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SNIPING FROM
THE SIDELINES**

**Dorothy Livesay:
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die for love?**

**Audrey Thomas on
Elizabeth Smart**

**An interview with
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our 11th annual
first novel award**

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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., 366 Adelaide Street East, Suite 432, Toronto, Ont. M5A 3X9. Telephone: (416) 363-5428. Available in selected book stores and in all W.H. Smith and Classic Book Shops. Individual subscription rate: \$14.95 a year (\$17.95 elsewhere). Back issues available on microfilm from: McLaren Micropublishing, P.O. Box 972, Station F, Toronto, Ont. M4Y 2N9. Indexed in the Canadian Periodical Index. Member of the CPPA. Material is commissioned on the understanding that both parties are bound by the terms of the standard PWAC contract. The editors cannot be held responsible for unsolicited material. Second Class Mail — Registration No. 2593. Contents © 1987. Typesetting by Jay Tea Graphics Ltd.

Kicking against the prix

The plots surrounding France's major literary awards are sometimes more entertaining than the books they set out to reward

The great novels are always a little more intelligent than their authors. Novelists who are more intelligent than their works should find another profession.

— Milan Kundera, *The Art of the Novel*

YESTERDAY I WENT into a book store to buy Milan Kundera's latest, *The Art of the Novel*. As I was browsing, there was a loud roar outside. Then the door slammed open and in came a burly fellow wearing a motorcycle helmet, greasy jeans, and a leather-studded jacket. After a preliminary grunt, off came the helmet, exposing a week's growth of beard and small bloodshot eyes. "Excuse me," he said to the terrified bookseller, "but do you have any of the prize-winners?"

France is a country in which Marcel Proust occupies a position analogous to that of Abraham Lincoln in the United States, but if there is one thing greater than the power of the word, it is the power of the literary prizes — especially those given to novels.

The fiction prizes — of which the main ones are the Prix Goncourt, the Prix Renaudot, and the Prix Femina — can bring with them not only enormous prestige but also bonus sales ranging from several hundred thousand to a million. For a author, winning a major prize means financial security for years as well as the likelihood that previous and future books will command major attention. For a publisher, a major prize-winner can turn a money-losing year into a profitable one. Money aside, there is the glory. The publisher becomes desirable to other potential prize-winners, and the author is admitted into the pantheon of French literary genius.

That such genius exists, who could deny? Yet with three large and several considerable prizes a year, the halls of genius are not as exclusive as they might be in a less worthy country. There are even those who say that the whole prize system exists mainly to benefit a few publishers who have learned how to milk the machine.

From the point of view of writers, the prizes — corrupt or not — present a understandable fascination. High hopes, nervous breakdowns, endless telephone calls to friends, publishers, and agents are all part of the gauntlet that must be run. Standard techniques include taking key

people out to lunches or dinners; even better is considered the tactic of getting your friends to entertain jury members or even the publishers of jury members. Since many contenders are well-known journalists or senior editors at publishing houses, the power they wield is sometimes almost equal to the favour they ask.

As in Canada, the French literary season centres on the buying period leading up to Christmas. It is from August 0 that would-be contenders are published, and all books published in the fall season are subject to speculation about their possible fares in the hands of the various juries. By mid-September juries have begun to announce their preliminary lists of finalists. These are published in the newspapers, debated on radio and television. Errors and omissions become public scandals and juries regularly revise their lists — sometimes dropping writers who have already been under heavy sedation for weeks.

This fall, foremost among the novels tagged as sure winners was Pascal Quignard's *Le Salon du Wurtemberg*. Hailed as a literary writer's breakthrough



to mass popularity, *Le Salon du Wurtemberg* is the tortured semi-Proustian memoir of a fictional musician. By turns exhilarating and hopelessly bogged down in description, Quignard's novel was probably the most ambitious of the fall offerings. Universally agreed upon as the year's *pièce de résistance*, it should have been slated for the Goncourt.

Enter politics.

Quignard's book had been published by Gallimard, one of the three big publishing houses — the others are Grasset and Le Seuil — who win prizes, the reason being that the juries are primarily composed of their authors and editors. However, since Le Seuil and Gallimard had recently dominated, it was the turn of Grasset. The result was that therefore Quignard would be denied the Goncourt; however, in compensation he was to be awarded the almost equally important Prix Femina.

Normally such backstage manoeuvrings are business as usual. This year there were two complicating factors. First, in the weeks before the prizes, the newspapers all printed versions of the above analysis, and came to the conclusion that Michel Host of Grasset would win the Goncourt for *Valet de Nuit*, a novel universally considered "worthy" in the worst sense. They also predicted that Gallimard would get its turn with the Prix Renaudot and the Prix Femina. (Le Seuil was agreed to have had a poor year for fiction). Second, the ridicule surrounding the prizes was heightened by the rumour that several publishers — those left out — were planning to publish full-page advertisements "exposing all."

The Goncourt fell, as predicted, to Michel Host. But instead of the usual laudatory articles greeting an entrant to the pantheon, *V&t de Nuit* was treated to a series of derisive reviews. Worse, the poor author was accused of the one sin which cannot be absolved — that of being *non-médiatique*. Similar treatment was meted out to Christian Guidicelli's *Station Balnéaire*, correctly predicted winner of the Prix Renaudot.

The next day the promised full-page advertisement appeared, but it was signed by only two publishers. The text pointed out that for the past 25 years the great majority of the prizes had gone to the three houses who controlled the juries, and called for an end to this national scandal. The publishers accused immediately replied that Robert Laffont and Pierre Belfond were merely jealous. Laffont went on, finally, to publish a interview in *Lire* accusing the houses of bribing the juries by giving huge and unjustifiable advances to books by jury

members (this practice was already considered "common knowledge" among writers and agents). He even named one jury member said to have had his cleaning lady paid for by an eager-to-please publisher.

The pressure, therefore, was on the jury of the third big prize — the Prix Femina. Under intense pressure to demonstrate their independence, they did so by rejecting their predicted choice, Pascal Quignard, and giving the prize to René Belletto, a relative unknown from a tiny but respectable house.

An epilogue: every year just before Christmas the Paris branch of the French P.E.N. club holds a fund-raising booksale at the Musée des Beaux-Arts. All the big names are there to provide autographed copies. This year the society ladies and their decorated husbands were lined up to buy books of memoirs and thrillers, but in front of the tables manned by Michel Host and Christian Guidicelli — emptiness. And yet worse: now ensconced on the best-seller list, far ahead of the prize-winners, the practically unreadable unwinner — Pascal Quignard's *Le Salon du Wurtemberg*. The prizes are dead, long live the prize!

Now if only the Governor General's Award could find a way to sink into yet deeper disrepute. ... — MATT COHEN

Days and nights in Baghdad

Dear Grandma:

Thank you for my birthday present.
The last missile did not hfr us.

Love,
Sarah

THIS LETTER, through one small modifier hinting at past dangers and speculating on future ones, was written by the six-year-old daughter of a Canadian diplomat in Baghdad some of whose experiences I shared a few months ago when I was invited by the Iraqi government to attend the seventh Al Mirbad Poetry Festival. The first five festivals were held in the southern Iraqi city of Basrah, so much in the news these days; the last two have been in Baghdad. I came home greatly moved by the intensity of the conference, the anxiety of the war situation, and the pleasure of seeing old friends and making new ones. Now their fates are very much on my mind.

The Baghdad I visited is a blend of old and new: the city of Shehrezâd and Saddam Hussein, of mosques and war monuments, the cradle of civilization and barbarianism. My hotel overlooked the magical Tigris River, as well as a gun emplacement, and from my window I could see incoming missiles from Iran exploding. Soldiers were everywhere, but otherwise, to the casual observer, the city seemed normal. We jostled our way through the copper, carpet, and spice souqs, but the antiquities in the great Iraqi Museum are bundled safely in the basement. The call to worship is heard from the minarets five times dally, hut I am told it is now on tape. We visited the shrines of Mohammed's immediate descendants, but also more modern ones, such as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. While driving back through the city I snapped photos of what I took to be innocent street scenes, but at one point our car was stopped by a machine-gun-wielding soldier who roughly ripped out my film..

At the conference — attended by more than 500 poets and critics, mainly from Arab countries, but also Canadian poets Dennis Lee and Henry Beissel — the minister of culture and information assured us of our freedom of movement and speech, but privately we were told there were no public telephones in the building and that we could not leave the official Conference Palace until after the minister had left. Many of the poets read patriotic poems extolling the bravery of the Iraqis and condemning traitors. Silence was denounced as shameful, but was met by the anguished question, "What can the poet recite at this time of

betrayal and war?" Some answered eloquently, while others responded with jingoistic propaganda. A Kuwaitee princess, known for her brave, pro-Amnesty International stance in her own country, delivered an impassioned poetic denunciation, disclaiming to the squirming, mostly male audience, "I would trade 1,000 literary men for one soldier."

Various sessions — at the conference discussed the differences between traditional and contemporary Arab poetry, the problems of translation, the link between poetry and national character, and how poetry is linked to political events. My paper attempted to explain the Canadian long poem through my reading of *The 1001 Nights*, which ultimately transposed Shehrezâd's tales to the Canadian Prairies. I delivered a shortened version of my paper, which was then given by a translator. Listening to the translation, I heard poets Robert Kroetsch and George Bowering pronounced Robert Crotch and George Boring.

We were offered the chance to travel around the country, but I declined an invitation to the front, extended by way of a military uniform laid out on my bed one night. I remained behind in Baghdad and experienced the first missile attack of our trip. The missile landed close to our hotel, shaking it slightly, and the sound of the explosion and breaking glass was deafening. Within half an hour of the explosion, there was an impromptu party in my room, aided by my foresight at the duty-free shop in Paris. A splendid dinner was organized equally spontaneously for a small group of us, and I was struck by the incongruity of dining sumptuously in a mirrored room, underneath immense chandeliers, while outside the &ad were being cleared away.

Our trip was not all dark. We visited Babylon, Ninevah, Samara, Hatra, Kerbala, Najaf — names to conjure by. At Ninevah children played along the top of the walls, seemingly unaware of the history beneath their feet. At Kerbala (the name now of Iran's major thrust into Iraq) we entered the exquisite Iman Al-Hussein Shrine. At Najaf, close by, we visited the Shrine of the Iman All Ibn Abi Talib: blue mosaics, glass prisms, and gold inlaid domes. As well as being the holiest of cities, Najaf is the location of the Ayatollah's exile, from which Hussein expelled him — hence the political significance of the area.

At Babylon we saw the immense, reconstructed Ishtar gate, juxtaposed with the obligatory portrait of Saddam Hussein, a modern-day Nebuchadnezzar in full military regalia. We saw the original processional street, but the exact location of the Hanging Gardens is in doubt. The Tower of Babel has also disappeared, but traces of diversity could still be found in

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the graffiti alongside the ancient bas-reliefs: "Anatoly, 1986," "Mick from Yugoslavia was here."

Our arrival by train in Mosul underscored the high regard for poets in Iraq. We were constantly photographed and interviewed, and television cameras recorded the conference; it was daily replayed in its entirety on national television. The station was packed with children in Kurdish dress or flak uniforms who strewed us with flower petals, shook our hands, handed us bouquets, asked for our autographs, and tried to kiss the women. The streets en route to our hotel were lined with men, women, and children cheering and ululating eerily.

During our trip I was lucky to spend time with a woman I know from Baghdad University. She told me that her three teenage girls wanted to sleep in the same room as her, so that if a missile hit them they would die together. One of the daughters had a school friend who had been killed with her family during that week's attack.

Each night the Canadian Embassy phoned us with updates on expected attacks. They asked us please not to get hurt — apparently the paper work is unbelievable! One evening Sarah's parents invited us for dinner and we watched the nightly news. Some pictures had no accompanying sound, and others

bore no resemblance to the voice-over. No one died in the reports, but there were many "martyrs to the cause."

We were told that it was difficult to bring typewriters into Iraq, because they are seen as weapons. The ruling Arab Ba'ath Party started with two typewriters, and as is evident in their treatment of poets, they are a nation that realizes the power of the written word. However, as I sit here trying to capture in words the power of my trip, I realize my own inadequacy. I think of Sarah and wonder whether she is still in Baghdad or whether she has been evacuated with her brother and mother to Cyprus. Iraqi families don't have this option. — ANN MUNTON

ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

Good intentions

Is hetemphemy an unconscious perversion or a crime of ignorance? It all comes down to which dictionary you choose to read

By Bob Blackburn

LETTER FROM Victor Yelverton Haines of Westmount, Que., opens up a can of worms (or of spaghetti, if you prefer a slightly less unappetizing metaphor). He says that I am wrong. I say that he is wrong. It can, and will, be argued that we are both right.

Haines accuses me of heterophemy in my recent use here of the word *heterophemy*. You can see that this is going to be complicated.

He writes:

Blackburn writes that the misuse of confusibles "by professional communicators can sometimes be blamed on heterophemy; more often it is the result of a lack of professionalism." Surely, heterophemy as a mistaken use of one word when mother is meant is a lack of professionalism, whether it stems from ignorance or lack of attention.

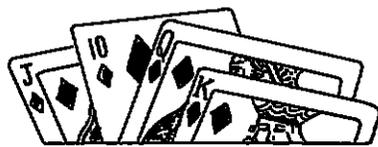
Yes and no. It comes down to which dictionary you read -and how you read it. My choice of the word was based on a check of my own favourite U.S. dictionary, the second edition of Webster's unabridged, with a further reference to the OED. The Webster says: "The unconscious saying or writing of words other than those intended." The italics are mine. The definition certainly suggests to me that hetemphemy is not within the conscious control of the speaker or writer, and that the person guilty of it should not be censured for either ignorance or lack of professionalism.

Here is the OED definition: "The saying or writing of one word or phrase when another is meant." Although unconscious

does not appear, possibly my reading was coloured by the Webster definition, and I maintain that the same implication is there: the word meant surely suggests that the offender knew the right word or phrase, but made an unconscious slip of the sort all of us (with the possible exception of V.Y. Haines) are prone to make from time to time.

I might have avoided this argument had I instead used *heterophasia*, which is hetemphemy attributable to a mental disorder, either organic or functional. It seemed perhaps too strong a word for the context, and it would not have given Haines even the dubious ground provided him by *heterophemy*, and would have denied me all this fun.

RECENTLY, the *Globe and Mail* published a letter from Thomas M. Paikeday, who is chief editor of *Winston Dictionaries* of Canadian English, challenging an assertion by Robertson Davies that *momentarily* means fleetingly or for a moment,



and does not mean anything like very soon or at any moment now.

In his attempted refutation, Paikeday cites three dictionaries (none of them his: he is gallant about this), all published since 1976. A fii for them! The only one of the three that I might pay attention to is the 1976 Supplement to the OED,

which, he says, "confirms the disputed sense of *at any moment* with citations dating from 1928 to 1975." That, in itself, means nothing. The OED, being a historical dictionary, is awash with citations, dating from the dawn of recorded history, that prove nothing except that modern writers have no comer on the misuse of words. Unlike some of its upstart counterparts, the OED usually has the good grace to indicate the undesirability of imitating such abuses. Furthermore, one of the youngest dictionaries on my shelf is the *Oxford American Dictionary* (1980), and it offers only one definition — the correct one — of *momentarily*.

one doesn't even need a dictionary for this word, which is the adverbial form of *momentary*. People don't misuse or misunderstand *momentary*; why should they have a problem with *momentarily*?

Paikeday refers to a history of *momentarily*, in the sense of at any moment, starting less than 60 years ago. That is such a short time in the history of language that it might indicate that this is but a *momentary* aberration; however, there is little doubt that it will be carefully nurtured by modern lexicographers, who, in their proper zeal to keep up with things, tend to forget that it is possible to be descriptive without abandoning their responsibility to be prescriptive as well.

It may be that there is already a dictionary (and, if there is not, there will be) that says of the word *nuclear*, "often pronounced *nucular*," and hundreds of inept newscasters will stand up to cheer and proclaim, "See! I was right all along." □

Town and country

Karen Lawrence's subtle story of a city woman in the midst of her lover's rural family is the best first novel of 1986

KAREN LAWRENCE has won the W.H. Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award for *The Life of Helen Alone*, published by Random House. Described by novelist Joan Barfoot as "the richest, most complex, and most subtle" of the finalists, Lawrence's story of an independent city woman who finds herself in the midst of her lover's rural family was the first choice of two of the four judges on the panel. The award, sponsored jointly by Books in Canada and the W.H. Smith chain of book stores, offers a prize of \$3,000 for the best first novel published in English in Canada during the previous calendar year.

Lawrence, who has also published two collections of poetry, was born in Windsor, Ont., and is a graduate of the University of Windsor and the University of Alberta. Her work has appeared in *This*

Magazine, *Canadian Forum*, and *Room of One's Own*, among others, and she has been an editor of the women's magazine *Branching Out*. Now a full-time writer, she lives with her husband in San Diego, California.

In addition to Barfoot, who won the 1978 Books in Canada award for her novel *Abra*, the judges for this year's competition were Nigel Berrisford, book marketing director for W.H. Smith; Governor General's Award-winning novelist Timothy Findley; and novelist Douglas Hill, who writes a paperbacks column for the *Globe and Mail*.

Besides Lawrence's novel, the books on the short list were: *Downfall People*, by Jo Anne Williams Bennett (McClelland & Stewart); *Momentum*, by Marc Diamond (Pulp Press); *Back on Tuesday*, by David Gilmour (Coach House Press); and *The Late Great Human Road Show*, by Paulette Jiles (Talonbooks). As the judges' comments indicate, their decision was far from unanimous:

Joan Barfoot: Given the difficulty — unforeseen and unappreciated when I agreed to this — of balancing five novels of varying virtues and vices, subjects and styles, to come up with the "best," I've decided to deal with them in the order of arrival at my door.

David Gilmour's *Back on Tuesday* came first, and I was in trouble immediately. Here's 34-year-old Gene, who abducts his small daughter to Jamaica, not out of love for her, or even hatred for her mother, but just to get his ex-wife's attention. He then leaves the child in a strange room in a strange country while he goes on a prolonged binge. Gilmour writes quite wonderfully about Gene's Jamaica, and about boozing and the vividness of hangovers, and it feels somewhat arrogant to disagree with Northrop Frye, who is quoted on the jacket as calling this a novel about "a failed writer's descent into hell." Frankly, though, I spent my time fretting about his kid, and ended it wishing only to shake Gene and urge him to grow up.

Next came Paulette Jiles's *The Late Great Human Road Show*. Since the planet's greatest potential tragedy — the capacity for obliteration — is also humankind's biggest and most awful joke on itself, it was delightful, in a perverse sort of way, to read a bitingly funny novel about the end of it all. With an acute eye for the banal, Jiles has produced a post-nuclear Toronto whose reduced populace, ranging from a right-wing newspaper columnist now in his paranoid-survivalist element to a quartet of bewildered yuppies to a group of children to a pregnant cow, is entirely believable.

Those and the few other survivors have in common only the fact that they all slept through whatever nuclear disaster occurred, which left buildings standing and cars jamming the roads but not a corpse in sight. This lack of the grisly, while obviously deliberate, unfortunately means the reader is a long way into the book before true horror and foreboding build to a critical mass of tension. Still, it's a wonderful comic tragedy.

Momentum, by Marc Diamond, won Pulp Press's three-day novel competition and was apparently expanded and developed by its author from there. It's another middle-aged-male-in-emotional-crisis novel, but this one is more fun than *Buck on Tuesday* because the guy knows how to regard himself with some

Karen Lawrence



PHOTOGRAPH BY JACK ESHIER

skepticism. Its passion is primarily political, aimed at British Columbia's government and the glitzy Expo that dispossessed the people Diamond calls the "lost ones." It's too lightweight and local to be a real contender for this award, but it has many moments of charm.

The *Life of Helen Alone*, by Karen Lawrence, is much the richest, most complex, and most subtle of the novels, with fine precise images and language, and loving sketches of people in the country community it portrays. While the dialogue is occasionally overwrought and unlikely, the novel is absorbing. I applied my own basic reader's test - how long can a book make me linger? - and found that compared with the first three, which were quick, easy, and generally pleasant, if sometimes infuriating, *The Life of Helen Alone* took a good deal of time and concentration. That's because it both demands and gives a good deal.

And finally, *Downfall People*, by Jo Anne Williams Bennett, arrived. For a speedy and interesting excursion into an African culture with which most North Americans are unfamiliar, this is dandy stuff. Its weakness, unfortunately a fatal one, is its main character, Likki, a silly, white American woman who is embarrassingly egocentric and ethnocentric. The trouble is, I don't think she was meant to seem that way.

So: *The Life of Helen Alone*. With the understanding that all these first novels are worth a look, for one reason or another.

Nigel Berrisford: My choice is *The Life of Helen Alone*, a wonderfully written, rich, complex novel, funny, moving, and crammed with memorable characters. I left this novel badly wanting to read Karen Lawrence's next book.

My choice was made harder because of a second superb entrant, *Back on Tuesday*, by David Gilmour, which tells an awful story of one man's descent into drunkenness. Set in Jamaica, the book is peopled with a collection of bizarre, amazing characters. Gilmour's is a major talent.

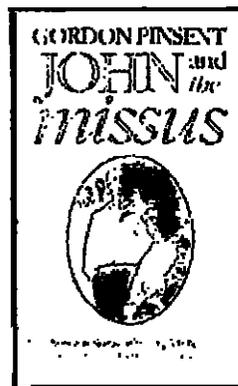
Among the other three entrants I enjoyed *Downfall People* the most. It can only be the first of many good books from Jo Anne Williams Bennett. I found Paulette Jiles's *The Late Great Human Road Show* the story of a dead, dark Toronto following a nuclear accident - funny, grim, and very well written. As for Marc Diamond's *Momentum*, it was written in three days, and is remarkable for that reason alone. If Diamond ever sits down and spends three months on a novel, watch out.

Timothy Findley: The novel I have selected as my candidate for this award has been chosen particularly for two overriding qualities. First, it completely fulfils the mandate given to it by its author. Second, it presents the image of a whole world, filled with whole people, with which and with whom the reader becomes involved as one becomes involved with drugs: they are beguiling, disturbing, and addictive.

In *Momentum* there is too much echo of tough-guy writing without the tough guy to go with it. The narrator has a passion to evade reality. He also has a castration complex. Both these qualities provide some wonderfully funny scenes. The trouble is, the hero has evaded most of reality before the story begins, and he keeps getting into bed with a woman who carries knives. These seem, at first, like deliberate comic devices, until you slowly realize the hero - or perhaps the writer - has completely forgotten his crisis with reality and his castration complex, and the comedy dies with a kind of muted fart. In the end, *Momentum* fails because it suggests a good deal more than it comes to grips with. (Clearly, to be fair, part of the reason for this is that it was written during the International Three Day Novel Competition - a competition it won, by the way.)

The Life of Helen Alone explores the situation created when a man with a family brings home his lover to take the place of his wife. The lover-Helen - has never borne children and never been married. Independent - though far from Free-

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floating — she has a strong sense of purpose and dedication. She brings with her, into the midst of her lover's family, her own disturbed and disturbing brother. A schism develops between the lovers and Helen leaves. During her absence, her brother dies in a fire and Helen has to come to grips with what taking responsibility for yourself in the context of other people really means. This is a good first novel, finely written by Karen Lawrence. Its people and milieu are well realized. It drifts, however, too often into reverie and consequently loses its tension.

Downfall People. by Jo Anne Williams Bennett, is the winner of the 1586 Seal Books First Novel Award. It has the scope of a whale foreign culture at its centre — the culture of a fictional African people. This is a disturbing book — as it should be — and Bennett must be praised for her powerful evocation of a seemingly alien, complex, but utterly human society encountered by an American woman who comes to Africa with the Peace Corps. Though nothing like Blanche du Bois, this woman does share one or two things with her: she is a teacher with a "past" who is spiritually lost and who arrives (and leaves) on a vehicle with an oddly pertinent name: not *Desire* but *Downfall People*. This is a highly accomplished piece of work, but it must be said that — just as with the author of *Moby Dick* — Bennett's academic fascination with cultural details too often stand in the way of her story.

In the *Late Great Human Road Show*. Paulette Jiles sets before us a unique society of street people, whose streets have been emptied by the advent of a nuclear war. People take up life in zoos. A cow is one of the leading characters. The spoken language has an eerie quality, referring as it does to the smashed utensils and jargon of a dead world. Children live in graveyards and dream of singing their way to Florida. Jiles has a mindful of wondrous people and a full-blown artist's gift for imagery. This is a dangerous, anarchic novel, written with humour, grace, and empathy. Jiles jabs her pen in your ribs

and just when you think she's going to tickle you, she says: "Your money or your life."

