovery.

In "Here," it proves tiresome, and the reader longs for the fulfillment of the story. Fraser is a literary technician who enjoys finding "tricks to help him tell his stories, but such techniques must I" evidently justify themselves: Do they add anything to the story? Do they offer a dimension that could not otherwise have been achieved, or are they simply hicks, important only to themselves and unnecessary to the telling? And, most important, do they distract more than they inform? Too often in these stories, they seem to be there only as symbols of technical dexterity, to the detriment of narrative inventiveness. Why, for example, "13 Ways of Listening to a Stranger," is dialogue presented in unpunctuated italics, unparaphrased conversations sometimes running confusingly into each other? It adds nothing to the already slim plot.

As a footnote, let me make a plea for fewer puns. It is, it seems to me, simply Fraser's trying too hard to be clever that most mars this book.

There is 'one of this in Hugh Hood's latest short-story collection, August Nights. Lively and inventive, focusing always vividly on the telling detail, these are the stories of a writer in admirable control. August Nights is Hood's 20th book, and his experience shows. Not a word wasted, not a sentence misplaced. There is nothing overtly dramatic in these tales of quietly desperate lives, but a sense of discovery keeps Hood's read-
ets moving from one story to the next. What does it more than anything else is Hood's solid grasp of character. Marian of "The Small Birds," a highly descriptive story that is testimony of Hood's powers of observation; Max Stratchey of "Cute Containers"; Bud of "Evolving Bud," about the decay of innocence in cottage country; the sex-obsessed Gracie Falconer of "Quick Coming Back:" these are deftly sketched characters who prove memorable in their own small ways. Even Sally and Patricia, the breezy baseball groupies of the satirical title story, manage to impress themselves on the reader as sadder people than they pretend to be.

"I've Got Troubles of My Own," my favourite in the collection, is a story that could easily have fallen into facile caricature but deftly avoids it. A tale of moral dilemma, it tells of a single mother who, squeezed for money, is forced to evict tenants — whom she has never seen — for irregular payment of rent. Only afterwards does she find out that her husband is a cripple, the wife pregnant. Her only response is the only one left to her in a crediting free-enterprise system — is anguish self-justification.

Many of these stories, even the fairly grim "I've Got Troubles of My Own," are laced with satirical humour:

"Mrs... Mrs..."

"Mzzzzzz," she said sturdily.

She realized that he didn't even suspect what Mrs. stood for and decided not to follow up on the identification. Let him think what he liked. He probably figured she was Mrs. Mzzzzzz.

In "Cute Containers," an outside toilet acquires with the passing of the years "the status of a hallowed antique, an historic edifice, something that ought to be protected by Heritage Canada."

One story, "Moskovitz's Moustache," is attempted Gogolian satire that takes on television news, the CBC, Ottawa and the top of Barbara Fyten's head. Unfortunately this story tries too hard to be funny and, in its wild exaggeration, fails to be. But it is a rare failure. Even the fantastical "The Blackmailer's Wasted Afternoon" and "In the Deep," each in its own way a product of the twilight zone, prove persuasive.

Hood's settings for the most part are less the exotic than the ordinary — cottage country, suburban living rooms, even Yorkville — made exotic. Through closely observed description, Hood infuses each place with the patina of a reality beyond everyday banality, rarely ever letting it get out of control and thereby turning it into the stuff of literature.

In August Nights, there is little sense of the manipulated or the manipulative. Beading the stories was, like any evening spent with a fine story-teller, an unalloyed pleasure.

**Minding their Q's and A's**

*By Sylvia M. Brown*


**The Interviews in Voice.3 & Visions were done not just to describe personal influences and writing habits but to trace the literary movement in Saskatchewan — as Eli Mandel says in his introduction, "the story of the discovery of a writing community or even the founding of it." Some of those interviewed are editors and publishers as well as writers, who have "contributed to the growth of Literature in the province" through such ventures as Grain magazine.

Thistledown Press, Thunder Creek Cooperative, Coteau Books, and through the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild and the Saskatchewan Summa School of the Arts. Just as they excitedly talk about these other interests, Hills draws them back to comment on the importance of place in their own work. In Guy Vanderhaeghe's view, Saskatchewan is a "good place because there are not the pressures here as on a writer living in Toronto. But, at the same time, the writer in Saskatchewan is less inclined to be thought of as a national writer. . . ." For Lorna Crozier, place literally means the prairie landscape, to which she has felt spiritually close. In contrast, the immigrant, Elizabeth Allen is oppressed by an agrarian openness and the prairie winter. The peripatetic Ken Mitchell managed to take the place with him when he wrote a country-and-western musical while living in Greece. Although, as Terence Heath expresses it, "prairie writers are feeling themselves free to deal with other subject matter," it is clear from the gorgeous cover painting by Anne E. Meggitt that response to the landscape is the book's organizing principle.

Hills, a poet and critic, solicits definitions of what it is to be a writer as well as practical advice: claims Anne Szumigalski, "The people who shouldn't be in [writers'] groups are those who immediately accede to everybody's demands." Vanderhaeghe and Glen Sorestad find writing to be a voyage Of self-discovery, whereas Gertrude Story insists that "the words were delivered to me.... I heard the words being spoken.... I simply took the words down...." She gives the impression of having misunderstood a great deal through those "dam books" she wrote, and would prefer "never to write another word for publication. . . ."

Writers use the opportunity to expound upon what they take to be fundamental truths: that the female is a guardian of the continuing species (Szumigalski); that "those people who understand themselves best make out the best" (Vanderhaeghe); that we gain wisdom and understanding through pain (Patrick Lane); or that "we are free to accrue unto ourselves as much pleasure as we can, providing we cause the least possible pain to others (Story).

One moot point is discussed — the "problem of the reader confusing art and biography." To quote Lane, who adds that "direct experience from life becomes metaphorically transformed." As Brenda Richer says, "What starts off as being biographical becomes fictionalized." I do not think Hills is asking if any of their work is autobiographical (Story views such questions as "immaterial"), but merely probing to find out if upbringing is ever considered by the writer to have literary relevance. Lane, for instance, says that he became "politicized through what he witnessed of poverty and oppression in his travels through North America: "My growing up as a working-class kid had somehow made me a member of the same disenfranchised group."

His is preparing a second volume of interviews to include other Saskatchewan writers not represented here. I would hope to see an Indian or Métis included, since only one writer in this volume — Heath — discusses the "regard and respect for Indian people and their culture" that appears in his writing. And a sample of each writer's work — an excerpt from a poem, story, or novel — might precede each interview.

On the whole, Hills performs the interviewer's art well; she does not depend on other critics but offers first-hand reactions to the work. She is intelligent, widely read, and equally at home discussing prose and poetry. She leaves mom for disagreement and defence, and is often complemented by the interviewees on her perceptions.
Fmm this same literary scene comes David Carpenter’s first novel—actually two novellas, the second set largely on the grounds of the Saskatchewan writers’/artists’ colonies at Emma Lake and Fort San, a former tuberculosis sanatorium. These humorous yet harrowing tales are linked by the figure of Walmsey, the pilot killed in a plane crash before the beginning of the first story, who turns out to have been the father of the alcoholic music teacher in the second. Both are set in the context of a marriage on the rocks—a time for accounting when memories come flooding back.

“Jokes,” with its subtitled section on “Lola” (shades of Lolita?) is reminiscent of a number of antiheroes—Audrey Thomas’s Munchmeyer, or an older Holden Caulfield, but especially of Nabokov’s Humbert Humbert and his female figure who contributes little dialogue but satisfies the protagonist’s lust.

The earlier “Luce” section is more evocative and reverberates with questions of dream and reality. There is much artistry in the summer explorations of pubescent boyhood into sex, death, and the unknown when everything is “nocturnal...secret and holy and terrifying. What I mean is enchanted.”

Exaggerated stories of a monstrous fresh-water pike with the jaws of a shark, told by a potential pedophile appropriately named Mr. Hook, instigate a mock heroic quest, the pursuit after an unholy grail. All of nature—moss and spider, jackfish and pike—is either eating or being eaten. The ravenous imagery of a huge mouth first gaping beneath the surface of the lake, then grinning “serpent-like” mingles with Drew’s nightmares of some monstrous thing watching and hovering near him. Freudian critics could make much of the imagery of the unconscious here-water, fire, blackness, and holes. The libidinous youths act out murderous games in retaliation against the safe, teacosy world their elders would have them believe exists. They are on the brink of a repressed truth about reality, about to make darkness visible, about to fall from the grace of innocence.

Drew’s awakening to adult understanding occurs to the rhythm of poetry, a reading of “The Cremation of Sam McGee,” after the gigantic fish “Adolphe” has been devoured by celebrants. The devils of Paradise Lost are unleashed upon the earth with the realization that his own father possessed the killer instinct in the face of perishing hunger. This novella shows skill in its allusiveness and suspense, if by no other gift, a story-teller from the prairies.

**Review**

The price of progress

By Michelle Heinemann


**There is one striking similarity between Vancouver Fiction and Brian Fawcett’s The Secret Journal of Alexander Mackenzie. Although the former is more gentle to tone than Fawcett’s 17 tough-edged chronicles, both collections express the consciousness of a marked beginning and both pose the question of whether the end is near. Vancouver Fiction relies extensively on the city’s most accomplished writers. It includes new work by Jane Rule, Keath Fraser, Audrey Thomas, and D.M. Fraser and previously uncollected stories by Malcolm Lowry, Ethel Wilson, and Betty Lambert, among others. It begins with a story about beginnings: an excerpt from Hubert Evans’s The New Front Line, in which the author imagines the end of an innocent era. New futures lie ahead, but for the central character, Hugh Henderson, a new war has just begun.

The Secret Journal of Alexander Mackenzie deals also with the beginning of the end: the discovery of the Pacific Northwest in the late 1700s by Alexander Mackenzie, which marked the start of industrial development in the region. The narrator of the title story has found a secret journal kept by Mackenzie, which differs considerably from the “official” historical version. As the entries proceed, it becomes clear that Mackenzie’s adventure was not simply a discovery of the land, but an inward, almost spiritual exploration parallel to the geographic one, enhanced by the consumption of bulbs of flowers and the mysterious appearance of an English manor, complete with a lush garden and voluptuous blonde woman.

The manor, located on an island near the mouth of the McGregor River, and the woman, the same one who had unleashed Mackenzie’s “cleanlest appetites” months back in London, reappear in several of the stories. In “The Deer Park,” a 50-year-old surveyor dying of cancer reveals his experience on the mist-shrouded, eerily seductive island—now overrun with deer—in 1932. In “The Castle,” a wealthy developer recreates the manor complete with plastic garden and plastic deer on a hillside. The plastic deer comes to symbolize the lack of depth in the man’s marriage.

Throughout his stories, Fawcett hits upon a more fundamental lack of depth in modern life. In “The Endako Hotel Massacre,” he laments the loss of "the kind world in which people are able to hold onto a sense that reality has more dimension and depth than the single focus of their personal well-being." He’s exceptionally skilled at working through many layers of deception to reveal the simple truth. In the process, though, he takes no care to hide his pessimism. His comments on the plunder and rape of a region once lavishly blessed with an abundance of nature’s gifts are caustic.

Fawcett is at his best in such stories as “The Enemy Within,” which compares aggressive economic domination by corporate America to a silent war, with an “invisible invasion, invisible invaders, invisible casualties...” Yet the casualties are not quite as neatly bidden as Fawcett would initially lead his readers to believe. Rather, it appears to be more a game of survival of the fittest, as when the U.S. conglomerate Dairy World puts a stranglehold on the local dairy.

The question of continued survival looms heavy over both collections. In Vancouver Fiction, D.M. Fraser’s post-bomb “Recessionary” is a sorrowful, brilliant, deliberately confused account of a time so dose that it makes still-unresolved fear of Second-World-War coastal upheaval seem inconsequential.

In a more positive vein, David Watmough’s sensuous “Vancouver Summer Pudding” offers a fictional record of the annual Peace March.

Fawcett, for his part, places his bittersweet stamp on the question of human survival when he delivers “My Friends Are Gone,” in which the northerner Don Benson reveals that survival has taken him back to the caves. Fawcett juxtaposes feelings about the futility of progress against his faith in the basic human instinct for survival. Rhetoric about concern for the continuation of humankind falls flat compared to his insistence that life still offers some options, however primitive.
EY DONA STURMANIS

THIS COLLABORATION by Vancouver sculptor Persimmon Blackbridge, narrator Sheila Gilhooley, and other writers, is a power-packed expose about the surpising political and social attitudes that still exist relative to feminism, lesbianism, and mental illness. Blackbridge's sculpture series, accompanied by experiential texts, chronicles a period of three years that Gilhooley spent in psychiatric institutions. Although focusing primarily on the injustice and ignorance the psychiatric care system demontrates towards gay women, the underlyng emotions of fear, anger, and outrage defiance can easily apply to other similarly victimized groups. Images of drugging, sexual abuse, and shock treatments have made for a disturbing, precise documentation of a nightmare survived and assimilated into the victim's life not as a forfeit, but as a source of renewed strength.

still sane first appeared as a well-received sculpture series at Vancouver's Women in Focus Gallery in 1984, but this book is certainly not an art catalogue. It is a confusing, not confused, tribute to an art vigorously laden with social and political content, something sadly lacking in Canadian art as a whole. In this sense, a thousand words can be said in an image. The response may not be as objective as if the themes were addressed separately to lengthy study books, but that is the whole point. The punch delivered here is meant to be an emotional one, and effective enough to get through to anyone who reads it. It should be mentioned that Kate Millett, Margaret Atwood, and Judy Chicago have already praised still sane lavishly. This book should inspire not only awareness of some vital social issues, but an effective new way of addressing them.


