

# BOOKS *in* CANADA

a national review of books

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 2

FEBRUARY, 1976



## THE LURE OF THE THIRTIES

George Woodcock discusses

## THE DECADE THAT WON'T GO AWAY

PLUS REVIEWS BY: Myrna Kostash; Donald Swanson; Marilyn Powell; Dennis Duffy; Gary Michael Dault; Jim Christy; Louise Dennys; and Gwendolyn MacEwen

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Cover: acrylic by Myfanwy Phillips  
Frogography throughout the issue by David Gilhooly

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# ANCESTRAL VOICES

CanLit's fascination with the 1930s is more than a fad; it's one bread decade reaching back to another

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By GEORGE WOODCOCK

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THE REAL REVIVAL of interest in the 1930s, a revival both literary and historical, did not come in the politically turbulent 1960s but in the economically perilous 1970s. This is more appropriate than at first sight it looks. The resemblances between the 1930s and the 1960s were in fact superficial and deceptive. The ferment of the 1930s developed among the have-nots of the Western world rebelling against a society that forced them into a hopeless cycle of idleness and poverty; the middle-class Communist-leaning intellectuals were merely the froth on top of the brew. The ferment of the 1960s, at least in North America and Western Europe, developed out of the rejection of a smug, affluent and discriminative society by the middle-class youth who were its scions. The 1930s ended in the great quixotic adventure of Spain, followed by the cataclysmic outbreak of the Second World War. The 1960s ended with an Eliotian whimper; those who protested in that decade fought their battles safely in the streets of Washington and Paris, and there were no grand heroic and gory set pieces in which the spirit of the age could find a permanent lodging in the imagination, as the spirit of the 1930s did in the defence of Madrid and the bloody battles of the Jarama. There was less posing in the 1930s because there were fewer escapes, fewer comfortably off daddies to help one out when the rebel's life began to pall; the only general escape from poverty in the 1930s was by the way we all dreaded, the way of the war that eventually came.

I have long felt in the marrow of my thoughts that the present decade is much nearer in its nature and its doom to the 1930s than the 1960s ever was. The 1960s was essentially a political decade, with all the rhetoric and shams of the political game, concerned with roses, not with bread. But the 1970s is a bread decade; it goes back to the economic anxieties that were the true driving force of the 1930s, the force that gave the politics of that era its formidable actuality. We are likely to get even nearer to the 1930s as our decade drifts deeper into economic crisis, and the benefits of the welfare society, on which so many of our people have become pathetically dependent, begin to wither away. We shall have genuine, popular movements of rebellion based on widespread, deepening and irreversible poverty, movements aggravated by the fact that politicians and labour leaders will try to hide from their followers the catastrophe of failing resources that makes the end of general affluence inevitable. At the same time, we move over into the second half of our decade with the feeling that local wars will escalate as they did during the latter part of the 1930s, in China, in Ethiopia, in Spain, in Central Europe; the feeling that we may well not see the 1970s out without some wider conflict whose unknown horrors we begin to dread as the men of the 1930s dreaded the war that from early 1937 seemed inevitable to any man with a fraction of political insight. I am not prophesying that we shall indeed reach Armageddon by the end of the decade, but the fear of it is already real; it is a factor in the way many people plan

their lives, and it makes us more inclined than we might otherwise have been to explore and even to identify with that hauntingly similar era of the 1930s.

This half-conscious sense of historical *déjà vu* as we live on through our puzzling decade is what makes the current flow of books on the 1930s, or located chronologically in the 1930s, something more than a passing fad or a fashion thought up by publishers and book columnists. But there are, of course, other factors related to the cycles in which societies and individuals move. We are all inclined to reject the world of our fathers; the grandpaternal world, which our fathers rejected, interests us and arouses our sympathy. During the 1930s, I remember, we became enthusiastic for the 1890s, rediscovering such poets as Lionel Johnson and Arthur Symonds, making a cult of Beardsley, and flocking to see John Gielgud in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Now, once again 40 years after, the 1930s themselves move into the focus of a lapsed generation, and become, for the great majority of Canadians, the age of the grandfathers, which they themselves never saw and hence can enter as *terra incognita*.

Yet the penultimate generation is never entirely detached from the present; we are linked to the 1930s, for example, in a way we are no longer linked to the 1890s because the grandfathers survive, and, indeed, have reached that plateau of achievement and leisure from which they can look back and down upon their past selves and either write their autobiographies or talk to their biographers. The increasing racket of Time's winged chariot drawing near is a notable stimulus to recollection and most men who think their lives

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interesting are likely to sit down just about a generation after they burst into the public eye and sum it all up — as many Canadians whose careers began in the 1930s are now doing, for the benefit of the historian, or the footnoter, or the termite.

If one wanted to mark a beginning of this trend, so far as it has manifested itself in Canadian publications, it would probably have to begin a little while back, with such books as Barry Broadfoot's *Ten Lost Years*, which charted a people's memories of the Depression, and Heather Robertson's *Grass Roots*, which was in fact a reportage on present-day Prairie communities, but which kept one's thoughts directed always back towards the 1930s, the age of classic endurance and occasional rebellion, against which the decadence of contemporary Western small towns had to be measured.

What interested me about these two basic texts, as soon as I saw them, was the extent to which they not only re-viewed the 1930s as a thematic concept, but also reverted to typical 1930s methods. *Ten Lost Years* was a book with an editor, but without an author in the ordinary manner, for Broadfoot wrote only the most exiguous of explanatory bridges between the statements he had gathered patiently and over a long period from the survivors of the Depression years. Now the idea of presenting a social situation or problem through a melange of unscholarly and unliterary voices — the presumed voices of experience — was typical of the 1930s and its populism; it had certainly never before been tried to the same extent. It was during the 1930s that an exciting and now almost extinct genre, the radio documentary, was developed; it was the time also when that pioneer public opinion poll, Mass Observation, was started by a group of poets in England (the present writer among them) who hoped eventually, by gathering the thoughts and impressions of ordinary people, to develop some kind of collective art. (The only actual collective work to emerge out of the movement, so far as I can remember, was the famous and dreadful Cambridge Mass Poem, put together by a group of leftist undergraduates.) At the same time the surrealists were developing in the visual arts the related technique of montage, putting together a work out of found objects that would present a pattern of evocative associations, with the artist only as arranger.

*Ten Lost Years* was in fact one of the most effective compilations of this kind I have seen, and certainly better than anything in the same genre that appeared in the 1930s itself, perhaps because it was a gathering of recollections

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***Margaret Prang's N.W. Rowell ... provokes one to speculate how different the 1930s might have been if R. B. Bennett had been opposed by this man of harsh principle instead of by the Grand Manipulator.***

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smoothed and shaped by the tides of more than 30 years of living rather than a collection of new impressions. Wordsworth's phrase about "emotion recollected in tranquillity" defines the making of good history as well as good poetry, and in its own way *Ten Lost Years* is good history, and as populist as you can get.

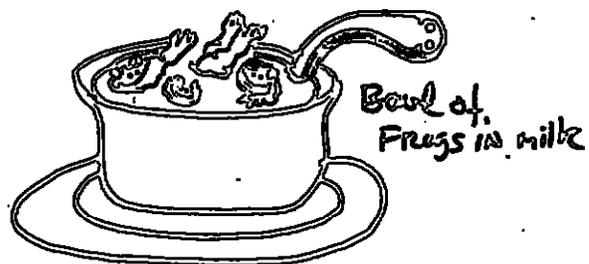
The 1930s was also the age when reportage became recognized as literature, with Gide's exposures of the Congo and Soviet Russia, with James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (its materials were gathered in the 1930s although the book did not appear until 1941), and with George Orwell's *The Road to Wigan Pier* and *Homage to Catalonia*. Heather Robertson, in her books and her journalistic essays, has shown herself very much in the tradition of Agee and Orwell, using the same combination of sharp observation, ironic yet compassionate judgment, and clear vigorous language. Beginning with deep immersion in the popular milieu she seeks to portray, she recognizes that her role can only be that of the observing stranger, but takes full advantage of the detached perceptions that position offers. The Prairie towns as she shows them have nothing to do with the new Prairie world of oil and agribusiness. They are the expiring remnants of the places that survived with such courage a generation ago. Their tragedy is that the urbanization of Canada is destroying the farm-based culture that was invulnerable to drought and depression.