As for David Gilmour's *Back on Tuesday*, it is a *tour de force*. The author's focus is riveted on a man called Eugene H. who suddenly throws his life into a self-created alcoholic maelstrom and refuses to sink from sight. The writing is vivid and controlled. There is not a single unnecessary word. The novel's evocation of Jamaica and of the amused Jamaicans who populate the exclusive world of whites on the run from reality is more than merely acute — it is painfully so.

What is most satisfying about *Back on Tuesday* — aside from what I've said above — is the fact that Gilmour has had the audacity to unfold his story through a set of characters we've all met before, in life as well as other books: the man who dedicates his days and nights to alcohol; the child caught tight in the vise of her parents' marriage breakdown; the sensible wife who opts for self-preservation. And yet you swear, as you read, you have never encountered their like before. Some of Gilmour's cruel insights are shocking. Eugene H. is a failed writer and, one night, unable to sleep because of the noise, he thinks that somebody else's typing is "like an audible conscience." That is also an apt description of this book. The people between its covers go on whispering after you close — or try to dose them away. Some writers' voices give you immediate confidence. David Gilmour's voice is one of these. *Back on Tuesday* is my undoubted choice to win this award.

Douglas Hill: I can't recall a year in which the entries were as evenly balanced as they are this time around. There are no obvious winners, no obvious also-rans begging for merciful silence. Each of the books has some readily apparent virtues of conception, style, or subject; none blatantly violates the canons of sense, decorum, or syntax. Choosing among them becomes a disagreeably negative nit-pick, a search for small flaws and minor inadequacies. This doesn't make for particularly good criticism, but what can you do?

Back on Tuesday has a strong first-person voice (mixing emotional bravado and self-pity), a good feel for place (Jamaica), and a painful if pretty routine subject (jealousy/guilt/self-hatred). As documentation of alcoholic nightmare, it's effective; as analysis of symptoms and personality, it's weak. I'm not too impressed by a novel, no matter how well it's crafted, that doesn't qualify its hero's self-indulgence and stupidity.

Momentum is a better book, though in some ways (emotional depth, pretence) it's slighter. The combination of a witty monologue, a lot of inventive action, and a Cart of New Age entrepreneurs and dilettantes is attractive, and the breakneck speed of the plot contrasts nicely with the semi-comatose narrator. Wholesome dirty fun, but not much on substance.

The *Life of Helen Alone* and *Downfall People* seem two of a kind. Both are intelligent, correct, full of interesting things, good for you — and dull. *Helen* suffers from gluey prose, an ambitious but uncertain narrative structure, and too many paragraphs (on nature and on group therapy, for example) that are ponderous or trite. *Downfall People* nearly suffocates under its own anthropology; too often the blend of setting, anecdote, and vignette becomes static. Still, both authors speak with authority most of the time, and both know how to poke fun. The effects of each book are cumulative; by the end there's the sense of a job done well, of a reward earned by hard work.

That leaves *The Late Great Human Road Show*, and what it's got more of than the other novels is simply control. Control of voice, of tone, of pace, of insight, of narrative, of dialogue — control finally of style in the largest sense, style as inseparable from imagination and vision. Jii creates a scene, characters (animals as well as people), and a situation of horrible vagueness; that she can bring her unreal reality to life is a tribute to the power of her vision. A close winner, but for me a clear one; in a year of riches, one treasure. □

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PROFILE

Fighting words

'Nobod knows anything about literature In this country,' says John Metcalf, a sharply funny stylist whose unremitting standards have made him CanLit's most controversial critic

By Brent Ledger

AT THE AGE of 16 John Metcalf, the author of some of Canada's more

elegant and controlled prose, wanted to be a boxer. It was more than just a teenage whim, more than the influence of Hemingway, whose work he did and does admire. He enjoyed boxing, the physical exercise, the small, exotic world of professional gyms. But his grammar-school headmaster, noting Metcalf's skill at English,

encouraged him to try his university-acceptance exams, and Metcalf went on to the University of Bristol and a career in teaching and writing instead.

"I was just a kid," says Metcalf. "I don't really know if I'd ever have had the dedication to go on more, because most boxers tend to be very sort of Puritan characters, half deranged. There's a kind of mad intensity about their lives. a

John Metcalf



PHOTOGRAPH BY PAUL GREENSTEIN

purity about their lives in some kind of weird, primitive way. I think in many ways that's one of the things I like a great deal about most kinds of art: the dedication, the obsessional qualities of it. I recognize it in other people very easily and feel an immediate kind of comradeship."

Metcalf is himself dedicated, obsessed and, when in full rhetorical flight, seemingly "half deranged." He's dedicated to excellence in literature, obsessed with finding an audience. He has spent the better part of the past 23 years producing funny, elegant, sharply written fiction that very few people have read. Among his nine books, his second novel, *General Ludd*, has been called by critic John Moss the "finest comic novel ever written in Canada." But outside the small Canadian literary community (Metcalf estimates its population at 3,000) few people know his name, even fewer know his writing, fewer still buy his books. None of his books — including the recently published, widely praised *Adult Entertainment* (Macmillan) — has sold more than 2,000 copies.

It would be enough to make most people give up, but true to his pugilistic beginnings Metcalf has fought on, challenging received literary opinion, and fighting for a larger and more sophisticated audience for literature. In the process he's rattled more than a few reputations. In a notorious article published in the *Globe and Mail* in 1983, he referred to Morley Callaghan's prose as "pedestrian and plonking" and confessed his bemusement at academic interest in such figures of the Canadian literary past as Frederick Philip Grove and Isabella Valancy Crawford (hailed by Northrop Frye as "the most remarkable mythopoeic imagination in Canadian poetry"). In conversation he casually dismisses Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* as "one of the most ill-written books that I have come across." Sinclair Ross's *As for Me and My House* is simply "not a good book," if compared to similar novels published elsewhere in the English-speaking world at the same time.

According to his former publisher Robert Lecker, associate professor of English at McGill, Metcalf has been "absolutely crucial to the development of writing in Canada. first of all as an author in his own right; second, as an anthologizer of some of the best fiction we've seen; and third, just as a kind of general prodder, an instigator. He makes people sit up and take notice and have standards."

Carleton English professor and avowed Canadian nationalist Robin Mathews disagrees. "John Metcalf," says Mathews, "has tried to make a position for himself as a literary bad boy, [by] what he thinks of as attacking established people and the very concept of Canadian literature. ... He demeans the Canadian literary community, he demeans the Canadian literary audience, he demeans Canadian literature. ... and so he just joins a stream in Canadian literature and criticism and cultural commentary which denigrates the achievement of the country, and I find it very boring."

And of course there's a dark side to Metcalf's devotion to high standards. Frances Bauer, a former student in his creative writing class at Montreal's Concordia University, remembers him as an abusive and highly critical teacher, who indulged in

tirades at his students' expense. "He had no respect or seemed to have no respect for anybody in that class. It was almost as if he was angry at us for having the very idea that we could imagine or attempt to write, as if somehow this offended him, as if it were something sacrilegious, as if he had a monopoly on writing and it required in his view some kind of dedication which we all clearly lacked except possibly for [one student] . . . whom he favoured."

ALL THIS ANGER, bile, and aggression are not immediately apparent upon first meeting. John Metcalf is a polite, affable man of 48, slightly above average height, dressed in a lambs-wool sweater and worn corduroys. His crooked, slightly petulant mouth - visible in old photographs - is hidden by a carefully trimmed silver-grey beard. He lives in a quiet residential neighbourhood just off Elgin Street in Ottawa in an elegant, renovated, red-brick house filled with gleaming furniture, Canadian abstract paintings, and African sculpture. The prevailing silence is broken only by the occasional strain of Billie Holiday's voice emanating from another room.

But launch Metcalf on any subject even vaguely related to literature and the anger starts rising to the surface. Metcalf acted at university, and it shows. His voice swoops and soars, moving dramatically from self-effacing whispers to bellicose mars, pouncing on certain key words ("the worst" "liters that we have") and pronouncing others like "bizarre" and "nonsense" with so much force and derision that he seems primed to explode. His conversation is liberally sprinkled with hyperbole — "nobody knows anything about literature in this country" — and aggressive assertions of opinion: "Munro, who can write the ass off Atwood any time of the day or night." Metcalf is devoted to literature to the point where he can say, with no fear of contradicting himself, that "writing is a dying craft" and then that he intends to devote the rest of his life to "writing short stories that very few people will be able to read with any accuracy." Not surprisingly he is infuriated by anyone whose commitment to literature is less complete.

His own conversion to the cause came relatively late. Although he read voraciously as a teenager, he didn't write his first story until a year after he arrived in Canada at the age of 24. His family background did, however, contribute to his zeal. He was born November 12, 1938, in Carlisle in the north of England. His mother had been a schoolteacher before her marriage. She was, says Metcalf, a severe woman, "religious in not a very intelligent kind of way." His father was a Methodist minister, a fact imprinted on Metcalf's being. "I was named," wrote Metcalf in one essay, "John Wesley Metcalf, a fact for which I have never forgiven" my father."

His father was a "very eccentric and remote man" who, for that reason, was an attractive figure. "His life," says Metcalf, "fascinated me a great deal. His study had a great attraction for me. I always wanted to go in there and find out what it was he did in there all those hours. When he was out of the house I used to go in there and look round the study — look at all the books and sit at his desk. . . . This study in which I was not welcome, where he went and shut himself away for the majority of his time, represented for me some big secret, something that I wanted to find out about. Maybe I grew up wanting to have one of them myself, I wanted to have a room like that where I could shut myself away. Possibly I grew up to be like him in many ways."

At school Metcalf enjoyed English and history and found everything else boring. He was influenced, he thinks, by the success of his older brother Michael, now a medieval scholar and lecturer at both Oxford and Cambridge and a Keeper at Oxford's Ashmolean Museum. "A lot of my problems stemmed from the fact that my older brother is a man of unbelievable brilliance who preceded me in the schools that I went to, so everybody expected me to perform as he had, and I sort of lived

within the shadow. . . . I think I sort of decided this was a competition I wasn't going to get into. So I just withdrew. The", happily, when I was a bit older. I began to see competitions I could get into with some possibility of winning."

After graduating with a second-class honours degree in English and theology from the University of Bristol, Metcalf taught briefly at a secondary modern boys' school and at a boys' reformatory on the outskirts of Bristol. In 1962, lured by the large salaries offered by the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal, he came to Canada. He calls Canada "a place of beginnings" and says that "people coming into Canada from outside Canada can imagine doing things in Canada which they could not imagine doing in the countries that they came from."

The Canadian catalyst was a pamphlet advertising a CBC short-story competition. A student brought it in and asked Metcalf if he should enter. He encouraged the student, but also decided to enter himself. He wrote "Early Morning Rabbits," his first story, the following weekend. "It was quite easy, because I had no idea what any of the problems were, so I just went right ahead and whacked it all down." The story won the CBC Young Writers' Contest Prize, earned him \$100, and was broadcast on the CBC-Radio program *Anthology*.

Further success followed in 1964 when the influential editor, teacher, and poet Earle Birney took the unusual step of publishing eight of Metcalf's stories over two issues of *Prism International*. This in turn led to the first publication of Metcalf's work in book form. Two of his *Prism* stories were included in the 1966 anthology, *Modern Canadian Stories*.

Metcalf returned to England in 1965 intending to write, but ran out of money. The year spent there was not a happy one, and he returned to Canada for good in 1966. (He has been a Canadian citizen since 1970.) "I realized within a very short space of time that those three years in Canada had changed me so much that I could never fit into England ever again. And I felt really kind of alienated by England and just wanted to get the hell out." He was disturbed by the class system, the almost instinctive evaluation of people in class terms, the confinement of people to the hopes, dreams, and occupations of their class. "There is a certain sort of expansiveness about Canadian life and there's a certain kind of generosity about Canadian life that I enjoy and I admire a great deal and concomitantly in England I think there's a kind of narrowness and meanness about life which I found depressing."

IN 1969 METCALF received his first major break: the publication of five of his stories in the short-lived Clarke Irwin annual, *New Canadian Writing*. That volume together with Metcalf's first short-story collection, *The Lady Who Sold Furniture*, which appeared the following year, established his reputation. He received extravagant reviews, including one in *Saturday Night* that compared him to Chekhov. "On the strength of the collection," says Metcalf, "a lot of people then thought that I was one of the coming young writers in the country."

In 1972, his first novel, *Going Down Slow*, appeared. At the same time, fuelled by a series of government arts grants and a resolute refusal to teach unless absolutely necessary, Metcalf started to devote himself full-time to writing. His second short-story collection, *The Teeth of My Father*, appeared in 1975, two novellas under the title *Girl In Gingham* in 1978, and his second novel, *General Ludd*, in 1980. *General Ludd*, the tale of a poet among the philistines at a fictional Canadian university, and *Kicking Against the Pricks* (1982), his book of polemics on the state of Canadian literature, secured Metcalf's reputation as a controversialist.

Metcalf is a painstaking craftsman, whom his friend Hugh Hood has described as "the most Flaubertian of laborious composers," a man who struggles to find just the right word and then struggles again, writing and rewriting. A story usually begins with an image or a phrase, or perhaps a bit or two of

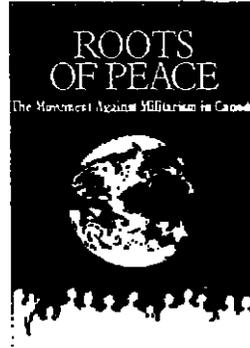
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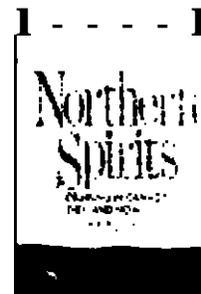
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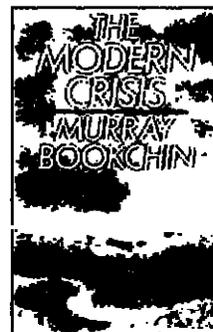
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autobiographical debris, which he then manipulates, twists and turns, to create what he describes as a verbal structure designed to evoke certain emotions in the reader. "I suppose," Metcalf says, "you could almost look at it as paint. You're putting colours down on a piece of canvas and then you're moving them around and you're overpainting and you're putting colour on again and you're seeing whether things work."

Given the small size of his audience, one wonders whether it's worth all the effort. Consider: The same week the mass-market paperback of *General Ludd* was given an award for best paperback of the year, the novel was "pulped" due to lack of sales. *General Ludd*, perhaps his most accessible work from a literary point of view, is now unavailable except in the expensive, deluxe edition. His first book, *The Lady Who Sold Furniture*, published 16 years ago, is available but not, as one might expect, in an off-the-rack paperback. In one of the peculiar ironies of literary life in Canada, ECW Press is selling mint-condition copies of the first edition.

Metcalf earns so little in royalties from his own work — no more than \$1,000 from any one book — that he's forced to live where government grants are most generous. He lives in Ontario rather than Quebec, for instance, because of the availability of Ontario Arts Council grants, which pay him between \$3,000 and \$4,000 a year. He has also received numerous Canada Council arts grants but, says Metcalf, "You never know whether you're going to get a Canada Council grant or not. To get a Canada Council grant is to receive roughly the sort of poverty level of existence payment, and I mean that would be wonderful but you can't count on that every year." His most successful anthology, *Sixteen By Twelve*, brings in about 96,000 a year. But none of his other anthologies has done nearly as well and the combination of grants and royalties isn't enough to support a household that on occasion has contained as many as six children. His second wife, Myrna, is a specialist in com-

puter software and she, says Metcalf, bears the brunt of the household finances.

Robert Lecker says Metcalf just doesn't write the sort of books most people want to read. "The audience is just about saturated for him. People don't want to hear about writers in universities [as in *General Ludd*]. People just aren't discerning readers; they don't think, they just like a good plot." If one mentions the obvious exceptions — people like Alla Munro who, if not selling as fast as Judith Krantz, is at least highly popular — Lecker suggests readers are attracted not by Munro's undisputed literary excellence but by the content of her stories. "They like Alice Munro because it's [about] sm. stories about girls and women, male-female [relationships], and the feminists like it. But Metcalf writes stories about artists. Nobody wants to know about artists." As his friend the novelist Ray Smith says, there's really only one theme in Metcalf's work, and that's "the theme of the man of civilization and taste trying to make his way in a world of vulgarity."

The problem, says Metcalf, lies in the reading public's lack of sophistication. "I don't think that Canada in general, yet, has learned, properly, how to read me, Clark Blaise, Alice Munro, Leon Rooke. They really don't know. They can't judge and they can't tell because they can't read. For 20 years we've been trying to teach people how to read, with not very much success."

Because they lack literary sophistication, people tend to read the "wrong" books, Metcalf says. Second-rate writers like Hugh MacLennan, Sinclair Ross, Pierre Berton, Farley Mowat (with the exception of a couple of books), W.O. Mitchell, and Morley Callaghan ("a tired hack magazine performer") have been elevated to the status of heroes, while first-rate writers like Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, Leon Rooke, Audrey Thomas, Terrence Heath, Norman Levine, Ray Smith, Keath Fraser, and Clark Blaise have been, if not ignored, neglected.

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"The people who sell the most books in this country," says Metcalf, "tend to be the worst writers we have. The most popular writers in the country — Richard Rohmer and people like this — write the most appalling nonsense. There's nothing surprising in this. The only thing that's distressing is that people who are almost as bad — like Margaret Atwood and Robertson Davies, who really if anything is even worse: middle-brow, sort of entertainment writing — sell even more."

ROBIN MATHEWS disagrees with Metcalf's assessment of the Canadian public's taste. "The attack on the Canadian audience bores me," he says. "Canadians are good book readers; they've read well. For many, many decades more books of poetry were sold per capita in Canada than, for instance, in England. And then these jerks come along and say, 'We have an ignorant audience.' Well, they're not reading John Metcalf. Is that a sign of ignorance?" Mathews sympathizes with the plight of the writer who writes long and hard and usually alone, only to find a lack of response to his finished work. Still, other writers — himself among them — have trouble finding an audience but don't constantly bitch about their lot. "John Metcalf spends his life complaining about the conditions that he works in and he wants the perfect audience and the perfect critics and the perfect acceptance."

For Metcalf, academics like Mathews are part of the problem. "There are a few wonderful exceptions, of course, but in the main I think they're appalling. I don't think they're very bright, particularly the people who teach Canadian literature. Everyone who's a bit thick and mediocre gravitates towards Canadian literature." Even when he accords some lucky academic a note of respect, he's apt to add a coda of bewilderment at the sheer perversity of his personal taste. For instance, W.J. Keith, a professor at the University of Toronto, is a man worth listening to, says Metcalf, but Keith thinks Timothy Findley is an important writer. "Nonsense," says Metcalf.

Metcalf has established a hierarchy of literary values, and nobody violates it with impunity. In *The Reader's Guide to the Canadian Novel* (1981), John Moss of the University of Ottawa says that Metcalf "follows comfortably in the wake of Cervantes, or Fielding, or Trollope, or Waugh at his very best." His praise has earned him only Metcalf's vehement denunciation. It is, says Metcalf, "a grotesque and stupid opinion. . . . When he says that my work can stand comparison with the best of Evelyn Waugh it merely shows that he cannot read Evelyn Waugh, because I am not fit to tie Evelyn Waugh's shoelaces."

Be&se the custodians of the literature tend to reward mediocrity, says Metcalf, the literature suffers. There is, for instance, a lack of good comic writing in Canada largely because, in Metcalf's view, good comic writing depends on a capacity for clever verbal play. "To be really good," says Metcalf, "you have to have a very sophisticated use of language, and a very sophisticated timing, and a very sophisticated sense of rhythm, and Canada, in literary terms, is just not very sophisticated. What Canada thinks of as humour is what the rest of the world gave up on as humour round about 40 or 50 years ago. We have just got round to praising with the Stephen Leacock Award for humour wildly unfunny books that you wouldn't find anywhere else in the world. Nobody writes yak-yak books like that any more except Canadians?"

For Metcalf, the question of taste is not a subject for idle philosophical discussion. It has a profound impact on our daily lives. "With John," says Ray Smith, "you're supposed to try to create around you an environment which is like his stories, and people who don't are vulgarizing their own lives and their own sensibilities. He'll say quite definitely, 'How can you expect fine sensibility from somebody who eats frozen french fries or somebody who has on his walls those chalk things on velvet? Somebody who would do that is obviously a base and vile man.'"

DURING THE 1960s and early 1970s, Metcalf taught in schools in Montreal, England, and Alberta. By his own account he was a "terrific teacher," but he was fundamentally at odds with the Canadian school system. (Not surprisingly, his complaints against the schools echo his complaints against the CanLit establishment: standards aren't high enough; there's no striving for excellence; mediocrity flourishes.) Since 1971 his forays into the educational system have usually been conducted as a writer-in-residence, a post he has held at the University of New Brunswick, Loyola College, the University of Ottawa, and Concordia University, where he also taught creative writing.

Frances Bauer, now dean of arts at the Lafontaine campus of Dawson College, took a course from Metcalf in the fall of 1980. She dropped out at Christmas. So did many of her colleagues. Only three or four students, of the 10 or 12 who started out, continued into the spring term. "He didn't actually slug anybody, he did it with words," says Bauer. "He didn't like very much of anybody's work."

Metcalf disputes her assessment of his style, noting that some people habitually misinterpret well-meant advice as a personal attack, but he agrees that he was disturbed by the lack of literary knowledge in his M.A.-level class. "I remember how appalled I was that hardly anybody in that class had read Hemingway, for example. Hardly any of them had read Katherine Mansfield. None of them so far as I could see had read any Chekhov, or even much more recent American writers. I might have been talking about early Turkish writing."

To Metcalf his students' lack of literary knowledge indicated a lack of commitment to their craft, a problem he says is common in creative writing classes. "I don't know whether people are going there for therapy or entertainment or amusement. If I'm teaching writing I'm very serious. . . . I'm interested in people who are — in those circumstances — really committed to making some kind of literary effort, however good they are."

During the time he was writer-in-residence, at four different universities, Metcalf says only three students came to see him in his office. Douglas Rollins, an English professor at Dawson College, suggests the problem lay as much with the students as with the teacher. "People would show up, but if they didn't appear to be serious or of the calibre he was looking for, he'd let them know and they wouldn't come back. You can give advice," says Rollins, "but if you get people who come to you whose central problem is sentence structure or spelling, then you're really wasting your time."

Robin Mathews, however, has no sympathy. "I've said in writing as well as publicly that someone who can be writer-in-residence four times and only have three students come to him is obviously such an obnoxious son-of-a-bitch that nobody wants to go anywhere near him. . . . If I had a free lunch centre," says Mathews, "and I was standing in front of it with a tire hose spraying anybody who comes by, not many people are going to come for the free lunch either."

Metcalf has had more success imposing his taste on the school system through a series of textbooks and anthologies, which he began editing in the late 1960s. In 1970 he edited the bigly successful *Sixteen By Twelve*, an anthology of Canadian stories each of which is accompanied by a photo of its author, a short biography, a list of his or her works, and an author's commentary. The book sprang from Metcalf's experience as a teacher. "He just saw," says Rollins, "that there wasn't very much Canadian material available — and there wasn't — and came up with a very simple idea, that when I looked at it didn't seem to me to be revolutionary but, as it turns out, a lot of people think it was."

Metcalf has edited a number of other anthologies, all designed along the same lines, all intended to promote the work of contemporary Canadian authors. They include *The Narrative Voice* (1972), *Stories Plus* (1979), and *Making It New* (1982). None of these has done as well as *Sixteen By Twelve*, which Metcalf

THE CITY OF TORONTO BOOK AWARDS

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FINALISTS

Sir Charles God Damn
by John Coldwell Adams,
University of Toronto Press

Twelve Weeks in Spring
by June Callwood,
Lester & Orpen Dennys Ltd.