BY SPARLING MILLS

THIS USEFUL anthology combines 25 essays by a variety of critics, an extensive bibliography, and two interviews of Ondaatje by Sam Solecki. In the 1975 interview, we meet an open, congenial young man; in the 1984 interview his manner has changed—be is more reticent, impatient, exact. After nine years he will not allow the interviewer to put words in his mouth.

The most important word Ondaatje utters in the second interview is "architecture." He is responding to Solecki's asking what he would like to discuss most in "media" interviews. Ondaatje goes on to explain that he means "one composes a book — structure: design; context. Where the narrator stands." Solecki is very dense about all this, introducing into the conversation Ondaatje's frequent use of the word "magnets" in his work. Ondaatje, exasperated, corrects him: "You're talking about a thematic echo, a psychological echo; what I want is something more physical, something having to do with the placing of a scene in one place and not in another." The critics might be wise to explore more "architecture" in their haste to nail Ondaatje down within a literary tradition, their comments are not as vibrant as his own.

At least Michael Ondaatje should be pleased with the "design" of this book. The cover is sensuous, with leaves, orchids, satin, and a furry black spider in its own margined square. The emphasizing colour of the whole book is teal blue.


BY CATHY SIMPSON

THIS HEFTY collection of would you believe, 37 Newfoundland writers, including poets, novelists, playwrights, folk roncoutes, and the unclassifiable J.R. Smallwood, could have been a useful reference for students of Newfoundland literature, history, and culture. Certainly the format is logical and pleasing: a chapter averaging 10 pages for each writer with a biography, synopses of selected works, an excerpt, commentary on the writer's oeuvre, a quote by or about the writer, and a selected bibliography. Obviously, deLeon has worked hard to amass a tremendous amount of raw information.

Unfortunately, she has grave difficulties in presenting it. Her biography are clumsy assemblages of facts and trivia—who really cares if Jack Fitzgerald coaches minor softball? Her synopses and commentaries are naive and repetitious, studded with axioms parading as insights: "a character is often juxtaposed with another to lay the groundwork for the arising conflict." There is even occasional nonsense, as when she describes a character as returning to "the periphery of his ancestry," or notes the "ironies of life—bad weather, flat tire." All in all, the best reading here is in the excerpts, which are lamentably too short, often just a page or two.

It's a pity, really, because a pair of scissors and a blue pencil, ably weighed, could have easily excised all this silliness and corrected the irritatingly abundant errors in spelling and sentence construction to boot. The result might have been a book of less bulk but greater worth.


BY DAVID JORDAN

ARMENIAN MURDERS in a Turk outside a coffee bar in Sydney; an East European diplomat is shoved from a moving train; suicide-murder claims a family of life... Are these merely random acts of violence, or small parts of a larger pattern?
In Kenelly's world these are only symptoms of the mass madness of our times, the same madness that is accountable for everything from bar-room fist fights to the Jonestown massacre. Kenelly traces the common thread of madness through two contemporary families: Terry Delaney, typical Australian working-class jock, is drawn into a crazy plot to prepare for the end of the world when he falls in love with Michelle Kabbalski, daughter of a former second world War refugee. Kenelly brings the two worlds together with impressive skill, moving with ease from Delaney's life of rugby, beer, and adultery to Kabbalski Pére's memories of refugee camps and storm troopers. The two stories seem to progress independently, but a gradual sense of unease overtakes the reader as he realizes that the atrocities committed in the name of war are not all that different from the everyday fights, stabbings, and domestic disputes that fill today's newspapers.

Just as madness can be a disturbing subject, A Family Madness is a disturbing book. One cannot help wishing that at least one of the many themes touched upon — these include the decay of family and religion, the folly of war, the mindless brutality of sports — could be pinpointed as the cause of the mass insanity Kenelly wields around us. Of course there are no such simple explanations, and Kenelly defy's the traditional novelist's task of trying to impose order on a disordered universe. There is no moral to this story, no neat, simple conclusion; what Kenelly does offer is a superbly rendered mosaic as insightful as it is disquieting. ∗


By Cathy Simpson

When the country awoke on Dec. 12, 1985, to the news of Canada's worst air disaster, Newfoundlanders recalled a similar awakening almost 20 years ago when a small Czech airliner crashed in a bog at Gander, killing 37 passengers. The forma poetry editor of Prism International here describes the impact of this earlier accident on 13-year-old Michael, who through his quest for and discovery of the crash site on one pivotal August day breaks with childhood and takes his first steps towards a mature understanding of life and death.

The skillful hand of the poet shows in the conning interweaving of thematic images — birds, light versus darkness, aircraft shattered and whole, apparitions — in reflecting and refracting the underlying symbol of the phoenix give depth, texture, and freshness to Michael's rite of passage. Rodgers's hand as a story-teller is less sore, and falters seriously at the climax with the introduction of a Monty Pythonesque character and the omission of the expected grisly corpse (which eventually turns up in a later scene).

I" The Art of Fiction, John Gardner defines the novella as a "single stream of action focused on one character [whose] world is radically changed." The character of Michael, thoughtful and independent, manages to overcome the faults of the plot and provides a well-drawn focus for a spiritual coming-of-age story that would appeal especially but not exclusively to adolescents. ❄


By Annell Pelkonen

Even without checking the notes on the back cover, the reader of this collection of short stories would know that the author was from South America. It is all there: the magic realism and the graphic depictions of torture that have become the distinguishing characteristics of this sort of fiction. This is what constitutes the book's central weakness. In its structure and portrayal, it resembles a little Frankenstein monster cobbled out of trends and themes that happen to be fashionable at the moment.

The book is too heavy with other literary voices to be gripping reading. In one story only — "How Are You?" — does Mallet seem to speak honestly and simply as herself. This tale of a love affair between the narrator and another refugee in Montreal retains the political-correct sentiments of the other four stories, but uses them to buttress the characters rather than the reverse. The reader is given someone to sympathize with.

Which is not to say that the book does not have any merit. &Ean-born Mallet is known primarily as a film-maker, and it is this sensibility that permeates her stories. Her images stay with the reader: the eerie details of life inside and outside prison remain in the mind.

The narrative is always in the first person, and though the narrators vary in name and gender, they remain interchangeable and static. The patient, resigned personae in each of these tales endures the randomness that constitutes the main horror of life in Mallet's Chile. The single chair, an empty corridor, a mouse-tail speak louder than the dramatic situations. The author is at her best when she deals with external details, for the she can slough off the other influences that cloud the work of this otherwise promising writer. ❄
Wooden Rooster, by Stuart Ross, Proper Tales Press, 60 pages, $5.00 paper (ISBN 0 920467 05 9).

By Grant David Shilling

THIS NOVELLA is full of comic exaggerations and erotic dreams in a style consistent with that of Gabriel García Marquez. However, Ross does not enhance or explore the Marquez style — he satirizes, and as a result his work often rings hollow and tends to be overwritten.

Wooden Rooster does have its moments. Fortunately those moments belong to Ross:

The women spoke again. "Hello." A smile spread across her face. On the top of her head, a bun of dark, stew-like hair balanced precariously. The misplaced weight of a single gnat could topple it. She was constantly being watched by scheming gnats.

Ross has a wonderful ability to blend the real with the fantastic. The strength of his work is an ability to blur the lines between the two, and focus with humour. He successfully reinvents reality, forcing the reader to accept a world "stuck in the wrong frequency."

His story of Carlos Venom portrays a man whose world nuns surreal and horrifying when he has a carpenter construct a wooden rooster for his pregnant wife. Venom attempts to seek out the carpenter and return the rooster. His journey takes him to America and the Ed Sullivan television show. Why Bd Sullivan is anyone's guess.

The narrative reads like a B-grade western movie, which, depending on your tastes, may be good or bad. Originally written for a three-day novel writing contest, apparently it has undergone a lot of editing and rewriting. But not enough. Ross's most disturbing habit is his frequent repetition of words and concepts, a technique that diminishes the impact of the work and tries the reader's patience. Still, there is much promise here.

Indeed, these two factors enhance Petrie's drama, making it a warm tale of growth and understanding, one that allows him to move favourably back through large themes in his own life (the screenplay is semi-autobiographical) with eyes that are, by turns, frightened, fond, fascinated, and ultimately forgiving.


By Janet Windeler

IF IT'S TRUE, as Flaubert asserted, that style arises from subject matter, then by that token alone this lacklustre, oversimplified, conservative, and curiously proportioned volume on the music of Canada will not illuminate anyone's understanding of either the very real urgencies of avant-garde composition, or the vivid complexities involved — historically and today — in making music in this country.

In a mere 257 pages of text that sweep the entire saga of Canadian music, including jazz, pop, and music of the Indians and Inuit, 64 pages are taken up by an "anthology" of score excerpts that is meant — as McGee, a University of Toronto music professor, points out in the preface — "to provide a basic overview of the field." The anthology (which disregards jazz, pop, and music of the original Canadians entirely) begins with an excerpt from North America's first opera by Montreal for-trader end composer Joseph Quesnel, who landed on this continent when his French munitions ship was captured in 1799 off the coast of Nova Scotia; it concludes, 12 excerpts later, with a visually stunning slice of a score by that madcap contemporary composer and graphic artist, Murray Schafer. The anthology, as McGee concedes in the preface, is "a bit uneven."

The final chapter of the book deals with the music of the Indians and Inuit, covering some fresh territory in a field that has received insufficient treatment in the past, and it is to McGee's credit that he attempts to analyse this music critically within the context of native culture. As well, he offers consistently cogent analytical suggestions for the numerous technical sections that appear throughout the book and are clearly set apart from the general narrative in enclosed boxes. But the narrative itself is problematic, basically amounting to a not very arresting amalgamation of facts that have been trimmed, pruned, and pulverized and appear hell-bent on clearing the controversy.


By Jean Wright

BY ME, FEET are, well, kind of yucky, and it's a good thing that they are usually kept decently out of sight in shoes or under bedcovers. Perhaps it is some subconscious dislike of feet that inspires shoe designers to create footwear that seems to have in mind distortions as bizarre as Chinese foot binding.

Dr. Copeland fails to convince me that congenital problems, not shoes, cause most foot troubles, even though he reports that barefoot bushmen have bunions too. In fact, much of this sprightly and often humorous book, written with Stan Solomon, deals with congenital and mechanical ailments. A long section is devoted to athletes feet, as befits a book by the podiatrist for the Toronto Blue Jays.

Other topics include bunions, calluses, and warts (for warts you could try cod liver oil), itchy feet, how to care for your nails (no, you don't cut them straight across), and getting a good fit in footwear. Although there is an occasional lapse into jargon ("abnormal supination syndrome"), the book is surprisingly interesting and enjoyable to read. Some of the puns — "soft-core corn" — may make you cry "Oh, my aching feet," but the foot-sole public will undoubtedly find much useful information as well as a few surprises. Including the fact that Copeland doesn't find feet yucky. He likes them!
McGee makes no mention at all of the serious decline in the Canadian music publishing industry over the last six years as a result of cutbacks in Canada Council grants. He heralds the CBC as giving “enormous support to Canadian composers and performers” — a statement that is the truth, but certainly not the whole truth in light of the CBC’s diminishing role in commissioning new works and the despair among the majority of composers in this country who can find no outlets for their writing.

The Past


By Paul Milidge

This biography is vigorous and appealing — like its subject, Emily Murphy, who was born in Cookstown, Ont., but lived in, and experienced, during the late 19th and early 20th century, places as diverse as Ingersoll, Toronto (“a stinking, glitzy place”), Chatham, London (England), West Germany, Swan River, Man., and Edmonton. Her friends included Emmeline Pankhurst and Nellie McClung; she sat three prime ministers of Canada; she travelled the timelimes of northern Manitoba in winter, and lived with Doukhobor farmers (who impressed her considerably).

Murphy worked with drug addicts (her study The Black Candle remains the most exhaustive on the subject) and prostitutes (whom she helped rehabilitate by placing them in her home); she knew a missionary’s life (her loving husband Arthur — who emerges in this book as a wonderful character — was eminent on two continents). She was also a writer (sewn books) and a reporter (Maclean’s, Chatelaine, president of the Canadian Women’s Press Club), a devoted mother of four, a police magistrate (for 15 years in Edmonton — the first woman to hold such a position in the British Empire), and she was largely responsible for the landmark decision made in 1929 by the Privy Council in London to consider women “persons.”

One is continually surprised by what the author turns up in this succinct, sparkling story of a vital, dedicated, generous, perceptive and (at the same time) humorous Canadian woman who has been called “a pioneer on the frontier of understanding of social responsibility in the 20th century.”


By Roy MacLaren

Of all the various devices that men have ingeniously devised to kill each other, none seems, at least in certain respects, more horrible than chlorine gas. Those who have used a flame-thrower or a nuclear blast might disagree, but there remains something fundamentally appalling in the way that gas kills by blindness, burning, suffocation, or by more gradual poisoning — a fate that overtook veterans of the First World War as much as a decade or more after the war to end all wars had ended.

McWilliams and Steel write about the initial German gas attack at Ypres in 1915 in a detached, almost clinical fashion — and their book is the better for it. The horror of what they write about needs no elaboration from them: their interviews of survivors and their exhaustive search of records ensure that their account has a disturbing immediacy. Major Andrew McNaughton, later Chief of the General Staff, noted the effect of chlorine on neighbouring Algerian infantry, the first gas victims, as they streamed by his gun.
emplacements in full retreat: “They were literally coughing out their lungs: glue was coming out of their mouths. It was a very disturbing, very distressing sight.”

So is McWilliams and Steel’s book; it is disturbing and distressing, despite their account of the courage of the raw Canadians who fought desperately to close the gaps in the Ypra front that resulted from the first German gas attacks. Their account, clearly written and authoritative, is one more indictment of man’s inhumanity to man.

Major Charles Boulton first published these personal accounts of the rebellion in 1886. His involvement in the first phase of the rebellion (1869–70) was greater than in the second (1885), but he was present or a participant at key stages of both; thus his account has authority. Indeed, in the matter of the execution of Thomas Scott, it was Boulton who was Riel’s first choice. It was one of many encounters Boulton had with Riel face to face.