Another characteristic of the 1930s in literature was the tendency of reportage and personal recollection to merge into fiction. Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* and Christopher Isherwood's Berlin books were of this kind, rearranged fact mingling with actual fiction, and there are some Malraux novels about the Far East in which it is extremely hard to tell where the author as witness merges with the author as inventor. Among Canadians, Hugh Hood has always seemed one of these intermediate writers, part journalist, part autobiographer and part novelist, good at presenting the physical processes of doing and living, but not so good at charting the interior monologue; adept at recreating the surface texture and even the moral flavour of the world in which people as characters move, but not so adept at creating characters with plausible motivations or emotions. After reading any Hood book, the people soon fade from one's memory, but their physical activities remain in the mind with a curious disembodied vitality, while the settings — in describing which Hood relies so heavily on personal recollections — are the most durably memorable of all. One is finally left with an image of vividly conceived townscapes inhabited by hands doing interesting things but incongruously attached to shadows.

With talents and interests thus slanted towards the documentary, Hood has allowed his admiration of Proust to lead him into the planning of a 12-volume fictional cycle, to be entitled *The New Age / Le nouveau siècle*, over which for the next quarter of a century he will toil in his equivalent of the celebrated cork-lined room. *The Swing in the Garden* (see December, 1975, issue of *Books in Canada*), which tells of his hero Matthew Goderich's boyhood in Toronto of the 1930s, is the first of the cycle.

There are others of us who have read and re-read Proust with the haunting ambition of equalling his feat, and while the more sporting of us will wish Hugh Hood well, we are likely to be sharp and captious critics. Certainly, viewed from my particular Proustian way, *The Swing in the Garden* seems to move on a level nearer to Jules Romains than to the master of the Faubourg St. Germain, for if the kind of grand neo-Platonic themes so evident in Proust are working in Hood's mind, they are not clearly present in his novel, while the profusion of material detail which in Proust is so admirably used to reinforce the strong psychological patterning of *A la recherche du temps perdu* seems, in *The Swing in the Garden*, to be laid on for its own sake or at best to give a kind of impasto effect to the background. And — in this volume at least — fascinating major characters of the stature of Swann and Odette and Madame Verdurin and the Baron de Charlus do not even begin to show on the horizon. There are some amusingly drawn minor characters, but Matthew Goderich is a twit and a bore.

His setting, however, is far from being a bore, and if one looks at *The Swing in the Garden* as an evocation of what Toronto was like in a child's eye view of the 1930s and as an account of what shabby genteel people threatened with failure did there, it is prime Hood — a writer doing well



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what he does best, and astonishing one both by the vividness with which he recollects the places of his childhood and the care with which his research has filled in the gaps.

Another kind of fiction that became popular during the 1930s was the novel of picaresque escape. J. B. Priestley's *The Good Companions* was the exemplar in this genre, gaining great popularity because the roving life of his band of players presented a colourful and relatively carefree alternative world into which his readers could escape from the hard realities and threatening prospects of the Depression years.

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*While Douglas remained among the people he knew, either in Weburn or Regina, he was passionately involved in genuine human problems, and managed to achieve some genuine solutions.*

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Now, in a novel that looks back into the 1930s, *It's All Free—On the Outside*, (McClelland & Stewart, 175 pages, \$8.95) Ann Henry presents the same pattern, with a twist. Zenith O'Brien, daughter of a sporadically employed St. Boniface radical, working as a waitress at survival level, is attracted by the chance of a job in a circus, and goes off in the hope of earning enough to complete her education. She finds her way into the complex microcosm of a large travelling show, learns the circus people's strange pride, shares their contempt for the "marks," and is expelled because she breaks the hard rules of sexual propriety by which the circus sustains itself from destructive internal dissensions. She departs, disillusioned and as poor as when she joined the circus. And the moral is evident: there are no "Good Companions" escapes from reality.

One way in which the 1930s is being little imitated today is in the field of poetry. There is socially conscious poetry around, to be sure; Milton Acorn and Tom Wayman are obvious examples. But the peculiar flavour of the kind of English poetry specially associated with the 1930s is probably unrepeatable, so closely was it linked to a particular stage of transition in the British class structure. But we can still look back on the poets of the time with an interest that in recent years has tended to grow. The latest product of that interest is a massive book, *The Poetry of the Thirties* (Doubleday, 445 pages, \$19.50), by a Canadian scholar, A. T. Tolley. I use the word "scholar" deliberately, since Tolley is an historian and commentator rather than a critic and when he does attempt criticism his insights are not especially brilliant. Still, *The Poetry of the Thirties* is perhaps the most comprehensive book on the subject to date, and especially useful because it does not restrict itself to the big four of Auden, Spender, MacNeice and Day Lewis, but draws in nearly 50 poets, some of whom up to now have had very little critical attention. However, Tolley's book suffers because, having given so much, he does not give all; there are many interesting poets of the time left out, including curiously — as Julian Symons pointed out to me the other day — the Canadians who played a part in the English 1930s movement.

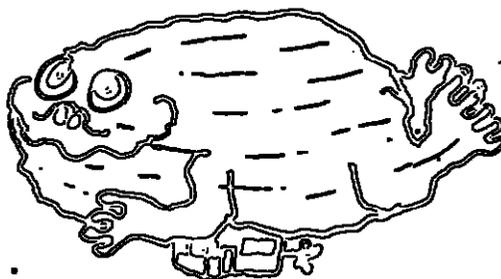
Shifting muses from poetry to history (which the Greeks wisely included among the arts), the inclination to focus around if not directly on the 1930s is evident in political biography. Mackenzie King gains in bulk if not in stature as a figure in Canadian history, and King's decisive decade in terms of attaining power was the 1930s. Success always looks, in afterthought, inevitable, yet there was a point

when King's succession to Laurier was challenged by a man who now is almost forgotten, N. W. Rowell, who threw his chances away because he was too straight-grained a WASP puritan. Margaret Prang's *N. W. Rowell* (U of T Press, 554 pages, \$25), the first study of him, is a major political biography, and it provokes one to speculate how different the 1930s might have been if R. B. Bennett had been opposed by this man of harsh principle instead of by the Grand Manipulator. In the event, Rowell made his own mark on the 1930s through the Rowell-Sirois Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations, whose findings the provinces of Canada have been disputing ever since.

The 1930s was Diefenbaker's decade in the wilderness, the long time of testing when he tried often for office and failed, but in the process absorbed all the frustrations of depression-battered Prairie Canadians, so that out of this osmosis in defeat emerged the charismatic radicalism that would take him to victory in later decades and make him even in his lifetime a figure in Canadian mythology. *One Canada* (November issue), the first volume of his memoirs, makes clear the vital role of the lean 1930s in shaping the populism that for the past two decades has shifted Canadian Conservatism uneasily to the left of Canadian Liberalism.

Depression Saskatchewan produced not only the populist Conservatism of John Diefenbaker, but also the peculiarly Canadian socialism of Tommy Douglas, and during the 1930s it became the seedbed of the CCF, out of which Douglas was elected federally in 1935, five years before Diefenbaker. Not until 1944 did Saskatchewan return to power under Douglas's leadership the first nominally socialist government in North America. But the years of the 1930s, welding farmer and worker together in common frustration, had prepared that result, and it is likely that, if the Second World War had not intervened, Saskatchewan would have come under CCF rule before the end of the Depression decade.

Doris French Shackleton's *Tommy Douglas* (McClelland & Stewart, 333 pages, \$12.95) is not only the first biography of a man of whom it might be said, as Orwell said of Gandhi, "compared with the other leading political figures of our time, how clean a smell he has managed to leave



*The Hidden Froggy*

behind!" It is also a book written from the inside, in the sense that Doris Shackleton is Saskatchewan born and bred, and has retained, during a long exile in Ottawa, a real feeling for the place and the people out of whose midst Tommy Douglas emerged.

One day someone will sit down to trace the special role in Canada of ministers in the British dissenting tradition. In England there was a historic connection between Chapel and Labour (as distinct from Church and Toryism), but in Canada the link between the free church ministries and cultural and political movements became much broader. One remembers Egerton Ryerson and Salem Bland, one thinks

of the Canadian literary pastors without congregations such as E. J. Pratt, Northrop Frye, and Desmond Pacey, and finally one comes to the role of such ministers as J. S. Woodworth and Tommy Douglas in shifting Christian ethics out of the Prairie churches into the world of politics, and in the process liberating Canadian socialism from the doctrinaires and the authoritarians.