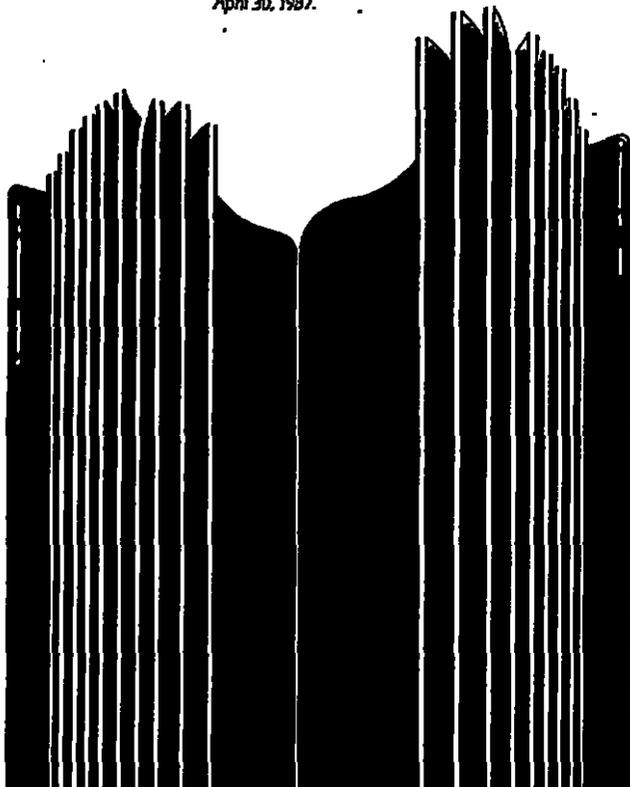
Toronto Observed
by William Dendy and
William Kilbourn,
Oxford University Press

The Museum Makers
by Lovat Dickson,
Royal Ontario Museum

Not a One-Horse Town
by Mike Filey,
Toronto of Old

Hospital
by Martin O'Malley,
Macmillan of Canada

The City of Toronto Book Awards
\$5,000 presented annually
to authors of books of literary
excellence that are evocative of
Toronto. This year's winners(s),
selected from the above list, will
be announced on Thursday,
April 30, 1987.



describes as "the foundation of **my** literary career. It's made me **enough money** every year that I've **been able to not** have a job."

In the larger **world**, outside the schools, Metcalf's attempts to promote **contemporary Canadian** authors **have focused on several annual** anthologies. **Each book in the *First Impressions* series, which he edited from 1980 to 1982, featured the work of three young** writers who might otherwise have languished in the **literary magazines**. One of its **beneficiaries** was Ottawa writer Isabel Huggan, whose **first** published story, "Celia Behind Me," Metcalf had spotted in the small Saskatchewan **literary magazine, *Grain***. "I think really highly of him," says Huggan. "I feel quite **grateful and very admiring** of him in terms of what he's done for people like myself **and** a range of others. There's probably about **20 writers** who owe **what success** they have had to John."

Metcalf has also promoted young **writers in Oberon's *Best Canadian Stories* series, which he co-edited from 1976 to 1982, and the *New Press Anthology*, which he co-edited from 1984 to 1985. Over the years he's combined the work of novice writers with stories by such established stars as Mavis Gallant, Alice Munro, Clark Blaise, Josef Skvorecky, and Hugh Hood.** "Maybe it's incredibly **arrogant**," says Metcalf, "but we just feel **that** there are all sorts of people that -if **we're not editing one of these books annually** - are just **going** to get ignored **entirely** and some of them are really **first rate**."

Keath Fraser, the author of two **highly acclaimed collections** of short stories, **got one** of his **first** breaks when Metcalf published **one** of his **stories** in the 1982 **edition of *Best Canadian Stories***. "I just read two or three **paragraphs**," says Metcalf, "and I thought, **Aba, we're dealing with something very special** here. This is obviously not the **first** story this **guy** has **ever written** by a bell of **long** shot and he must have a **hell** of a lot more and maybe **they're** as good and I'll have to lay my **hands on these fast**." **Besides publishing the one story, Metcalf eventually arranged** to have Fraser's **collection** published by Oberon Press. At the time Fraser had **been writing** for **almost** a year and was beginning to get discouraged at the lack of response to his work.

Soon Metcalf hopes to **augment** the audience for **CanLit** by pushing it **into** the **international** market. He's **currently** negotiating to do an **annual** anthology of the best **short fiction** from the **English-speaking** world. Its **editors will** be Metcalf, **his current co-editor Leon Rooke, and such luminaries as Nadine Gordimer from South Africa and Frank Moorhouse from Australia.**

On **Metcalf's** part the **venture** is **fuelled partly by** an understandable **desire** for a public he doesn't **have** in Canada. **Deny the pull** of the world, he says, and a rapid **descent into** parochialism follows. "What happens is **that** you start **publishing with little prairie publishers in Saskatoon and you win awards like the Greatest Saskatoon Novel of the Year. Piss** on that. I **want** people in **London and New York** to talk about me - and **[in] Johannesburg and Sydney**."

Robin Mathews, on the **other** hand, says the project is but **part of a long tradition of denigrating Canadian culture**. "Why should some&e in Michigan or Manchester have **higher standards** than I do? They don't. It's **only** if you're a colonial-minded John Metcalf that you think they have **higher standards**. It's a **non-question**. It becomes a **question with people who are desperately nervous** about their **identity, who want** applause, and so **they say**, 'If they applaud me in London, I must be important.'"

On the **contrary**, says Metcalf, "As long as **Canadian** matters are **kept within Canadian boundaries, mediocrity can flower** quite happily. As soon as you **begin to push** them outside, as long as you're **pushing** Canada **into being** part of the **English-speaking** world, then **things have** got to **open up**..."

"Canada," he says, "has always embraced **crap**." □

Death by drowning

'Leon broke off to turn and tell me that Raymond Knister was dead. I remember screaming out, "I killed him, I killed him!"'

By Dorothy Livesay

EAR LORNE PIERCE:

The rereading of the Rilke material, which Raymond Knister was immersed in at the time of his death (as he was also immersed in Keats, one of the Rilke-type "heroes" who die young and thus attain immortality) — this, in addition to the key sentence of your letter, "I wish we knew why Raymond died," has led me to set down for you as honestly as possible exactly what occurred between him and me on that day in mid-August when I last saw him. It may lead you to agree with me that Raymond committed suicide.

Raymond arrived at Clarkson that afternoon apparently to see my mother, who he knew was very keen on his poetry. I had just returned from a year in Paris. We all had tea together in the "Woodlot" garden and then, as I was living in our town house most of the time, and Raymond said he was driving to Toronto, it was agreed that he would take me along.

On the way he drove the old bus slowly along the lakeshore mad, plying me with questions on poetry and writing.

Since I had undergone a new direction in my thinking, and was solely interested now in writing that possessed social or revolutionary significance, Raymond expressed himself as astonished (though not shocked) and proceeded hammer and tongs to find out why I believed poetry should deal with movements and messages, when all these things were transitory. Seeing I was adamant, he changed his tack and related that while living in Detroit he had become interested in the working-class movement and in factory life. He had even written a novel about it, he said. Often he had talked with Leo Kennedy and his socialist crowd in Montreal and had some sympathy with their views politically. But what had any of this to do with poetry, he demanded? Poetry must concern itself with an individual response to the beauty and sorrow of the world.

I disagreed, was scornful of him as a bourgeois; I felt (I remember) that it was too bad Raymond was so far behind the times. When he told me what he was trying now to write Henry Jamesian short stories I was even more mol.

He persisted, however, with the idea that he wanted me to see them and criticize them. Meanwhile he suggested we stop at Sunnyside and enjoy watching the beach and the bathers, but I was heading for a dinner engagement and was not to be deterred from getting to town. Raymond insisted on driving me home. He would bring over his stories the following day. I agreed, suggesting that if I was not home he could leave them in the letter box.

I went out for the evening into the university area to supper and to a meeting on Marxist literature. Came home alone by streetcar. I was in the house and upstairs taking off my sweater and skirt when the doorbell rang. I hastily pulled them on again and went to open the door. There stood Raymond.

"I-I-thought I would bring you this manuscript tonight," he stammered.

"Thank you very much." Before I could say anything further he had invited himself into the hall, closing the door.

He passed a few remarks of no significance, still standing in the hall, and then I asked him how he knew I was home. "I just got in," I said.

"I know," he said. "I followed you."

"What?" He then confessed he had watched me depart from the house and had later waited at the streetcar stop until I returned. He then came along to the house after me.

I was nonplussed, but even more so when he said: "It's because I know now you are the only woman. I love you."

Well, I challenged that. Pointed out that he scarcely knew me, had met me only under half a dozen times, had altogether different views from mine.

"I have always known you," he said, "always loved you. Ever since you were a girl."

"Theo why didn't you say so? And why did you marry?" "Because you were too young. I could not dam interfere with your life at that point. Fifteen, weren't you?"

This weakened me considerably. He must have sensed this, followed it up with the question: "Did I mean anything to you — ever?" I admitted (foolishly) that when I was 16 or 17 I was



in love with him — with that idealistic love a girl has for a remote ideal. Had he seen more of me at that time I might have become deeply involved. Instead he passed out of my ken and I fell in love with a flesh-and-blood person who, if no more receptive than Knister at the time, fully occupied my emotional life.

But once I had admitted to an interest in him there was no holding Raymond back (that stubbornness has been noted by others who knew him intimately). He insisted that I was the ideal woman he had always loved and the time had come for us to meet and become one. It developed that what he meant by this was not any gradual friendship or courtship, but an immediate going to bed together. In order to divert him from this idea, which did not appear attractive to me, I plunged into the subject of his marriage and of sex in general, particularly D.H. Lawrence's views of it. He had read *Sons and Lovers*, but not *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. This I promised to lend him.

In the course of this discussion (still in the hall, as I had found that one movement toward sitting down in the drawing-room with him was too dangerous — he was literally gasping to get me down beside him) he told me that he had made the g & t mistake of being a virgin until his marriage, at 28. He had had no idea what sex would mean to him and he had been almost overwhelmed by it. On the other hand his wife had no similar response. She remained frigid and quite unable to feel the sensations he felt, or to participate actively with him.

"Well?" I said, sharply. "If your wife is frigid it is no one's fault but your own. Any psychologist would tell you that."

He would not accept that idea. No! When first married, she refused to discuss the sexual act or say sensation she might have. He apparently longed to have her declare a similar excitement and surge of activity that he felt but she never seemed to respond. . . . How could the sexes ever be equal, he demanded, if women were not as active as men — if participation was not mutual? He felt that there must be a woman who was capable of participation.

I suggested *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Well, he hadn't read it. I went to fetch it for him, gave him the book, edging him toward the door.

"Look here," he said, "you must understand. I must be with you. Can't you see it isn't just the body I am asking for? I could go downtown in my car and pick up a woman any time. It's not that. It's you!"

Since he would not accept the fact that I had no desire for him, I then found that the only reason for refusal I could give was to tell him I loved someone else. This was true, though I was not engaged or bound to the other person. Even that did not deter him. "You're just being coy," he said, and tried to pull me toward him, and into the drawing-room. That made me furious as well as making him appear ridiculous. In order to stay on talking he plunged into other matters — his agonies of mind and indecisions about the nature of the world and the nature of the creative writer. He felt he wanted to save me from my errors in choosing the materialistic philosophy of revolution. I was a person who must remove myself from the world and "just create."

"I know of a place — a cabin — up in Northern Ontario. That's where we could go together, and grow away from the world and into the nature of things. We could really write."

"What would we live on?" I asked him. "And what about your wife and child? Surely you have assumed responsibility toward them? Surely you cannot evade it?"

He brushed that aside. She was no longer a red wife to him, she did not participate in union with him. He was sure he could prove to me that ours would be a perfect relationship. . . .

After about two hours or more of this tense, excited talk, backed by his fanatical determination that I was merely holding out on him, I finally opened the door and insisted that he go. We had a brief tussle on the verandah, during which I dropped the door key on the steps.

"Oh hell," I said, dashing to retrieve it.

"Oh hell," he repeated emphatically, trying to catch and embrace me. I shook him off, went in and dosed and locked the door. Theo I went to bed. I felt too shaken to sleep for hours. And so by morning I was in a dead slumber.

Somehow, the doorbell wakened me. I stumbled up sleepily putting on my dressing gown. It was 8 a.m.

I went downstairs, opened the front door, and there he stood.

This time I felt really angry, but he did not appear to be aware of it. He had stayed up all night, he said, pacing his room and reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. There was nothing in it of what he was seeking. D.H. Lawrence's women were only a little more alive; they nevertheless remained passive, never really experiencing what it was possible for a woman to experience.

I disagreed with him. To no avail. He wanted to experiment with me, then and there. He had gone to the drugstore and bought the necessaries.

His actions seemed so fantastic, so removed from reality that I began to pity him, to wish I could be of any help. But there seemed to be no way. He would accept no compromise. So I had to tell him that I was going to dress and go out to a café for breakfast and then go to a friend's place. I phoned my mother in Clarkson (to reassure myself) and repeated with marked emphasis the fact that she was coming into town that morning. Raymond listened resignedly. He stayed quietly downstairs while I dressed. Then we went out of the house silently and he drove me to a café on St. Clair Avenue. I did not even ask him to breakfast, so afraid that he would interpret the move as a relenting gesture.

That was the last I saw of him. I read his stories dutifully, did not like them and said so in a letter to him. He replied a week later, in a perfectly calm way, urging me, at some length, to study Keats's philosophy and point of view on the poet. He dosed by asking if I would visit them in the country, whenever I could manage it.

Two weeks after I had seen him I was in Montreal visiting with Leon Edel and his mother. The telephone rang; it was Leo Kennedy. Leon broke off to turn and tell me: "Raymond Knister is dead — was drowned today."

I remember screaming out, "I killed him, I killed him!" Leon hastily finished his conversation with Kennedy and turned to bear my story. He tried to put some sense into me and to assure me that if it was suicide — for which there was no proof — the man himself, wrought up and obsessed as he was, was responsible. I might have been a small link in the chain that led to the finality.

If he was obsessed, he was obsessed with the idea that he was a great poet and that to join the immortals he must renounce all the ties of life that bind and enslave the creative artist. His spirit could then be free, but it would be bound to earth through the intercession of those who loved him. Such would be Rilke's interpretation.

Whether his spirit actually obsessed me, or whether the violence of Ids going made me feel burdened. I do not know. I do know that I was freed from him only a year later when, returning from work in the United States, I went to spend a week alone on an Ontario farm. I wrote the poem "The Outrider" for Raymond, and dedicated it to him. Then, for a time, I let him go. Or he let me go.

You know the rest. Each return to Ontario reminded me of him and of all the unfinished uncollected work that was being forgotten. I got after you and you too, having loved him, were impelled to act.

Now shall we say: surely it is finished? □

Dorothy Livesay, whose investiture as an Officer of the Order of Canada will take place this month, is currently preparing her memoirs for publication. The poet and novelist Raymond Knister drowned in Lake St. Clair in August, 1932.

Fool for love

Elizabeth Smart's journals unwittingly reveal a spoiled, narcissistic, conventional woman whose laziness led her to squander her talent

By Audrey Thomas

Necessary Secrets: The Journals of Elizabeth Smart, edited by Alice van Wart, Deneau, illustrated. 285 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88079 122 4).

WENDY: When you come for me next year Peter — you will come, won't you?

PETER: Yes. (Gloating.) To hear stories about me!

WENDY: It's so queer that the stories you like best should be the ones about yourself.

In 1950 George Barker published, in England, a curious novel called *The Dead Seagull*. The novel may have been written four or five years earlier than that for the protagonist (a poet) declares: "I write this in the year that ends the war. . . ." Whether Barker's novel is, therefore, an answer to or companion to Elizabeth Smart's *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept*, published in England in 1945, I really do not know, but it certainly throws some light on how Barker perceived the early days of their relationship.

It is a very poetic book, beautifully written but full of violent images — directed especially against women. "I saw

Elizabeth Smart

her look up at me [after lovemaking] like a sea anemone, like a giant squid with a tiara on its head, full." "Pig-woman. Circe. was I happy in your sty?" "I experienced the same sort of hypnotized revulsion I imagine might have excited me if I had awakened and found a mermaid in my bed." "How can one love a monster . . . a monster of such magnificence?" "I love ha because she is a" animal es incapable of sin as a tigress. She has no soul."

The Elizabeth Smart character, to whom these remarks refer, goes by the peculiar name of Marsden Forsden. She is a beautiful, spoiled, lazy blonde, a" old school chum of the poet's pregnant wife, who is given the name of Theresa for more obvious reasons. Marsden invites herself to their cottage and proceeds to seduce the poet and alienate him from his wife. (This isn't hard to do as he has grown to hate the child inside her womb and hopes it will die. It does, and a few hours later the saintly Theresa dies but curses the poet and his mistress with her dying breath. Since then, the poet says "every time I sneeze I conceive a child.")

The two women in the novel personify the madonna/whore split, so beloved of poets (and lesser men) but the writing in the book is beautiful — true poetic prose. Marsden says to the poet: "I have had hundreds of dreams about you. It was your book. When I mad it I sat down and wrote one exactly like it." And later, when he has followed her to London: "... I don't care if I do have to buy you with cottages or beds or babies or sacrifices or anything; I want you and I don't mind what price they ask. for you." The" she shows him ha red notebook, full of dreams and expectations of their meeting, "written in the South of France."

If this seems a lengthy introduction to a review of Elizabeth Smart's journals (which include the "red notebook") it is because I disagree with the editor's premise that we see here a young writer serving her apprenticeship, searching for a voice, the voice that will sing forth in *By Grand Central Station*, called by Brigid Brophy "one of the half doze" masterpieces of poetic prose i" the

world." (I disagree with that as well.) Certainly we discover what Elizabeth Smart was reading in the years before she met George Barker and wrote *Grand Central Station* (not necessarily in that order). She read the metaphysical poets, Vii Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, D.H. Lawrence, Anais Nitt, Henry Miller, the Song of Solomon. And all of these are there in the novel. But the journals are fascinating, to me at least, for quite other reasons.

They are the record of a young woman of wealth, beauty, and great personal charm who is obsessed with the idea of finding someone to worship, preferably a poet, and, I think, preferably a poet who would make her suffer. (It's interesting that Theresa, in *The Dead Seagull*, says to her husband, "You must be nicer to Marsden . . . because if you aren't she'll fall in love with you.") Give" those goals she picked a winner. And pick him she did: "He is the one I picked out from the world. It was cold deliberation." She went on not to become a writer, not really, but to have four children by George Barker and, given the choice of the two most powerful weapons against despair, drink or art, she chose drink.

In many ways, as these journals unwittingly reveal, she was a very conventional woman. She wanted a mate — and for life. That was her first, her prime, objective. In Palestine in 1937 she turns away from the ideal of the kibbutz, although she admires the dedicated young women, saying "I seek a mate, not a way of life" and "I must satisfy nature before I invite God." She also says, in another section "Trying to write," "To be in a very unfeminine, very unloving state is the desperate need of anyone trying to write."

She wanted a man who was successful in his chose" field (and hers); she wanted to have hi babies. When he turns out to be "either a prince "or charming (or only charming when he chooses to be, on his terms), in some strange way she even remains "well-bred" in her decision not to rage and moan against him but to shoulder her burden — the ocular proof that they had bee" lovers, that she had been loved by this great man, this poet



PHOTOGRAPH BY ELEANOR WACHTEL

— and raise the children herself. **Free Spirit** or Patient **Griselda**?

I think there was a deep laziness in Elizabeth Smart and this laziness, in addition to her own conventionality (and we must remember the times and her "station" in life), kept her from being a writer of any stature. Lazy, you say, with **four babies**? I am speaking of artistic laziness. I don't think this is at all the same thing as what Tillie Olsen discusses in *Silences*.

The Assumption of Rogues and Rascals, published more than 30 years after *Grand Central Station*, is really not much more than jottings, notes for a possible novel or group of linked stories. A **Bonus (poems)**, published the year before, is a slim volume indeed. *Grand Central Station* has some lovely-sounding lines but needed more work. It's by a prose writer trying to be a poet. ("It was your book. When I read it I set down and wrote one exactly like it.")

Reading the *Journals one* becomes more and more aware of what a spoiled, narcissistic brat the young Betty Smart was, but also of what talent she had and how she squandered it. For she had a deep knowledge of and feeling for external nature (someplace along the line she picked up a lot of botany, and easily identified trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses as she travels around the world) and the descriptions she jots down — descriptions of landscape, flora and fauna — are superb. A hummingbird in Mexico in 1939:

After a long rest he visited the red trumpet-flowers for a drink, his invisible wings buzzing like electric fans with a low tone . . . He pauses, darts — drinks with his head thrust forward and all his body quivering. He is incredibly small, but voluptuous with the body of an acrobatic dancer. When he stops still he loses his brilliance. His body is a roly-poly shape. When he drinks at the scarlet flower his scale-like jewelled greenness makes a rich, round eye-ful.

Notice here what she does with sound: 'lie pauses, darts — drinks'; 'quivering'; 'a rich, round eye-ful.'

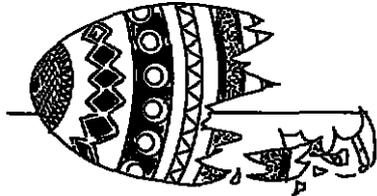
Here is an evening when she is lying on her back, looking at the moon and the night sky:

Then I noticed how each single star in that enormous wideness had pinned me hue and there . . . So I was strung on a clothesline sagging only where there were no stars. One star moved in a tripping glide like a housefly on the ceiling . . . If anybody else has ever seen the moon why don't they go around talking, raving, being astonished about it? . . . Why is not the whole world buzzing with wonder and consternation? How can they exclaim over a soup bowl, and the platitudinous poet — can they not REMEMBER? . . . It is a power plant terribly charged — and too much moon could easily kill me with shock.

I put these journals down thinking,

"What a waste. What a terrible waste." The best of her writing is in here.

It did not surprise me to learn from an editor's note that J.M. Barrie was one of Smart's favourite authors. (She describes her only meeting with him in the jour-



nals.) Somehow I think that although she avowed she wanted to be like Pet&Pan, a free spirit, a high-flyer, who she really wanted to be was Wendy.

WENDY: Are none of the children then girls?

PETER: Oh no; girls are much too clever to fall out of their prams.

WENDY: Peter, it is perfectly lovely the way you talk about girls.

And at the end of the play Mrs. Darling promises Peter: "I shall let her go to you once a year for a week to do your spring cleaning." The stage direction reads: *Wendy revels in this.* □

REVIEW

The human comedy

By Brian Fawcett

Farewell Tour, by Virgil Burnett. The Porcupine's Quill, 108 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88984 098 9).

I JOINED Virgil Burnett's *Farewell Tour* toting my own peculiar baggage. Most of what was in it can be summed up in John Berger's condemnation of bourgeois art — that because middle-class life is essentially riskless and trivial, its artists rarely take on significant subject matter. Most frequently they are merely consumers of experience, more concerned with detailing the adumbration or corruption of personal sensibilities than with establishing a coherent critique of human activities. In short, they are rarely prepared to operate in any context riskier or larger than their own emotions, abilities, and ambitions.

Certainly Burnett's volume is heavily framed by the trappings of upper-middle-class literary sensibilities. At a casual glance, his prose style appears to be — how shall I put it delicately? — refulgent but curiously dated and ornate continental conceits. The situations his characters face — the breakdown of personal rela-

tionships, the loneliness of alien cultures, choosing the manner and method of mutual suicide — are problems that people in Quesnel, B.C. or Beirut, Lebanon, will never have the leisure to indulge.

Consequently, I bristled my way through the first two of the book's seven stories. I was certain I would find no fallen trees across Burnett's roads, no tanks or rocket launchers disturbing the self-concerned reveries of his characters, and none of the accidental brutality that crushes the innocence and generosity from the lives of most people. I felt sure I would find little more than oversensitized people making privileged consumer choices, posturing into occasional sexual odalisques, and similarly transcendent and irrelevant practices — all of it drenched in overburdened, perfumed language.

Boy, was I wrong. Virgil Burnett is a very, very good writer. The third story divested me of my hostile baggage, and soon I was wondering gleefully where this strange tour would take me next. It wasn't that he'd really given in to my self-righteous demands. There was a tree across one of his roads, and there were some tanks, and quite a few other ultimate objects and events I didn't expect to encounter. But the trees, tanks, and everything else were very particularly Burnett's creations, transformed by his surehanded control of his subject matter and imagery, and a confidence that allows him to track the human comedy wherever it leads him. What happens in his stories simply happens — well, never simply, but almost always believably.

He captured me with a wonderfully funny story about a socially uncomfortable pilgrim at a masked ball who ends up, literally, under the banquet table, and from there took me through a ghostly divorce settlement and an utterly mysterious kidnapping to a Venice suicide pact that misfires ironically on a point of language. The volume's final offering, a war story that provides the book with its title, is a masterpiece of crossfiring operatic laughter and suspense. It is at once a testimony to the sweet particularity of human abilities and a chilling condemnation of the wasteful stupidity of war.

Throughout the book, Burnett's control over his materials is entertaining, extraordinary, and absolutely unique. The man plays some strange instruments, sure, but the totality is one hell of an orchestra.

It's too bad that Virgil Burnett isn't heard in Quesnel and Beirut. He won't be, because the excessively precious design of the book will put an automatic brake on its distribution. Anyone who can penetrate that surface, however, will be richer for the experience of this unusual writ's music. □

Je me souviens

Less comprehensive than the many other books about Quebec politics in the 1960s, Gérard Pelletier's memoirs are nevertheless the most illuminating

By I.M. Owen

Years of Choice: 1960-1968, by Gérard Pelletier, translated from the French by Ala Brown, Methuen, 288 pages, 529.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 80450 9).