Boulton’s motivation for opposing Riel was his belief that British law and authority must prevail over a pro-American revolutionary. He says that “there is no doubt he [Riel] conceived the idea of forming an independent government and handing it over to the United States for a good round sum.” To many Canadians at the time, the U.S. represented an evil empire, while the British Empire was on the side of good; Riel, therefore, was an apostate. But in Boulton’s observation Riel was a tyrant for other, very tangible reasons: he seized and opened mail, suppressed the local press, imprisoned civilians, and thwarted the Crown. Boulton was imprisoned by Riel, fought him, saw him hang. To his mind, justly so.

Though Boulton’s account is told in an elegant Victorian manner that is surprisingly crisp (no doubt credit is due to Robertson), it must be admitted that he was too much the military man. His tale lacks the detail and colour that a professional writer might have added to give the depth this passionate historical event contains.


By Cyril Strom

It should surprise no one that the history of Quebec has been an arena for partisan debate. Nor will it surprise many to hear of the interest with which these debates have been followed in the province. Dispossessed peoples, or nations with a grievance (Poland is an example sometimes cited) are said to accord particular notice to their historians, whose findings contribute to their self-definition and inform or even legitimize current politics; and in such a situation the historical profession will in turn become politicized.

Gagnon, professor of history at the
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, has written this book as a sequel to hi Quebec and Its Historians: 1840 to 1920. Here he documents the emergence in postwar Quebec of professional history based on modern methods. He is especially concerned with analysing the influence of the national question on certain key works of historical scholarship — in large measure, this book serves as a critique of ideological history-writing. It is also a platform for the author to take his stand on many of the recent debates within the profession, and to present his own reflections on theory.

Gagnon credits Guy Fréguet and Marcel Trudel with initiating the scientific treatment of Quebec's history in reaction to the methods and spirit of the "clerical-conservative" tradition. Still, he finds that their work and that of their successors can be read as contributions to contemporary political controversy. Openly or implicitly, they speak to the issue of Quebec's former backwardness and inferiority, and in accordance with their support for or opposition to French-Canadian nationalism, locate the cause of either in conquest and colonization or in Quebec's internal development.

The next generation, represented by Marcel Hamelin, Fernand Ouellet, and later Louise Demers, introduced the methods of the new social and economic history into Quebec under the influence of the Annales school in France and in response to the social and cultural upheavals of the Quiet Revolution. Gagnon reserves warm praise for Ouellet's work with the Annales model.

For Ouellet, however, there is little praise. Devoting two long chapters to a review of his work is a kind of compliment to his stature in the profession; their matter, though, imputes to Ouellet nearly every sin capable of commission by a historian. His rhetoric is subjected to a close reading and found to substitute hidden polemics and moral judgments for causal analysis. His analysis of ideologies is found to be vitiated by bias and anachronism. His assembly and interpretation of statistical data are give"a step-by-step critique and revision. Ouellet is made to represent the harmful effects of political partisanship and a "questionable passion for figures" upon talent and learning.

It is imperative, Gagnon concludes, to depoliticize professional history. His analysis of the dialectic of method and ideology moves smoothly to a synthesis: the adoption of advanced scientific methods will make historical argument less vulnerable to ideological distortion. Perhaps it moves too smoothly. Achievement of an acknowledged scientific methodology in the human sciences remains an elusive goal. Gagnon's suggestion to dump attempts for now at "total history" in favour of regional and thematic studies may hold more immediate promise for the realization of his aim. He is also optimistic for the possibilities of a new humanist and voluntarist historiography, based "the latest phase of the Annales model, as supplement to the more deterministic quantitative approach.

Itself a contribution to partisan debate, this enormously informative book is persuasive evidence that, notwithstanding revolutions in historiography, ink will continue to be spilt for the cause for a long time to come.


By Lorne Elisaschuk

JOSEPH HOWE, the 19th-century Nova Scotia journalist and politician, is known for his articles and speeches. This collection of letters to his wife, written early in their marriage, does not seem to alter it public knowledge of him. He and his wife do not have a private life (separate and hidden from the world) that these letters reveal; they were written too hard to keep a quality newspaper alive. He was out nearly half the year trying to find new subscribers and collect money from old ones. Hence these letters from all parts of the colony. She ran the paper in Halifax and attempted to make ends meet, not at the office.

But our public knowledge of Howe is subtly altered by reading what is really a collection of business letters to a partner. By the time we've read 85 expertly annotated letters, we know something about the partnership that would move on from newspapers to produce that important figure, the Tribune of Nova Scotia. Behind a legend are a man and a woman dividing up labour, and as is still the custom in our culture, building up around the "ma".

The Alchemy of Clouds. By Mark Frutkin, Fiddlehead Poetry Books/Goose Lane Editions. 60 pages, 86.95 paper (ISBN 0 86492 060 1).

By Frank Manley

FRUTKIN'S SECOND book of poetry is divided into five sections with titles like "Drenched in Light," "Century of 'Clouds," and "Apollinaire's Footprint" in addition to a two-page section labelled "Notes." As a whole, this collection bespeaks an exoticism of experience as Frutkin invokes many well-known artists (Dante, Picasso, Pound), and a rhapsody of landscaper (Africa, India, Paris).

Frutkin's major weakness as a poet is
that he often falls to bridge the gap between invocation and art: he overlooks the mechanics of good poetry (fresh language, precise imagery) as his romantic sensibility soars. The result is often disconcerting, as one is confronted with reckless description ("she is a beautiful animal/that also can think") the ungrammatical cliché ("I lay awake all night, watching my thoughts") and the banal ("a gray day/at the end of a gray week/the dog sighs/pages in a book turn"). Indeed, pages in this book will turn as the reader searches for sustained insight -- evidence that the poet's impressionistic vision ("Incense rises like dreams in a spine") will not dissipate, taking with it the meaning that should link writer and reader.

A handful of poems in this collection work. where Frutkin allows language and meaning to be synthesized and his original vision is not usurped by verbal pyrotechnics. "Slash of Lethie," "Bells," "A Cup of Chai," and "The Watch" are all short poems, and perhaps because of this, are reasonably well sustained.

One disturbing aspect of this book is the inclusion of "notes" for some of the poems. Does it help us to know that "voluble" and "willow are cognates" when the poem fails as a whole? Should semantic and etymological dissection replace meaning as the arbiter of a poem's success? In choosing impressionism over realism Frutkin allows his poetry-like the title of the book -to connote much, while denoting little.


By Doug Brown

This second of a three-volume series presents prose, poetry, and criticism of writers connected with the Atlantic provinces. It follows an earlier volume of prose, and anticipates one of criticism. The selection, beginning with what the editor identifies as the first distinctive generation of Canadian poets, harks back to a century ago when Sir Charles G.D. Roberts without cloying could employ the not altogether demonstrative "you." It ends with the lifetime verse of George Elliott Clarke pondering his black and Baptist heritage. Altogether there are 49 poets and almost 250 poems.

As one would expect, poets like Bliss Carman, E.J. Pratt, Alden Nowlan, and John Thompson are well represented. Cogswell himself contributes a number of pieces, notably a deft and tender sestina. And I was reminded once again of Milton Acorn's eloquence and range. Over all, the quality of writing is high. About three-quarters of the poems included piqued my interest to some degree, and about 10 are impressive. Among the younger writers, aside from such rarities as a villanelle by Brian Bartlett, formal verse is virtually absent.

What is peculiarly Maritime in this collection is not hard to isolate. It derives from a devotion to landscapes and history. A lot of material comes from the attachment to earlier ways of life, to a past that is perceived as passing or as passed. Old and decrepit farmsteads provide potent symbols. Many poems deal affectionately with rural subjects, and encounter with a nature both homely and grand. Others display a dedication to the dignity and vulnerability of individual endeavors. For those interested in regionalism in Canadian literature, or for anyone wishing to sample new poetry, this anthology can be highly recommended. For a Maritimer, it is a must.

Nimrod's Tongue, by Rafael Barreto-Rivera, Coach House Press, 109 pages, $8.50 paper (ISBN 0 88910 310 0).

By Lorne Ellaschuk

"RAPHIE MAL anmeche zab almi." Nimrod shouts in a mixture of languages at Dante and Virgil in Hell. The giant had built the Tower of Babel and consequently brought the curse of many languages on man. Unable to understand or speak to him, the older poets move on. Barreto-Rivera (his first name on Nimrod's tongue) stays. In four long poems he plays with the language of Nimrod.

"Here It Has Rained" is a prose poem in which a number of images and phrases constantly recur. Stalling the linear movement we still expect in prose. It is like bpNichol's Journal, only shorter, lusher in language, and less frightening. "Jersey Shore Album" uses the annual summer visit (to in-laws near the sea?) as a means of taking snapshots, over time, of a marriage. It is written in the intense, disturbing language of a man's conjugal passion.

"Derridavian Poems" seem to be selected marginal notes made during a Derridian reading of some early Wittgenstein. Bertrand Russell and the Austrian philosopher, in quest of the "simplest kind" of proposition, are treated as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza: "To attempt to know/a windmill is to know the futility/of ever fully knowing it.

The best poem is last. "Old Hallam's Bones" uses Tennyson's In Memoriam as a controlling metaphor. It is "a record of a poet's mood variations" over several years. Barreto-Rivera's tendency to very lush language (see his previous collection, Noises, Voices, 1982) is preserved by the wonderful excesses of Tennyson "before him." Several sections of "Old Hallam's Bones" consist of the few simple, ordinary words to be found in a section of In Memoriam, just bits of its skeleton, a few old boner. This poem bears comparison with George Bowering's Korrisdale Elegies and Frank Davey's King of Swords, also works from Nimrod's tongue. 0
Year, thus, the poems effectively span
the last quarter of a century. Much of
the collection's value derives from this
fact.

One of Bowering's preoccupations is
Canadian nationalism, and anyone
interested in the issue will find a review of
fifteen strains, particularly anti-
Americanism, in our national thinking.

Besides this one, Bowering's favourite
themes are the brutality of our system of
law and order, the hypocrisy or vanity of
the bourgeoisie, the institutionalized war,
and, cropping up here and there, the
redemptive power of love. In
general, the subjects are not far
removed from the interests of editorialists:
these poems are nothing if not social
commentary.

Bowering's manner is consistently wry
and ironic, sometimes cryptic, and
occasional, and even haphazard. There are
several potshots at the establishment that
at a remove of 10 years or more
strike one as naive: es if the True
Way would lead to an apotheosis of
Saturday morning scruffiness. Indeed,
Bowering offers little in the way of penetrating
analysis, preferring to let sentiment
and pathos surround his observations.
Nor does he go far toward envisioning
remedies. Yet he succeeds in involving us
in the problems that concern him.
The difficulty one has with these
poems rarely has much to do with their
subjects. Some poems are simply
 anecdotal. Perhaps the desire to sound
unguarded and committed leads him to
eschew poetry's potential for varied and
complex expression. This is a problem
he hints at in his Preface, and in one of
the early poems he writes of leaving off
and doing the important work
which at the time might have seemed
plausible. Even though he does "ot hold
to this formula, end can be witty
enough, the passage identifies a genuine
tension running through these poems.

This is the tension between the clever
detachment of the poet as maker and his
concern with disturbing social problems.
Unfortunately, Bowering doesn't make
much use of it. To the face of an
immense, daunting, and intractable sub-
ject matter, the poet calls very few shots,
as if he most take dictation from an
incoherent subject (God only)
knows what that gives the poetry its
haphazard quality. With such material
there can be little freedom to shape one's
themes to purely poetic ends.

The Blurb tells us this book contains six
poem sequences. In fact, there are five groups of poems: "Some People," "Cops," "Canadian Scenes: Viet-
nam & Other Wars," and "Our Other (Latin)
America," organized loosely around
certain central subjects, and a sixth group
The Poems of Ed Prato," which seems to be a miscellany. Some poems are dated as early as 1962, and
from references in others we can infer
that the latest were written sometime last

Stirrings and Screens, by Francis Spar-
shott, Childe Thursday, 80 pages, $6.50
paper (ISBN 0 920459 05 6).

By Doug Brown

SpRASHOTT'S SECOND publication with
Childe Thursday is, like the earlier col-
collection, The Hanging Gardens of
Eblisibote, very much a mixed
bag. Sparshott's subjects range from
Knob Hill's meet counters through a
cottage country beleaguered by longings for
transcendence to the poignancy of
individual destinies (among them those of
Terry Fox, Archimedes, some well-
known academics'averting a co-
ference, Cassandra, and Stan Rogers).
While covering this ground he presents
us with a gamut of moods, though
whether jaunty and whimsical or plain
and plaintive, his tone is generally sub-
du ed. To mix this up further, these
poems are written in several sorts of free
verse as well as over a dozen regular
metrical and stanzaic forms.

It is clear that a"important part of
Sparskott's poems is a "emphasis" word-play. To enjoy these one most re-
respond to attention paid to etymology, a
deliberate and slightly eccentric
vocabulary, end such things as
anagrams and found poems. Here is the final stanza of
a 10-line poem of anagrams beginning
"A nasty age range";

A sage, yet no gentle,
a gay reason agent,
a near gray sage, N o,
a great some agony
George Santayana.

This sort of detached tinkering is evident
throughout the collection, though the
poems are "ever allowed to run into
riddling "specificity" or obscurity.
I" spite of the fact that Sparskott
writes such upfront and short lyrics, I
found that it took a few sittings to warm
to these poems. At first, I thought this
was due to his somewhat choppy style.
But it has more to do with the unusual
figures he comes up with. These are
sometimes bizarre:
animal mistrust ran its hot eraser
round the wax contours.
A prudent child pays out his nylon line
carefully as the teller in the corner bank
thumbs his soiled notes against a
pensioners cheque.