*Tommy Douglas* is not — even nominally — an autobiography, and I am not sure how far it can be classed as an official biography. But Doris Shackleton has certainly had virtually unlimited co-operation from Douglas, from his family, and from his Prairie associates in providing information and enduring interviews. There has been no shortage of material, and the main question has been the usual biographer's problem of what to discard and how to arrange what remains. Mrs. Shackleton has not been very good at discarding. She has not assimilated her source material adequately, and has adopted little visible discipline of arrangement, so that the narrative line in her book is weak, and she has relied much too greatly on anecdote, with the result that the earlier years of Douglas's career, when he was a fledgling minister and apprentice politician, and thus closer to the people who observed his idiosyncrasies, are much richer in human interest than the years of success when Douglas tended to become lost in the great isolator of Ottawa.

All this makes for a very lop-sided biography, though it does show in a salutary way how a deep immersion in politics withdraws a man from real life. One has constantly the feeling that while Douglas remained among the people he knew, either in Weyburn or Regina, he was passionately involved in genuine human problems, and managed to achieve some genuine solutions; but that when he turned to federal politics and became involved in national and international matters, he became as ineffectual as good men fallen among thieves usually are.

One of Shackleton's problems undoubtedly has been that her personal respect for Douglas the man has been supported by little political sophistication. She seems to have tried to make up for deficiencies by hard reading, but the result is a very naive presentation of contemporary socialist theory (mainly derived from Michael Harrington, an American who knows virtually nothing of socialism in Canada) combined with a biased view of Canadian radical history marked mainly by a rooted antagonism towards Walter Young's pioneer history of the CCF, *Anatomy of a Party*. *Tommy Douglas* is in fact an amateurish work that is likely to be regarded in the future as a useful if badly arranged source book rather than as a definitive biography.

Other recent books closely linked with the recent surge of interest in the 1930s include Ivan Avakumovic's *The Communist Party in Canada* (June issue), Morley Torgov's fragment of autobiography, *A Good Place to Come From* (April issue), Paul Kligman's autobiographical novel, *It All Ends Up in a Shopping Bag* (April issue), Harry Pollock's novel *Gabriel* (January, 1976, issue), Lita-Rose Betcherman's *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf* (January, 1976, issue), and a dozen or so semi-academic studies of the labour and social-reform movements.

Included in this last group is Evelyn Dumas' *The Bitter Thirties in Quebec* (Black Rose Books, 151 pages, \$3.95), which is slightly misleading in its title, since it actually takes us through the history of Quebec strikes from the beginning of the 1930s into the mid-1940s and the end of the Second World War. Apart from telling the history of a number of little-known industrial disputes, the main aim of

*The Bitter Thirties in Quebec* is to dispel the now commonly held belief that labour militancy in Quebec began with the great asbestos strike of 1949, during which the alliance of Trudeau, Marchand, and Pelletier was first formed.

Evelyn Dumas does put a good case for a tradition of labour discontent and militant trade unionism stretching well back into the 1930s. As she points out, there were no less than 667 strikes in Quebec between 1931 and 1946, an average of more than 40 a year; in 1942 there were as many as 133 strikes, but those in the earlier years were — if fewer — often fought with great vigour, largely by non-French-speaking workers up against a generally distrustful environment as well as the hostility of the employers. Among such struggles were the strike of the miners at Noranda in 1931 (mainly immigrant workers whom the Québécois called "fros"), and the series of strikes during the later 1930s in the "rag trade" or garment industry of Montreal, which were started by Jewish workers but later, as the ethnic composition of the work force changed, were taken up by French-speaking working girls. Later, in the 1940s, French-speaking workers became involved on a larger scale, in such strikes as that of the Montreal tramway workers in 1943.

Evelyn Dumas makes her main point effectively: that Quebec was not an island of total industrial peace in the radical years of the 1930s. Nevertheless, the disputes she describes involved only a small proportion of Quebec's industrial workers and only an infinitesimal proportion of the province's population. Quebec as a whole was still, throughout this period, the sleeping giant of Canada, the province whose 1930s was delayed a whole generation. □

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# LIT, O LIT, O CARELESS LIT

Engel's disappointing new collection raises questions about general literary complacency

By LOUISE DENNYS

MARIAN ENGEL's last major novel, *Monodromos*, was a carefully structured work, hauntingly evocative of the Mediterranean island in which it is set, with a sense of place and a delight in language that is at times reminiscent of Lawrence Durrell. While her earlier work showed that she had talent, *Monodromos* confirmed her as a fine writer. Consequently, I turned to her new collection of short stories, *Inside the Easter Egg* (House of Anansi, 172 pages, \$12), with anticipation . . . but as I read on I found myself ploughing through it with increasing boredom and irritation. Such disappointment!

Certainly there are some memorable moments in this collection — particularly those stories centred around the tough, blowsy authoress-figure of Marshallene. The dialogue moves along lickety-split at all times, sure and

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*"Disappointment" has long characterized this world of Canadian letters, hugging to itself failed expectations, evoking the spectre of second-class literary citizens, sleepwalkers in an infant culture.*

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true; an ironic humour shimmers just below the surface. But this is damning an able writer with faint praise.

Most of the stories reflect the familiar concerns of everyday — adolescents maturing into adults, stifling middle-class marriages, little love affairs. Unfortunately, she fails to transcend banality, choosing instead to offer sentimentality in the guise of honesty. In "Break No Hearts This Christmas," Carolyn, Ph.D. student and current wife of a self-sufficient Jewish anthropologist named Ziggy, has an affair with a faceless friend. Melodramatically she lays bare her feelings: "She wished she would meet a prophetic old man on a stile who would tell her what to do. She wished she could throw herself down on the leaves and cry, or go home (though she had no home) or at least not bitch in her head all day." Tired platitudes that barely scratch the surface. Marian Engel can do better than that.

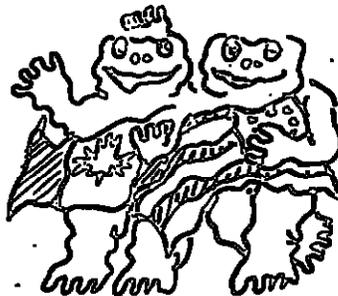
Ziggy is a potentially glorious character (he prefers to spend Christmas with his gorilla-charges rather than with his wife, and one sympathizes), yet even he remains ultimately shadowy — although he figures in several of the stories. In fact, many of the characters do recur in different stories, and names and places from Marian Engel's earlier works float in and out. A sense of family tribe and community begins to emerge, but again the potential is not realized. The characters don't develop in any way; they could well be different people who just happen to have the same names. If the book had been more carefully wrought one might be tempted to see this as deliberate, a reflection on the fragmentation of personalities or relationships or whatever. It

feels instead as though the collection were hastily swept together.

Individually, many of the stories are not well sustained and are peculiarly loose-ended. In the structure of the book as a whole, this sense of carelessness is reinforced by the fact that Marian Engel uses the same material, the same ground of experience in a few stories. Such repetitions are insulting to the reader and, unfairly I think, at a vacant imagination. For instance, the family protagonists of "What Do Lovers Do?" and "Ruth" have identical backgrounds; both get a job with Hydro, take lovers, then go through a morbid period of parading up and down the beach in "the first bikini ever seen there" and "accepting all comers." Different women in different stories scream wordlessly at their husbands, "Notice me!" The characters begin to merge confusingly. It would be virtually impossible for a writer not to re-use well-worn moments — but in the same book! Such sloppiness from an otherwise careful writer looks distressingly like laziness. I find myself wondering why a writer of Marian Engel's talent would allow herself to publish a generally mediocre, carelessly structured collection.

It is particularly disappointing because it seems to be yet another instance of what we are becoming increasingly conscious of as a self-perpetuating "crisis of standards" in the world of Canadian letters — a stumbrous complacency that slowly, insidiously overwhelms writer, publisher, and reader alike. The lackadaisical artist is unlikely to rouse his audience to impassioned awareness, yet without abrasive publishing standards or demand for excellence from a critical public the artists cannot entirely be blamed for becoming careless and complacent. The call to excellence is essential to a vibrant, living, creative fiction. To ignore it is actively to accustom oneself to disappointment.