Le Temps des choix: 1960-1968, by Gérard Pelletier, Stanké, 384 pages, 518.95 paper (ISBN 2 7604 0288 6).

SOON AFTER Gérard Pelletier became secretary of state a friend in Ottawa, giving me lunch at the Rideau Club, dismissed him as "a damn parochial little man." I wondered about that, since the only time I'd met Pelletier he'd spoke cogently — in fluent English and without notes, what's more — a Foreign-policy matter. This second volume of his memoirs might almost have been designed as a refutation of the calumny. Three of the first five chapters are set abroad, and their themes are clearly Chose" to place the political history of Quebec in the 1960s in its international context.

Chapter one establishes the inescapable background to all events of our time by describing a guided tour in 1960 of the missile base at Plattsburgh, New York. I" chapter three Pelletier and at&vision crew visit Alabama, also in 1960, in the early days of Martin Luther King's movement. I" chapter five the same crew covers Algeria at a moment when the FLN rebellion has moved From open warfare to terrorism. There are other scenes abroad scattered through the book, including an official tour of Latin America in 1967, during which Pelletier observes the emergence of liberation theology and contrasts this visit with one 22 years before, when the clergy's chief interest was in promoting the canonization of Christopher Columbus.

He doesn't stress, but deftly makes clear, that it is From the perspective of them travels that he — and the reader — can judge Pierre Vallières's characterization of French Canadians as *Les Nègres blancs d'Amérique* and the FLQ's Walter Mittyish imitation of oppressed Algerians.

Against this background, the", he continues what might be called his tetrabiography — of himself and his three friends, Jean Marchand, Pierre Trudeau, and René Lévesque. The first volume, *Years of Impatience*, dealt with their

doings during the Great Darkness of the Duplessis years. Now he mow onto more familiar ground, taking the story From 1960, when Lévesque became a Quebec cabinet minister, to 1968, when Trudeau became prime minister of Canada and Lévesque Founded the Parti Québécois.

OF making many books about those years there is no end, and Pelletier evidently Found much study of them a weariness of the flesh; hence he soon gave up the attempt to write yet another comprehensive history of the period and decided to confine himself to events that he himself witnessed or heard of from his closest Friends. Modest man that he is, he "my be surprised that I, who have read many of those other books too, find this one the most illuminating of all.

Relying on memory, he warns us at the beginning that memory is often inaccurate and always selective. Some of the most interesting passages in this volume occur when Pelletier's memory conflicts with others — notably the highly selective memory of René Lévesque. In each case I Find Pelletier's recollection more convincing. For example., in *My Québec* Lévesque says that Lesage invited all four to be candidates in the 1960 provincial election, and in *Memoirs* he even shows them all sitting in a hotel room awaiting Lesage's call and trying to make up their minds. Pelletier categorically denies this: "As For Trudeau and Pelletier, I must say in the name of accuracy that Jean Lesage never made either of us the slight&t advance."

Again: it's an accepted fact that in 1965 Lévesque, who happened to be at a conference in Newfoundland, urged Marchand on the telephone that he mustn't run in the federal election unless he could take the other two with him. Lévesque's version is that Maurice Sauvé, who was at the same conference, received a call From Marchand in Ottawa, seeking advice, and that Lévesque got on the extension and "tossed in this little semi-ment of solidarity." The Pelletier version takes place at his summer cottage on Lac Ouareau:

The phone was ringing in the back of the cottage. I rushed in, picked it up, and heard: "Are you Miter Pelleyteer? Mister Leyvesk wants to speak to you.

One moment please." Ten seconds later René was on the line. He was calling from Newfoundland, where Joey Smallwood had invited him to some discus&m.

"So, tell me, is it true what the papers are saying? Have you decided at last?"

"Decided, yes."

"The guys in Ottawa want Marchand. That we know. But the other two . . ."

"That's not so certain."

"Listen: tell Marchand when you see him, tell him to stick to his guns. He mustn't take the plunge alone. He mustn't let himself be isolated. Either the three of you go, or nobody. And eve" . . . if you could take two or three more candidates along with you, that would be better still. Believe me, I've been through it."

He laughed.

"Do you want to speak to Jean? He's here. Trudeau's here too, for that matter. Hold on . . ."

Marchand and Pierre took turns on the phone. René repeated his warnings. Trudeau hung up and turned toward us:

"He seems convinced Of what he says.

And I think he's right. How about another swim before dark?"

It's possible that both conversations happened; but if so, it shows that Lévesque wasn't just tossing in a little sentiment but felt strongly enough to go out of his way to repeat his advice.

Even after Trudeau had made up his mind, he kept unmaking it. George Radwanski in his biography has told us that he was reluctant to run For the nomination in Mount Royal because his Friend Victor Goldbloom wanted it: the result was a comic nomination meeting in which each candidate insisted that his rival was the better man. Pelletier adds a new Faa: Trudeau wanted to withdraw during the campaign because the NDP candidate (who couldn't possibly win) was his friend Charles Taylor. The three met at Pelletier's house and after a long wrestle Trudeau agreed to stay in.

Gradually, Pierre recovered his serenity.

We finally escaped fmm the subject and started comparing our election experiences, taking shop. It was late afternoon, time for an aperitif: and for the first time in the memory Of man, Trudeau accepted a whisky, which I poured generously — on purpose — for him. My two friends stayed for dinner with the family. My children were surprised by

Pierre's unusual euphoria. They had never seen him so relaxed, talkative and good-humoured.

This charming story has a charming echo in 1968. It was even harder to persuade Trudeau to run for the leadership than it had been to keep him running in Mount Royal. It wasn't until February 14 that he told Marchand and Pelletier that he would do it. The he added: "If I get the jilters again, we'll all go and get drunk on Pelletier's Scotch."

Pelletier describes eloquently how he himself hated his first two years as an MP. I'm eager to find out from the next volume how he liked seven years as a minister.

Ala' Brown's translation is good. I'm comparing the two versions I found some expressions that I would have translated differently, but a equal number of places where he has solved problems brilliantly, in ways I would "ever have thought of. His translation of the previous volume was disfigured by strange gallicisms like "aggressivity." Here I find only one: "complicities." It's surely not idiomatic English to use that word in the plural. But for the life of me I can't think of a substitute.

Anyway, the translation does read well; yet, for reasons I can't put my finger on, it reads like a translation. Perhaps that was unavoidable. Long ago I translated a book by two of Pelletier's friends, and I preened myself on having turned it into impeccable English — until a colleague complimented, me on my skill in retaining the French flavour. □

REVIEW

Mother and son

By Ken McGoogan

Adele at the End of the Day, by Tom Marshall, Macmillan, 248 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9343 0).

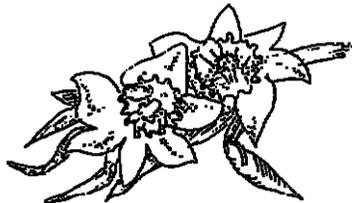
WELL-KNOWN POETS are usually good at titles, and Tom Marshall has come up with a beauty for his second novel. The title reflects only half the book's contents, but say it aloud and that no longer matters: Adele at the End of the Day.

Marshall, best-known for *The Elements*, has written a quietly impressive novel whose greatest strength is its characters. Eschewing pyrotechnics, he has nevertheless taken risks in both form and content. This is a work of subtle darning.

The novel is dominated by two characters: the eponymous heroine, au

acid-tongued, gin-swilling 70-year-old who lives in Toronto in a residential hotel, and her adopted son Kevin, otherwise known as Barney, who is wallowing in middle-aged angst in New York.

The book opens in the first person. We're with Adele in the present and we brace ourselves: not another old-timer



looking back in sorrow and sadness? "But I had what was considered a trim figure, at least in my time. Boyish almost. Harry told me I'd have made a perfect flapper back in the twenties — when I was locked away at school."

Next thing we know, however, we're shunted into the third person, and find ourselves looking at our heroine from outside: "Adele had been a widow for fourteen years. Her husband (Harry) had left her several million dollars. But she no longer travelled abroad as she had once done. She no longer even wanted to leave her hotel suite."

The shift is jarring, but we roll with it, and by the end of "Adele: Take One" we're accustomed to moving in and out of the heroine's mind.

The comes "Kevin: Take One." Here we go through the shunting process with Barney/Kevin, only this time it's complicated by the presence of a third-point-of-view character, a bartender named Chris: "Barney had by now (Chris hoped) pretty much exhausted the subject of his broken marriage."

The novel proceeds, the, by focusing in alternate sections on Adele in uptown Toronto and on Kevin/Barney in down-and-dirty New York, each of them wrestling in the present with demons out of the past. Within each section, we move from first to third person, from extended scene to fragment of consciousness, from monologue to dialogue to dispassionate observation.

Marshall's way of telling this story is impressionistic, almost pointillist, and it taker getting used to. I-iii method, a variation on Joycean stream-of-consciousness, is sufficiently original to raise doubts in a reader's mind about whether he has his book under control: am I safe?

Not to worry. Marshall's method enables him to cover a lot of ground with great economy, and to avoid the meaningless shuffling of characters from one room to another. It works.

I'm the novel's present, which is 1984, Adele is engaged in a low-key power

struggle with her housekeeper. Florence, a dowdy, unintelligent woman who belongs to a bizarre Christian cult. Adele's past includes sojourns in France, Germany, and England during the 1930s and '40s. Adele has lived sensually, at times promiscuously, and the central emotional fact of her life has been a affair with an idealistic Englishman named Daniel.

Kevin/Barney's present centres on his desultory love for Chris the bartender, who serves primarily as a foil — as someone to hear his tale. Kevin's self-pitying monologues focus mostly on his failed marriage to a emotionally frigid woman named Carrie.

Here's Carrie when, early in their courtship, he has unbuttoned her dress and is fondling her breasts: "I do hope you're enjoying yourself." And several years later, when he tells her she's like "a blast of ice," and that he might as well go and sleep in the snow, she tells him to go ahead. He goes. "Carrie phoned the police. That was her mentality."

See what I mean about characters?

Kevin is obsessed, as well, with several homosexual love affairs. The male love of-his-life, a Quebecois nationalist named Raoul, tells him, "You're a being completely ruled by libido." It's in the area of sexuality that Marshall takes chances with content (at least from a mainstream point of view), most notably as he graphically describes Kevin's making love to a athletic university friend.

Sensuality, however, is the point — that of the mother resurfacing in the so". This is the thematic heart of the novel. "When she had finished her long story Barney said, 'History repeats itself, they say. Once as tragedy. And once as farce.' Passion in Paris, he was thinking. The insanity of politics. Of love."

The plot of the novel, which serves as another way of linking Adele and Kevin/Barney, involves a attempt by Florence to secure Adele's fortune for her cult. It calls forth Brother Gary, a cult leader who strains credulity, and leads to a farcical climax that is curiously out of mood with the rest of the book.

No big deal, because readers won't come to this novel looking for plot. They'll come for earned truths and modest wisdom:

The young in their blessed naiveté think that everyone can love everyone else., at least within their own charmed (and, of course, usually exclusive) group of friends. Almost never do they realize that in mid-life, if not sooner, one is, whatever his or her situation . . . inevitably and inexorably thrown back upon one's own emotional resources.

Adele at the End of the Day is a quietly mature novel. It rewards a slow, deliberate reading, and deserves to be savoured. □

Blaming the victim

Was Marcel Giraud preaching to the 'indolent' Métis he seemed so severely put down or to the people of war-torn France, where his monumental study was written?

By Jennifer Brown

The Métis in the Canadian West, by Marcel Giraud, translated from the French by George Woodcock, University of Alberta Press, 2 vols., illustrated, 1,360 pages, \$70.00 cloth (ISBN 0 88864 098 6).

MARCEL GIRAUD'S MONUMENTAL study, *Le Métis canadien: son rôle dans l'histoire des provinces de l'ouest*, first appeared in Paris in 1945. Newly available in this translation, it may survive with difficulty the shock of being transplanted into the 1980s, for its considerable merits are intertwined with an analytical perspective that in the last 20 years has aroused increasing criticism from scholars and native people alike. In short, like most works of history, it is not a timeless book.

In 1945, *Le Métis canadien* was timely, or even in certain respects far ahead of its time. Into the 1970s, it was still a uniquely valuable source for western Métis history from the 1600s to the 1930s. Although its interpretive point of view was by then jarring to any sensitive reader, it could still have contributed vigorously, if translated in that era, to Anglo-Canadian historiography and historical debate.

In the late 1980s, however, it is more difficult to salvage the work for its merits and to overlook its biases. Deeply embedded in Giraud's writing was what Emma LaRoque has aptly called the "civ/sav dichotomy" of most older historians of North America — the tendency to range native groups along a continuum from primitive to "civilized." Giraud and many others remained culture-bound in their own moral universe, without the perspectives to grasp and interpret the actions and values of communities not immersed in European-based traditions.

I first discovered *Le Métis canadien* in the University of Chicago library in 1970, as I was beginning doctoral research on Hudson's Bay and the North West Company fur traders and their native families. Like most of its older users, I found it on my own. Little known and rarely cited, copies of the book gathered dust in university libraries while their dreadful wartime paper yellowed and decayed. And yet, as of 1970, the work was a goldmine. No other writer had delved so

deeply into the Hudson's Bay Company archives in pursuit of fur-trade his&. No Canadian historian had paid as much attention to names and families, to processes of growth and change among the fur-trading communities from which the Métis sprang, or to the women, children, and descendants of these families.

The book began as Giraud's doctoral thesis. At the beginning of 1936, having already carried on extensive research in Canada, he began work at the Hudson's Bay Company archives in London, while appointed to the French Institute there. In mid-1939, however, the archives were closed for storage away from wartime attack. Giraud worked on his thesis in Paris under the German occupation and in September, 1941, reported to the HBC archivist that it was "in a fair state of forwardness." He had worked steadily the previous winter, he said, "as this was the only chance to get over the gloomy and downhearting hours we were living." By August, 1942, the book was completed but could not be published owing to lack of paper stock.

Such conditions must surely have affected the character of Giraud's book. These were not favourable times for a French author to be in touch with other scholars or to keep abreast of developments in relevant fields, as he notes in his introduction. Thus, although translator George Woodcock says that the book reflects "the prevailing attitudes of historians and ethnologists at the time and place when it was written," that opinion is not particularly fair. Giraud could have benefited from more exposure to some significant international trends in anthropology of the 1930s, in preparing a text that the Institute of Ethnology in Paris was to publish.

Second, one must wonder if the tense conservatism of Giraud's writing reflects not only an older historiography but also a reaction to France in crisis. Giraud never drew explicit parallels between Canadian Métis history and the Third Republic or the Vichy regime, but he was unambiguous about what he viewed as some of the causes of Métis difficulties and failures. Repeatedly, he described the Métis as indolent, volatile, suggestible, weak of will, and lacking in discipline,

initiative, foresight, and clarity of vision. Their "nation" was not a true nation; they failed to maintain consistent authority and order. Influenced by and allied to Indian cultures, they were constantly at risk of regressing to the "instincts and mentality of primitive peoples," despite the "moral regeneration" offered by the Roman Catholic clergy and other civilizing influences.

In fairness to Giraud, he did not resort to racial determinism, and did recognize the importance of the buffalo hunt, the inadequacies of Red River agriculture, and the powerful socio-economic forces that beset the M&is. But in "blaming the victim" so often, was he preaching more to the French who might read his book than to the M&is whom he seemed so severely to put down yet who so clearly engaged his interest and sympathy?

Such issues might usefully have been addressed in Woodcock's introduction, better yet, in a new foreword from Giraud (who in his 87th year is still an active scholar). Unfortunately there is little trace of dialogue between translator and author, and we are left wondering about how Giraud's thinking has evolved since 1943 and how he might have liked to revise the book.

Still more enigmatic is the question of how Woodcock, of anarchist sympathies and author of a sympathetic biography of Gabriel Dumont, responded to the book. Giraud and Woodcock were both in prewar London when Woodcock was formulating his anarchist-pacifist ideals. They presumably have never met, and surely their political orientations have been very different. Yet in introducing this edition, Woodcock becomes Giraud's apologist without satisfying our curiosity on this point.

Woodcock's introduction is unsatisfying in other ways. It is difficult to accept his description of Giraud's study as an objective history, and his statements that the Métis lack their own historians, that they have exhibited no artistic self-expression, and that the Métis nation was an invention of the North West Company partners show acceptance of old and dubious judgements. Thus his text tends to share the book's problems, instead of putting the reader in touch with current

thinking in countless newer writings on the Métis.

To one who has used the French original, the format of the new edition is a major disappointment. Every page of the French text was enriched by mines of footnote information that Giraud presumably counted on being readily accessible for reference. This edition resorts to endnotes, with only chapter numbers as guides. The separating of notes from text increases the impact of Giraud's interpretations while hiding the range of his knowledge from casual readers.

To its credit, this translation does make a rare and valuable work far more accessible. However, to readers who are not familiar with the pitfalls of the older civ/sav analyses (or who would be interested to see how deeply these ideas have penetrated), I would strongly recommend a further companion reading. Bruce Trigger's *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* (McGill-Queen's University Press) evaluates the older historiography of Canadian native peoples in the light of the radically different approaches that ethno-historians and others have developed in recent years. Although Giraud's work lies beyond Trigger's focus on New France, *Natives and Newcomers* offers the most developed perspectives on both anglophone and francophone writings, old and new, on native history. □

REVIEW

Where it's near

By Gideon Forman

Remembering Summer, by Harold Horwood, Pottersfield Press, 191 pages, \$11.95 paper (ISBN 0 919001 35 1).

ELI PALLISHER -sailor, labour organizer, writer, and adventurer-is the protagonist of this novel, set in 1960s rural Newfoundland. The East Coast may not be the first place we think of when discussing the revolutions of the '60s but, as Harold Horwood makes clear, that region was not unaffected. *Remembering Summer* finds Eli in the village of Beachy Cove, living with an assortment of young children and inquisitive teenagers. The latter — whom he affectionately dubs "the freaks" — come to his house for food, affection, and enlightenment. Eli's relationship with the kids and his desire to live in the new way constitute this story's heart.

What is the new way? Horwood goes to great lengths depicting all we tradi-

tionally associate with the '60s. Eli lives off the land, encourages free love and communal living, and frequently enjoys hallucinogens. His music is E.L.O., Pink Floyd, The Grateful Dead. The language, too, is markedly from that era, and while Horwood is right to strive for authenti-



city, the talk he puts in the kids' mouths sometimes reads like parody.

"Let's split, blow the scene, take the road. . ."

"Just us, you mean?"

"Hell no. Everyone! . . ."

There's a philosophy behind the sex and drugs, of course, namely the belief that people must love one another, abandon their materialism, and enlarge their thinking. A good deal of the book chronicles the group's attempts to — in Blake's words — cleanse the doors of perception and see everything "as it is, infinite." Eli's kids "indifferently turned their backs on broadloom and on Cadillacs, seeking the mystery that glows and flickers at the core of life. . . ." When "the old reducing valve" is removed — when they stop filtering out most sensual stimuli — the group is in a visionary world, a world that Eli considers "more real than the one we see now. It's closer to the chaos that actually exists."

Horwood's attempt to see things as they really are, to describe the truly glorious, is commendable. I admire his willingness to tackle — in the manner of a religious philosopher — the tremendous themes of eternity and immortality. And yet, while I applaud his goal, I am often disappointed with his actual product. His descriptions of the visionary world are frequently given in vague, even hollow, language.

Once or twice Horwood does convey the feeling of cleansed senses ("You went outside, feeling every grain of gravel and blade of grass, every touch of moving air") but too often he gives only abstractions. Describing a festival, he writes: "Thousands of people tripped out to the edge of consciousness, or sometimes a bit further, and there was a" overall mood of interpenetration." Telling us that people approached the "edge of consciousness" is quite different from offering insights into that state.

While one certainly cannot fault Horwood for having only a" imperfect grasp of the eternal, one can fault him for descriptions that leave the reader no

wiser. During one of their trips, Eli says "We stood, wrapped in stars, clothed in evolving galaxies, through all the ages since God was born, and for all the ages to come, while the universe opened like a flower, and closed, and opened once again. . . ." Phrases like "clothed in evolving galaxies" tell us practically nothing. And Horwood uses large, unevocative, unpicturable concepts throughout. Throwing around phrases like "the universe" and "all the ages since God was born" not only cheapens description, it frustrates the reader.

The novel is strongest when it stops describing the colours and images of acid trips and simply chronicles the group's daily interaction. Horwood does a fine job of painting Eli's loneliness, and offers a powerful discussion of remorse. Referring to a teenager he banished from his home, Eli muses: "He probably needed love as badly as anyone who ever asked for it, and I allowed the grim Old Ma" in me to refuse it." Eli's bold honesty and self-awareness make the passage refreshing.

What I particularly like about *Remembering Summer* is the fact its verdict on the '60s is so favourable. Eli explores several important aspects of the decade and concludes it was truly a time of enlightenment. This is a far more optimistic — and, I believe, accurate-view than the one frequently offered. Eli does not believe that generation achieved all it hoped to, but he argues it made important strides: ". . . we glimpsed the possibility of a change, the next step for man, maybe, a free society where music would matter more than money, and love would be more respectable than greed."

Interestingly, despite the novel's references to materialism, greed, and poverty, it contains little discussion of world politics. Horwood does touch upon the life of the poor — of those "sold like horses into an endless round of filth and toil. . ." — but he is remarkably reticent when it comes to, say, the Vietnam War. Though the war had a stronger impact on the United States than on us, even for Canadians it was not a detail. Revulsion toward the war and all it stood for was central to the youth culture Horwood tries to depict. A reference or two to napalm notwithstanding, it is virtually absent here. One hopes that Horwood does not share Eli's position when he says to his girl-friend, "Hey Margo, what are we doing talking about politics? Smell the woods! Listen to the waterfall!"

Remembering Summer is a flawed work, but its celebration of the new consciousness remains inspiring. Eli expresses the breakthrough succinctly when he says, "I was part of that generation that opened up its head as no generation ever had before. . . ." □

BRIEF REVIEWS

BEAUX ARTS

The Best of Tom Thomson, by Joan Murray, Hurtig, illustrated, 90 pages, \$22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88830 299 1).

TOM THOMSON had all the elements necessary to become a myth, as Joan Murray points out: humble beginnings, great talent, an enigmatic personality, a mysterious, untimely end. Add Thomson's almost mystic identification with Algonquin Park, and you have a certified Canadian legend. Yet Thomson died before his art achieved complete assurance, and certainly his reputation owes much to the admiration the Group of Seven had for his work.

This is Murray's seventh book of art criticism, and something of a way-station in her career. She has been working on a catalogue raisonné of Thomson's paintings since 1970. This compilation presents about 50 of his works under the tendentious "Best of . . ." title.

Thomson's best-known works are included: *The West Wind*, *Jack Pine*, *Woodland Waterfall*. A biographical sketch of Thomson by Murray and a one-page appreciation of his work by Northrop Frye accompany the reasonably faithful colour plates.

Murray's research seems thorough (as it should after 17 years) and her comments on the paintings and Thomson's progress toward a more abstract style are generally helpful. Her prose, however, is often leaden and sometimes confusing. She writes "To those who 'pot on airs,' he could be rude. He singled out a few, like Elizabeth McCarnen who roomed in one of the boarding houses where he stayed in Toronto." It takes a few tries before the reader realizes that Murray means McCarnen was not a woman he was rode to. By contrast, the vibrant colours and vigorous brushwork of Thomson's art still sparkle.

— JOHN OUGHTON

Carl: Portrait of a Painter from Letters and Reminiscences, by George Johnston, Penumbra Press, 140 pages, \$15.95 paper (ISBN 0 920806 11 5).

THIS ISA curious book: a biography that is written partly by the subject (in his letters to the author, long-time friend), an appreciation of a "important painter that contains no reproductions of his paintings.

Carl Schaefer to some extent inherited

the mantle of the Group of Seven painters, several of whom encouraged him as a young artist. However, his favourite subject was not the granite and pines of the North but the lush fields around Hanover, Ont., where his ancestors had fanned. (He also painted many works as a "artist on service with the RCAF during the Second World War.) No one who has seen his watercolours could forget the passion of his colours or the organic rhythm of his lines. Yet it is hard for those of us who don't have a catalogue of his work handy to remember specific paintings, which makes the lack of even monochrome reproductions in this book hard to fathom. Schaefer's comments about his own work seem penetrating, but are a bit opaque without having the paintings available for examination.

Johnston, a poet and academic, creates a "portrait" that is strong on humanity and admiration for his friend (who also influenced Canadian art by 20 years' teaching and administration at the Ontario College of Art). Yet its reliance on occasional letters from Schaefer gives the book a sketchy, jumpy quality, in which trivia sometimes appears ("He bought a new heavier car, Oldsmobile 88, 212 horsepower, hoped it would last him six years at least") but important questions such as what Schaefer instilled in his students or how critics treated his work receive relatively little note. Accompanied by publication of a full critical study and a coffee-table volume reproducing Schaefer's paintings, this book would add a comfortable, informal sense of the man. On its own, it doesn't seem quite enough.