In a poem such as "Exhaling of
Dying Metaphor," they can be the ob-
ject of baroque elaboration. As is "ot
uncommon in contemporary poetry, the
selection of images can seem arbitrary at
times, end their presentation a bit
crowded. But if Sparshott's images do
not always hit home immediately, they
are seldom without interest and are
informed by the same curiosity evinced
by his word-play.

By Mary Frances Coady

Remi De Roo has become increasingly known as an outspoken leader in Canadian Catholicism ever since he became bishop of Victoria in 1962. As chairman of the Canadian bishops’ eight-member social affairs commission, he was catapulted to national prominence early in 1963 after the publication of the commission’s document, Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis. Expressing concern about the large-scale unemployment problem, the statement questioned the underlying ethic governing Canada’s economic structures. The government, the commission suggested, was not living up to its responsibility to care for the poor and the disadvantaged in our society.

Social problems are not a new concern for the Catholic church. nor is De Roo the only bishop speaking out about them. For several years, the bishops have been issuing annual Labour Day statements, stressing the priority of workers’ rights over profits. Most of these have been ignored.

For the rest of this century, the Catholic church’s social teaching has been formed on two principles that form the basis of De Roo’s book: the value of persons over things and the importance of work in giving human beings a sense of dignity. For De Roo, this is becoming increasingly urgent, as Western society tends to undervalue humans’ beings in favour of technology. The result is that “people are treated as a ‘imperisonal force having little or no significance beyond their economic usefulness.”

He tries to show that such a problem is a moral one for society and, like other recent Christian leaders, he tries to broaden his readers’ thinking beyond the purely private and personal. Church-going Christians should no longer regard their faith as a Sunday affair, content to live the rest of their lives according to some other ethic. Sin, he says, exists in the very make-up of society, and anyone who cares about humanity must assume responsibility.

De Roo speaks of the need to “transform society” so that all people may receive a more equitable share of goods. His vision does not become specific, nor does he claim an ideological bias — saying that any alliance between the church and particular social and political systems is unwise and unhealthy.

Trying to create an awareness that, united, people have the power to change their lives, De Roo advises his readers to “think globally but act locally.” To be effective in helping to form a just society, he says, churches need “to learn new skills in forming community leaders, providing human and spiritual support groups, providing a forum for discussing and evaluating local issues.”

The book is succinct and well-edited. It can be read easily by anyone who finds church documents too stolid and top-heavy with theology. De Roo’s views can be argued with, but they can’t be ignored — not, at least, by those who realize that the danger in a technological society is that human beings can become disposable pawns.


By S.A. Newman

Some members of the medical community think that deadening the body while the mind is conscious would be infinitely safer than the potential perils always present with general anaesthetics. This sunrise leads them to look more closely at the pagan and primitive practice of zomification, in particular as it is performed in Haitian Vodoun religion. Part thriller, part scientific documentary, this well-written narrative introduces the reader to the complexities of Haitian life and the hypnotic allure the sometimes barren, sometimes lush country holds over the book’s author.

Davis, an ethnobiologist working on his doctorate, had studied 15 tribes in Latin America before travelling to Haiti. Initially, his journey led him into a “exciting exploration of plant and animal poisons thought to be the cause of zomification. But he discovered that poison alone was too simple a cause. His search eventually led him to the vodoun religion, its fascinating rituals, the many-tentacled secret societies, and the faith of many Haitians in their gods and in spirit possession.

Davis weaves the rich fibres of Haiti’s history — freedom-seeking slaves, temperamental European masters, a religion brought from the depths of Africa — into a tapestry as resilient, languid, colourful, and seductive as the country and its inhabitants, people ruled as much now by the houngan and their religions fears as they were in the days of the French tyranny they once overthrew.

Whether your interest lies in the spiritual mysteries of an ancient religion or in understanding the troubled past that bred in Haiti such despotism as the Duvaliers, this is not a book to miss.


By S.R. Gage

Don’t let the title fool you — this is not a collection of Nordic fairy tales but an account of the adventures of two wildlife documentary-makers in the arctic. Miles and Salisbury spent three years filming in Greenland, Spitsbergen, and Canada. Their book touches on many aspects of the northern ecosystem, with particular emphasis on polar bears, musk oxen, and caribou.

The book also gives some insight into
the tribulations of the wildlife photographer: the authors spent a month in the Spitsbergen area, manhandling snowmobiles over ice and snow to get 10 minutes of filmed view of a mother polar bear and her three cubs emerging from their winter den. Miles estimates they travelled 500 kilometres over the ice for each minute of usable film.

The authors did most of their filming in the Canadian North and they owe a major debt to scientists working in the area who willingly shared their knowledge and research facilities. Kingdom of the Ice Bear will appeal to a general readership, especially those who dream of some day visiting the "true North." The book has excellent colour photographs and useful maps. It should be noted that this particular British perspective, which produces small surprises for the Canadian reader, including the need to define "mukluks," "arctic char," and "spring break-up." ☐

**SOCIETY**


By Ann Luhitis

A sudden explosion of mass political unrest will rock the nation during the next 30 years, predicts Steven Wineman. It may be triggered by a new episode of U.S. foreign intervention, a conflict between the superpowers that proceeds to the brink of world war, the detonation of a nuclear bomb, an ecological disaster, a seven-week economic depression, or a combination of events.

But we don't have to worry. The *Politics of Human Services* was written with just such a crisis in mind. It contains the recipe for a "holistic and integrated" movement called "radical decentralization." The movement, which offers an alternative to right- and left-wing politics, is feminist, anti-racist, pro-gay, anti-nuclear, pro-disarmament, environmentally conscious, and libertarian.

Decentralization, or the reorganization of society into small social, economic, and political units, offers what Wineman believes may be the only hope for survival of the present social and political systems. Despite their many evils.

Still, Wineman makes a strong case against capitalism and the welfare state, both of which he calls "bankrupt." A former student radical who marched in the anti-war demonstrations of the 1960s, Wineman exposes the New Right's opposition to welfare programs as "an elaborate smokescreen for racism and class privilege." The right presents itself as promoting individual autonomy, he argues, but "its alternative to big government is big business, which is equally centralized and bureaucratic." But Wineman's vision of an egalitarian, co-operative, participatory society that defines self-interest as a person's ability to contribute to the common good seems like a wildly impractical and hopelessly naive alternative. At least he has the good sense to admit that prospects for radical change seem "faint." ☐


By Barbara MacKay

RECENTLY I MET A woman who is working with a committee to remove sexually explicit material from public view. She was careful to explain that the group was anti-porn—not anti-erotic, she added. "But we haven't found any erotica yet." Valverde's book highlights many of the issues, explicit and implicit, in this anecdote. Not only is it difficult to legislate against pornography without censoring feminism (note the recent legal battle against Page's book store in Toronto for displaying a feminist art installation), but the women's movement has had a lopsided focus on sex, concentrating only on the dangers for women: assault, rape, and pornography.

The book's introduction promises an examination of sexuality that is both theoretical and experimental, and for the most part the promise holds. However, despite the disclaimer that this is not a cookbook of sexual recipes, the chapter on heterosexuality seems "pop-psych" prescriptive—"for example when addressing the "scarcity problem." In general, the middle chapters on lesbianism and bisexuality seem more a primer for those whose views on sexuality lean toward theories of what's "natural," and assume a less well-informed reader" than the rest of the book.

The book is most interesting when discussing the ways in which desire is socially constructed, and the last chapter, "Pleasure and Ethics," which disputes the libertarian notion that sex is purely individual and any-

thing goes between consenting adults—is a fresh and welcome contribution to the feminist discussion of sexuality.

**TEACHING & LEARNING**


By Phil Hall

FOLLOWING IN THE line of books that are political scrapers, namers of the enemy, and resolution of the issues (Stan Perky's *Of Sacred or The House That Jack Built*), this angry history and political against the B.C. government's "assault" on education is dynamic.

Now let me take the quotation marks away from the word "assault." No one who has fought through the last 10 years of B.C. educational policy will be able to tolerate those non-committal quotation marks. And no one who reads Crawford Kilian's admirable and detailed account of the roots of the problem will think School Wars a stolid title.

The Social Credit government is currently trying to under-fund education while forcing school boards to comply or resign. Crawford Kilian had taught in B.C. For 18 years. He wrote this book in seven weeks, and finished it June 18, 1985. His speed is the bunker-speed of a war correspondent: polish and die.

But his arguments for educational excellence have the brevity of a long, committed career. He says that the real clash is between "ecumenism" ("an attempt to bring everyone into a single community in which the shared values include respect for diversity in individuality") and the "schismatics" (those who would run schools on "a business footing," with no allowance for diversity). He says: "Yes, I take it personally when a public institution is threatened, because that threat is aimed at my family, my friends, and my students."

He is speaking for more than himself. His book is timely and useful. A quick response, dated soon, but for now read hot. Every liberal educational program in British Columbia teeters while the Sovrads dress themselves for Expo. Do not forgive them, boards. They know exactly what they do. ☐

28 Books in Canada, June/July, 1986
Maria Aagélas

Maria, The Daughter of Gélas
by Antoinne Maillet
tr. Ben-Z. Shek

Prohibition in Acadia lives again in this rollicking tale as Maria takes on the establishment in her fight for independence.

ISBN 0-88924-171-6
6 x 9, 150 p.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, MA 02138

Gyno-Critics/
Gyno-Critiques

Edited by Barbara Godard

For 25 years scientists from many disciplines have been working on the Polar Continental Shelf Project. Share in the adventure in their engrossing stories and pictures. Co-published with Energy Mines and Resources.

128 pp/8½x10½/1 INDEX/INDEX MAP/34 COL. 100 B&W PHOTOS/920053-63-7/$24.95c

NC PRESS PUBLISHERS LIMITED
31 Portland Street, Toronto M5V 2V9

Vancouver Poetry

Edited and with an Introduction by Allan Safarik

Asocial history of Vancouver through the eyes of her poets. Includes 62 poets from the past 100 years. Introduction, biographies & index. Vancouver Poetry gets to the heart of a poet's response to the city. An honest portrayal of some wonderful surprises. CBC RADIO

- 200 pages $12.95 0-919591-06-X

Distributed by Raincoast 112 East 3rd Ave Vancouver BC V5T 1C8 604 873 6581

Vancouver Fiction

Edited and with an Introduction by David Watmough

A critically acclaimed centennial anthology of 13 stories, including seven new works. Introduction, author biographies and photographs. With its fresh and sophisticated content, Vancouver Fiction verifies the recent coming of age of Vancouver as a prose centre. PROVINCE

200 pages $12.95 0-919591-05-1
**REVIEW**

The lives of the parties

*By John Roberts*


**THIS ACCOUNT OF political events in Canada from 1980 to 1985 — covering two leadership conventions, two national elections, and four prime ministers — argues, correctly I believe, that the turbulent politics of this time enables a non-objective observer to determine the common ongoing realities of Canadian politics. This book is more, therefore, than a simple journalistic account. It is an* heart *book about the structural context of politics in Canada. It should be said at the outset that this is a superb book. At a time when journalism often consists of quick fix and subjective myth-making, it is a pleasure to find solidly researched reporting. One can quibble with some details. Pierre Trudeau’s peace initiative — as Ron Graham suggests — did reflect the idealism of the prime minister, but it was also a conscious attempt to defuse the criticism of the government’s handling of the cruise missile issue by shifting attention to larger problems of peace and security. And a’ account of Trudeau’s last government should focus as much on Allan MacEachen and Marc Lalonde as on Jean Chrétien, and as much on Gordon Osbaldesto as Michael Pitfield. But these are minor points. They are overbalanced by great advantages. For example, Graham’s 30 pages on Trudeau provide a more trenchant understanding of the character and purposes of this remarkable man than is to be found in vast quantities of words by other authors. The major virtue of this book is that, while continually interesting and easy to read, it is measured and balanced. Instant history often becomes not an account of what happened but the views of those who are prepared or eager — for whatever reason — to be interviewed. Facts, even recent ones, fade to obscurity in favour of colourful episodes — sometimes episodes that exist only in the limelight of the narrator’s imagination. I should add, perhaps, to establish my own objectivity that I have not been either interviewed or mentioned by Mr. Graham. Apart from this (only to me) incredible omission, future historians will not be able to find a better balanced perspective or more accurate account of Canadian politics during the past five years. This book reminds us of what did happen, and why, and provides a clear insight to the rationale for actions on the part of the major players on the national stage.

But this book is more than a narration of events. Graham’s thesis is that Canada is a “essentially liberal country, that the political centre of gravity is on the left and that any government, whatever its ideological label, will respond to that political reality. Although I at” in accord with this view — that regionalism and history, the challenges of geography, and the variety of cultures have created an essentially liberal society — there are times when Graham describes a “almost fatalistic vision of Canada’s destiny. He seems to be saying that it does not matter who governs, since the political imperative will require all governments to act similarly. To extend Graham’s argument this far is a bit unfair, but it would be unfortunate if his book persuades readers that there are no real decisions realized through our political system at a time when Canada faces very important choices — particularly in economic policy — that should and could be determined in the political process.

One other major contribution of this book is to emphasize how money and access to the new political technology of polling, marketing, and public relations have transformed the electoral process. Graham describes Brian Mulroney’s campaign as the latest model in how to fight an election in the television age. The polls, the ads, the speeches, and the platform were chummed out with centralized and scientific precision. The spotlight was on the well-trained leader, and his tour was a structure for the media’s daily feed. The advance men worked from the same set of instructions as the advertising gurus. And the media were pampered with their every desire — except unstructured access to Mulroney’s thoughts. The crowds were large. The local candidates were kept in step, and the content was restricted to promises and platitudes. The very dynamic of the organization guaranteed that ideas, debate, and boldness were replaced by image, blandness, and caution. Money pushed aside the envelope-lickers, polls pushed aside the thinkers, Optimistic clichés pushed aside hard reality.