"Disappointment" has long characterized this world of Canadian letters, hugging to itself failed expectations, evoking the spectre of second-class literary citizens, sleepwalkers in an infant culture. There was a time when such fears had validity, but to reiterate them now is both boring



Betsy Ross and Laura Secord  
Burlesque stars

and irrelevant. We've moved on, explored our terrain, dug and dug again into Canadian themes, survivors surviving. Nevertheless, although God knows disappointment is a commonplace experience in any culture — How often does one come across a book that truly excites? — our reaction to

it remains distinctly unusual. We swallow our disappointment whole. With a few notable exceptions, we scuffle our feet, refrain from discussion of standards or belief in excellence. We shy away from laying ourselves on the line to admit that something may be very good indeed, or scatter uniform praise for the sake of CanLit, blurring all differences of form and quality. This has the added effect of lumping everything together into a sweet whirl of candy-floss, making it depressingly difficult to distinguish the good among the bad, the unique voice amid the babble, too often spinning the spotlight of critical recognition away from the writing itself to "judge of author's names, not works." It means we potentially deny ourselves that

wonderful, rare experience of the remarkable. And I'm afraid that it actually encourages the kind of carelessness Marian Engel allows herself in *Inside the Easter Egg*.

Marian Engel is not, of course, at this point, an excellent writer. She herself would probably laugh at the very idea. Yet *Monodromos* is a fine book. It presented her as a writer of considerable promise — one who would strive for greater things. This collection of stories is so far below par that it suggests that she has instead fallen prey to the general malaise. But to acknowledge disappointment is at least to acknowledge the possibility of excellence. In the final analysis, all that can be said about *Inside the Easter Egg* is that it is terribly disappointing. □

## THREE GRAND OLD PARTIES

Writers in Canada must play many roles — and Livesay, Layton, and Woodcock have played them all

By PETER SUCH

THREE COLLECTIONS of poetry have recently appeared that illuminate this year's dross and also clarify some of the murkier byways of this country's literary landscape. Praise be that the "same-old-face syndrome" our publishers are heir to (see Tom Hedley's essay, November issue) here works to our advantage. These books are *Ice Age* by Dorothy Livesay (Press Porcépic, 75 pages, \$3.25 paper), *The Darkening Fire* by Irving Layton (McClelland & Stewart, 176 pages, \$4.95 paper), and *Notes on Visitations* by George Woodcock (Anansi, 102 pages, \$9.95 cloth). Here we have assembled CanLit's Grand Mother (rather than Grandmother), our Grand Father, and our Great Uncle — each a standard-bearer bringing a particular vision and attitude to our cultural life as well as to our poetry.

Great Uncle Woodcock has published comparatively little in the poetry genre, but his influence in the field through *Canadian Literature*, with its idea of engaging writers in the critical process, has helped define what has now clearly become a uniquely Canadian syndrome: that is, the multiple roles that writers have had to play in this country by being their own critics, publishers, agents, promoters, and reviewers. As each year our paralyzed publishers are forced to creep one by one into their Yankee-made heart-lung machines, powered by agency sales of foreign books, it becomes more and more obvious that writers will need to become their own editors as well — since editorial departments everywhere are withering alarmingly.

All three of these writers have faced those challenges in their energetic creative lives and have played all those roles — many times simultaneously. The advantages of such a horizontal integration are cause for joy, even if they have grown out of necessity, compared to the fragmented publishing bureaucracies of other countries with their ghost-written and "packaged" products. But the creative drain on our literary people is enormous — particularly since many work out of the academies, as do these three, performing thereby a triple or quadruple work-load. The regular academics, in pale imitation, often attempt to emulate the Renaissance-man feats of our important cultural personages rather than sticking to their job. They wind up expending their creative critical energy (and it is creative when done

right) by scurrying around looking for a mini-publisher, then writing whining letters to editors after their collections are justly demolished.

I'd like to think that George Woodcock, who does everything all at once, could have been a great poet given a clearer space in which to do it. His collection ranges from early Eliot-like experiments, circa 1935, up to the present. Readers of the collections who are familiar with the unique qualities of his prose are likely to be surprised, as I was, by the lack of those qualities in his poetry.

Woodcock's prose is remarkable for the capacity to engage his sensibility with that of the great men he has come to know through his life or his research. Even on subjects as large as the decline of the British Empire, his ideas seem to flow from some well of truth that is completely outside himself. It is this quality of abnegating the ego that separates the academic from the scholar. Woodcock's writing always concerns subjects; academics are prone to see their topics as objects. There is still in his poetry, Woodcock the scholar, Woodcock the fine craftsman with words. But only in those poems dedicated to great men does the aching self-consciousness disappear.

Much of Woodcock's poetry reminds me of the English topographers who did all those cool watercolours of Canada at the turn of the 19th century. There is that same sense of an essentially European sensibility foraging for exotica to render in a familiar style. One feels that Woodcock himself is doubtful and uncertain about his poetry — which, it's fair to add, has been written over a considerable number of years with a long period of silence in the middle. As well as the funny and honest preface by Al Purdy each of the book's six sections is preceded by a little self-explanatory critical article, written in a chatty style that often puts the following verse to shame.

In the fourth article, titled "Death and the Distant Princess," we find two major clues to the faults of this collection. First, here's Woodcock on his love poems:

Reading these poems leads me to the conclusion that — for me at least — it has rarely been deep and lasting experiences of relationships that have moved me to expression in verse . . . . It is more often the accidental relationship, the fleeting contact complicated by parting, by the very sense of evanescence, that for me has been conducive to poetry.

Second, here he is on "Song for the South" and other travel poems:

A less striking place, in which I had lived longer and been more genuinely happy, would not have provided such images, which had value precisely because of their exotic and unfamiliar nature.

Let these lines stand for themselves. With cunning and practised skill, Woodcock has described the topography of an eclectic range of exotic subjects — from wartime Europe to ancient myths. But they lack that essential quality of engagement. Always the golden light falling over the far hills onto the sheep's backs, never the feel of the wool. And often the awful crimping hand of a lulling form sonorously dooming the trivial and the important alike. But all is not lost. When that scholarship and craftsmanship come together in the right form, on subjects that utterly involve Woodcock's persona, then we have poems such as the one for Garcia Lorca. The achievement of these two stanzas alone should be satisfaction enough for a writer whose poetry has always been on an essentially *ad hoc* basis:

*Remember Lorca as Spain's noblest bull,  
Not in the sunlight of Mithraic rings  
Sparring his life to matadors and crowds  
But in numb secrecy to the knacker's laugh*

*Remember Lorca as the earth of Spain:  
Lined with valleys as an old man's hand  
In each valley the gun lurking and the dead waiting  
For the dawn that will not break their empty sleep.*

GRAND MOTHER Livesay is a seeder of poems among little magazines. Where they fall they seem to hold the centre of their usually whimsical constellations. Since *Ice Age* is really a collection of such pieces, many of its poems will be familiar to the equally whimsical reader of such periodicals. It's fun trying to match poems to magazines. Which, for instance, appeared in *Chatelaine* and which in *Blewointmentpress*? So extensive are her periodical credits, Livesay may be forgiven for neglecting to mention that "To Be Blind" (for Alan Crawley) appeared first in *Impulse*. That old adjective "uneven" is not unfairly applied to this collection. It is, though, the unevenness of Rocky Mountain peaks. Some don't quite touch the clouds. The poet-critic Frank Davey would disagree, but it seems to me Livesay's strength does not lie in the personal lyric of private moan but has always been in the documentary. To brand her work merely as including "the most sensitive and powerful poems of feminine sexuality in our literature" is to praise the braiding and ignore the coat's cut. In his article on her in *From There to Here*, Davey deliberately ignores Livesay's critical work in the documentary genre (published in *Canadian Literature* and in *Contents of Canadian Criticism*), choosing a more easily chauvinist sort of praise. "One Way Conversation," for instance, a pillow-poem for an impotent lover, should have been slipped into the lover's trouser-pocket while asleep and left there:

*A woman wants above all  
to be touched, caressed,  
massaged and kissed . . . .*

These lines could equally well have been written by Joan Sutton. But the poems grow stronger as the book proceeds and by the time we reach "A Catechism," Livesay's music begins to excite us. The closing lines of that poem and of "Madame Curie" on the facing page speak powerfully of women who have dedicated themselves humanistically and with great courage to their life's calling — work that can turn and destroy their persona, wrecking them physically and spiritually.