— JOHN OUGHTON

I Know Not Why the Roses Bloom, by Claire Weissman Wilks, Exile Editions, 100 pages, \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0 920428 01 0).

MOST OF THE work in this collection of drawings, lithographs, and sculpture portrays females, nudes entwined in angst and eroticism. A "artist and visual researcher for the CBC, Wilks has produced several other books, including a study of the fascinating eccentric photographs Hannah Maynard.

Wilks draws skilfully, if somewhat obsessively: the bodies of her figures, voluptuously shaded, twine around each other. Their breasts, hands, and feet bulge at the viewer. Their faces, however, are undifferentiated, staring blankly into space. Given that several of the poems

from which Wilks has drawn her accompanying quota deal with genocide, perhaps these faces are meant to suggest shock; anomie. But their consistent vacancy makes it hard to separate the drawings from each other, to read changes in mood or intent.

The sculptures, small bronze "goddesses" represented here in photographs giving several different angles of each, offer more variety. Accompanied by Robert Graves's invocation of the White Goddess, they are stronger, more alive figures than the drawings convey, although a narcissitic quality colours them. If you're a goddess, you shouldn't need to admire yourself.

— JOHN OUGHTON

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

The Case of Valentine Shortis: A True Story of Crime and Politics in Canada, by Martin L. Friedland, University of Toronto Press, 324 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 2606 0).

WRITTEN BY University of Toronto law professor Martin L. Friedland, *The Case of Valentine Shortis* is a scholarly account of a fascinating episode in the annals of Canadian law. It is also an authoritative and compelling look at the complexities of the social and political history of Canada in one extraordinary year, 1895-96. It was a case that helped to change the way the insane are treated by the Canadian criminal justice system.

The 20-year-old son of a wealthy Irish cattle dealer, Shortis cold-bloodedly shot to death two employees of the Montreal Cotton Company in Valleyfield, Que., where he had worked as private secretary to the general manager. After a long and dramatic trial — during which his own lawyer said that he took the case only because his client was a complete imbecile with no sense of responsibility — Shortis was found guilty of murder and sentenced to be hanged. Governor General Lord Aberdeen later commuted the sentence to life imprisonment.

Friedland dramatically recounts the controversy surrounding Aberdeen's commutation in the light of Shortis's wealthy parents' intervention and the government decision to let Louis Riel hang 10 years earlier. He also skilfully sifts through the various legal arguments in the trial, providing a detailed and incisive analysis of the legal footwork that even today would be an inspiration for many law students and lawyers, especially

in its early use of the **insanity defence.**

This is a book for anyone interested in a detailed retelling of a 19th-century murder case placed in its proper social, psychological, economic, and political context. Friedland convincingly documents every important detail in this complex story, and his book is a treat for history, crime, and legal enthusiasts.

— JAMES R. DUBRO

FICTION

The Alligator Report, by W.P. Kinsella, Totem Books, 125 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 00 223170 0).

FOR THOSE OF us who recognize that W.P. Kinsella certainly can write but who suspect that his best Indian stories are behind him and aren't eager for yet another transcendental baseball tale, it comes as a relief to discover that *The Alligator Report* is about neither. In the introduction Kinsella writes, "Many of the short, surreal pieces in this book owe a debt to Richard Brautigan." (Kinsella also includes a letter he wrote to the late writer in 1980 that is a rather pretentious celebration of Kinsella, but we'll leave that be.)

The prose of these stories has a soft, easy quality, like the rain that falls on

East Vancouver, where many of them are set. The best are included in part one, where the narrator lives in a down-and-out rooming house along with an unemployed Serbian juggler and a man named Gabon who keeps a pony in the attic. While Kinsella keeps down the sentimentality that has swamped some of his work, these stories still have a sweet, understanding quality about them reminiscent of Leon Rooke. One of the best, "The Redemption Centre," is a touch too simple but embodies a kind notion: that the drunks and losers of society get that way by soaking up the pain meant for the rest of us.

Unfortunately, this short book weakens as it continues, and the stories in parts four and five almost all misfire as they dwindle into pointless strings of anecdotal paragraphs. There is a lousy satire about the Canadian publishing industry where books are purchased only to be turned into cardboard boxes for VCRs ("The Book Buyer") and a story called "The History of Peanut Butter" that is, well, daring in its triviality.

But the better stories contain passages that quietly accept life's quirky imperfections, like this one in which the narrator ponders the bed he and a prostitute are about to lie on:

The single bed, with its prison-bar head and base covered in chipped brown

enamel, was manufactured by the Howard G. Scharff Corporation, of Baltimore, Maryland. By the age and condition of the bed, Howard G. Scharff must be dead these many years. But, how marvellous to have little monuments to your memory in all the two-dollar short-time rooms, in all the creaking hotels, of all the skid rows of America. I would like to be remembered the same way.

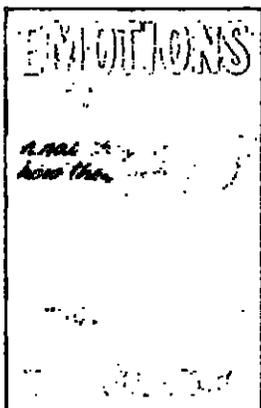
— CARY FAGAN

Rommel and Patton, by Richard Rohma, Irwin, 318 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7725 1623 5).

MORE THAN 40 years later D-Day continues to provide the grist for countless fictional mills. Richard Rohmer may have more right to the story than most. He piloted a reconnaissance aircraft during the invasion of Normandy and watched the battle unfold from above. Set amid D-Day's turbulent aftermath, Rohmer's *Rommel and Patton* speculates convincingly on how the war in Europe might have ended almost a year earlier.

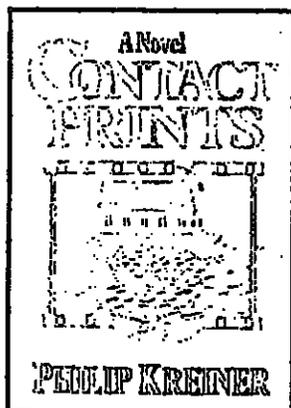
Rohma picks up the action shortly after June 6, 1944. Convinced his battered army will soon succumb, Rommel canvasses his generals for support of an armistice with Great Britain and the United States that would free German forces to fight against the Soviets in the

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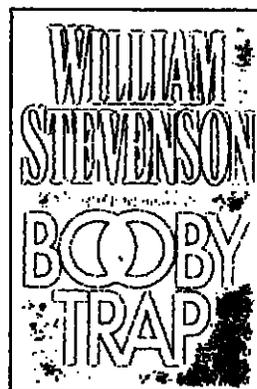
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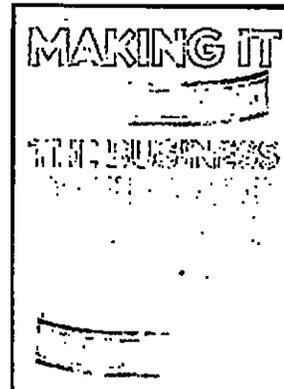
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DOUBLEDAY CANADA

east. Before he can act, Rommel is badly wounded in a fighter attack on his staff car. The novel gradually escalates towards a climax that has Field Marshal von Kluge, Rommel's replacement, secretly meeting the Allies' negotiator, General Patton.

The cast of pasteboard characters includes just about every major participant in the Second World War except for Hirohito. Rohmer's dialogue is stilted and his images — such as the German staff car and its motorcycle escort, which resemble "a pair of small black ponies pulling a hearse" — are often jarring. Still, he makes his case plausible by supplying a wealth of detail, including an epilogue of contemporary documents, one of which records his own involvement in the events described. *Rommel and Patton* is not for the Second-World-War buff, but the casual reader may find its premise intriguing enough to overlook other drawbacks. — DOUGLAS MALCOLM

A Stone Watermelon, by Lois Braun, Turnstone Press. 181 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 88801 107 5).

LOIS BRAUN'S first collection of short stories — several already published in literary magazines — is an oddly uneven book, full of bright surprises and dull disappointments. It is worth reading for the multitude of memorable scenes and images Braun creates and the broad range of characters and circumstance she chooses. However, she seems to have not yet found the right editor to polish her work; if she does, her stories will truly shine, for there's a diamond-hard realism and authenticity beneath the sometimes muddy, over-written material.

The promotional release with *A Stone Watermelon* classifies Braun's as another voice from the Prairies, and certainly the regional flavour is strong and folly developed. Not only do a majority of stories deal with rural folk, but the setting Braun describes most vividly is the land itself — wheatfields like "a gold satin sea that rolls like a regular ocean."

What's admirable about Braun is the audacity with which she tackles her eccentric characters. Sometimes her stories are a little forced (as in the opening "The Queen Passes By," in which a fiftyish widow adores Queen Elizabeth), but when they work (as does the title story, in which four old men drive around the countryside for an afternoon, drinking whisky and touching their past lives) they are startlingly effective.

In her longest, most focused, and most successful story, "The No Place Bar and Grill," Braun gives us a peculiar bunch of people who eventually become very real — Rita who runs the bar, ha hus-

band Truman the retired crop-duster and failing strawberry farmer, and their fey, dance-mad son Artie. The sadness and passion and joy of ordinary people come clear here.

And in "Monolith" Braun paints a wonderful picture of a farmer going out, year after year, at combining time to set a red flag by the boulder he can't move from the rye field. The symbolism is accurate for us all, and the image haunts long after the story itself fades.

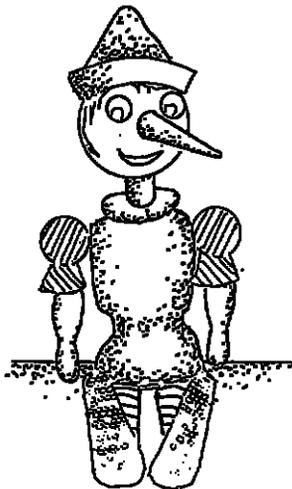
— ISABEL HUGGAN

THE PAST

John Anderson: Fugitive Slave, by William Teatero, Treasure Island Books, P.O. Box 2273, Kingston, Ont., K7L 5S9 \$21.95-cloth (ISBN 0 969265 05).

JOHN ANDERSON was a Missouri black who in 1853 killed a white man during his escape to freedom in Canada. U.S. authorities applied, under the terms of the extradition treaty between the two countries, to have him returned — probably to face execution as an example to other slaves. Would Canada comply?

A sense of drama, a clear style, and delightful illustrations draw the reader into William Teatero's well-researched book, which recounts four successive trials relating to the Anderson affair. The book also re-creates the reforming passion of our Victorian ancestors. It lampoons British abolitionists such as Mr. Harper Twelvetrees who, after Anderson's release, found him too libertine and packed him off to reform school and, later, Liberia. It captures the ardour of



hundreds of Torontonians who jammed into St. Lawrence Hall to affirm that if the law did not free Anderson, they "would trample that law under foot!"

Students of black history may, however, find the book disappointing. Due to a dearth of personal source

material, Anderson is but a shadowy symbol helping to define fuller characters. The man at the heart of this tale is John A. Macdonald. As attorney general of Canada West, Macdonald insisted on due process; the courts, not public opinion, would interpret Canada's treaty obligations. This, Teatero contends, was a surer path to justice than the crusading for Anderson's immediate release led by Macdonald's perennial foe, George Brown.

While many of us might willingly be persuaded of the supremacy of law in Canada, Teatero's portrayal of our leader washing his hands of political considerations in this affair is somewhat troubling. Macdonald played politics gleefully, one historian wrote, the way small boys play in mud. Yet the man had so many sides that one cannot dismiss the high-minded one presented here. Few would disagree with the author's conclusion that

Macdonald was described by his contemporaries as compromising, humane, sensitive, vain, intuitive, bawdy, urbane, witty, drunken, wily, intelligent, charming, imaginative, daring, and much more. They were all correct.

— JAN NOEL

POLITICS & POLITICOS

Social Credit for Beginners: An Armchair Guide, by J.S. Osborne and J.T. Osborne, Pulp Press, 229 pages, \$10.95 paper (ISBN 88978 175 3).

SOCIAL CREDIT emerged as a political and economic movement from the rabble of the Great War and for a while gained a wide if frequently off-the-wall following among those elements of Euro-American society that were disenchanted with the existing systems for distributing wealth but terrified of communism. Only in Canada (you say?) did it gain enough credibility actually to become the basis for an elected government, and then only in Alberta and eventually in B.C. — not surprising, since both provinces still have a strong following for such curious items as the flat-earth theory.

The brothers Osborne have produced a sardonic but essentially sound history of the movement in a cartoon-and-text format similar to that of the Marx-and-Freud-for-beginners series that came from Britain about a decade ago. As a fellow B.C.er and long-term victim of Social Credit, I have some insider's objections to the volume, but I have no misgivings about recommending the book for either entertainment or scholarship purposes.

Social Credit has its purely loony side, but as an illustration of what happens when an intellectually bankrupt middle class comes up against what it sees as the misuse of wealth and privilege in an

economically unstable world. it serves as an excellent warning of what to expect and, finally, of what not to do. Given the political and economic circumstances of Canada in the 1980s, I can think of thousands of people for whom this book should be mandatory reading.

— BRIAN FAWCETT

E.C. Drury: *Agrarian Idealist*, by Charles M. Johnston. University of Toronto Press, 299 pages, \$27.50 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 3432 2).

CHARLES JOHNSTON'S yecomanlike account of E.C. Drury is the latest in a growing library of biographies of premiers produced by the Ontario Historical Studies Series, "a comprehensive history of Ontario from 1791 to the present." It complements Peter Oliver's biography of G. Howard Ferguson in its presentation of the other side of politics, revealing the deep enmity between Ferguson and Drury. Johnston's biography analyses a significant period in the social and political development of Ontario, but is sorely lacking in colour and energy.

Drury, the son of a prosperous Liberal farmer in Simcoe County who was Ontario's first minister of agriculture, is described from childhood through his

emerging role as a political activist, as secretary of the Canadian Council of Agriculture, then as a master of the Dominion Grange and Farmer's Alliance, and as a co-founder (1914) and first president of the United Farmers' Party of Ontario (UFO). Although an activist, he did not stand for election in 1919 when the UFO united with labour to defeat the Tories. Still, he was invited to lead the government and subsequently found a seat in Halton in 1920. As Ontario's eighth premier he steered the passage of some significant social legislation, including the first minimum wage act and the first mothers' allowance act, developed a roads policy, and moved to promote tourism.

Drury was a strong proponent of temperance, which became part of his election platform in 1923. However, the feisty, cost-conscious, teetotal premier created enemies both in and outside the party through battles with Sir Adam Beck over Hydro costs, the English River timber rights dispute, his failure to revoke the infamous Regulation 17 on francophone schools, and his firm attachment to the policy of "Broadening Out" — an attempt to retain party structure, yet to reach out to concerned urban as well as rural citizens to fashion a more humane, moral, and progressive society in Ontario. In short, he tried to launder the province

morally. His idealism was badly shaken by the realization that the exercise of power required pragmatism.

Johnston's treatment is sympathetic, but dwells too much on the years after the defeat of 1923. Drury's brief unsuccessful flirtation with federal politics, his years as Simcoe County's sheriff and registrar, and his work as a local historian and unpublished novelist are interesting, but the years in power are far more important. This is a solid if pedestrian contribution to Ontario political history, a useful addition to a worthwhile series.

— CYNTHIA M. SMITH

The Party That Changed Canada: The NDP Then and Now, by Lynn McDonald, Macmillan, 264 pages, \$14.95 paper (ISBN 0 7715 9559 X).

THIS COULD HAVE been a good book. Given the background and training of the author — MP for Toronto-Broadview since 1982. Ph.D. in sociology, past president of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women — it should have been a good book. It is not, McDonald bites off some big chunks, but fails to chew them.

Her book includes a short history of the CCF-NDP. She presents a casual and muddled story, and doesn't always bother to get her facts and data right. This inspires little confidence. McDonald builds a strong case for the CCF and particularly Tommy Douglas as principal architects of Canada's welfare state, yet says nothing about the problems of that structure or how it might be improved through, say, a guaranteed annual income plan.

She provides capsule reviews of the role and status of social democratic parties in other parts of the world, but is not at all convincing on why socialism has been relatively unsuccessful in Canada. Lengthy rehashes of voting statistics and polling results over 50 years add nothing to our understanding or to the party's reasons for optimism.

McDonald attempts to set out why various groups should vote NDP but don't, and observes only that this reflects "the irrationality of voting." Oh dear, oh dear. She says the CCF was "based on pre-Freudian assumptions," whatever that may mean, and with disarming candour admits that "at various times the party attacked popsidés, processed cheese, and packaged breakfast cereals." How's that for grabbing the electorate's imagination on questions of social injustice?

McDonald is no more compelling on the topic of present NDP policy, for which she is an inadequate advocate, or on the party's prospects. She favours a national incomes policy, a "new and fair

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social contract." without providing details of methodology! and waxes enthusiastic concerning possible breakthroughs for the NDP in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec, but again offers more optimism than evidence.

This is a "earnest work, but with too much cheerleading and "or enough to cheer about.
— JACK MacLEOD

RERUNS

Dream Chamber: Joyce and the Dada Circus, by Sorel Etrog, Exile Editions, 54 pages, 59.95 paper (ISBN 0 920428 07 X).

THIS "COLLAGE for the great collagists of our time., consists of 22 typographical sculptures combining Sorel Etrog's observations with quotations from the likes of Yeats, Eliot, Hugo Ball, Hans Richter and, above all, James Joyce. Not unfamiliar texts get new contexts, shaped by Etrog and textured by a diversity of typefaces, in order to produce "a new comprehension." a new consciousness of the unconscious.

What delight the work stirs comes from the linguistic play, the puns trivial and quadrivial, of Joyce; what power from the wild hopes of the Dadaists, blasting the "cultural foundations of the west" and inventing "ways to give the bourgeoisie insomnia." Only occasionally do Etrog's forms enhance the original materials. "A Carved Africa" Cup" does because the division of words required by the shape reveals traces of other, long lost stories; so too does "The Obligation to Work" with its airy column of abstractions parallel to another dense with images. But too often the visual figures are banal, like the typographical bird of which "Long Beaked Birds Splitting



Men's Skulls" forms a part. The problems presented by type remain unsolved, and Etrog, like a sonneteer stuck for a rhyme, squashed or stretches words to fit his pre-determined shapes.

Dream Chamber was a better book when first published, on tan-coloured paper and in a larger format, in 1982 (Dolmen/Black Brick). Given the grey

paper and the "arrow margins of this second edition, subtle visual effects fade out and Etrog's figures lose ground. Helpful bibliographical information has been omitted and errors have been introduced, most notably the alteration of McLuhan's phrase "percept and concept" to "precept and concept." To misquote McLuhan on Etrog in a book dedicated by Etrog to Marcel Janco and McLuhan — and to do so in a way that makes odd usage ordinary — is a revealing gaffe. Had Etrog and his editors quaffed more freely the iconoclastic spirits of Dada, *Dream Chamber* might have been a better work of art — probably not a book at all, certainly not one cluttered with punctuation in conventional places or laid out in the straight lines prescribed by Gutenberg
— TED MCGEE

SCIENCE & NATURE

Looking for the Wild, by Lyn Hancock, Doubleday, 256 pages, \$22.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 25063 0).

IN 1953 NATURALIST author Roger Tory Peterson took his British friend James Fisher on a 30,000-mile tour of North America. The result of that search for the best in unspoiled habitat was the book *Wild America*.

Thirty years later Canadian writer Ly Hancock set out with a group of kindred spirits to retrace Peterson and Fisher's route. The result, *Looking for the Wild*, is a book primarily for the serious birder. The kind of birder who doesn't need colour photographs or illustrations to identify species. The kind of birder who can profit from a 16-page bird list arranged by Latin names. The kind of birder who knows American geography and can ignore a lone five-by-six-inch map of the continent.

Hancock says in her preface that one of her objectives is to reach the diffident traveller who has little interest in natural history or conservation. On that level *Looking for the Wild* fails. The root of the problem lies in trying to tit three months of almost constant birding and naturalist hikes into 195 pages. The result is a series of abbreviated bird lists and thumbnail sketches of national parks and wildlife refuges. In spite of Hancock's chatty style this is pretty tough sledding for the "diffident."

The book does have definite value as a reference work for anyone considering a trip to the United States to see wildlife (Newfoundland is the only Canadian destination discussed). There are some pleasing bird sketches by Robert Bateman at the beginning of each chapter and a set of indifferent black-and-white photographs.
— S.R. GAGE

REVIEW

Lives of the poet

By David Latham

The *Self-Completing Tree: Selected Poems*, by Dorothy Livesay, Press Porcépic, 288 pages, \$12.95 paper QSBN 0 88878 258 6).

WHEN DOROTHY LIVESAY'S first *Selected Poems* was published in 1957, it included an introduction by Desmond Pacey that praised her as among the best poets of the "generation which came to maturity between the two World Wars." Milton Wilson then sanctified the "between the wars" tag as the title for an anthology that has served a generation of students. The popularity of the tag is unfortunate. Pacey added an immediate qualification and a prophecy that would render such labelling as inappropriate as lumping Yeats with the *fin de siècle* aesthetes: "With the single exception of Pratt, she has a longer record of continuous and even composition than any other Canadian poet. She has been writing poems of high merit for over thirty years, and gives every indication of being ready to do so for another thirty." Indeed, 30 years later, she has compiled here a collection that secures her place among the best poets of the century.

How futile it is to pigeonhole Dorothy Livesay. Who can we say are her contemporaries? I have on my bookshelf a copy of Charles Mair's *Tecumseh* signed by Livesay in 1927. A forerunner of the Confederation poets, Mair was not only alive when Livesay began writing but, with the publication in 1926 of a deluxe edition of his work, had just been lauded as the Dominion's best poet. Livesay at this time was attending dinners with two poets who most readers agreed had eclipsed the older Mair: Roberts and Carman. Critics we beginning to champion two poets from a still younger generation: Pratt and Wilson Macdonald. Perhaps the even younger Livesay blossomed so soon because of the ferment between Pratt (with the emerging Knister, Ross, and Montreal poets) and Macdonald (with the fading Confederation poets).

Accounting for Livesay's longevity is a wholly different matter. The *Self-Completing Tree* extends her consistently remarkable work over a span of 60 years. In her public readings, she often documents her progress through the decades as a schoolgirl, a social activist, a wife and mother, a social worker, a professor, and an old woman. Yet the phases

she writes of suggest not her passing interests but rather the genres with which she continues to experiment and practise. Thus, es with the sonnet "Comrade," the social activist is a poet of the 1970s as well as the '30s.

Her organization of the poems further demonstrates the consistency of her interests and makes the selection itself a well-crafted work of art. Its middle highlights the central dialectic of Livesay's work: side by side are two sections of poems -- "Struggle: The Documentaries" and "The Unquiet Bed: Fire and Frost." The public documentary, wherein the social conscience explores the national dream, is contrasted with the intimate, confessional lyric, wherein the selfish soul explores physical desire. Synthesizing the dialectic is the pervasive image in her poetry of the self-completing tree. In one form or another, the tree bonds innocence with experience, the women with the world.

To demonstrate her consistency, we can compare an early poem included in this collection with a late poem omitted: "Green Rain" (1932) and "Photograph" (1984). Both poems concern distant recollections of a grandmother.

"Green Rain" is a series of similes in which all the memories of a spring love affair are no" associated with her grandmother's death. As she tries to recall "That day" when, alone with her lover, she first made love, each detail — the rain, road, house, and silence — reminds her only of her grandmother — her shawl, road, house, and parlour. The intensity and impatience of a young girl's selfish infatuation (a love she assumed would last forever) are no" forgotten and replaced by her growing compassion for an old "omen with whom she no" feels some identification. For no" she too has an irretrievable past.

"Photograph" presents an old woman viewing a photograph of herself as a toll, growing girl standing beside her stooped, severe grandmother. Contrasting the photograph with ha poem, and her grandmother's maxim with the "odd, she recognizes that the black-end-"bite vie" of the world held by her grandmother is obsolete:

*I remember you again, . . .
and your voice, musical, proverbial,
saying:
Above all else be truthful
never tell a white lie.*

*O my Gran,
life would be simple
for my children and grandchildren
if lies — black or white —
were the only barriers.*

The power of the poem is in its lament for a world that defies all advice, whether from a Polonius or an Edgar. This power accounts for her success as a poet.

Whether writing public documentaries or intimate lyrics, Livesay speaks "what we feel, not what we ought to say."