As Robert Stanfield observed: “It makes a farce of a campaign from a public point of view in terms of the discussion of issues and so on. But a leader hasn’t got much choice now.” Ron Graham does not analyse the implications of this phenomenon for the operating of elections, parties, and governments in Canada. But it is one of the many accomplishments of this fine book that it stimulates readers to reflect not just on the past five years but on their importance for the coming new generation of politicians.

**REVIEW**

Life in the jet stream

*By Paul Wright*


**TO READ THIS book with the expectations normally brought to a work of realistic fiction is impossible. It is an air concotio”, like Iris Murdoch set to music and animated by the clockwork mechanism of a television sitcom, with trans-Atlantic jet flights replacing the opening and closing of doors, with coincidence defying the laws of probability, with confrontations and reconciliations and an occult conclusion. Implicitly feminist, light in touch, determinedly humorous in tone, fluent in language, *this is fiction as souflé*.

Sidney Snowdon is an international businessman with financial and amorous interests in Toronto and Yorkshire, where his wife and sons live. At the beginning we see him secure in his money, with his wife and sons living in London, and with his children in charge of his business. By the end the women have risen and joined with each other and with the larger sisterhood to take charge of Sidney.

Such a summary gives nothing of the “owl’s real intentions or achievements in language and plotting and in the creation of a literary mechanism — a complex of spinning cogs and gears intended to sustain interest in the absence of character development and physical description, which are jetisoned for the sake of speed. As well, looming behind the words, there may be a purpose greater than either of these, some generalization about the world and its ways, life and love, women and me”. The author’s voice speaks through “one of her comic creations. Her statement is made, rather, by setting the terms of relationships — thus a moral observation, as comedy often is.

For whom is such a novel intended? To say that it would make a substitute for television viewing would be to dismiss a considerable technical achievement — one perhaps intended for co”-sumpto” in the unreal circumstances of
trans-Atlantic flight across five time zones with only a single Feature film for distraction. It would also Fail to recognize a number of good lines:

There were 20 words in his vocabulary to tell Jill that after ten years it was over. The tears flow must be divided down the middle. She could not tell him half to a middle-aged working woman with clean habits.

Wyatt has, of course, the right to establish the terms in which her novel is to be read and judged. She has chosen to sacrifice weight and bulk for lightness and speed. In doing so she has created a different sort of book, distinctive and in its way, elegant. To say that it would have more weight end power if the characters and situations had been drawn in greater depth and detail is to propose an altogether more conventional way of writing, but one that I as a reader, would have preferred.

**REVIEW**

**Food for thought**

By John Marla


OVER THE YEARS farmers have gained the reputation of being chronic complainers. Now, regardless of what went on in the past, there is no doubt they have something to complain about. Some are suffering economic hardships, and many are worried about the future of their Industry. In recent years certain outspoken farmers and Farm groups have attempted to bring their message to the general public. They have mostly failed.

With the publication of Down to Earth, we may be witnessing an optimistic new trend. Here we have an account of the crisis facing Canadian agriculture, written by a journalist with little practical experience in agriculture but dedication to a group with whom she feels a kinship. Using a large number of interviews, the author takes us on a cross-country tour of the Farms and farmers in Canada, and does a creditable job of identifying the problems facing them.

From East to West the story is more or less the same. Out farmers are faced with high interest rates, high investment costs, low prices, and depression. From cheap imports, urban sprawl, and exhausted Farmland. The biggest concern is that these problems are already putting farmers out of business.

Farmers, Giangrande explains, are faced with a no-win situation. In order to compete with cheap imports (many of these from countries where labor is exploited) they must continually challenge the land with Fertilizer and pesticides to produce more and more for less and less. The farmers’ expenses are increasing, and his income is decreasing. The result is degraded soil, loss of equity, and often bankruptcy.

If our farmers can’t compete why should we prop them up? The answer is in this book. Farming is a primary industry that employs thousands of people. Agricultural exports account for billions of dollars in foreign trade. The production of Food is an enterprise that all countries strive to perfect. As a result, many countries subsidize agriculture to a Far greater degree than does Canada.

We are living in an era of global over-production. The world produces more oil than it is needed, more lumber than we can use, surplus iron, nickel, and copper. Agriculture is an exception. Every year more countries become net exporters of Food. Canadian F.S are now being challenged in areas where previously marketing our crops was no problem. This, however, can only be viewed as temporary. As Third World countries become more affluent, the exploitation of labor will decrease. As foreign agricultural subsidies run out, the cost of Food will increase. At that point we must have a diversified, successful agricultural industry.

As an agronomist, and an agrologist, I would commend Giangrande’s efforts. This is not to say that I think her work is faultless. I have a strange Feeling about the people she chose to interview. They seem to be too rich or too poor or too opinionated to represent the mainstream of Canadian farmers. As a Maritimer I felt somewhat abandoned as the author travelled around Quebec, Ontario, and the Western provinces with her tape recorder.

The Atlantic provinces are mentioned only twice. Once, in the chapter on corporate agri-business, she interviewed a potato farmer to develop a case against agri-business and to point out that the poverty and unemployment in the Maritimes are typical of a Third World country. Her only other Foray into Atlantic agriculture was an interview with a Nova Scotia sheep producer who has a lot of ideas but does not represent the interests or the opinions of the Atlantic agriculture community. This is unfortunate as many readers will be unaware that we have well-established Farmers involved in dairy, hog, fruit, vegetable and poultry production.

All of that aside, after putting together a readable, coherent and sensitive account of the problems facing the agriculture industry, Giangrande disappoints us in the tentative solutions that are proposed. One late chapter is an impassioned account of the possibilities that organic farming holds for our salvation.
Out of this world
By P. Scott Lawrence


IN THE FALL of 1977, Douglas Curran bought a second-hand Renault, christened it Giselle and “began driving, looking for objects that people might have made to express their ideas about outer space and the future.” Rounding the corner of a two-lane highway in Quebec’s Eastern Townships, he suddenly came across a wooden rocket perched out front of a general store. His interests in photography and Jungian theories of myth and archetype were galvanized: “It was at one and the same time the quintessential product of western civilization, a daydream of technology and a symbol of transcendence and freedom. It was nostalgia for the future.”

Over the next seven years Curran travelled 125,000 miles through the United States and Canada, taking pictures of home-made spacecraft and talking to flying-saucer aficionados, amassing abundant evidence of this modern obsession with UFOs and outer space. In Advance of the Landing is filled with photographs of sewers and rockets of every description, some hunkered down in woodlots behind rural homes, some bolted to pylons at road-sides and atop buildings, some parked in barns and garages.

A number of these home-made spacecraft were obviously built for commercial purposes, by small entrepreneurs with questionable originality and a thing for dish-shapes: there’s a Flying Saucer Gas Bar in Saskatchewan, a Flying Saucer Drive-in in Niagara Falls, and a Flying Saucer Gift Shop in Cavendish, P.E.I.

But the greater “umber can be seen as quasi-religious symbols, erected by people who genuinely believe that UFOs are real and that the beings that visit our planet are - Space Brothers — offer our best hope for salvation. It’s Curran’s thesis that these UFO cultists represent “a new mythology of gods and technology as relevant to twentieth-century civilization as Zeus and Apollo had bee” to the ancient Greeks.” I” the popular imagination, Curran argues, the flying saucer is “a god wrapped in stainless steel.”

Curran met hundreds of these believers, and their stories bring the book alive. There’s Ruth Norman, a.k.a. the Archangel Uriel, an 83-year-old widow from El Cajon, California, who heeds the Unarius Foundation. She is preparing Earth for its salvation, which will be heralded by the arrival of 32 spaceships from the Intergalactic Confederation. Her late husband, Ernest L. Norman, is currently the Moderator of the Universe. End lives a’ Mars.

There’s John Reeves, a retired longshoreman from Brooksville, Florida, who in 1968 was whisked away to the moon and Venus in a flying saucer. When he returned, he erected an elaborate monument to the aliens. The tax man eventually claimed it, but Reeves keeps the colourful Venusian flag give” to him by his abductors, tucked in the wooden-paneled bedroom wall of hi trailer.

And there’s Madeleine Rodeffer, a disciple of George Adamski. Adamski claims to have had numerous close encounters with extra-terrestrials, and one of his books, Inside the Spaceships, is, says Madeleine Rodeffer, “next to the Bible — it’s just the greatest.”

Virtually all of the organizations these people run or belong to — from the Aetherius Society to the Unarius Educational Foundation — have in common extraterrestrial encounters in which Judeo-Christian ideas have bee” integrated. Jesus Christ is nearly always at the centre of things, communicating with the beings on Earth through Space Brothers.

The desire for immortality and fears of nuclear devastation and global chaos inform the ideas the cultists have about the future. Their message is simple: unless we heed the warnings of these omniscient Space Brothers, or are rescued by them, we are more than likely doomed.

It would be exceedingly easy to gawk at these eccentrics, to see them as freaks, and et first glance some of the photo: graphs do elicit an amazed laughter. But Curran resists the temptation to ridicule them: a skilled and compassionate narrator, he relates his characters’ stories and beliefs with a poker face.

And like an anthropologist, he makes his photographs’ order to record, not interpret. They’re shot without apparent guile, like postcards or well-framed snapshots of the family vacation. The pictures render both the saucers and the people curiously intact, frozen in time and space. But that makes them eerily compelling, like snapshots of places or people we think we might have visited or known but can’t quite place.

I felt a creeping sense of regret in the book, too. The faithful Curran profiles are aging, and there don’t seem to be many young believers coming along to take their place. Theirs meteors and flying saucers are rusting away, the wooden ones losing their paint. Despite their best efforts, they all seem very much earthbound.

Nevertheless, with an unshakable belief in the wisdom and benevolence of the visitors from other planets, they continue to search the heavens for evidence of the marvellous and affirmations of their faith. Curran takes great care to present their perspectives, and in so doing reminds us that the most enduring mysteries concern the beings that inhabit Planet Earth.

REVIEW

Honest John
By W.G. Godfrey


IRISH-CATHOLIC Conservative prime ministers recently became fashionable in Canada. But the first of them Is long since forgotten, his brief two-year term eclipsed by memories of the Macdonald years before and the Laurier years after. From November of 1892 to December of 1894 Sir John Thompson was Canada’s prime minister and, as Peter B. Waite’s meticulously researched and well-waited study reveals, he deserves far more attention than he has received.

Thompson’s death at 49 years of age, at Windsor Castle on Dec. 12, 1894, shortly after being sworn in as a member of Her Majesty’s Privy Council, brought to a close a brilliant and meteoric political career. Born an Irish Methodist in Halifax, Thompson embraced Catholicism shortly after marrying his beloved Annie Affleck. With the support of Bishop John Cameron, Antigonish County became and remained Thompson’s political base. He represented it from 1877 to 1882, seeking service as attorney general and the” briefly as premier of Nova Scotia. At 36 Thompson was appointed a judge of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court but, pursued by Charles Tupper and John A. Macdonald, in 1885 he accepted a call to Ottawa as minister of justice, now representing Antigonish at the national level.

Knighted in August of 1888, Sir Job Job” quickly became a power in the Macdonald ministry. Macdonald com-
mented that "The bat thing I ever invented is Thompson," and he was an obvious heir-apparent to the Tory leadership. Always, however, he was a reluctant politician, distressed at Ottawa sojourns that separated him from wife and family in Halifax, and so it was only in November of 1892, well over a year after MacDonald's death, that he accepted the burden of the prime minister's office. Imagine — a prime ministerial contender who doesn't bide his time in "unpolitical" activities in Montreal or Toronto while waiting for the right moment to claim the leadership.

Waite has been at work on this study for a considerable time. He brings to it the wit, the charming anecdote, the readability and, above all, the mastery of sources available on the period, both primary and secondary, that his professional colleagues have learned to expect in his writing. This is far more than a "exercise in political history. It is a well-narrated and broadly social history that offers insights concerning legal, urban, and religious affairs, to name just a few.

Like all good biographies, it examines both the individual and his time, which were turbulent if not intolerant. Yet a balanced, composed, and consistently tolerant Thompson was often able to regain in the prejudices and resolve the problems that threatened to tear apart his party and his nation. The formidable agenda included Louis Riel, religious questions, diplomatic disputes with the United States, a "at-times insensitive mother country, provincial autonomy, and scandals within the Tory ranks. Thompson's performance, marked by good sense, courtesy, tact, strength of principle, and clarity of intellect, served MacDonald well in his last years and held the Conservative party together after the Old Chieftain's death. When Thompson died, however, as Waite puts it, the "cracks began to open that Thompson had kept closed" and Laurier Liberalism would eventually capitalize on Conservative disarray. The Tory capacity largely to arrange their own demise and defeat themselves — a more pronounced 20th-century feature of the party — had emerged in 1900.

There were few monuments and few memories left by the brief, Thompson interlude, Waite acknowledges. If the Charles Tupper papers were not just laundered but scarped for postery, this respectful and admiring examination of Tupper's contemporary and colleague guarantees a historical niche for its subject perhaps not quite merited by his actual political accomplishments. This is not to deny that Thompson's legislative and diplomatic achievements were relatively considerable and substantial. Nonetheless, his time at the helm was so limited that his contributions as Conservative leader were mainly about to occur rather than accomplished at the time of his death.

But if the book is assessed as both a life and times, the brevity of Thompson's prime ministerial service is of limited importance. Here is as good a rendering of late 19th-century Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Canada as that offered by any writer, even as a treatment of a particular individual, Waite has made a powerful case for Thompson's legacy of integrity and hard work, decency and morality, rugged honesty and a sense of duty, placing the nation above the party.

Above all, on the dual nationality question so much debated then and now, Thompson epitomized and articulated the accommodative approach, growing out of the pluralistic Maritimes society that shaped him, so badly needed in times of suspicion and vindictiveness. The political winds might have dictated a different tactic, but on this, as on other issue, Thompson's principled course would prevail if he had his way. Waite has rectified John Thompson's neglect of this excellent portrait and has painted an arresting picture of the united yet diverse Canadian nation prior to the turn of the century. 