*O Marie alone  
with your hands  
your bitter bitten hands  
rancid with radium . . .  
the gift become the poison*

*"Leave me in peace"  
you said at the end  
faced with your own creation  
your own destruction*

This musing about self and womanhood occurs throughout *Ice Age*, usually more strongly expressed but often in contradictory terms. It is a poignant collection, rather like Miriam Waddington's *Driving Home*, in which the dedicated and now ageing woman artist begins to regret the personal sacrifice that her art has meant to her. An aching loneliness runs through her sensuality and she is left with only the therapeutic comfort of her art. This ambivalence reflects the book's unevenness. In "The Stoned Woman," for instance, Livesay complains about a world of users:

*the stoned girl meant  
there's no love  
I am become an object  
the man I love  
uses me  
he eats me like breakfast  
and then he shits*

But in the very next poem, "Morning Rituals," Livesay muses:

*I remember the names of things:  
dark light  
wind water  
laughter tears  
But the names of my lovers  
I cannot  
I cannot remember*

I'm not sure Livesay would see her collection this way. From her structuring and title it's obvious her intention was to write a book with a less personal thrust: that of the transition of generations. We are, of course, into the new "Ice Age," as the title poem suggests — an age in which even our hearts seem to be made of a glacial debris. I would like to think though, that this theme is simply an extension of the "hidden agenda" in these poems that I've tried to extrapolate. In "Unexpected Guests" she writes:

*Some final pact was made  
between the parent and the child*

Would that this were true. Would that Livesay's deep and human seeding were to bear fruit with a host of spiritual children among the poets of our future . . . .

FOLLOWERS OF Layton the critic, as well as of Layton the poet, will recognize Dorothy Livesay's reference in "A Catechism." Layton's beautiful explanation of writing a poem is as follows: "You pull the bow, pull it, pull it, and then . . . you let it fly!"

Livesay also quotes Layton in her first poem "Why we are Here":

*The womb  
is such a diminutive room  
in which to lie*

That leads us to a discussion of Layton's latest collection, *The Darkening Fire*.

Irving Layton, whose prefaces can stand as important critical pieces, also works in the academy and has been his own publisher (borrowing from a friendly bank manager to finance his first book when he was 35 and being — with Dudek, Livesay, Miriam Waddington and others — one of the guiding lights of Contact Press in the 1950s. Unfortunately, the preface to this collection is written not by Layton but by Wynn Francis. As a document of praise (and, I suppose, of academic criticism), it has merit; but by its tone, structure, and somewhat facile analysis, it belies the instinctive urgent power out of which Layton's poetry is written by attempting to categorize Layton's themes and

render his poetry safe for critical digestion. What is clear in Layton's poetry is that it has no ideology, whether of craft or purpose.

"Whatever else, poetry is freedom." His well-known refusal to join the Black Mountain group marks the crucial point in what Dennis Lee might call "this lone self-starter's" poetic odyssey. His legacy to Canadian poetry (to the world's poetry) is not the development of technique. Far more important, it is his *attitude* — a readiness to commit himself totally and vigorously to the practice of the most ancient art.

That commitment, like all real commitments, involves a courageous loss of self in a symbiosis between ego and the materials of existence that burns with vitality. To that commitment the poet must bring his total flawed self with all its fiery pride. In "The Bull Calf," an impressive poem from 1956, we find the calf, though young and fragile, "still impressed with his pride." But at the end of the poem, we see it "bereft of pride and so beautiful now/without movement, perfectly still in the cool pit/I turned away and wept."

Where we find the burning energy in Layton is not as abstract fire symbol but as the blaze that excites his words to dance for us. Even his descriptive and anecdotal poems flare with images — always in movement, always in process — until, whether in sex or in the act of writing, there occurs that consummate stillness, that timeless moment of perfection, beauty, and ease.

More than any other poet in this country, Layton has been the champion of poetry as an explosive force, as an act that has to be wrested from effiteness and petty politics. His priorities are clear. Many of these poems are about strugg-

ling to understand the poetic process. In "Invention" (*Periods of the Moon*, 1967) he writes:

*When my head is filled with a poem . . .  
it is myself as I truly am  
May time keep me worthy of the poem  
that has written me since time began*

Occasionally, and particularly in the early poems, we can see him chafing at those necessities and at those debilitating personal relationships that keep him from exercising his craft; but which also he manages to consume as poetic material.

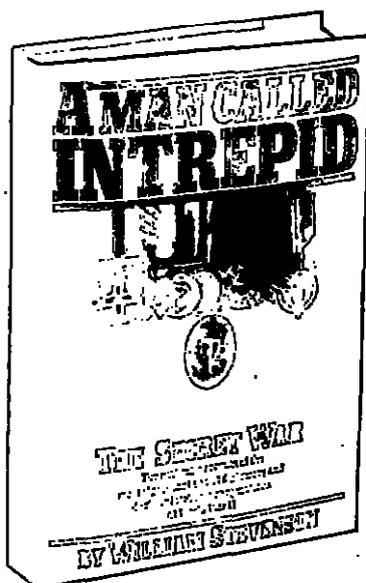
Nothing can keep Layton from celebrating. He is in touch, through his poetry, with the eternal verities. Here is a faith in existence that would put a martyr to shame. Should a new ice-age arrive for Layton, we would probably see him, as in "Mahogany Red," dancing:

*. . . hot and bare  
on a lost glacier.*

This book contains the quintessence of Layton's fine poetry from 1945 to 1968. Those five or 10 poems from each of his many collections that fly like singing arrows are here assembled in a clear-cut retrospection. They show Layton shucking off all notions of technique to find that crucial engagement where his words become conterminous with his insights and emotions.

There are tender poems — "Song for Naomi" and "For Musia's Grandchildren" — along with many others that can stand as classics anywhere or any time, poignant and elegaic. There are philosophical poems, anecdotal poems, and a wide range of great words that can't be categorized and that suggest this is not so much a prophet at work as a shaman. This is magic on the most human and sensitive level. A great voice speaking. □

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# WY One: too little from on high

**To See Ourselves: Five Views on Canadian Women**, by Sheila Ar-nopoulos, Sharon Brown, Dian Cohen, Margaret Daly, and Katherine Govier, International Women's Year Secretariat (Privy Council Office, Ottawa), illustrated, 225 pages, \$7.50 paper.

**All Work and No Pay**, edited by Wendy Edmond and Suzie Fleming, Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press (79 Richmond Road, Bristol, England), 127 pages, \$6.75 cloth and \$1.95 paper.

**Every Woman's Almanac 1976, The Women's Press**, unpaginated, \$2.95 paper.

**Herstory 1976: A Canadian Women's Calendar**, by the Saskatoon Women's Calendar Collective, Hurtig, 124 pages, \$3.95 paper.

**Once More With Love**, by Joan Sutton, Clarke Irwin, 135 pages, \$7.75 cloth.

By MYRNA KOSTASH

I DETECT A feeling abroad in the land that now that we've spent a whole year observing the niceties of International Women's Year, chitchatted about this and that exploitation, paid obeisance to the appropriate government funding agencies and congratulated ourselves on our awareness and changed attitudes, we will all now move on to more important problems — you know, stuff like Canadian content in *Reader's Digest*, the PC leadership convention, and corruption at the Olympics. The "woman problem" (as if women were the problem) has been ghetto-ized, abandoned to a few specialized institutions and pressure groups and collectives of "cranks" that are tolerated and, in some cases, even pampered, with the expectation that this will take the heat off the ripoff artists and console the mass of women who are mumbling about the lack of action on our grievances.

That little, in fact, is being done from on high is the theme of two new books, *To See Ourselves* and *All Work and No Pay*: that something can be done by women ourselves is the message of two 1976 calendars; that feminism, albeit in

a very diluted, apologetic, and sentimental fashion, can infiltrate even the smug territory of low-brow journalism is the impression that *Once More With Love* tries hard to convey.