"This is the selection of poems I would like to be remembered by," she announces in the foreword. Yet this second major selection can only hint at the scope of the complete collection I envision her compiling in the future. It will include all of the favourite poems we want our children and grandchildren to remember her by. □

REVIEW

The new wasteland

By Rupert Schieder

The *Radiant Way*, by Margaret Drabble, McClelland & Stewart, 400 pages, \$24.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 2864 4).

DOUGLAS GIBSON displays his constant combination of seasoned literary judgement and shrewd business sense in selecting as one of the first of the series of "Douglas Gibson Books" this major novel by a major figure of contemporary writing. There is no denying the eminence of Margaret Drabble. Her fiction has been widely reviewed and loudly, sometimes acrimoniously discussed on both sides of the Atlantic and in the rest of the English-speaking literary world. Her numerous scripts for television end film have included that for the successful *Isadora*. Her work as a literary scholar, particularly her biography of the neglected Arnold Bennett, won ha the distinction of editing the new *Oxford Companion to English Literature* (1985). The list of her awards and honours is impressive. In this time of jet-set literary hype, her international appearances at far-flung meetings and conferences rival those of the indefatigable David Lodge. Last fall she was a shining star of the widely publicized International Festival of Authors at Harbourfront.

It is fortunate for Douglas Gibson that Margaret Drabble should have produced this particular novel, *The Radiant Way*, just when bis series was getting under way, for it is a novel that demands attention and respect. Its nine predecessors, published over 24 years, have been varied both in approach and in the level of achievement, as she has been adjusting her form to serve her very serious concerns. Ha first two, *A Summer Bird Cage* (1963) and *The Garrick Year* (1964), established the early Drabble territory: the mind of a young female graduate, intelligent, sensitively, often narcissistically self-

aware, observant, faced with the dilemma of finding a role that could combine a career, emotional freedom, with the functions of wife and mother. These, restricted to private worlds, often autobiographical, were slim hooks, covering a limited time, a slender group of characters in a narrow social and economic sphere. *The Millstone* (1966), *The Needle's Eye* (1972), and *The Realms of Gold* (1975) showed a widening of sympathies and an expanding of their social range culminating in the panorama of British society portrayed lo *The Ice Age* (1977).

While an undergraduate at Cambridge Margaret Drabble came under the powerful influence of F.R. Leavis, at the centre of whose exclusive canon of "great" novelists stood George Eliot. Her novels and those of Arnold Bennett have obviously had a part in this gradual expansion of the form of Margaret Drabble's fiction. She was quite specific last fall in naming George Eliot's finest accomplishment, *Middlemarch*, as the likely model for her next book. *The Radiant Way*, her newest, her 10th novel, is obviously that book..

Like *Middlemarch*, *The Radiant Way* is a large novel — her largest so far — so large that it is impossible to do it justice in a relatively brief review. Opening with a crowded, brilliant party on fashionable Harley Skeet in London on New Year's Eve, 1979, it ends ate small picnic one Somerset hillside in July, 1985. Between these dates in some 400 pages, Drabble, concentrating on London end "the other nation," the Midlands, has managed to pack in a detailed, documented examination of what she has called "the Thatcher wasteland": the politics of the New Right and Labour, the economic and social conditions, the cutbacks, depression, end strikes and the worlds of sociology, psychiatry, education, and art history.

From time to time some sections seem heavily loaded with illustrative detail, but it is this documentary method that produces the richness and conviction of *The Radiant Way*. Giving unity and point to this wealth of materiel is Drabble's concern about the weakening of traditional morals and manners and the resultant uncertainty and disorientation, both individual and communal. The interjection of scenes from the late 1950s and early '60s, a buoyant period of opportunity and promise, makes even bleaker her pessimistic delineation of the Thatcher years.

However, Drabble is not a historian but a seasoned novelist. She has successfully transmuted these materials into a skilfully constructed, convincing, lively novel. At the centre stand three women, middle-aged, like their creator now, who have kept in touch since their Cambridge days:

Liz, psychiatrist, Esther, art historian, and Alix, teacher at a prison for women. By combining their relations with one another, their parents, husbands, lovers, families, colleagues, patients, students, their often mundane everyday concerns, with a bizarre set of murders and the mystery of an absent father, Drabble has constructed an engrossing plot. The characters are so sharply defined that, even with so extensive a cast, each stands out clearly and memorably. It is these individuals who temper the bleakness of the wasteland. As Drabble said last fall, "I'm pessimistic about society but not about individuals." The settings, interiors, and exteriors, are graphically presented: college residences, prisons, fashionable London, depressed Midlands steelmill towns.

Holding together and giving a unity to all these heterogeneous events, people, and places is the controlling, manipulative omniscient narrator. It is this "voice" — not "modern," but a combination of the traditional and the postmodern — that fuses so successfully the novel's comprehensive scope and the intimacy of its personal relations. The reader senses the presence of a highly intelligent novelist, a professional who has worked out the form that serves her serious purposes while engrossing her readers. It is, of all the novels by this major writer that I have read, the most attractive and the most rewarding. □

REVIEW

Holier than Mao

By Patricia Morley

Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom 1800-1959, by Alwyn J. Austin, University of Toronto Press, illustrated. 395 pages, \$27.50 cloth (ISBN 0 3020 5687 3).

IT IS DIFFICULT to imagine the religious atmosphere in the late 19th century when hundreds of enthusiastic young people marched by torchlight down Toronto's Yonge Street to escort the first Canadian party of missionaries bound for China to their train. The 19th-century church took the gospel call very seriously. A contemporary song to the tune of "Bringing in the Sheaves" went: "Bringing in Chinese, Bringing in Chinese, We shall come rejoicing/Bring& in Chinese."

Such evangelical zeal when the talk was all of "saving the world" — marked the beginning of an association between Canadian missionaries and the Chinese that endured despite the Boxer Rebellion

of 1900 (when hundreds of missionaries were killed as "foreign devils") and the civil wars of the 1920s until the Communist takeover of China in October, 1949. After that, the missionary presence was seriously weakened, although a few missionaries — such as the United Church's James Endicott — survived into the 1950s.

Alwyn Austin's history of the missionary years is a fascinating portrait on a large canvas, a story of passion, devotion, carnage, fear, and hope. As he puts it, his book is "not meant to be an academic treatise on how i&es crossed the ocean and converted the Chinese — seemingly without any human agents . . . not a history of Chinese Christianity, or even of Christianity within the Chinese missions. . . . I have tried to present the Chinese not necessarily as they were but as the Canadian missionaries saw them and reported them in letters home." He accomplishes what he set out to do. end more.

Mention Canadians in China and one thinks of Norman Bethune. His story is not part of the topic in a literal sense, and Austin deals with him in a paragraph. However, the assessment is warm and generous:

It is tragic . . . that the missionary doctors could never see that Bethune's character became purified by the fires of China — just as their own had been — so that on his death he was spontaneously elevated to the rank of saint and martyr. His example, his laughter, his dedication — and even perhaps his flamboyance — inspired countless millions of Chinese to acts of selfless devotion. If for no other reason that that Dr. Bethune was Canada's greatest missionary.

Another saint in Austin's pantheon is James Endicott, who, more than any other missionary, accepted and was willing to work with the Communists after 1949. Endicott often said that he was not a Communist but a Christian, and that it was not possible to be both. Many Canadians considered him tainted, and the Endicott controversy raged in the 1950s in religious magazines. Austin's handling of the affair is discreet, but he appears to favour Endicott.

Christianity in China survived with comparative freedom until the late 1950s in three forms: an indigenous Catholic church, an indigenous Protestant one, and so-called "house churches." The Communist government initially guaranteed religious freedom, in theory if not in practice. Mission schools and hospitals were incorporated into state structures. After the Cultural Revolution, the churches fell silent until 1978. Today estimates of the numbers of Christians in China vary from an official 12-million to the 30-million claimed by evangelical churches in the West.

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Since the late 1970s, Canadian ties with China have flourished again. Austin stresses that the reopening of China has coincided with a willingness in the West to reconsider our own religious history: "We must seek to understand the nature of missionary paternalism — our paternalism — so that in our dealings with the underdeveloped nations we do not repeat the mistakes of the past."

Austin, the son of missionaries to China in the 1930s and '40s, writes as an insider, although he was only six when his parents left "Red China" in 1951. His research — which draws on accounts from former missionaries, their children, letters, and archives — is impressive, and his sympathies are reasonably balanced. His prose is clear and strong. General Odlum's letter of December, 1948, to Madame Chiang Kai-Shek is termed "sentimental claptrap," and the vagueness of a 1942 remark provokes the comment, "If Christian missionaries had not yet figured out their role after 140 years, post-war China was no place to learn."

Saving China offers a new approach to a neglected area at a time when relations between Canada and China are increasingly friendly. Some striking black-and-white photographs add to the interest of this significant book. □

REVIEW

In the mode

By Allan Weiss

Small Regrets, by David Margoshes, Thistledown Press, 144 pages, \$10.95 paper (ISBN 0 920633 19 6).

The Unsettling of the West, by Gary Geddes, Oberon Press, 95 pages, \$21.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 646 1) and \$11.95 paper (ISBN 0 88750 648 8).

Leaping Up Sliding Away, by Kent Thompson, Goose Lane Editions, 92 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 86492 080 6).

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS suggest that realism continues to be the dominant mode for English-Canadian short-stow writers. This is not to say that the techniques of metafiction, "magic realism," and other post-modernist modes have had no influence, but that many Canadian writers have adopted some of these techniques as they attempt to create believable characters in identifiable settings.

One writer who seems to have been influenced by post-modernist writing is Dave Margoshes. *Small Regrets* contains 11 stories, most of which portray the clash

between present reality and a hazily remembered past. In this conflict, romantic illusions fare poorly against harsh, sometimes vulgar, truths. In the opening story, "The Same Thing," for example, a beautiful woman sunning herself on a beach is approached by a wealthy older man. It is a scene that could have come out of a romantic novel, but then the man says straightforwardly: "I'd like to. uh, have sex with you."

By violating his readers' expectations, Margoshes denies us the luxury of depending on our memories of similar fictional situations for guidance. This manipulation of response is characteristic of post-modernist fiction, and yet the story moves toward what might be considered an epiphany, as the true natures of the characters involved in this brief relationship emerge.

Margoshes has a good eye for detail, and his stories are enriched by vivid imagery and landscapes (as in "Truckee Your Blues Away" and "Trespassers Will Be Violated") that loom ominously and sometimes border on the fantastic. As in Clark Blaise's short stories, civilization barely masks a grotesque substratum. Apart from the occasional cliché and some clumsy writing, the stories are effective and in some cases — especially "Among Strangers" — very moving.

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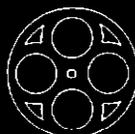
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Out of this world

By Alberto Manguel

Le Coeur Découvert: roman d'amours, by Michel Tremblay, Editions Leméac, 318 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 2 7609 3111 0).

CERTAIN WRITERS choose not to be eclectic. They circumscribe themselves to one particular aspect of the world-theme, time, and place — and dig there and almost nowhere else. In the best of cases, this results in two fortunate effects: the first, an increasing profundity in the illumination of the subject; the second, an enrichment of each new work by its predecessors.

Michel Tremblay is a clear example. The stages that lead from *Les Belles Soeurs* (1968) to *Albertine en Cinq Temps* (1985), all the way through the *Chronicles* of the Plateau Mont Royal, become progressively more incisive and daring, both in form and content. Furthermore, *Albertine* for instance, written almost 20 years after *Les Belles Soeurs*, is enhanced and explained by the memory of the despicable and famous chorus of unsatisfied women in the earlier play.

I believe that Tremblay the playwright is inseparable from Tremblay the novelist. Each new book or script is another instalment in the ongoing Tremblay saga in a menaced world, a micro-image of Quebec, closed upon itself. What matters in each new drama or novel is how much further we are taken into that world, because the further we go, the clearer it becomes that Tremblay's obsessions are in fact reflections of vast archetypal themes, closer to the Greeks than those of any other Canadian writer.

Within an *oeuvre* that comprises about 30 titles, it is not surprising to find that a few are less successful than the rest: Tremblay's early volumes of short stories, for instance, and plays such as *L'Impromptu d'Outremont* are not representative of Tremblay's genius. Neither is his latest book, *Le Coeur Découvert* which has not yet been translated into English.

The title translates both as "The Heart Laid Bare" and "The Heart Discovered," and I don't envy the translator who must find English words that convey both meanings. The plot is simple: boy meets boy. Jean-Marc, a professor of French in Montreal, meets Mathieu, a young actor. They fall in love and stay together. The end. The two characters are barely sketched; Jean-Marc, at the beginning of the book, is disappointed with the gay

Gary Geddes is known primarily as a poet and editor, but his first collection of short stories should earn him a reputation as a skilful fictioneer as well. He has based his stories "on tales of hearsay, that is, legends and gossip passed between generations." On first inspection, the collection seems quite varied, but the stories are similar in some significant ways. For one thing, their plots are strong, the narrative movement of each story maintaining the reader's interest to the last page. In a way, these are modern folktales; they may lack some of the imagistic strength of Margoshes's work but compensate by emphasizing pure story.

Geddes's stories, although narrated from the points of view of vastly different characters—an RCMP officer, a college professor, a salesman, and so on — share a distinctive voice: witty, sarcastic, cynical. It is as if Geddes has chosen to individualize his protagonists only so far, permitting his authorial personality to homogenize otherwise very dissimilar characters. Like every reciter of tales, Geddes lets something of his own voice colour his story-telling.

The pieces in this collection, thanks to Geddes's wit and narrative skills, are extremely entertaining, although he tries perhaps a little too hard to tie up loose ends of each story on the final page. One typographical point: by not justifying the last lines of some pages, Oberon Press has let its computerized typesetting system become too visible. Oberon can ill afford to let anything worsen its already dull and distressingly familiar book design.

At the opposite extreme to Geddes's traditional tale-telling and rounded form is Kent Thompson's collection of "post-card stories." As Thompson explains in his preface, the works-in *Leaping Up Sliding Away* were originally composed on postcards and sent to friends to make them "wonder." The pieces are classic examples of impressionist writing: minimalist, concentrated, and designed to suggest rather than enunciate. Most are less than a page in length, and can best be described as the germs of stories rather than stories themselves. They do reward second readings; Thompson manages to pack quite a lot into just a few paragraphs. But, as Thompson intends, the reader's response will almost invariably be one of frustration. Those brief glimpses into fictional lives are annoyingly tantalizing, and are best appreciated once the reader stops hoping for more.

All three writers display the ability to produce striking effects in few words — the hallmark of good short-story writing. To a greater or lesser degree, they use the techniques of recent experiments in the genre to explore the lives and thoughts of characters in whom we take a real interest. □

scene and has had a fleeting affair with an actor, an experience that has put him off the stage milieu (he thinks) forever. Mathieu has been married, fathered a child (now four years old), and is in search of "the right partner." After a number of false starts, their relationship blossoms — and stays that way. Minor characters provide minor distractions: Jean-Marc's gang of lesbian lady-friends on the one hand, and Mathieu's ex-wife and son on the other. But they are too flimsy to add layers of complexity to the plot. I said the plot is simple: it would be more correct to say that it is superficial.

Of course, the straightforward telling of a love affair need not be superficial: its power, like the power of all fiction, can come from both the craft with which it is told and the intuition of revelations offered to the reader. Both are lacking in *Le Coeur Découvert*. The story is unfolded by both protagonists, Jean-Marc and Mathieu, each taking turns at being the "I," the judge of their own affair. The double narrator is a device Tremblay has perfected to the point of fine art: seamlessly shifting from victim to victimizer in *Hosanna*, multiplying it in *Albertine*, subdividing it in *Les Anciennes Odeurs*. But in *Le Coeur Découvert* it is merely a device to provide a change in the style, to justify a chapter break. The voices of Jean-Marc and Mathieu are not different; they do not even illuminate one another's stories, even though at times there are comments from one on the conduct of the other. We are very far from the effect produced by the voice of the old *Albertine* reminding her younger self of the future (which is also her present). That was high drama. This, in *Le Coeur Découvert*, is chit-chat.

This superficiality is evinced in the writing itself. Parts read like a gay guide to Montreal:

It was difficult to cruise in the streets of Montreal in the early sixties Nowadays, the street has become an ideal place for pick-ups. And the easiest, as well. The meat is there, ready, for all to see, skimpily dressed even in winter. It holds sway on the Rue Sainte-Catherine and on the Rue Saint-Denis, day and night, rarely joyful. On the contrary, cruising has become a very serious occupation which must be undertaken with knitted brows.

Other parts read like the worst excesses of romantic fiction:

He drew near me and kissed me on the cheek. "In the meantime, thank you for a lovely evening. You must realize how much better it has made me feel. . . ." Thirty-nine years old and there I was, melting just because of a kiss on the cheek.

The depiction of a happy gay couple, so rare in fiction, would, we suppose, allow for a deeper exploration of the

Crimes of the heart

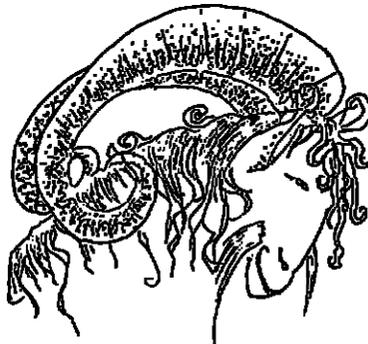
By Al Purdy

Gothic, by David Day, Exile Editions, 65 pages, \$10.95 paper (ISBN 0 920428 05 3).

The *Animals Within*, by David Day. Penumbra Press. 68 pages, 96.95 paper (ISBN 0 920806 61 9).

DAVID DAY HAS published 10 books over the past 10 years, and they are all different. Three arc-contrast& genres of poetry; two are *bestiaries* of Burroughs and Tolkien; one is a book about *extinct animals*; another an *illustrated* book of castles; still another, *The Emperor's Panda*, a children's novel; and the much earlier very suitably titled book, *Many Voices*: David Day certainly has many voices. At present he is working on a book about whales and their ocean environment.

According to Day, "one of these books has received much critical attention. I consider that extraordinary. Why not? Well, one reason might be that Vancouver Island-born Day has lived in England for several years. Perhaps out of sight out of mind, although that dictum didn't apply to Margaret Laurence or Mordecai Richler during their self-imposed exiles. Some of Day's books have been lavish, notably the *stunningly illustrated* coffee-table tome, *The Doomsday Book of Animals*, and *Castles*. A reaction against him may have set in. Or the impression may be that Day is a dilettante, a mental lightweight, a trivial oddball or whatever — I don't really know, but it seems puzzling. Whatever else, Day is certainly a



romantic, although not the Harlequin novels kind.

My 50-year-old dictionary says Gothic means "rude and barbaric." An English novel, *Cold Comfort Farm*, says it indicates "something nasty in the woodshed." I'd say "decadent brooding

manner in which such a relationship survives against all odds in the midst of a society that resents it. At its best, a solid gay relationship is a revolutionary act, contravening social norms and prejudices by flaunting its stability. But the threatening society, or any other society for that matter, is almost non-existent in *Le Coeur Découvert*. Tremblay, so immensely capable of bringing to life classes, generations, sexes, ignores all others and instead follows his amorous couple through what appears to be a magic kingdom rise" in the midst of Montreal, unblemished and unassailable.

Marivaux, with whom Tremblay shares the knack of portraying interweaving relationships, used exactly that device in *La Dispute*. He set a boy and a girl in an 18th-century "noble savage" environment for us to observe the development of a pure society outside his society. If this is Tremblay's intention, he has failed, because neither Jean-Marc nor Mathieu are (or could be.) noble savages. If it is not Tremblay's intention, then I cannot explain the absence of the outside world in their story. Nothing touches than more than fleetingly, because Tremblay has not allowed almost anything to appear in front of them. Money, neighbours, family, the church, politics, the police, are all inconspicuous. Unchallenged, Jean-Marc and Mathieu never develop. The world around them leaves them alone not because their love is so strong or the powers of this world too weak, but simply because, in *Le Coeur Découvert*, the world is not there.

Tremblay's well-deserved fame is, at least in part, based upon his ability to make us see, feel, hear the believable presence of the world he has chosen to depict. That aspect has been left aside in *Le Coeur Découvert*: Jean-Marc and Mathieu are one-dimensional. Their happiness (happiness seems to be so much less believable than unhappiness in fiction) is tested by nothing, and therefore does not matter to us. It does not even have the fairy-tale quality of extreme good and extreme evil because there is nothing to compare them to. It certainly doesn't have the superb ambiguity of Tremblay's great characters: who, in *Albertine's* world, could cast the first stone? Who can blame Edouard (in the last volume of the *Chronicles*) for trying to escape Mont Royal, and failing? Who can call Hosanna either ticked or saintly? All that can be said about Jean-Marc and Mathieu is that they are irredeemably "fin," nice.

Le Coeur Découvert lacks subtlety, ambiguity, and the richness of the established Tremblay world that forces an understanding upon us. It is instead the lengthy chronicle of a love affair between two maudlin characters set somewhere in Montreal's Cloudcuckooland. □

menace." which leaves something to be desired. (Hastily added: I don't-d&e "brooding menace" just a belter definition.) The reason for this semantic discussion is Day's latest book of poems, called with simple reticence, *Gothic*. The book is gorgeously produced with fancy paps stock and post-Beardsley drawings by Alan Lee.

Ted Hughes, the English poet laureate, says Day's poems in this book are "some sort of sexual nightmares." I agree. Shades of Poe and misty ladies wearing nightgowns in haunted landscapes with ruined castles, and a soupçon of de Sade thrown in. The tone is menacing and sardonically indulgent toward the victims, who are women in most instances. The male imagination does perform some odd exercises, but the reader must regard them as just that: exercises. Here's a short one, "The Castle":

*My dearest Rebecca
I low this place*

*All my ancestors' history is here
A murder in every room
What more could I ask for?*

*It is strange, but despite
your little infidelity
Whenever I'm here
I think fondly of you*

*I hope you find
the east wing restful*

*Right now, I'm preparing a room
for your sister*

(I wonder what Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem and Germaine Greer would think of that one.)

The poems of *The Animals within* also demonstrate Day's virtuosity, realism, and far-ranging imagination. I'm slightly involved in this book myself, since one suite of extinct animal poems was a prizewinner in the CBC poetry contest, of which I was a judge. The other two sections are called "Ravenswood" (a mixture of Gothic horror and myth), and "The Axemen" (deriving from Day's experiences as a Vancouver Island lumberjack).

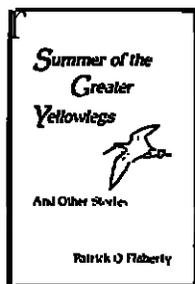
It barter the heart to think of all the tribes and congeries and hosts of harmless creatures mankind has doomed to extinction — dubbed, shot, or poisoned with chemicals. (Parley Mowat has a long book on the same subject, which simply awes one with its descriptions of human evil.) In his suite of nine poems Day writes small epitaphs for these irreplaceable citizens who have vanished from the earth. I think they are excellent poems, but the poignance is made even more vivid for me when I think of *Geochelone abingdoni*, a male tortoise of that species in the Galapagos Islands. "Lonesome George" is, or perhaps was, the last of

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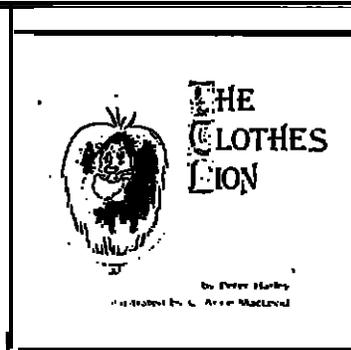
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his particular tortoise species. When I visited the Galapagos (which is the Spanish word for tortoise) in 1980, a \$10,000 reward was being offered to the discoverer of a female of the same species. There were no takers.

The Gothic "Ravenswood" section in this book is a precursor of the later and somewhat more alarming Gothic. It does not arouse any wild enthusiasm in my breast, but a more moderate take-it-or-leave-it attitude. The logging section obviously derives from personal experience, but even here we have not completely abandoned the Gothic mode: it seeps in and tinges the colouration of many poems. Other poems are as authentic as rust on a double-bladed logger's axe, or morning mist on chain saw metal — the same chain saw that screams into a hollow cedar and finds the flesh of a hibernating bear. . . .

Obviously as well, I find David Day's work a fascinating study, since my personal acquaintance and knowledge of the writer mixes with the writing itself. But whether Day is a romantic, has Gothic predilections, and whatever the many and varied subject matter of his books — these are irrelevant to the central issue: simple merit. There is a large amount of merit here., more than enough to secure the author a deserved attention. □

REVIEW

Looking beyond the landscape

By E.F. Dyck

Heading Out: The New Saskatchewan Poets, edited by Don Kerr and Anne Szumigalski, Coteau Books, 136 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 919926 57 6).