REVIEW

William the conqueror

By David Jordan


My Dear Legs: Letters to a Young Social Democrat, by Alex MacDonald, New Star Books, 187 pages, $14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919573 38 X) and $7.95 paper (ISBN 0 919573 39 8).

British Columbia politics have long been an enigma to the rest of Canada — and indeed to the rest of the world. How can a right-wing government continue to win election after election in a province where 48 per cent of the work-force are union members? I" a province of lumberjacks and miners, why has the NDP bee" all but powerless to interrupt the Social Credit's 30-year reign? The paradox of Social Credit role in British Columbia is examined by these two authors. One a veteran journalist, the other a NDP MLA with the dubious distinction of having spent all but three of his 25 years in the legislature as a member of the Opposition.

I" Tough Guy, fiery-tongued m-radio announcer Allen Garr throws himself into the task of getting to the root of the Bennett enigma. The book is unashamedly one-sided, as suggested by its subtitle and by the liner notes promising a chronicle of "the devastating effects that Bennett's restraint program" is having on British Columbians.

Garr begins his study of the Bennett dynasty with a look back to the origins of Social credit in the "A + B Theorem," a crackpot theory advanced by Major Douglas during the Depression. This formula called for a freeze on prices and for free money, or "social credit," for all citizens. Though Major Douglas has long since been forgotten, it was his theory that W.A.C. Bennett brought to British Columbia, where he became premier in 1952.

From this historical perspective Garr moves to the present, where his considerable connections afford rare glimpses into the private lives of the Socrates. We are treated, for example, to the spectacle of nightclub stripper Big Pannie Ample entertaining the party faithful in a shauhnessy mansion; we are also let in on the secret of the underwater rope that helped Bennett's representative to victory in a swimming race at Okanagan Lake during a private foray for Bennett's son Kelowna.

Garr's most valuable contribution to the understanding of B.C. politics lies in his exposure of Bennett's reliance on sophisticated polling and marketing techniques. Eve" those who are skeptical of the power of the polls will feel a little uneasy — if not frightened — to read one party organizer's explanation of how a unpopular Bennett, who had led the province into a recession, beat the immensely popular Opposition leader Dave Barrett in the 1983 election.

Garr's unbridled sarcasm may tempt readers to dismiss him as a bitter reactionary. His penchant for nicknames — Wacky for the former premier, Bill Bennett's father; Petesy for Peter Brown, prominent Vancouver financier; and Billy, or The Tough Guy for the current premier — is undoubted. But if the Tough Guy is more than simply the left-winger's personal attack on the agreeable leader. To the all-too-familiar complaints one is likely to hear in pubs from Vancouver to Prince George, Garr adds his hard-won insights and a compendium of facts that are so often lacking in beer-parlour discussions of politics.

Reading the memoirs of Alex MacDonald, B.C.'s longest sitting MLA, one gets the impression that the answer

JuneJuly 1986, Books In Canada 33
to the Sacred's continued success lies not so much in what Bennett and the Sacred machine have done as in what the NDP fails to do. In a collection of letters to his young friend Hugh L-egg (nicknamed "Legs"—hence the book's title), McDonald mulled over the NDP cause, remembering the glory days of the Dirty '30s, when socialism was born in the West with the signing of the CCC's Regina Manifesto, and laying out a blue print for world peace, NDP-style.

My Dear Legs opens with an intriguing scenario: as his colleagues in the B.C. legislature attempt to defeat Bennett's 1983 restraint measures with all-night filibusters, MacDonald hunkers over his desk to compose a letter to his young friend, in which he reminisces about the origins of their party. A film director could have a field day with this setup: flashback to farmers cheering, fists upraised as the Co-operative Federation is born amidst the soup lines of the '30s; cut to the present—Bennett shaking his fist in victory as NDP leader Dave Barrett is physically ejected, chair and all, from the legislature, MacDonald, however, fails to capitalize on the scene's dramatic potential: as his NDP colleagues pitch a desperate battle around him, MacDonald merely ruminates on such lofty ideals as the pursuit of equality and the protection of liberty.

In this rambling collection of letters, MacDonald spells out his opinions on everything from health care to world peace. His arguments are well thought-out, and his proposals often thought-provoking. Included in MacDonald's dream of the NDP future, for example, are salaried doctors working in competitive community health-care centres, fighting to keep costs down by keeping patients healthy, rather than prospering on illness. But this, like most of the author's proposals, has the distinct ring of a pipe-dream: beneath his inventive against big business, small government, and money-grubbing capitalists, one catches a definite sense of futility.

MacDonald sums up the plight of the NDP in British Columbia by describing his party as "Candidates of the Hard Truth" with "the unenviable lot of having to disagree with quite a few dominant opinions and of trying to convince people they are wrong." This doesn't give the NDP much of a chance against the Sacred, who, as Garr points out, find out what the people think and then tell them they are right. MacDonald is well aware of his party's seemingly impossible position; his response, however, that Bennett's "cynical manipulations will carry him only as far as the next election" can't help but sound just a little naive, considering that with the success of Expo '86 Bennett seems poised on the verge of a fourth successive election victory.

---

**FIRST NOVELS**

Rewriting history

Based on real events, a new novel falls shy of its author's ambitions because it relies too heavily on the facts

By Douglas Glover

In 1931, amid the drought and hopper plagues of southern Saskatchewan, Tom Sukanek began to build a boat. Not a canoe or a rowboat but a 100-ton, steel-hulled, ocean-going steamship that he planned to float down creeks and rivers to Hudson Bay and thence to the far corners of the world. A Finnish immigrant who had served time in Minnesota for wife-beating, an inventor, a Mr. Fix-It, a schemer of crackpot philosophies, a man whose eccentricities were nearly to the point of being sick, Sukanek had almost managed to finish his ship, the Sononian (Dung Beetle), when he was certified mentally ill in 1941 and committed to a hospital where he died a year later.

Dustship Glory (Doubleday, 224 pages, $19.95 cloth), Andreas Schroeder's fictional account of Tom Sukanek's life, is a novel of obsession, madness, and dream. Based on newspaper stories and eyewitness testimony, this is a story of the bizarre, a cross between Ripley's Believe It or Not and, say, Robert Kroetsch's Badlands. Schroeder is clearly fascinated by his subject—the ship as it looms over the prairie, out of place, improbable, a mighty symbol of fortitude and futility, and its builder, a man who invents futuristic grain harvesters and foresees television while accusing his neighbours' wives of pining in his machinery to make it fall.

Unfortunately, Dustship Glory, the novel, falls somewhat shy of its author's ambitions. The problem is signalled by Schroeder himself when he admits, in a preface, to stopping "short of presuming to know Sukanek's inner thoughts." This is the kind of humble disclaimer one would expect to find in a biography or a work of history, not in a novel. The strength of the novel form derives from the author's ability to imagine what is inside the protagonist's head. Novelists are not tied to fact, to research; they don't have to rely on educated guesses or "hunches"—they can make it up.

Schroeder effectively emasculates his story, oscillating between thall-person narrative and first-person monologues by fictional "witnesses" (repetitive, tritey folksy, the way rural people talk on TV). The third-person sections grow stronger as the book progresses; the description of the RCMP taking Sukanek away from his ship is deep and powerful. Schroeder could and should have written the whole book that way. As it is, everyone guesses but no one knows what Sukanek is up to. In the end he remains an obscure, cranky, filthy misanthrope.

Judith Terry's Miss Abigail's Part (Macmillan, 330 pages, $19.95 cloth), subtitled Or Version and Diversion, is a negative to the positive of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, or an anti-Mansfield Park, or a revision, or a metatext. It is Mansfield Park retold from the point of view of Julia Bertram's personal maid Jane Hartwell. A little like a servant looking up mildly at the stairs, it's a rollicking, picturesque romp, more Fielding than anyone else.

Where Jane Austen seems a touch on the prim side, Jane Hartwell is lusty and matter-of-fact. Shrigs off rape (by both a man and a woman) with barely a thought. She catches Maria Bertram and Henry Crawford in flagrante delicto in the park at Sotherton. She's mauled by Tom Bertram and submits willingly to Henry. She runs off with a Reformist scene painter from London, is pursued by armed thugs, watches a pursuer trampled by a herd of cattle, becomes nearly the most famous actress of her day, is wounded in a duel (by Maria Bertram) and marries a lord.

Where Jane Austen eschews social commentary, exchanging the irony of politics for the politics of irony, Judith Terry throws her heroine willy-nilly into
secret Reform Movement coventicles andDickensian dens of under-class
iniquity — things not dreamed of in
Austen's universe.
This is all in fun, as implied in the
novel's subtitle, and not to be compared
with the inimitable Jane. One gets the
feeling Terry is somewhat dissatisfied
with Austen, thinks she needs some red
blood pumped into those cold veins of
ironic wit. That's a point of view, not
one I share. Frankly, the scenes of
political discussion in Miss Abigail's
Part are a little dull. And the sex is start-
lng without being convincing. Are we to
read these sections as exercises in revi-
sionist social history, or are they as
much a literary confection, albeit of
another century, as the original Mans-
field Park?

These quibbles aside, Miss Abigail's
Part is an entertaining first novel,
especially if you've read Austen recently
and can appreciate the sly interplay be-
tween versions.

Manitoba poet Jacquie Smyth's No
Fixed Admission (Turnstone, 74 pages,
97.95 paper) is an ambitious effort to
sound the chords of the generations
within one family, showing the way
attitudes and relationships, not just
eyebrows, hair colour, and foot size, are
passed on through the blood. Though a
scant 74 pages long, it has epic inten-
tions à la R.D. Laing. In a series of
vignettes, she tells the stories of
children, parents, and grandparents.
Their hurts, their weaknesses, and their
failures, following each to death or to a
querulous, somewhat somber present.

Alice Peterson has left the Prairies to
mend fences with her estranged father,
now a motel owner in British Columbia.
She lives with him for six months, listen-
ing to his reminiscences, writing letters
to her sister and a former boy-friend,
talking on the telephone to her mother,
keeping a journal, assessing and
reconstructing the litanies of plaint and
self-justification.

My father's anger brings me back to my
mother. The repetition of events. Like
being locked into the credits, having to
repeat the same fate over and over. And
then I think it is all blood and
the rest is choice.

Between journal entries, the narrative
slips into the past, into Alice's paternal
grandmother's mind, into her youthful
father's mind, and so on. We see the

BookNews: an advertising feature

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF WATER
by David Donnell

A limited edition of 175 letterpress copies sewn into paper
covers. Signed and numbered by the author.

A prose poem of witty and lyrical entries on water's place
in the world of men and things. Available only from the
publisher and selected rare book dealers.

Send to: Shaw Street Press, 550 Clinton St.,
Toronto, Ont. M6G 2Z6. $25.00 prepaid.

COMPLETE YOUR COLLECTION

A limited number of back issues of Books in Canada are
available for the following prices per copy, plus postage
and handling:

1976 - 1980 - $1.95 per issue;
1980 - 1981 - $2.25 per issue; 1979 - $2.50 per issue;
1978 - $2.75 per issue; 1977 - $3.00 per issue;
1976 - $3.25 per issue; 1975 - $3.50 per issue;
1974 - $3.75 per issue; 1973 - $4.00 per issue;
1972 - $4.00 per issue.

Order now while stocks last! Write to:
Back Issues, Books in Canada, 355 Adelaide Street East,

The New Edition of the Bestselling
Unconventional History

Red Lights on the Prairies
James H. Gray

At a time when the world's largest voluntary mass
migration to western Canada was underway, the
mixed tinder of whiskey and prostitution set the west
ablaze with controversy. $8.95 trade paper

“Gray sets the record straight with gusto, and adds a
fascinating chapter to our social history in doing so.”
William French

The Globe and Mail

Western Producer Prairie Books
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

CANADIAN FICTION MAGAZINE
edited by Geoffrey Hancock

CFM congratulates ROBERT MISTRY for his story
"Exercisers" (#54) which won CFM's Annual Contributor's
Price as the most outstanding story of the year.
Previous winners include LEON ROGGE, W.P. KIMBELLA,
MARS GALLANT, JOHN HEDDALE, GUY VAN DERMAEGHE,
KEITH FRASER, DAVID SHARP, DOUGLAS CLOVER, ANNIE COPELAND,
MATT COHEN, AND PATRICK ROSCIO.

CFM: Canada's only literary quarterly devoted to the art
of the short story, celebrates its fifteenth anniversary in
1986. Current issues on sale now at university and city
bookstores, or at $6.95 from the publisher at:
Box 946, Station F, Toronto M4Y 2N9
Subscription: $24/4 issues

June/July 1986, Books in Canada 35
couples combining, splitting apart, Alice's mother and father growing to a flawed maturity and passing on their "genes" along with their fates. It's a stately little dance, the dance of time and the generations, that we're watching. And there's no doubt the vignettes, piling on top of the other, build a certain cumulative power.

No Fixed Admission is a marvel of ellipsis and condensation—Smyth has tried to write War and Peace on an aerogramme form. But, occasionally, reaching too hard for poetry, she becomes awkward and vague. (The second sentence—"Outside, fallen leaves are hidden among everything that is green"—is passive and grammatical.) The journal entries are devoid of action, thin. Compared with the passionate, sometimes brutal, life of her family, Alice Peterson's is a little like flat beer. Passive, victimized, she does not appear to see herself with the same clarity she demonstrates vis à vis her family. Nevertheless, this is a strikingly intelligent, dense, and poetic short novel.