(Let it be said, however, that editors have to stop lumping all books by women together as if they all came out of the same mind; it would make as much sense to categorize books about economics, history and poetry written by men as books about the "man" problem.)

After a good deal of hoopla, several million bucks, and free PR for Marc Lalonde, what we got from the International Women's Year Secretariat is a very classy book, *To See Ourselves*. All five writers live in Central Canada but the topics covered are more eclectic: the Non-Professional Working Woman, the Disadvantaged Woman, the Homemaker, the Professional Working Woman and the Young Woman. And under the gloss what they have to say collectively is still devastating, infuriating, and outrageous, even to a seasoned feminist cynic like me. I am even cynical enough to suspect that the way this book is produced — its trendy square-shape, its glossy paper, its appendix of photographs — is a sly attempt by the government to divert the anger bound to be provoked in the reader by the contents. What it should be is a thick paperback, on newsprint if necessary, for sale in drugstores and supermarkets; it should be distributed free to high schools and laundromats; ah hell, it should be inserted as a series of subliminal messages into TV commercials.

Because what each writer says, through statistics, interviews, and commentary, is this: the exploited condition of the mass of Canadian women has altered hardly a jot, and in some cases has even deteriorated, in the last 10 years. Women working for wages are still paid much less than men for the same work, are still confined to low-status, tedious jobs, are still not unionized and are still fired when they get pregnant. Housewives still work 100 hours a week for no pay and little more respect. In 1901, 15 per cent of the total number of working women were in professional occupations; in 1971 it was a whole 16 per cent. A woman raising a child on her own can go on welfare for \$350 a month — or work for \$400. A teen-ager still sees herself as a wife and mother; all other ambitions remain vague and tenuous. Eight years after the report from the Royal Commission on the Status of Women we are in ex-

actly the same place. Who cares? Not, the book makes clear, the politicians, the managers, the union executives, the social scientists.

*To See Ourselves* leaves it at that. *All Work and No Pay* is more explicit. Women must organize as a revolutionary class. Enough already of waiting for Them to do something. The rallying point around which all women, regardless of social status, race, nationality and age, may coalesce is this: that we

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**Housewives still work 100 hours a week for no pay and little more respect. In 1901, 15 per cent of the total number of working women were in professional occupations; in 1971 it was a whole 16 per cent.**

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are all housewives. For husbands, fathers, brothers, and boyfriends, no matter that we may hold down other jobs as well, we all cook, clean, mend, and nurse — for free.

The Wages for Housework campaign has gained considerable momentum already in Europe, especially in Italy and England, but the influence of the "perspective," as it is known in Canada, has been minimized by internal, sectarian hassles. All the more reason, then, for this book to become widely distributed among us. Although it raises many perplexing questions that it doesn't answer (Who will pay the wages? How will they be tabulated? If a husband does the dishes, does he get paid too? If tending children is work for the capitalist state, because it produces labour power, do I also "work" when I dress myself in the morning to go to the office?), it does provide a logical and consistent theory of the basis of all forms of women's oppression. It goes like this: because we work for no money at menial and repetitive tasks, we are forever dependent on male wage-earners, we are given menial and service-oriented jobs in the labour market, we are seen as powerless, dim-witted servants who labour for "love," and we are structurally alienated from our sense of self, our sexuality and our creativity.

The book is an anthology of statements around these themes from a refreshingly diverse collection of women running the gamut of feminist collectives, intellectuals, Irish housewives, and Italian secretaries. Canada is represented by the Toronto-based Wages Due Collective, who present an ingeni-

ous argument for lesbianism as a form of "workers' control" of sexual labour. It is, in short, a tantalizing and energizing book that provides at least the possibility of going beyond cynicism and despair about our condition.

As for the calendars, besides being useful, they are examples of the way feminist ideology can be presented to even the most recalcitrant anti-feminists. *Every Woman's Almanac* has 50 pages of straightforward, common-sensical, even-toned information and discourse about birth control, legal rights, native women, daycare, and so forth in a purse-sized format with nice big spaces to write daily records in. It is interspersed with tasty quotes from the likes of Virginia Woolf and Norman Bethune, and ends with one from Chairman Mao just to make the connection between feminist and anti-imperialist struggles. (You never know where you're going to find allies.) This is the third year of *Herstory* calendars and the Canadian personalities and data they present are becoming a little esoteric: Agnes Deans Cameron, who travelled down the Athabasca River in a scow; Janiel Jolley, who broke up the Miss Canadian University beauty pageant; items about ballet premieres and altitude records. It is also annoying, in a calendar, to find the space for Oct. 15 taken up by an anecdote about Charlotte Whitton. Nevertheless, the calendar is a good read and a pleasant way to absorb your lessons about the enormous role of women in Canadian history.

*Once More With Love* is the sort of book that will be enjoyed by people who think no "lady" would be caught dead being a "libber." Sutton offers hemi-demi-semi feminist clichés for the unconverted ("So many of the qualities that are considered 'feminine' traits are actually just human characteristics..."), as well as unrelievedly sentimental essays about the death of a dog, the author's cabin by the lake, and acquaintances' love affairs. Sutton is a journalist and a broadcaster but in this book she is for all the world just another languid, middle-class lady with nothing more strenuous to think about than the nature of True Love and the New Woman ("Love is my retreat, my touch stone..."). Tell it to the Italian women in Toronto, working for minimum wage in a sweatshop between pregnancies. □



## WAY Two: once more with cobwebs

**The Parlour Rebellion: Profiles in the Struggle for Women's Rights, by Isabel Bassett, McClelland & Stewart, 223 pages, \$10 cloth.**

By PAT BARCLAY

FOR MANY Canadians, International Women's Year has something in common with bashing one's head against a brick wall; it feels great now that it's over. More rights for women may be the worthiest cause around since Laura Secord brought the message to Beaver Dam, but the media's dedication to feminist overkill during 1975 must surely have raised a good many hackles along with all those female consciousnesses. And a new book by Isabel Bassett, who teaches English at York University, is unlikely to lower them.

Titled *The Parlour Rebellion*, Mrs. Bassett's book is a series of biographical sketches of nine prominent

Canadian feminists, beginning with Anna Gaudin (1865-1940) and ending with Therese Casgrain (born 1896). Each sketch is preceded by a few pages of introductory material aimed at providing a frame of reference for its subject's life. For example, the biography of Helen MacGill, the first woman graduate of Toronto's Trinity College, is prefaced by three pages headed "The Doors of Academe" in which Mrs. Bassett lightly reviews the quality of education middle-class Canadians deemed suitable for their daughters at the end of the 19th century. As Judge MacGill herself was later to observe:

The development of the girl's mind was superfluous; motherhood was considered her only important function, and family life her only satisfactory destiny. To send her to college would make her unfit for a passive role as wife and mother, and develop in her an objectivity which, though thought admirable in a man, was then considered awkward, unpleasant, and masculine in a woman.

Mrs. Bassett has also included two chapters that act as frames for her main text, first setting the scene ("As Laura Berton points out, in the early 1900s girls were brought up to think that every

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able-bodied man was just waiting to seduce them. Raised on such beliefs, women understandably suffered from a host of fears and built-in constraints that curbed their initiative", and later surveying it ("Why is the way ahead so difficult, so slow?").

This description of the book's organization may make it sound well-planned and cohesive; and sure enough, it is — when viewed from a distance. Closer to, however, the reader is visited by the peculiar sensation of groping for a light switch in a darkened room hung with cobwebs. The trouble is partly Mrs. Bassett's relentlessly pedestrian prose, partly her habit of peppering her pages with the names of worthy women well known to herself through her research, but as yet improperly introduced to the reader. An index would have helped to clear up this confusion. Further confusion occurs when some introductory sections are allowed to consist entirely of more biographies, pocket-sized and skimpy, placed beside portraits of major figures whose life histories do not follow until several pages on.

*The Parlour Rebellion* is not a total loss. Many women readers, teen-agers especially, will empathize with many of the incidents Mrs. Bassett describes. It does us all some good to be reminded that "the women of Quebec did not get the provincial vote until 1940." And did you realize that "at a time when 4,000 copies was considered a good sale in Canada," Nellie McClung's propagandist *Sowing Seeds in Danny* sold more than 100,000 copies and ran to 17 editions? Its sequel, *The Second Chance*, did even better. Which suggests that the advertising man who innocently unleashed the slogan "Never underestimate the power of a woman" on an amused and indulgent male world, underestimated her far more than he knew. □



## All cats are grey in the darkroom

The Female Eye, by Lorraine Monk, National Film Board of Canada in association with Clarke Irwin, 191 pages, \$19.95 cloth.