ANTHOLOGIES, LIKE group readings, are seldom either very good or very bad. With its wide range of voice, technique, and subject, an anthology is likely to appeal as a whole or in some of its parts to Everyreader. This representative individual can usually find poems incredible and terrible, in approximately equal numbers, in the representative sample that is the anthology. The great danger for the anthology therefore is that by being representative it will be average and by being average it will be dull. *Heading Out* deflects this challenge by presenting 38 new poets from Saskatchewan.

As a book, *Heading Out* is a very attractive package. Its cover is glossy without being glitzy, and if Robert Sinclair's illustration is a bit didactic given the book's title, it has the virtue of being itself excellent. Inside, the same good taste continues: a decent editors' foreword, author-alphabetical arrangement for easy reference, highly readable type, more black than white on its pages, and brief, matter-of-fact biographies that mercifully avoid archness. This is good design: it directs the reader's attention to the poems, which is surely as it should be.

The editorial policy of *Heading Out* is not quite as successful. "We have arbitrarily defined a new poet as someone who has published no more than one book of poems," say the editors, and, as a result of an apparently rigid application of an admittedly arbitrary definition, the book has some startling inclusions and exclusions. Established members of the Saskatchewan writing community of 10 years' standing qualify (for example, David Carpenter and Geoffrey Ursell); much "newer" poets who unfortunately have two books of poetry in print do not (Anne Campbell, Victor Jerret Enns, and the late Jerry Rush, among others). Every editor needs a principle of selection, but the application of any principle is better made according to the spirit than the letter.

Editorial policy really comes to the test, however, in the poems themselves: how "new" is the writing of the new Saskatchewan poets? The cover blurb to the contrary, *Heading Out* is dominated by

the prairie formula-poem. At least half of the authors represented in it write a free-verse lyric relying on some combination of an Olsonian line, regional imagery, anecdote, and colloquial idiom. Landscape in these poems functions without question as a portrait of the poet as prairie; language refers naturally to the great Other and only formulaically to itself. To the credit of the writers, these poems are competent and occasionally good. As a group, they have only one fault: whatever can be said of one can be said of all. This is enough, it seems to me, to suggest both a school and a style.

Those poems that depart from the prairie formula-poem do so by recovering additional possibilities for poetry. Here are poems on historical subjects; poems that mention or use mythology; feminist poems; prose poems; meditative poems; even parodies of the formula-poem. None of these subgenres are new, of course, and some of these poems are also prairie formula-poems. What makes this group more interesting is that the reach is farther, the engagement of the living tradition is fuller, the rhetorical stance is sometimes exploited, and a love of language augments a love of self and place. If the dominance of the formula-poem as it is practised in Saskatchewan suggests a school and a style., then the presence of these departures from formula (even to engage other formulas) suggests some poets are getting ready to move. Not further west (as the cover art implies), but further into poetry.

How the movement further into poetry is taking place for Saskatchewan writers is anyone's guess, of course, but the anthology suggests some particular routes. Lines like "The menses/flower, a rose of five days bloom," in Elizabeth Philips's "Valentine's Day," deconstruct one of the richest images of poetry. Martha Gould's "Order: Sirenia" revitalizes another ancient metaphor. Poems like Ursell's "I'm still here, but" and Rick Hillis's "Gulls Outside the Shopping Mall" (marred unfortunately by a redundant ending) exploit the rhetorical possibilities of a colloquial idiom. Elyse Yates St. George plays age against nursery rhyme in "White are the Corners of My Room." Tilden Bruce's "Tree Poem" exhibits the struggle that is language that is life: "Soon, and I am not saying/how long I am saying soon. . ." Brian Sentes's meditation on the early Wittgenstein will eventually extend to the later Wittgenstein. Examples could of course be multiplied, but in each case the note worthy element is a considered use of the power inherent in the language to reflect (not refer to) the human experience right here in Saskatchewan. For this quality alone, *Heading Out* is worth reading carefully. □

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Grime and punishment

By Douglas Malcolm

Crang Plays the Ace, by Jack Batten, Macmillan, 208 pages, \$19.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9339 2).

WHAT'S IN A job? Plenty if you're a first-time mystery writer like Jack Batten trying to pick a suitable occupation for your sleuth. Do you risk the obvious and make the hero a private detective or police officer or do you go for something more exotic but perhaps less believable? The fact that fictional actors, priests, jockeys, professors, antique dealers, and even sewage inspectors have successfully undertaken their own investigations into crime does not necessarily make the decision any simpler. But for Batten, a lawyer turned writer who has produced several books on the Canadian legal scene, the choice was easy. It is only fitting that his sleuth should be a member of the bar.

Crang, the eponymous hem, is a solo legal practitioner in Toronto who doesn't mind cutting a few corners. Most of his time is spent defending assorted small-time crooks who have been unfortunate enough to get caught. So Crang is a little surprised when he's approached by Matthew Wansborough, the snooty head of a old Toronto family with lots of loot. It seems Wansborough's cousin has invested \$300,000 of the family money in Ace Disposal Services, one of the largest waste-disposal firms in the city. (The significance of the title should now be abundantly dear.) Wansborough is worried, not because he's lost his investment but because Ace's profits are too high and he wants to know why.

Crang soon discovers that Ace is owned by Charles Grimaldi, whose father just happens to be a local mob kingpin. Enjoying playing the detective, he follows an Ace truck and finds that it takes longer at the dump's weigh scales than other trucks. Something's fishy, but Crang needs proof so he nonchalantly organizes a break-in of Ace's headquarters. (Disbarment is obviously not a major concern.) He gets his evidence but suddenly a body turns up, and he finds himself in the middle of a murder investigation. Crang needs all the ingenuity he can muster if he's to retrieve Wansborough's \$300,000 and solve the killing.

Batten, whose detailed portraits in *Lawyers* were so convincing, has the happy knack of creating distinctive and

fresh characters in a few broad strokes. Crang, who narrates the story, is attractive, witty, and unflaggingly irreverent. "I'm a Miss Manners representative," he informs one of Grimaldi's underlings. "We go door to door offering lessons in etiquette." Crang tools around town in a white Rabbit convertible (a gift from a satisfied client), loves jazz, dresses in jeans, and has a fondness for Wyborowa vodka. On the strength of this one showing and with more promised, Crang already can be considered a serious rival to Benny Cooperman and Charlie Salter.

The rest of the cast includes an aspiring young thief whose sole aim is to be "a real good break and enter man," a garishly dressed but nonetheless astute Toronto *Star* reporter, and Crang's independent girl-friend, Annie B. Cooke., who reviews movies for CBC Radio. The book's villains, like the duo who terrorize the citizenry in a pink Caddie, are as menacing as necessary.

That is not to say that all is smooth sailing in *Crang Plays the Ace*. Crang's final headlong dash into the lion's den defies reasonable notions of self-preservation. Sometimes Batten's style seems overly influenced by the current American masters of the genre. Crang's wisecracking, for example (admittedly part of the private-eye tradition), and the attention he pays to details of food and dress are strongly reminiscent of Robert Parker's character Spenser. More successful is the Elmore Leonard-inspired dialogue. By dropping words — the "did" in "You ever meet Charles?" or the "I" in "Haven't got a waiting room" — Batten makes his characters speak as if they're right off the street.

Among other bonuses in *Crang Plays the Ace* is Batten's vivid portrayal of Toronto. During the course of his inquiries, Crang visits and makes wry



observations on Bay Street ("It takes ten minutes to travel a block"), the Greek section of the Danforth ("a corner of Athens"), the Kingsway ("the oasis for rich folks in the west end"), and his own beloved neighbourhood of Queen Street West. Crang is also a restaurant junkie and he sings the praises of Joe Allen's, Scaramouche, the Rivoli, and Daniel et Daniel, which caters a delightful picnic he and Annie enjoy in Serena Gundy Park. Original characters, a colourful setting, and true-to-life dialogue, not to mention a fair measure of excitement, make *Crang Plays the Ace* a winner. □

For richer or poorer

By Morton Shulman

Hot Money and the Politics of Debt, by R.T. Naylor, McClelland & Stewart, 464 pages, \$24.95 cloth QSBN 0 7710 6707 0).

THIS BOOK tells how illegally earned money finds a safe haven, how it flows from criminals to banks and from country to country with the connivance of politicians, governments, and even the Vatican. According to R.T. Naylor it all began with Meyer Lansky's laundering of mob money, developed its sophistication with Bernie Comfeld's IOS Mutual Funds, and finally came of age with the collaboration of Swiss banks with the likes of Duvalier, Marcos, and Marc Rich.

Naylor has done extensive research and he fully ties together all the loose ends, from Michael Sindona to President Mobuto and from Margaret Thatcher to Fidel Castro, to produce his theory and his proposed solution. His theory is that the cause of the Third World's debt problem is the flow of hot money and that the major purpose of current negotiations is to whitewash the debt. He believes that the objective is to assure that the governments of the debtor countries assume obligations incurred by private companies or by corrupt public officials and that they pay off those debts by lowering their people's standard of living. Naylor's solution is to cancel the debts that he considers illegitimate — that is, those borrowings caused by the need to offset the flight of capital to safer havens.

Unfortunately, Naylor's conclusions are drawn from a rather loose connection of the facts at his disposal. For example, he explains the U.S. government's denunciation of illegal tax dodging through foreign bank havens as intended to "divert public attention from the much more massive level of tax evasion in which rich individuals and major corporations indulged at home." It is a fascinating conclusion, but there is not a shred of evidence to back it up.

More serious is *Hot Money's* statement of "facts" that are totally untrue. Thus we see this:

For reasons to do with the need to bolster her government's then sagging electoral fortunes, with lingering British imperial xenophobia, and with the desire to "demonstrate" the need for a British long-distance strike force (undermining

those calling for reductions in British military expenditure), Margaret Thatcher ordered the torpedoing of the Argentine heavy cruiser *Belgrano* after it had begun to steam away from the combat zone.

An opposition MP did accuse Thatcher of this action, but Naylor is apparently unaware that the subsequent parliamentary investigation proved the allegation to be false.

For some reason Thatcher is portrayed as a major villain throughout *Hot Money*. For example, "Just as Margaret Thatcher's post-Malvinas bellicosity in the summer of 1982 helped precipitate a property-market collapse that autumn, so her insistence in the summer of 1983 on a continued British presence in How Kong after the treaties expired helped bring on a financial crisis the next autumn." Naylor even ascribes Thatcher of initiating Britain's privatization program because "The Iron Lady's enthusiasm for generating stock market bubbles may not be completely unrelated to her own portfolio of shares."

Despite its inaccuracies and strained conclusions, *Hot Money* is fun reading, with lots of stories about the wicked amongst us. Just don't take it too seriously. □

REVIEW

Flashes of mortality

By Bay Flip

Zembla's Rocks, by Louis Dudek, Vehicule Press, 141 pages, 39.95 paper (ISBN 0 919890 72 5).

LOUIS DUDEK begins his new collection of poems, *Zembla's Rocks*, with two quotations, one from Alexander Pope:

*So Zembla's rocks (the beauteous Work of Frost)
Rise white in Air, and glitter o'er the Coast;
Pale Suns, unfelt, at distance roll away,
And on th' impressive ice the Lightnings play. . . .*

and the other from Vladimir Nabokov's navel. *Pale Fin?*: "blue inenubilable Zembla."

Zembla represents an imaginary landscape where the fabulous and the mundane meet to create something larger and higher. God, Beauty, Art lead the way up the elevations. The book is an assortment of little flashes scaling those multitudinous subjects.

Little flashes like kittens. Dudek sees "divine efflorescence" in his cat: "gentle Hilary, kitten-conscious/come to

purr, among Clod's little tea-sounds, /furrily welcome."

A McGill professor for more than 30 years, Dudek's sense of daily reality was shaped by the classroom. Dudek, the chipper scholar, can be seen in poems such as "Esse Est Percipi," "Paradiso," "Afflatus," "O Paidion," "Non Gridate Piu," "Kerygma," and "Professors," with the line: "Take you a course, get you a place.."

In "My Students," Dudek enumerated the casualties in his battle to educate: "One has committed suicide/One is in a mental institution/Two left the examination because they were sick/One is recovering from epileptic seizures/Many confused, incapable of clear thought, /have not been able to do their work/Some talk too much, some break out in skin eruptions/Many cannot speak or write/The work we do aggravates their condition."

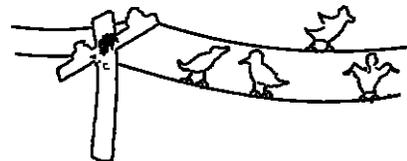
"The Retired Professor" is grade-A incidental verse. "I lecture in my dreams — a retired man/for whom life is one unending coffee break!/Death, interesting as a postman/comes walking down my street of days."

It's the didactic Dudek, the hurtful critic, who in turn gets accused of being "too academic", or "dry." Dry as gunpowder, he is a veteran campaigner against the misuse of language.

In "Bad News" Dudek attacks his favourite target, the mass media "propaganda machine," for its manipulation of minds. Ezra Pound said that "poetry is news that stays news." But the silence of poetry cannot compete with such noisy persuasion.

Love is also what the man is about. In "Love Poem" he claims he'll be glad to leave behind the "mass newspapers" announcing his death: "POET PASSES/PRESS HISSES." But he discloses to his wife: "only I'd hats to leave your world/darling/of cats, carpets, pillows, cups, plants, perfections -/the female apartment of the heart."

Death is a recurring theme, the idea of it contemplated over a lifetime, and the actual hour drawing closer. Dudek reveals the proximity of life and death, fantasy



and reality, in "The Loaded Gun," about how his mother, as a girl, playfully acted out her suicide. When she shot at herself in a mirror, she discovered the gun was loaded, and "fell in a teal swoon."

Dudek could be speculating about his own fate in "To The Poets Newly Dead."

He concludes: "perhaps this/ is what we mean by spirit, / the memory of men, an immortality/ reserved for the very few."

Tutelary spirit, great encourager, respected man of letters, Louis Dudek has not given us his grand summing up from the summit in *Zembla's Rocks*, but 141 pages of saved moments noted down with the grace of a sage. □

REVIEW

Travelling light

By Allan Weiss

Night Driving, by Peter Behrens, Macmillan, 192 pages, \$17.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 93441 4).

PETER BEHRENS'S first book contains 19 works of short fiction, but it would be difficult to classify all of them as "stories" in the traditional sense. Some are narratives that lead to no resolution of the conflicts portrayed, and many do not so much end as stop, leaving the reader with the sense that something has been omitted.

Behrens has his reasons, of course, for constructing his stories this way. His characters are almost invariably rootless and without clear direction. Their emotions are muted, to the point that they often seem to act without motivation or purpose. Not surprisingly, the action we find them engaged in most often is travelling; they drift in and out of places much as they drift in and out of the stories. Nor is it surprising that so many of the stories have place names or routes as their titles: "Outremont," "Saltash," "In. Montreal,," "I-80." The language of the works is simple and concrete, with modifiers carefully selected and kept to a minimum, as in "Almost Christmas, West Texas":

The sun was a half-inch above the horizon. The sky was pale and blue and stretched flat. The only features on the landscape were oil derricks and a row of poles strung up along the highway. The air smelled of oil-f-i-i gas.

Beneath the apparent emotionlessness of the prose is a violent undercurrent that at times breaks through the surface.

In sum, Behrens is a very Hemingwayesque writer, and exhibits both the strengths and weaknesses of Hemingway's approach. On the positive side, Behrens provides a strong sense of place, so that his varied settings are always vividly portrayed. It is no coincidence that photography and art are common motifs in the stories, in keeping with his em-

phasis on the visual. And Hemingway, Flaubert, and others have show" us how powerful writing can be when it is pared to its essentials: unity of effect can be achieved through a strict control of voice and tone as well as a strong plot.

On the other hand, if sustained too long this sort of prose becomes annoyingly monotonous, as a reader attempting to finish *Night* Driving at one sitting will quickly discover. More important, a short story with too many details that are extraneous to the plot loses its focus. Frequently in Behrens's book a well-described scene or setting that we expect will have some significance for the story as a whole proves to be simply one more in a chain of loosely connected incidents or perceptions.

Behrens's characters are thus reflected in the form that their stories take. But a familiar literary problem is at work here: should a directionless character be portrayed in a (seemingly) directionless way? One answer may be that there is no other way, although Behrens proves in his tighter pieces — such as "Jack's Grave," "Vulcan," and "Lyle" — that it can be done.

The stories in the collection derive their strength from the compelling voice that carries them from detail to detail and the poetic precision of the images. They are weakened by their diffuse action and

Behrens's unevenly maintained point of view. He proves that he is capable of re-creating scene and character very effectively; too rarely does he exercise the kind of control over his material that one would like to see. □

REVIEW

Dancing for the bears

By Ray Filip

DP: *Lithuanian Immigration to Canada After the Second World War*, by Milda Danys, Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 365 pages. 814.95 cloth QSBN 0 919845 28 6).

"DIRTY DP" was a slur that met many postwar European immigrants to Canada in the late 40s and early '50s. To those of the second-generation who grew up with parents who did not want to discuss the past, DP by Milda Danys is a welcome book.

Close to eight million foreigners, prisoners of war, forced labour draftees; and refugees from all fronts were herded into abandoned homes, hotels, schools,

and barracks inside a crushed Germany divided into four occupation zones: American, British, and French in the West, and the Soviet Union in the East. The first part of Danys's text, "War and Its Aftermath," offers valuable details about everyday life in the Displaced-Persons camps. Masters of cultural survival, the Lithuanians set up schools.

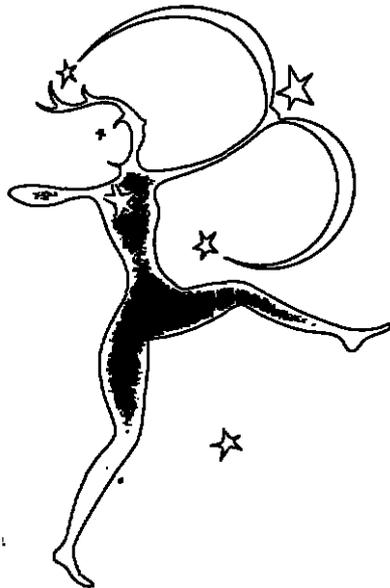
The classrooms often consisted of gasoline cans for seats, planks of wood for desks, and were surrounded by unboarded windows covered with cellophane. The teachers' monthly salary couldn't buy a kilogram of butter. And in November, 1946, the United Nations Refugee Relief Association decided not to pay teachers at all! Yet the pupils came in eager droves:

What teacher could resist students who would trade their chocolate for notebooks and pencils? And it was better to teach for nothing than to do nothing at all and so to feel oneself truly displaced. As DP's they were passive victims of world events; as teachers they were active members of the Resistance.

The black market, afloat with American cigarettes, served to balance the economy. Camps were subjected to "kratos" — shakedowns — which sometimes uncovered illegal cows or pigs bid in outbuildings.

Parts two and three of the do-en-

BLOOMSBURY



Penguin Books Canada Limited is proud to announce that, effective July 1987, it will assume Canadian distribution of the Bloomsbury line. Bloomsbury Publishing Limited, a new and independent publishing house, opened its doors late in 1986 and is causing a major stir in England's publishing circles. Publishing a wide range of hardcover fiction and non-fiction. Bloomsbury is the brain-child of four of the most respected names in U.K. publishing.

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tary deal with immigration to Canada, hailed as a "open frontier where you could "folk dance for the bears," as opposed to the stricter United States. Rather than remain trapped inside Germany, fearing the outbreak of a possible war between the U.S. and the Soviets, many Lithuanian professionals chose to slave beside Japanese and German prisoners of war in Canadian sugar beet fields or in lumber camps, gold mines, and railroad gangs. Only the best and brightest women were contracted to work as domestics for \$30 to \$35 a month — a discriminatory policy that backfired into a revolt.

Danys also mentions the quarrels between the "Old Lithuanian" communists transplanted between the wars and the new, more sophisticated *dypukai* who were labeled as fascists for fleeing. How many bowls of borscht have been spilled over those table-thumping arguments in Lithuanian households?

Among the refugees were major poets such as Henrikas Nagys. He would lose himself in poetic revelry on weekends. Monday morning, he would find himself addressing ids Montreal classroom in Lithuanian instead of English. His wife, Birute Vaitkunaite Nagys, graduate of the Vienna Academy of Music and Modern Dance, tells of having to dance in vampish Montreal cabarets, such as the Bucharest, El Morocco, Mocambo, and the Palm Café, in order to earn a living. She nevertheless pioneered modern dance in Quebec through her own studio, as well as working in television and the schools. Among her few possessions when she arrived in Halifax in 1949 were "some

dried chrysanthemums, the first bouquet she had received as a professional dancer."

The stories go on and on. This is the kind of book that should be handed down from generation to generation. Milda Danys, born in Montreal a year after her parents left the Augsburg DP camp, should be given some sort of medal for this important, well-researched, and very moving work. 0

REVIEW

Perfect hindsight

By Laurel Boone

Sounding the Iceberg: An Essay on Canadian Historical Novels, by Dennis Duffy, ECW Press, 100 pages, \$14.00 paper (ISBN 0 920763 14 6) and \$24.00 cloth (ISBN 0 920763 15 4).

AS THE POINT of departure for his theory about the development of the Canadian historical novel, Dennis Duffy borrows AI Purdy's idea that, in relation to our ancestors, we are like the living tip of a "dead iceberg below the surface of time." Duffy traces the treatment of these submerged ancestors held by three successive groups of novelists, English and French. His premise is that while individual historical novels, especially those written before about 1970, often do not stand up to critical scrutiny, as a genre they deserve respect and repay study. His organizing principle is that "the historical novel in Canada moved from a popular and revered form, to a merely popular one, and the" finally to its position among the serious fiction of our time."

Duffy ob- that 19th-century Canadian historical novels were invariably idealistic romances. He notices two families of novels: the inclusive, which predict a future built on unity and peace, and the exclusive, in which nationalism resides in the struggle for survival and unity means banding together against a common enemy. To support his thesis, Duffy discusses in detail the exclusionism of John Richardson's *Wacousta* and Philippe Aubert de Gaspé's *Les Anciens Canadiens*, and the" he shows how William Kirby in *The Golden Dog* and Gilbert Parker in *The Seats of the Mighty* wrestle conflicting historical and social elements into an inclusionist and optimistic vision.

After about 1900, Duffy contends, realism gradually replaces idealism, and the Canadian physical environment replaced the idea of Canadian nation-

hood. Exclusionist and inclusionist views remain, but exclusionist novels demand choosing the New World over the Old, and inclusionist novels show a unity not only among humans but also between humans and the natural world. Invasion themes dominate the exclusionist stories, prophecy and resurrection themes the inclusionist.

After the publication of Robert Laroque de Roquebrune's *Les Habits rouge* in 1923, Canadian historical novels tend to be more modern, with ambivalence, complexity, and realism dominating both the psychology and the actions of the characters. Finally, novels such as Philip Child's *The Village of Souls* (1933), Louis Vaczek's *River and Empty Sea* (1950), and Howard O'Hagan's *Tay John* (1974) begin to explore the question of bow, where, and at what level of understanding the inclusionist ideal of unity with the wilderness can occur.

With the 1970 publication of Anne Hébert's *Kamouraska*, Duffy says, the historical novel rejoined serious Canadian fiction. Although *Kamouraska* is usually seen as a tale of Gothic violence, Duffy points out that its "significance" as psychological and historical fiction lies in its narrative frame — Elisabeth d'Aulnieres Tassy Rolland recalling her past. If Elisabeth stands allegorically for Quebec itself, the inevitable inclusion of *Kamouraska* in the genre of historical fiction illuminates both book and genre. In "the extroverted world that attracts historical novelists," Duffy notes, "interior dispositions are less important than the exterior world's molding and curtailment of them. The modern novel is more preoccupied with the inner world. . . . All historical novels discuss collective processes of one form or another. . . . The trick to producing a good one is in the successful handling of both inward and outward matters, in producing characters at once convincing in themselves and yet representative of larger tendencies." This is the achievement of *Kamouraska*, Rudy Wiebe's *The Temptations of Big Bear*, Timothy Findley's *The Wars*, and Graeme Gibson's *Perpetual Motion*, the most important exemplars of contemporary historical fiction.

If the introduction to *Sounding the Iceberg*, Duffy declares that the pattern of development he sees in Canadian historical fiction is a product of his hindsight, and he denies intentionality to the novelists who contributed to the pattern. This statement acknowledges but glosses over the book's major weakness: with only 85 pages of text, it treats the topic inadequately. Duffy has used the principle that second-rate artistic productions tell more about the life and circumstances out of which they grow than masterpieces

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do, but he leaves entirely to others the necessary discussion of his thesis in relation to intellectual and social history. Had he explored the points at which his theory touches the rest of Canadian intellectual history, his book would have been greatly

enriched and his disclaimer would not have been necessary.