Cornel Lumiere's Balkanita (Simon & Pierre, 178 pages, $10.95 paper) with the unfortunate subtitle A Greek Tragedy/A Strange Love is an anti-German, anti-Holocaust, revenge novel set partly in Canada and partly in Greece. It's the story of how Stavros Milionis, sent to Canada in 1939 at the age of four to escape the coming war, grows into a Bay Street legal barricada, a star tennis player, a self-made millionaire (he buys Denison stock at 10 cents while he's still at university). and writes songs that promise to eclipse the modem taste for decadent nck music (Lumiere quotes lyrics at length—

The wind, if you listen, will tell you a story. The tale of two belts that has never been told—
A tale of their grief and their moment of glory, The wind may well tell you, for whom the bell tolled. —(Sing heed not worry), the", in the 1980s, returns to the Greek village of his birth and cold-bloodedly kills 50 innocent German tourists to avenge a wartime massacre.

Stavros is not Superman. he's Super Greek. He cuts a swath through the namby-pamby Toronto establishment like a combine harvester through a field of wheat (mainly, we are told, because for the first four years of his life he ran around in the mountains with his dog and slept in caves where his father sheltered sheep). He impresses the prime minister (clearly Pierre Trudeau) during a party at a Jamaica retreat; he wins a death struggle with a shark. He can do anything, and satisfy any woman. (Stavros approves his father's militantly chauvinist policy toward women.)

Amid this boring literary macho chieft-beating, we get the story of the village of Kalavrita, where over 1,000 men, women, and children were slaughtered by the Germans in 1943 in reprisal for the Greek partisans slaughter of several hundred German prisoners of war. Of course, Stavros wasn't around when any of this took place and really doesn't show much curiosity about it as he grows up. It's not at all clear why he suddenly flips out and starts murdering tourists. (He really hates those "Huns": Stavros is a species of racist.)

It is probably useful to point out that among all the Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, intellectuals, Poles, and Russians the Nazis killed in the Second World War, they also slaughtered some Greeks. But Stavros is not a convincing Angel of Retribution and his program of vengeance is revolting.

Shirley Shea's Victims (Simon & Pierre, 186 pages, $12.95 paper), subtitled A Pound of Flesh is also a revenge novel—this time a right-wing feminist attack on the Canadian criminal justice system, which, we are told, coddles and excuses and sex murderers. Shea is pro-death penalty and anti-plea bargaining, statutory remission, and mandatory supervision.

Sylvia Jenning, 39, the stay-at-home wife of a prominent Toronto criminal defence lawyer, has turned herself into Super Woman, swimming, working out, taking Defendino classes. Using her husband's case files, she hunts down and murders several me'' accused of sex crimes and either acquitted (with her husband's help) or released after serving minimal sentences. Described as a rough equivalent to the Reign of Terror, these murders prompt the me' of Toronto to whimper-for police protection. adopt the buddy system after dark, buy extra pen knives, and be generally panic.

Sylvia manages to elude detection by framing a man who has tried to murder her in her home (a sub-plot—Sylvia beats up a young purse-snatcher in a shopping mall; the purse-matcher and her brother trap her in her house; she kills the purse-snatcher with her bare hands but the brother surprises her and she is only saved by the timely intervention of her pet kitty.)

Victims is a polemical novel that plainaeps vigilante acts. Throughout there are pamphlet-like, set-piece conversations, arguing for or against various aspects of the justice system. The plot is manipulated to drive the points home. AU men accused of sex crimes are guilty (whether or "of a judge or jury finds them so")—they ought to be punished with deaths similar to those they inflicted on their female victims.

As an argument against our criminal justice system (and who can say it's perfect?), this one is too shrill and hyperbolic to take seriously. Having been a court reporter on a couple of daily newspapers (and having see' a fair share of sexual assault trials) I have never ceased to be surprised at how well the system actually does work, how fair and shrewd judges appear in practice, how delicate a balancing act we perform between infringing on and protecting the rights of individuals.

Shea seems to think that in a court of law any kind of base and cynical manipulation ca' be brought off, that all criminals escape with less than they deserve. This damages her argument as well as her plot. For example, the planting of two pieces of circumstantial evidence on an innocent man (at least innocent of the crime for which he's convicted) seems to Shea to be enough to convince Toronto's gullible police department of his guilt.

Simon Johnston's Lion Dance (Williams-Wallace, 282 pages, $19.95 cloth) is meant to be a page-turner, an action-packed thriller set in turn-of-the-century China. A cruel and racist British colonel named Elliot is charged with delivering two black pearls to the Dowager Empress, a bribe for her compliance in continuing the foreign economic domination of her country. Elliot sets off for the Dowager's palace with his opium-addicted daughter Victoria. He's trailed by two revolutionary martial-arts monks, Fat-san and Fat-meen, and a" old woman whose so" Elliot has executed. Following them, in turn, is Justin Wu, the half-British, half-Chinese nephew of Sun Yat-sen, who is supposed to protect Elliot and his daughter.

This book is full of brutal, cartoonish murders, executions and mutilations (a boy is chosen to deep with the Dowager, the" has hi tongue and penis removed). On page 131, Johnston decides to switch from third-person to first-person narration, and after that he alternates the point of view for no apparent reason. The plot is loose and episodic, sometimes difficult to follow, and the writing is weak when it isn't being wildly sensational.

One supposes that part of what Johnston wanted to do was to represent the brutal extremes of imperial Cibi and foreign exploitation, but he concentrates too strictly on his cardboard protagonists to give his novel a chance at depth and amplitude. Lion Dance reads like a bad Western with the names changed.
The rich and varied world of classical music comes alive in interviews, photo features, historical articles, audio news, record, and book reviews.

Classical music on records and in concert is a source of pleasure to you. Music Magazine is bound to enrich the experience. Five times a year we bring you candid, personal glimpses of musicians from around the world and authoritative views on new recordings.

If you are playing, studying, listening to or just getting acquainted with classical music, you are ready to subscribe to Music Magazine.

"It is now more and more difficult to book top-class conductors, as there are very few of them to begin with, and the ones who are really good are over-booked all the time. This season I'm crossing the Atlantic 26 times. I'm really getting tired of doing that."

Conductor Charles Dutoit, March/Apr '83

"Part of what makes musical life interesting is being in a place that you least expected and finding something delightful. Obviously, to have the freedom to call the shots is great, but you miss out on the unexpected."

Cellist Yo-Yo Ma, Jan/Feb '83

"If I, as a musician, have difficulty with a lot of contemporary compositions, it might be my fault. But then, what can we expect from audiences who are not half as educated as the musician? In the time of Bach and Mozart musicians were always playing the newest music; they didn't even play things that were two years old."

Pianist Andras Schiff, May/June '83
Y CHANCE, while working on her doctoral thesis at the University of London, Phyllis Grosskurth discovered the unpublished autobiography of John Addington Symonds. Her subsequent biography of him, The Woeful Victorian (1964), won a Governor General’s Award and launched Grosskurth on an unexpected career as a distinguished biographer and literary critic. Since then, her reviews and articles have appeared in the Observer, Daily Telegraph, New York Review of Books, and Saturday Night, and in 1980 she won international recognition for Havelock Ellis: A Biography (McClelland & Stewart). Born in Toronto in 1924 and now a professor at the University of Toronto, Grosskurth has spent the last five years working on Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work, a study of the controversial pioneer psychoanalyst, recently published by Knopf. She was interviewed in Toronto by Sherie Posesorski.

**Books In Canada:** How did you come to choose Melanie Klein as a subject?
**Phyllis Grosskurth:** A miracle. I’ 1977, I was in England working on my book on Havelock Ellis, when my son Brian, who is interested in psychoanalysis, gave me Klein’s Envy and Gratitude to read, saying, “She’s a genius and she will help you to understand Ellis better.” At Christmas, 1980, I was floundering. I had taken my research on Marie Bonaparte, my next subject, as far as I could. At that point, I didn’t know I had bee” double-crossed with regard to access to the Bonaparte archives, but I did know I couldn’t continue without it. I didn’t know what to do next. Brian encouraged me to write about Klein.

**BIC:** Why has there been such a strong resistance to Klein and her work?
**Grosskurth:** The resistance to her is caused, in part, by her warring relationship with Anna Freud. Who “Klein fist arrived in England, she walked right into the right psychoanalytical circle. It was a perfect concatenation of a person with a milieu. She flourished until the arrival of Anna Freud, whose arrival split allegiances within the circle. There still remains a passionate and irrational allegiance to Anna Freud. Some people even think that she was a doctor. She was daddy’s little girl, didn’t formulate anything new or disturbing — unlike Klein, whose ideas are very disturbing. When the Anna Freud psychoanalysts emigrated to the U.S. in the 1930s, they brought their allegiances and prejudices against Klidp, and imprinted them on "generation of analysts.

Second, there is the matter of Klein’s forceful personality. She was a gutsy woman. I think some of the resistance to her is simply male prejudice against a woman. Women aren’t supposed to think abstractly — and worse, she had the audacity to challenge Freud.

**BIC:** What did you find you shared with Klein?
**Grosskurth:** Here were all these people that adored her — excessively, I thought. I started off rebellious, trying to put her down — feeling, I’m not going to be taken in by this woman. Gradually, as I got into my research, I began to discover that there were almost too many startling parallels between her life and my own. I had to be very careful that I didn’t overidentify with her. For a while, in any biography, you have to overidentify, if you want to become engaged. You become terribly protective — absorbed in the other person. But then you reach the point where you have to stand back and grant the other person her otherness.

At one point I had to rewrite her life up to the age of 40 when some additional letters showed up in her son’s loft. A translator in England started sending them over to me in batches, and I began putting together the jigsaw puzzle of her family dynamics. A series of letters depicted how Klein had sided with her mother against her sister. Suddenly, I became so disappointed in her. I remember sitting on my stairs, in tears. I thought, you’d better watch it — you’re not her keeper or her defence lawyer. She had a life of her own. The book became better when I started to use the blue pencil more.

**BIC:** In an interview, you stated that "Klein speaks to women. Freud didn’t know anything about the relationship between mothers and daughters, and that is her greatest contribution."

**Grosskurth:** Klein’s work addresses the relationship between mother and daughter. which is the most complex of all relationships. I think that real maturity for a woman is achieved when she finally comes to terms with that relationship. Although feminists wouldn’t like to hear this, they have a far more complex envy than me” do — because they have more envy. I don’t think the feminist movement is going to go anywhere as long as it stays at the level of blaming patriarchal society for everything, and not looking into themselves.

**BIC:** I know little about psychoanalysis, yet I find your biography accessible.
**Grosskurth:** I think that it was important that it was written by a woman and by someone who wasn’t an analyst. A’ analyst would have got caught up in the jargon. Learning about psychoanalysis was formidable — that was the thing that scared me most — but it was the most wonderful education, the greatest immersion course. When I was writing the book, I knew it was important to
LETTERS

Psychological warfare

In Keith Maillard's review of my book, "Objectivity and Human Perception," (March) he states that my solution to the malaise of civilized society is "practice," or the pursuit of non-projective perceptual activities traditionally associated with mystical schools. In several passages I make it perfectly clear that such practice is merely one aspect of my solution, and that "psychoanalysis" or the analytical probing of the individual's projective system is another aspect. I state explicitly that practice is "one essential prong of a two-pronged assault on the distortions and discontentments" of our normal perception. This was a major omission and a gross misrepresentation.

Second, Maillard claims in a paraphrase that I regard "Mom" as the troublesome central presence in our problematical perception, yet I stress that it is the internalization of split aspects of the "caregiver" during the early stages of existence that is the heart of the matter. "Mom" is a conceptualization that comes into play during the course of the child's maturation, after the crucial events of the early period have commenced. The reviewer's use of "Mom" distorts and trivializes the book's thesis.

Again, the reviewer states that the "mirror relationship" between the mother and the infant is an aspect of the early period that is postulated by "certain Freudians." He fails to note — and I make this explicit, employing bibliographical reference — that the minor relationship is widely regarded as crucial to the child's development by child becoming too possessive of your subject. A supreme example of this is Leon Edel's "Henry James. He simply forced you to see his James. He's so self-indulgent. He just doesn't know when to stop —the identification has become too strong.

BIC: What are the satisfactions of your work?

Grosskurth: More than anything else, it is the dogged interesting. It takes over your life. You are walking around all the time with this world in your head that you are reconstructing. I think it's so difficult to understand your own world, and all your own relationships. Yet you can understand your own world better by putting together the pieces of somebody else's.

Although absolutely sure that I knew exactly what I meant to say. It was terrific discipline. Although sometimes I wish that I could write with more of a flourish, my strength is clear writing.

BIC: Do you anticipate that your Klein biography will arouse controversy?

Grosskurth: Yes, I have assumed a great deal of criticism. It will resist her because she doesn't say we can be anything that we want to be — she states that there are human limitations and that it is particularly difficult to be a woman.

BIC: You seem to be drawn to people who are psychological Chinese boxes, in that they are composed of layers of contradictory selves — selves that they themselves are unaware of. Why?

Grosskurth: I'm fascinated by the depths and contradictions of people — to me, that's the marvel of human nature. Even as a literary scholar, I have always been most interested in the discrepancy between illusion and reality. With Symonds, his discrepancies and self-deceptions in his life and autobiography were tied to his homosexuality. With Ellis, the deceptions in his autobiography are tied to the fact that he never understood himself. Here was a man who was handing out advice to the world, yet he was so lacking in self-understanding. Of all my subjects, he was the most self-protective — he was so pleased with himself. Klein's autobiography is self-protective for different reasons. She had tremendous self-understanding. She couldn't have written her work without an acute awareness of her own complexity. But in the writing of her autobiography she withdrew from some of the pain she had experienced in her relationships with her mother, husband, and children.

BIC: What are the hallmark of a good biography?

Grosskurth: First off, I do not think it is possible to write about a living person. Second, you must be able to guarantee every single thing you say — you must provide references for your readers. Biography should have narrative pace, just as a novel does — a momentum, and that momentum should vary. As well, I like illuminating detail.