By GARY MICHAEL DAULT

IF ANYTHING is proved by *The Female Eye*, it is that there is no such thing as the female eye. Produced by Lorraine Monk of the Still Photography Division of the National Film Board as a salute to International Women's Year, the book is a mustering of 178 photo-works by 83 artists from across the country. The works range in method and approach from the solid photographic orthodoxy of Reva Brooks and the no-nonsense modernist confrontation portraiture of Clara Gutsche to the lambent colour-studies of Grace Norgard, the cutesy colour photo-silkscreens of Angeline Kyba, and the elaborate photo-constructions of Jennifer Dickson, Barbara Astman, and Fern Helfand.

Titling the book *The Female Eye* was a provocative but, as it turns out, an almost aggressively annoying thing to do. Admittedly, a more academic title such as *100 Women Photographers* wouldn't have much zip. But it would be less likely to drive you mad as you try to precipitate out of the infinite variety some quality of vision, some alternate perceptiveness, some readable hormonal texturing, that might help to explain the curiously biological emphasis.

Perhaps this search through the book for the quintessentially female is beside the point? Perhaps it is even the book's founding irony that, look where and however you may, the quest will come by necessity to an inevitable and un-chauvinistic inconclusiveness? Nothing so subtle.

In the first place, the book prepares its browsers to expect a standard Alice-in-Wonderland maturation odyssey of cyclical female life by opening with 20 pages of photographs all dealing with birth and children. There are troubled mothers holding their children (Reva Brooks), happy mothers nursing their children (Reva Brooks), wistful mothers holding babies (Lori Spring), proud mothers holding babies

(Stephanie Colvey, Lynn Murray), a foolish self-pitying picture of a vague cinematically distraught naked woman with a stuffed panda bear beside her holding a broken doll to her breast by Rae Huestis (yeah, we get it, we get it . . .), and five slightly nutty photographs by Laura Jones of two naked and enormously pregnant women mugging for the camera, playing with their present children, and sharing a laugh or a breast-feeding with their men. So much for the parturition section. On to studies of the growing girl, right? Wrong.

Abruptly, despite this beginning, the book becomes a standard photo-anthology. The next photo after those of Laura Jones, for example, is Carol Marino's careful post-Atget study of gnarled tree roots. Then 157 pages of catholic works, some absurdly bad and some brilliant.

Among the absurdly bad ones are Angela Nori's dumb surrealist study of a naked man in a wicker chair holding two burning candles up in front of his face so that their glare renders him eyeless, even faceless, and Angeline Kyba's breaking a butterfly on a wheel with her excruciatingly heavy-handed photo-screen showing at the top a *Vogue*-like model reclining on blue velvet while beneath her are printed three black-and-white studies of the face of a woman obviously in intolerable pain or anguish. Among the brilliant ones are all nine of Sandra Semchuk's beautifully composed, finely captured, and indelibly memorable studies of ordinary people doing ordinary things: a kid sits at a beanery counter with a coke; a farmer drives his tractor up towards the camera while his dog leaps joyfully along beside him on its hind legs. Good too are all 10 of Claire Beaugrand-Champagne's dignified and moving photographs of dramatic or telling moments in daily life, frequently in the daily lives of old people: an old man sits at a table holding a glass of wine in his right hand and supporting his bowed head in his left; a white-haired woman leans towards the light of a window to hold dialogue with her budgie whose cage sits on the table in the sun. Despite this sort of subject-matter, there is no trace of sentimentality or condescension.

A mixed collection, then. Crazy uneven. A great part of it wasteful and arch, some of it inventive, skillful, revealing, moving. The book could have been given a lot more interest by providing the viewer with more information. Nowhere is it stated who these photographers are, where they live,

how old they are, what their pictures are titled and what they are about, who the subjects are, what size the photos are, what printing processes have been used, what sort of cameras took the pictures and at what settings. These are the things any serious viewer will want to know.

And as for the femaleness of *The Female Eye*, forget it. □

## And tell sad Tories of the birth of King

**Macdonald: His Life and World**, by P. B. Waite, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 224 pages, \$12.95 cloth.

**Robert Laird Borden: A Biography, Volume I, 1854-1914**, by Robert Craig Brown, Macmillan, 306 pages, \$14.95 cloth.

By DONALD SWAINSON

AS I WRITE (in early January), the Conservative Party is very much in evidence. John Diefenbaker has been honoured by the Queen; an incredible contest is being waged for the federal Conservative leadership; William Davis has struggled to maintain Tory power in Toronto. There has also been a great deal of activity on the publishing front. We have new books on Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Robert Borden. Diefenbaker has favoured us with a volume of eminently readable reminiscences. This high Tory profile tends to obscure some rather basic aspects of the federal Conservative situation. R. B. Bennett's government was defeated 40 years ago. Since then, Canada has had only one Tory regime — that of Diefenbaker. It was a highly inept regime, confirming the impression that in modern Canada Conservative governments are aberrant or accidental.

One can go even farther, and say that as an effectively competitive force in Canadian politics the Conservative party died during the 1890s. Before the rise of Wilfrid Laurier, the Conservative Party of Sir John A. Macdonald had solid support in both French- and English-speaking Canada. It was led by a master politician and was able to perform major integrative functions in Canadian society. This capacity declined in the late 1880s and then vanished. It is true that the party has under-

gone periodic rejuvenations. Borden led a fighting party after 1908; Arthur Meighen revitalized a shattered organization in the mid-1920s; Diefenbaker provided dramatic leadership in the 1950s; and Robert Stanfield almost defeated the ubiquitous Liberals in 1972. Nevertheless, since the triumph of Laurier in 1896, consistent patterns are observable. First, the Conservative Party has lost its ability to perform the primary function of any viable federal party: to accommodate the fundamental interests of both English- and French-speaking Canadians. Second, the party has been unable to sustain itself after electoral success; the pattern of Conservative victories in this century is all too clear. The party can win only when a Liberal government is forced to the wall because of political senility or economic adversity. Once the Liberals reorganize, they are able to exploit the structural flaws in the Conservative position and return to power for another interminable period. It is now 80 years since Laurier won his great victory. During the long ensuing period the Liberals have ruled for 48 years, the Conservatives for 22. Our present government seems secure. In its current rightward slide into some form of maldefined corporatism, it might have reason to fear some provincial premiers but it clearly regards the parliamentary opposition parties as irrelevant — as they almost certainly are.

Waite's book on Macdonald and Brown's on Borden present readers with an opportunity to review the critical period of Conservative Party history. Macdonald and his lieutenants, both English and French, established a durable and creative party during the 1850s. It dominated Canadian politics for 40 exciting years that witnessed the collapse of the United Province of Canada, the creation of a transcontinental federal state, the triumph of economic nationalism, and the construction of a transcontinental communications system. At the core of Macdonald's political strategy was the assumption that the Conservative Party was an alliance of English- and French-speaking Canadians. That alliance began to erode before Macdonald's death; the erosion continued during the 10 years of unstable leadership that followed his death in 1891.