Readers who buy *Sounding the Iceberg* in spite of its inflated price "ill be rewarded, not only by the opportunity to reflect on a significant new idea in C&A-

dian literary history but also by the pleasure of reading Dennis Duffy's lucid and graceful prose. *Sounding the Iceberg* creates the same illusion as the very best lectures: that one has always known what one has just learned. □

INTERVIEW

Edward Phillips

'In the States I was told my books aren't "gay enough" to be called gay novels. I'm not unclassifiable — I'm simply trying to tell the story the best way I can'

By Nancy Wigston



FIRST-TIME NOVELIST just short of his 50th birthday, Edward Phillips "as nominated for the 1981 Books in Canada First Novel Award for *Sunday's Child* (McClelland & Stewart), praised at the time as "witty, wonderfully poised, smart-arsed and poignant." It "as followed by *Where There's a Will, another murderous comedy of manners*, and last spring saw the return of Geoffrey Chadwick, the

acid-tongued lawyer who narrates *Sunday's Child*, in *Buried on Sunday*. A self-confessed downwardly mobile product of the Westmount world about which he writes, Phillips "as educated in law, taught English in primary and secondary schools, and had "a not very illustrious career as a painter" before turning to writing. On a recent visit, he was interviewed in Toronto by Nancy Wigston:

Books in Canada: Had you always wanted to write?

Edward Phillips



Edward Phillips: No, it's not as if I had a burning desire to do it. I left teaching because I grew weary from the sheer volume of reading I had to do. Students learn to "rite by writing, so I read stacks and stacks of student essays, and I got a little read out. When I got back to reading I started to read a certain amount of Canadian fiction, and I thought a great deal of it was pretty heavy going. I wondered whether I could "rite a novel. Once I started it I loved it. I had to go through an apprentice period of course — it was a little like teaching yourself brain surgery. I "as diligent, and wrote a novel a year. It "as five years from when I submitted my first manuscript until *Sunday's Child* was published.

BiC: What sort of difficulties did you encounter during your apprenticeship?

Phillips: I realized I'd been writing a lot of vignettes — good vignettes, but they lacked a strong narrative structure. That's when I came up with the idea of the murder. I was far more interested initially in exploring the so-called male menopause. There had been a long and distinguished tradition of fiction dealing with women at this transition point — Angus Wilson's *The Middle Age of Mrs. Elliot*, Tennessee Williams's *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* — about "omen who'd gone through the menopause. their children were grown up, sometimes their husbands bad-gone off with somebody younger. I thought, men go through this too; they get to a point when they realize they aren't going to get any further in their careers, that there aren't going to be any more surprises. But I had to have a story to tell.

BiC: There are so many serious issues in your first book — the nature of love, the meaning of happiness — and they seem hung on the genre structure. Do you agree?

Phillips: Yes. I'm much more interested in the side issues.

BiC: Reviewers greeted you as a Canadian phenomenon. The Westmount character types, the acerbic humour — even the

murder in Sunday's *Child is taken lightly partly at least because the young hustler is an American. Do you see yourself as part of a tradition?*

Phillips: I see myself as writing to a tradition, but I don't think it's necessarily the Canadian tradition. The writers as a group that I admire are the female British novelists starting with Jane Austen through George Eliot and more recently Elizabeth Bowen, Muriel Spark, Margaret Drabble, Beryl Bainbridge, and Fay Weldon. These are the novelists I find the most rapport with, because they're interested in the texture of life no", and they're interested in the kind of detail that I find interesting to write about. One of the reasons I made my protagonist homosexual is not because it's a burning question but because of sensibility. I would be very bad writing a novel about a marine, unless he were presented from someone else's point of view". I'm not interested in the locker-room mentality. I tend either to "rite about women or about men who have that added dimension of sensibility. A woman will walk into a room and notice things that a homosexual will; a football player "ill not. Another thing I admire about these women writers as well is their enormous intelligence. Not only is the writing witty and poignant but there is a mind informing you. It's very enviable.

BiC: Do you see yourself as writer of satires?

Phillips: If I had to put a label on what I do, I see myself as a comic writer, as opposed to a humorous one. I think the comedy in my book tends to be a little more unkind, a little sharper, a little more unforgiving than humour.

BiC: Have you had trouble with people trying to classify your books?

Phillips: People don't know whether or not to call me a titer of mysteries. In the States I "as told my books aren't "gay enough" to be called gay novels, whatever that means. I'm not unclassifiable — I'm simply trying to tell the story the best way I can.

BiC: Do you belong to the Westmount society you write about?

Phillips: Not tremendously. Maybe that's why I can write about it. I'm certainly not a Westmount mandarin. My father came to Westmount when he was 14, from Great Britain. He had nothing going for him but drive and imagination. He was very much a fit-generation success. My mother was from Westmount, and I grew up there. The BBC series *Jewel in the Crown* was my childhood, except it was in Westmount. Fifty per cent of the people who came to my house were from the U.K.

BiC: Is there a "Westmount voice" that you've tried to capture in your books?

Phillips: There is a Westmount voice, definitely. My mother, who'd been trained a singer, used to correct our diction on words like "bureau" or "down." Regional accents fascinate me; I went to the Université de Montréal, and I used to be able to tell someone from Quebec City at 50 paces, but I haven't found a prose equivalent for the Westmount accent, and I hate the use of phonetics. I consider *Two Solitudes* the worst Canadian film for that reason.

BiC: What about the eccentric geriatrics portrayed in your books? Are those characters based on living models?

Phillips: I remember reading an interview with Margaret Atwood, and she talked about the "biographical fallacy" — that, in Canada, every character you create in a novel necessarily has to be based on somebody. People ask me, "Was the mother in *Where There's a Will your mother?*" No, she wasn't. "Are you Geoff & Chadwick?" No, I'm not. I'm not very good at making up places, so all the interiors in my books are places that I've either lived in or been a frequent visitor to, and know very well. I take imaginary people and send them up a staircase I'm familiar with.

BiC: But Geoffrey Chadwick in particular seems so real . . .

Phillips: Curiously enough, where I was at dinner last night there was a very beautiful and very friendly boxer, and the hosts had the dog tied up because Geoffrey Chadwick didn't like the sheepdog in *Buried on Sunday*. Finally I sneaked off and made friends with the dog. This is a perfect example of the biographical fallacy. Tie up a dog because the author doesn't like them because a character in a novel doesn't like them.

BiC: Chadwick has appeared in two of your three novels, are there any more Chadwicks on the horizon?

Phillips: A lot of people — particularly women — related very well to Geoffrey Chadwick. They asked if I would consider doing another Geoffrey Chadwick book. I said yes, but I'm not doing *Son of Sunday's Child*, or *Geoffrey Chadwick 13*.

I wanted to publish something else to show I could bring off a different character.

BiC: He seems to strike a chord in women then?

Phillips: Yes. I was very interested when I was doing my tour for *Sunday's Child*. If I was being interviewed by a woman I knew the interview would be favourable, because women aren't threatened by homosexuality. They could relate to the man on a much more human level. Whereas I had a couple of male interviewers who just — I don't know what they thought I was. One guy carried the book as though it was going to detonate.

BiC: In other words, under no circumstances are you to be confused with Geoffrey Chadwick?

Phillips: I think an anecdote sums up this question very well. I have a very good friend whom I've known for many years who said, when I mentioned how many people were asking me if I were Geoffrey Chadwick, "Of course you're not, he's much nicer than you are." □

LETTERS

Sin of omission

THE MOST amazing omission in *The Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English* is that of any work by John Metcalf, who has written some of the very best stories ever published in this country. I'm surprised your reviewer (January-February) didn't mention this. Here is a major short-story writer who has done so much to promote short-story writing in Canada. But it's not just that he deserves to be in the anthology. It's the readers who deserve to get the pleasure of one of his stories. I really hope it's possible they will, in the second edition.

Alice Munro
Clinton, Ont.

NO RESPECT

IN REPLY TO the letters in the January-February issue, I did not end my review of Irving Layton's *Dance With Desire* (November) with "O, shut up." The original version I had submitted concluded with the line: "The man has written some potent poems — of which this book is short."

My text was also shortened by editorial decision. Layton's powerful poems are the ones that deal with his Jewish heart, not his you-know-what. A collection of those would have merited my praise. Layton has made a career out of insulting people, posing as the *enfant terrible*. At 74, he is still permitted to be "rude,"

"offensive," "flippant," "immature" — adjectives that were hurled at this reviewer!

If Layton can dish it out, he should be able to take it, and so should his fans who naively consider a disrespectful puffball to be one of our "most respected" poets."

It all makes for lively reading, which is what *Books in Canada* tries to provide, and what we need more of to "build a viable cultural community in this country."

Ray Filip
Verdun, Que.

OUR MISTAKE

I AM WRITING with reference to a review of our publication *Four Went to the Civil War* by Douglas Glow in the August-September issue.

I may disagree on certain matters of Glover's opinion of the book, but on the whole he reveals keen perception and remarkable understanding. But one gross error has been brought to my attention: the matter of the price of the book. Glover refers to "McBain Publishing" and "\$28.95 papa," whereas in fact it should have been "McBain Publications, Inc." and "\$14.95 paper; 528.95 hard-cover Limited edition."

John McBain
McBain Publications Inc.
Kitchener, Ont.

ANA ONE, ANA TWO . . .

YOUR REVIEWER, Terry Goldie ("Smaller Than Life," December), did not know an *ana* from a *anus* until I gave my papa on 18th-century *ana* to about 20 members of the department of English at Memorial University on Oct. 17, 1986. The use for publication of ideas scavenged from a desperately underprivileged and much older woman colleague is not accommodated by his writing me a disingenuous little private note, after the fact, saying he should have given me a footnote. Dam! his footnote. Is there any way of persuading him to drop, forever, that shallow vulgarity of tone that characterizes his reviews and is epitomized in remarks such as "for those of you not steeped in literary history"?

Elizabeth McGrath
St. John's, NM.

RECOMMENDED

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

NON-FICTION

The *Harvest Of Sorrow: Collectivization and the Terror Famine*, by Robert Conquest, University of Alberta Press. Long sap-

pressed through Soviet disinformation — abetted by Western writers and intellectuals allied with the “revolutionary homeland” — Stalin’s systematic starvation of at least five million Ukrainians in the famine year 1932-33 is painstakingly recounted in thankfully calm, unhurried, and measured style.

POETRY

Private Properties, by Leona Gom, Sono Nir Press. A few of Gom’s poems focus on the sexual war that we will eventually weary into cliché, but she renders them in a fresh, quintessentially feminine, and subversive way. Her book is witty, playful, and sardonic all at once.

RECEIVED

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

Albatross in Five Times, by Michel Tremblay, translated by John Van Buren and Bill Glasco, Talonbooks.
Allies Springs, by Beth Learn, Learn/Veats & Co.
Anytime Stories, by Leo Sawicki, illustrated by Michael Robinson, Penumbra Press.
Art and Reality, edited by Robin Bleser and Robert Duncan, Talonbooks.
Achternach, by John Reibetanz, Signal Editions.
The Asro Canada C102 Jelliner, by Jim Floyd, Boston Mills.
A Beel: Room in Somers Town, by John Malcolm, Totem.
End Money, by A. M. Kabal, Irwin.
Part 3 Breadfoot and Peplin the Short: A Merovingian Romance, by Barbara Goldberg, Porcupine’s Quill.
The Bibliography of Literary Writings by Blacks in Canada, edited by Lewis Elliott, Williams-Wallace.
Eis Plans, by Paul de Barros, Talonbooks.
L’Hort-Dufferin in Pictures, by Cynthia Patterson, et al., Toronto Public Library.
The Bones of Their Obsession, by Jerry Rush, Cormorant Books.
Canads in Space, by Lydia Dotto, Irwin.
Canadian Financial Markets, by W.T. Hunter, Broadview Press.
The Canadian Import File, by G.E. Salenblat et al., Institute for Research on Public Policy.
Clor: Fursult, by Carsten Stroud, Viking.
Crédits-de-débit-actes, by Alma Criddle, Friesen.
The Darling Game, by Kit Pearson, Penguin.
The Darkest Road, by Guy Gavriel Kay, Collins.
The Dangling of the Colours, by Gail Fox, Oberon.
Dinosaur Provincial Park, by Gordon Reid, Boston Mills.
The Dream Auditor, by Lesley Choyce, Indivisible Books.
Dreams and Desires, edited by Nuzrat Yar Khan, Canada-Pakistan Association.
Decans of an Unseen Planet, by Teresa Flowright, Arbor House.
Everything that Floats, by Willan Kaplan, U of T.
Exit Home, by Lake Sagars, Cormorant Books.
The Exiled Heart, by Don Guttenberg, Oberon.
The Fabulous Disguise of Ourselves, by Jan Cohn, Signal Editions.
The Financial Post Selects the 100 Best Companies to Work for in Canada, by Eva Jones et al., Totem.
Fireced, by Margaret Ruess, illustrated by Roberta Mebs, Barnes & Norton.
First Principles, Second Thoughts: Aboriginal Peoples, Constitutional Reform and Canadian Statecraft, by Bryan Schwartz, Institute for Research on Public Policy.
Fives & Sixes, by John V. Hicks, Porcupine’s Quill.
Fortunes in the Grounds: Cobalt, Porcupine & Kirkland Lake, by Michael Barnes, Boston Mills.
Founders, by Ernest Stabler, U of Alberta.
Free the Shadows, by Luis Posse, Talonbooks.
From Iceberg: The Story of Bilingual in Canada, by William Humber, Boston Mills.
From Glad to Satellite, by Gordon W. Thomas, Irwin.
The Glass Bottom Boat, by David Gilmour, NC Press.
Goodnight Disgrace, by Michael Mercer, Talonbooks.
Green Side Up, by Wesley R. Porter, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Guide to Watching Whales in Canada, by M. Beaton, Department of Fisheries and Oceans.
Hungary and Suez 1956, by Escott Reid, Mosaic.
The Hollow Woman, by Simon Ritchie, Collier Macmillan.
I Met Murder, by Elizabeth Ferraro, Totem.
In Particular, by Clid Coesman, Cormorant.
In the Silliness Dancing, by Neil McKenty, Darton, Longman & Todd.
Incapable, by David Young, Coach House.
The Invisible Woman of Washington, by Diana G. Collier, Clarity Press.
Jacques & Hay: 19th Century Toronto Furniture Makers, by Ruth Cuthbert, Boston Mills.

CANWIT NO. 119

WE HAVE IT ON impeccable authority that in Irish slang “to be Mulroneyed” means to be fleeced. Contestants are invited to coin and define other appropriate terms of endearment based on the names of prominent politicians and other well-known Canadians, living or dead. The prize is \$25. Deadline: May 1. Address: CanWit No. 119, Books in Canada, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9.

Results of CanWit No. 117
WHOOFS. MAYBE February was too depressing. Whatever the case, the

response to our request for domestic riddles suggests that these days Canadians aren’t finding much to laugh about. The winner is Barry Baldwin of Calgary for a jaundiced list of jokes that includes:

Why did Paul Hellyer cross the road? To join a new party.

What melts faster than snow? Conservative majorities.

Why is Sinclair Stevens such a bad friend? You can’t bank on him.

What happens when two Tories meet? They form three dissident party factions.

SOLUTION TO CANLIT AGROSTIC NO. 4

Reindeer, here, seal and the famous canned muktuk . . . , mipku . . . , the rich pemmican . . . is all good Canadian fare to the people of the north although not readily available to everyone, nor indeed acceptable to most of our delicate palates.

— Jehane Benoit, The *Canadiana Cookbook* (Pagurian Press)

Jeremy Gates and the Magic Key, by Janet Craig James, Penumbra.
John and the Missus, by Gordon Plesent, Dell.
Last Chance Summer, by Diana J. Weller, Prairie Books.
The Last Hunter, by Fred Coderberg, Stoddart.
Legal Terminology, by Daniel Williman, Broadview Press.
Legs et Bison/Legs and Bison, by Frances Cherry and Corinne Tonnai, Penumbra.
Liability Insurance, by David Gill, Fraser Institute.
Little Sitch, by Margaret Banel Edwards, illustrated by Judi Penanen, Penumbra.
The Mangoo Inheritance, by Brian Moore, M & S.
Maximal Aerobic Power, by R.L. Mirwald and D.A. Bailey, Sports Dynamics.
The Medical Aspects of Dance, edited by Donna Peterson et al., Sports Dynamics.
Mother, I’m so Glad You Taught Me How to Dance, by Nancy Kasper, Williams-Wallace.
My Round Table, by Sparling Mills, Herring Cove.
Names of God, by Tim Liburn, Oolichan Books.
The Night the Gods Smiled, by Eric Wright, Totem.
No Contingencies, by Ayanna Black, Williams-Wallace.
One Night at the Indigo Hotel, by Robert Allen, Cormorant.
One-Eyed Merchants, by Kathleen Timms, Totem.
The Papers of Samuel Marchbanks, by Robertson Davies, Totem.
Phallops, by Eugene Monick, Inner City Books.
The Plains of Cronus, by Samuel Selvon, Williams-Wallace.
Port Dalhousie Ghost & Ship & Sealing Wax, by Dorothy Turcotte, Boston Mills.
Portraits of Canadian Catholicism, by M.W. Higgins and D.R. Letson, Griffin House.
The Power to Move, by Susan Gilkman, Signal Editions.
The Pyrate Latitudes, by Gordon Rodgers, Creative.
The Radical Papers, edited by Dimitrios I. Roussopoulos, Black Rose Books.
Random Descent, by Katherine Govier, Penguin.
Relations, edited by Kenneth Sherman, Mosaic.
Religion, Economics and Social Thought, edited by Walter Block & Irving Herham, The Fraser Institute.
The Religious Body, by Catherine Aird, Totem.
Retiring to British Columbia, Newport Bay Publishing.
Riding High, by Colleen Rutherford Archer, Penumbra.
The Role of Interuniversity Athletics, edited by A.W. Taylor, Sports Dynamics.
Schedules of Silence, by J. Michael Yates, Pulp Press.
The Sky Hungs Low, by Jens Rosing, translated by Naomi Jackson Groves, Penumbra.
Signs of Literature, by Kenneth James Hughes, Talonbooks.
Slow Mist, by Vincenzo Alanesse, Cormorant.
Solidarity: The Rise & Fall of an Opposition in British Columbia, by Brian D. Palmer, New Star Books.
Some Friends of Mine, by Ernesto R. Cuevas, Williams-Wallace.
Some of Eve’s Daughters, by Connie Gault, Coteau.
The Sparrow’s Fall, by Fred Bodsworth, M & S.
Spirit in the Rain Forest, by Eric Wilson, Totem.
Squatter’s Island, by W.D. Barcus, Oberon.
Stalin, by Kenneth Neill Cameron, NC Press.
Steven Is Kennell, by Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, translated by Ray Chamberlain, Esie.
Still Living Together: Recent Trends and Future Directions in Canadian Regional Development, edited by William J. Coffey and Mario Polèse, Institute for Research on Public Policy.
Stealing the Moon, by Carolyn Smart, Oberon.

The Story of Firefighting in Canada, by Donald M. Baird, Boston Mills.
Take a Giant Step, by Myra Paperny, Overlea House.
The Tent Peg, by Aritha van Herk, M & S.
Three Meanwhile Poets, by David Walker-Toews, et al., Good Books.
The Tiger in the Tiger Pit, by Janette Turner Hospital, M & S.
A Time for Loving, by Riemzi Cruz, TSAR Publications.
The Total Fibre Book, by Margaret Fraser and Helen Bishop MacDonald, Grosvenor House.
Translating Genesis, by Deborah Godin, Penumbra.
Under the House, by Leslie Hall Pinder, Talonbooks.
Vipil, by Roberta Morris, Williams-Wallace.
Waterfowl Decoys of Southwestern Ontario and the Men Who Made Them, by R. Paul Britton, Boston Mills.
What Peace Means to Me, External Affairs Canada.
When Freedom Was Lost, by Lorne Brown, Black Rose Books.
Yukon Water Doctor, by Monty Alford, Burns & Morton.

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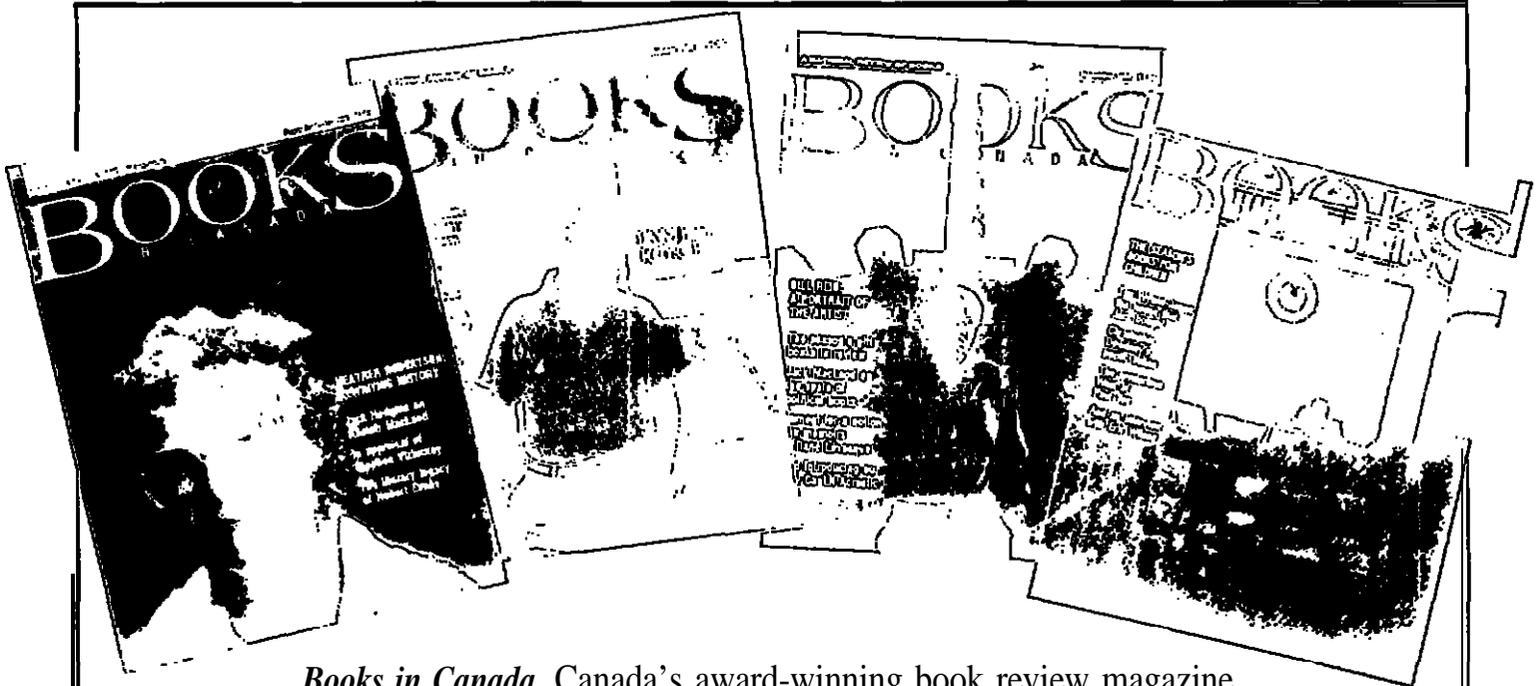
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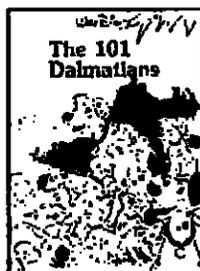
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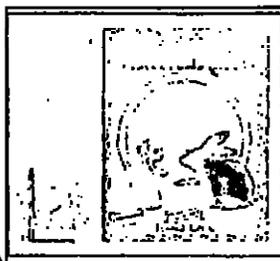


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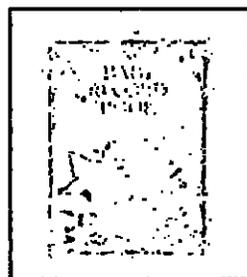
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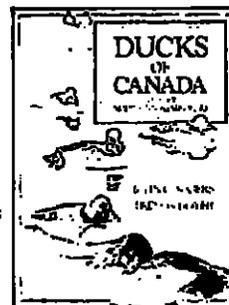
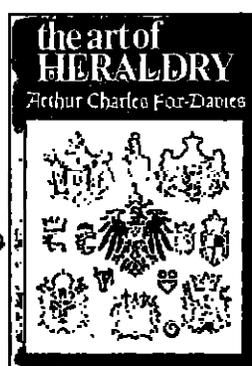
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