The character should gradually unfold in all his or her complexity. By the end the reader should feel to feel that he has come to know that person intimately by being the one who adds up the pieces — he must be given that privilege. Yet there should be a whole area of mystery about that person that he can never penetrate. I don't like biographies that say at the end, this is what the person is. It should be left open-ended. One of the great dangers of biography is
psychologists both within and without the “Freudian” camp. Thus, when Maillard later states that he does not believe in certain “myths” about early childhood, he creates the false impression that his position puts him at odds only with “certain Freudians” and not with specialists in child psychology. This is important because it raises a larger, related issue, namely the reviewer’s failure to acknowledge the book’s persistent, unremitting attempt to differentiate between orthodox “Freudian” views and other views within the psychoanalytic community. Again and again the book employs precisely such differentiations to characterize human behaviour. Indeed, several of the book’s chapters are devoted to refuting the orthodox “Freudian” outlook on everything from infantile anxiety to altered states of consciousness. By refusing even to mention this central feature, the reviewer not only obscures the book’s nature, he places himself in a position to turn his review into a rhetorical exercise in Freud-bashing.

Finally, the reviewer wonders how I can explore my subject without bringing in the anthropological angle. If he would just read my book he would discover a discussion of anthropological issues based upon the definitive work of Erich Neumann, which makes very clear the way in which the “good” and “bad” versions of the maternal object appear in all parts of the world.

Although a reviewer has the right to dislike a book, he also has the duty to present the book truthfully.

M.D. Faber
Department of English
University of Victoria
Victoria

Keith Maillard replies: Yes, indeed, Faber’s book is quite explicit in emphasizing, as he says, “a two-pronged assault” (“practically all psychoanalysis”), and yes, indeed, his book does make a “persistent, unremitting attempt to differentiate between orthodox ‘Freudian’ views and other views within the psychoanalytic community.” If my review, as published, overly simplified Faber’s position, let me apologize. But granting those points leaves my central objection to his book untouched. He suggests that I have refused or failed to grasp his book’s psychological meaning. No. What I have refused and failed to do is believe it.

Everybody with any knowledge of psychology at all (even me) believes that a close, intimate bonding relationship between an infant and a “primary caregiver” (usually a mother) is “crucial to the child’s development.” What I don’t buy is all the rest of it — the interjection of the “good mother/bad mother”; the separation from the mother setting off a “lifelong mourning process”; the endless search for “replacement”; the association of our ability to conceive of objects as separate in space with the “emotive dilemma” of infant separation, so that our notions of time, space, and our use of language are somehow related to this emotive dilemma to the point that “our perception itself is the chief carrier of our conflict.” It is this chain of speculation that I have called a “fantasy.” Not only is most of this not supported by research “data,” but most is of such a nature that it can’t be tested at all.

That the work of Neumann can be called “definitive” will come as news to many. From the Jungian tradition, James Hillman, whose writing is state-of-the-art in archetypal psychology, suggests that Neumann stuffs so many images of women into the mythologem of the Great Mother that what is left is a fuzzy, undifferentiated blur. Neumann’s work doesn’t fare any better in the green groves of academe; it would not be considered by cultural anthropologists to be a model of the scientific method.

I’m not opposed to imaginative, speculative writing about the human condition nor in love with the orthodoxies of academia and experimental psychology. But Faber claims that his book is based on “data,” that it is somehow “scientific.” To compare roots: a “fact” is something found; a “fiction” is something made, and Faber has certainly made something — a myth, a fantasy, a story, a fiction — but not a contribution to science.

In the preface Faber writes: “It should be remembered that the words themselves are not the pay-off.” From my point of view, when you’re writing a book, the words themselves certainly are the pay-off. I love reading the fictions of Jung, Campbell, von Franz, and Hillman. (In the right mood I even enjoy Freud’s fictions.) All these people tell good stories. AU I have against Faber is that he didn’t tell a good story.

SIGNS OF DISSENT

GRANT DAVID SHILLING’S profile of Chad Kilodney (March) was on the whole an accurate account of this extraordinary writer’s social disillusionment, and his courage in publishing his own work and selling it on the streets of Tomato.

However, a glaring error cries out to be put right. Kilodney has never worn a sign that pronounces him to be “The World’s Greatest Author.” He indeed wears signs that are obvious and outrageous attention-getters, and although some of them are too sublime to penetrate the heads of the Bay Street crowd.
others are so bizarre and grotesque that they make certain people flee in terror, none of them are ever as pompous and self-serving as the "on-existent one quoted above. Kilodney's out there to sell books, not declare himself to be the world's greatest anything.

But speaking of those books, I am one who has read most of them, and in the process discovered one of the finest and most original prose-writers in this country. I'll venture to say the most original. It's a pity that Shilling didn't make any real comment on the writing itself. For it's time that someone published a detailed and intelligent article on Kilodney's entire body of work. No one in this country writes as he does:

no one can, and even "original" is too weak a word to describe this phenomenal and much-overlooked literary figure in our midst.

Gwendolyn MacEwen
Toronto

Grant David Shilling replies: I appreciate Gwendolyn MacEwen's comments. It is obvious that she shares my enthusiasm for Crad Kilodney's work. Kilodney has been selling his books on the street for the past seven years. His signs change frequently. MacEwen must be a powerfully big fan of his to be aware of all the signs he has worn during that time.

If you understand the humour of Crad Kilodney, a sign declaring him "The World's Greatest Author" is clear. The sign was worn shortly after Lightning Struck My Dick was released.

LIVES OF GIRLS AND WOMEN

CARY FAGAN'S pedantically centralist review of Gertrude Story's work (March) sets up the trilogy as a liturgical sacrament. Like Ontario's Robertson Davies, Saskatchewan's Story (like a good girl?) is supposed to write according to tradition, and if she doesn't, she is an "instinctive rather than technically sophisticated writer." What nonsense!

The idea that a fictional life should fall conveniently into three volumes labelled "early," "middle?" and "late" years is ridiculous, particularly in the case of women. Past, present, and future spill into one another. Lives get interrupted, redirected, haunted, and invaded by others.

"Technically unsophisticated" Gertrude Story dances with roopy Western Canadian magic realism in her first book, the small detail of clannish interconnected lives in her second, and post-modern Freudian fragmentation in her third, a work that consciously sets out to test the limits of language. In light of Story's technical expertise, her "plodding plot summaries of her books resemble the clucking of a podiatrist at a jazz ballet.

Undoubtedly Robertson Davies could give a fascinating account of the genesis of podiatry while Gertrude Story dances beside the shadow of Upper Canada College in uptown Saskatoon". Think about it.

Anne Hicks
Waterloo, Ont.

CLASH OF SYMBOLS

I'M WRITING TO congratulate The Canadian Book Information Centre for its bold, satirical 43 Below poster. Even the dullest of Canadians will appreciate the symbolism of this poster. The myopic Canadian writer is oblivious to the fact that he is sliding downhill and that he is destined to end up teaching Remedial English in Terrace, B.C. In the bottom right corner, a steamer is arriving to pick up a fresh load of Canadian raw resources, and below it, a cruise ship full of Canadian tourists has just left the St. Lawrence in its wake as it makes for Europe and the July sales. Judging from its worse, one would assume that Baie Comeau was its last stop. Brilliant!

Be" Labovitch
Toronto

WATCH YOUR LAWGUAGE

RE: ROB BLACKBURN'S column on "offensive language" (March). The other day I watched a CBGTV program
called “Parenting.” Book stores now-
days are filled with “How to Parent”
manuals. No one seems to question or
protest the fact that a noun has some-
how been twisted around into a verb. I
have a terrible feeling it is only a matter
of time until this usage of “parent” gets
into the dictionary.

One of the worst examples of this kind
of word-twisting came to light at a
recreational seminar I attended, in
which the instructors (all university-
educated, no less) repeatedly re-
cited the act of “recreating” our spate
of time.” We in the audience were known
as the “recreators”!

Before these corruptions worm their
way into acceptability, perhaps what we
need to do is “recreate” some interest in
correct and careful usage of the English
language.

Margaret Gunning
Hinton, Alta.

RECOMMENDED

THE FOLLOWING Canadian books were
reviewed in the previous issue of Books in
Canada. Our recommendations do not
necessarily reflect the reviews:

FICTION

The Green Tomato Years, by Gloria Kup-
chino Frolick, Williams-Wallace. A series of
testimonials about the Ukrainian com-

munity in Alberta during the Depression.
Frolick’s tint collection of short stories evokes
a tightly-knit society where people keep their
balance in a strange land by hanging on to
each other.

NON-FICTION

Michele Landsberg’s Guide to Children’s
Books, Penguin. Full of strong opinions
and passionate beliefs (Landsberg detes
such widely popular children’s writers as
Judy Blume and Roald Dahl, but is equally
opposed to censorship), this guide, which
spans some 350 titles, adds up to much
more than merely a listing of favourite
books.

POETRY

Woman to the Woods, by Joy Kagawa,
Mosaic Press. Despite the imagery sug-
gested in the title, Kagawa’s vision is
obscured neither by the forest nor the trees.
Though often the world offends her sensi-
blility, her poetry’s most engaging virtue is
an obvious passion for life.

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

RECEIVED

Active Voice: An Anthology of Canadian, Ameri-
can and Commonwealth Prose, edited by W.H. New and W.E.
Mansperg, Pratch-Hall Canada.
A4 book, by Barry Dickson, illustrated by Elena
Kartl, James Lorimer.
All the Men Were Cheekish, M. S.
American Illustrations, 1930-1950, Romances, Adverse &
Semplice, by Judy L. Lasman, Glendon House.
Animal’s Pet, fixed by Joyce Baxtor, illustrated by Ann Blades, Janet Lorimer.
Animal-Face Animals from the New Alps, by Stephen
till, Vesta Publications.
As Bird Brings Earth to, by Allan MacLeod, M.A.S.
Athabasca Oil Sand Northern Resource Exploration Jt.
1955-1951, by Barry George, Canadian films Research
Institute.
Back to Normal, by Richard Loose and Clyde Kuchyn.
Daughters.
The Bootlegger’s Daughter, by Bruce Hutton, Treacle-

Press.
Leave Yourself, by Elena Janowals and Sandra Bern-
stick, Pratch-Hall.
The Bishop, by David Helti, Penguin.
Blue Jay ‘93, An In-Depth Look, by... by Seymour Swift,
Stevie Eldred, and Peter Hilt, Caledon Macmillan.
Bread on Sunday, by Edward Phillips, M & S.
Brimstone, by Ted Bilston, Dell.
Canada: A Story of Challenge, by J.M.S. Careless,
Macmillan.
Canada Among Nations, edited by Maureen Appel Mole
and Brian W. Tomlin, James Lorimer.
Canada 1905-1957, by Arthur Liebeski and Inno-
cent, by R.L. Grae, Scottish.
Canadian Literature, a Change of Change, Colin
Kingsland and Robert Davidson, University of Alberta.
The Canadian Encyclopedia: A Regional Perspective, by
Donald Gower, Macmillan.
William E. Peel, Pratch-Hall.
City Citizen How to Live with Urban Wildlife, by David M.
Ed. Egg Pong.
Company’s Game, by Jean Pierre, Company’s Game.

Co-operative Educational Model, by Eva Niederl, Grad-
centre, Faculty of Education, U of T.
A Christmas Tree from Puffin’s Steen Hill, by Elie Hadden
Hole, illustrated by Cyril Hines, Pearson.
Bread with Dredd, Love Poems, by Irving Layton, M.A.
Death is An Anchor Maker, by Anne Campbell, Treacle-

Press.
Discovery of the North: The Exploration of Canada’s Artic,
by Stuart Anick, University of Toronto Press.
Don Valley Legacy, A Pioneer History, by Ann Guthrie
Oxford.
Dwellers of the Arctic, by Mary Bruce, Pennsylvania.
The Ptarmigan and the Moth, by Elspeth Enns.
The Vancouver Guide Book, by Glyn and Beth Evans, Eve

Publishing.

Violets & Feathers: Masterpieces of Botanical Art, by
Catherine Johnson et al., National Gallery.
Virtuosity, by David Vincenzo Laidlaw.
Values of Deliverance, Interviews with Quentin and Annick
Gillespie, by Donald Scott, translated by Larry Boland.

The Wall Street Game, How You Can Profit from Invest-
ment Newsletters, by Peter Bratton, Key Press.
The Watch That Ends the Night, by Mark Linn.
Whole Woman, by Judith Fitzgerald, illustrated by
Maureen Purdy, Black Moss.
Women in Beer, by Jerome Kidd, illustrated by
Samantha Love, James Lorimer.
William Nolan: The Story of A Tanker, by Patricia Jones,
Dundurn.
Writing Fundamentals: A Grammar of English, by
Joseph P. Lyons, Prentice-Hall.

BOOKS IN CANADA, June/July, 1986
HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Summertime or anytime . . .
if reading is one of your pleasures,
you'll find a welcome travelling companion
in Books in Canada

Canada's award-winning book review magazine comes
to you nine times a year —
monthly except for a winter issue in January-
February and summer reading issues in
June-July and August-September.

Watch for the August-September Books in Canada on the newstands or in your local bookstore after August 25.
Or if you want to be sure not to miss an issue, subscribe now and save 15% off the newsstand price.

In the meantime, happy holidays.

□ YES I want to subscribe To Books in Canada
NAME________________________________________
ADDRESS_____________________________________
POSTAL CODE__________________________
Cheque enclosed
Bill me

□ YES I want to subscribe To Books in Canada
NAME________________________________________
ADDRESS_____________________________________
POSTAL CODE__________________________
Cheque enclosed
Bill me

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE $14.95 A YEAR
($17.95 A YEAR OUTSIDE CANADA)
365 Adelaide St. East, Suite 432
Toronto, Ont. M5A 3X9
Stoddart

H.R. PERCY
A MODEL LOVER $12.95

ANDREA DWORIN
ICE AND FIRE $18.95

CAROL SHIELDS
VARIUS MIRACLES $19.95

Available at bookstores everywhere