The tragedy of Borden's long leadership, which began in 1901, was that he was unable to halt or even slow the disintegration of the Conservative Party in Quebec. It is clear from

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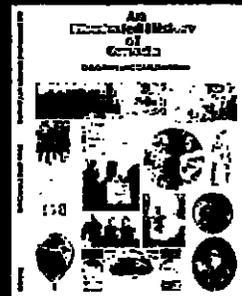


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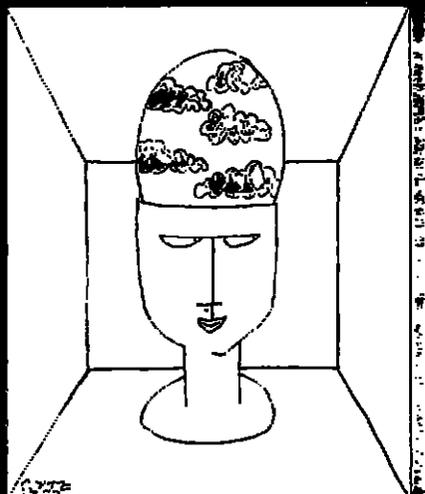


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Brown's biography that Borden could neither sympathize with nor understand French Canada. As Brown comments at one point: "Borden simply could not understand either the fears or the aspirations of his Quebec colleagues. For years he had argued that both English- and French-speaking Canadians should all be 'content to be Canadians'." In another place Brown observes that for Borden "Quebec and its Conservative members were a perpetual source of puzzlement and frustration." It is true that before the 1911 election Borden was able to put together a winning coalition of old-line Tories, French-Canadian nationalists, disgruntled Liberal businessmen, and provincial Conservative chieftains. But that coalition was ephemeral. The Quebec wing was neither consolidated nor enlarged and public support within the province quickly collapsed. By 1914 Premiers Roblin and Whitney had become shaky supports. Borden decided not to call the election he had tentatively planned; he would probably have lost his majority. The government was saved by the First World War, which enabled Borden, again in alliance with Liberal dissidents, to win a second election. Unfortunately, that victory was purchased at excessive cost. The federal Conservative Party has never since been a long-term or representative force in French Canada. The swing away from French Canada that began in the 1880s was not reversed during Borden's leadership. Instead the party emerged as an Anglo-Saxon party, with its French-Canadian wing obliterated.

Waite makes no attempt to provide a careful analysis of public policy or political history. His book is popular history, complete with profuse and beautiful illustrations. It is larded with good, if often well-known, anecdotes and takes readers on a tour of Macdonald's Canada. Persons who know little Canadian history will come away with an interesting overview of the second half of the 19th century. They will have acquired some useful knowledge of Canadian social conditions, Conservative achievements, and the fascinating personality of our greatest political leader.

Brown's volume is a different sort of work altogether. It is our first serious biographical study of Borden. Brown has completed a massive quantity of research and has written a well-documented, interesting study. His picture of Borden is thoroughly honest. The politics of the early 20th century were fascinating, but Borden himself

emerges as a monumentally uninteresting personality. The impression of pomposity and dullness obtained from a reading of his *Memoirs* is confirmed. No attempt is made to disguise his lack of rapport with French Canada. His repeated misreadings of the public mood are frankly described. Brown gives his pre-First World War legislative program what substance he can, but it is difficult to leave the volume without the feeling that Borden was something less than a major prime minister. The Conservative Party has spent a lot of time in the wilderness but, even if only by default, it remains an important national institution. We need to know more about it, and we can look forward to Brown's concluding volume on Sir Robert Laird Borden. □

## Nothing to lose but our Keynes

**Inflation or Depression: An Analysis of the Continuing Crisis of the Canadian Economy,** by Cy Gonick, James Lorimer & Company, 448 pages, \$15 cloth and \$7.95 paper.

By ALEXANDER CRAIG

FEW PEOPLE doubt we live in troubled economic times. Inflation, unemployment, and labour unrest mount as food and energy crises spiral. Economics, as Cy Gonick would surely agree, is too important to be left to the economists. He has therefore set out to present a comprehensive, compendious, and coherent critique of the current condition of the Canadian economy.

Gonick teaches political economy at the University of Manitoba and is publisher of *Canadian Dimensions* magazine. He has chosen his subtitle with an excessive modesty that's typi-



PROG-ON CALL

cally Canadian. The purview of this book ranges much further than Canada — south of the 49th parallel frequently and beyond. Gonick outlines at length his views on Keynes and his conse-

quences. The declining U.S. empire; food and fuel, ecology and the nature of work and unemployment are just some of the other matters he discusses, skillfully and often in detail.

Gonick's approach is socialist. He frowns on "mechanical Marxists" but is much more critical of NDP-type social democrats. He wants to supplant



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WITH cheese

capitalism, not merely to tinker about attempting to reform it.

Not the least of the book's strengths, in fact, is the intellectual stimulation offered by its constant critical conflict with capitalism. Gonick cannot reconcile himself to a society based on profit rather than utility and he never lets the reader forget this. And there is so much that is offensive in the present system; he cites for instance, the familiar fact that "Americans are applying some three million tons of nutrients to lawns, gardens, cemeteries and, golf courses — more than used by all the farmers in India and half again as much as the current shortage in developing countries."

The author shows how some present-day problems are caused by the internal contradictions of the system. Success for the U.S. in the post-war period "required stability and prosperity in the capitalist world, but this allowed its rivals to re-establish themselves." The nature of post-war U.S. economic growth has meant that although the EEC countries employ fewer resources in research than does the U.S., they have one third more researchers for purposes of economic development and civilian industry and technology (mass transit, for example, as opposed to defence and space).

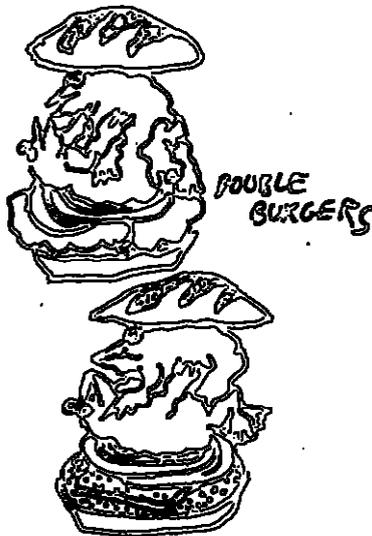
Throughout the book, Gonick engages in a running battle with one of the most popular economic texts sold in Canada (Samuelson and Scott's *Economics*, third Canadian edition). His book will make a valuable counterpart to the latter, but it has a lot more to offer than that. Gonick goes into depth, confidently and persuasively, on various basic aspects of the process of development economics. He does this particularly well in giving a brief his-

tory of the Auto Pact and in discussing unemployment, but he also does valuable analyses of the operations, investments, and other activities of multi-national corporations.

An extensive and largely sympathetic critique of Canadian labour is presented, with the sorrowful conclusion that "just as a branch-plant economy produces a truncated, fragmented and inefficient industrial structure, branch-plant trade unionism produces a truncated, fragmented and weak labour movement." The book's most prominent theme is the sheer dependence of Canada on the U.S., of which it is a "sub-economy." Abundant illustrations are given.

It has been said that "economics is a framework of steel on a bed of sand." Gonick's model is intellectually logical and consistent, but the political underpinnings are at times neglected or over-simplified. He seems, for example, to underestimate the resilience of capitalism or the strength of nationalism. Too many institutions — the central government of Canada, the U.S. empire, the labour-business alliance in the U.S. — are seen as "beginning to disintegrate."

This is particularly noticeable in his relatively short excursion out of North America. It is perhaps a minor mistake for a North American to believe that the greatest "underdevelopment of hinterlands . . . in Great Britain" is "in the centre and the southwest," but how



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much sense does it make to write about oil and the Middle East without even mentioning Israel (or Britain without even mentioning separatism, oil, or Ireland)? The reliance on revolutionary Left sources for information about China, France, and Italy helps to explain his rosy views on those countries.

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These and other reservations are inevitable reactions to a work that stimulates and challenges as much as it informs and analyses. It does this in part by being up-to-date; many examples are drawn from the 1970s and up to mid-1975. Although somewhat raw, such data add to the merits of this book. *Inflation or Depression* gives us some ideas about how historians of the future may regard our times. Gonick writes well, for instance, on the immense effect of the Vietnam war on the U.S. economy, and on the significance of the growth of credit capitalism in post-war North America.

This is a valuable book, and much effort and care have obviously gone into it. There are many interesting tables, references and quotations, and a long, annotated, largely revisionist, bibliography. There are only six pages of elementary index, however, which is not at all helpful for what for many will become an important reference tool. A work of this significance deserves better. □

## The ring and the books

Call Me Sammy, by Sammy Luftspring with Brian Swarbrick, Prentice-Hall, 195 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

By JIM CHRISTY

BOXING, WRITES Gary Wills in a recent issue of *The New York Review of Books*, has become an "opiate of intellectuals." Now, the fistic world has long fascinated movie-makers and writers, even the odd intellectual; George Bernard Shaw was an aficionado and used to trade Shakespearean quotes with his friend Gene Tunney. Wills, however, was trying to make the point that the current gross verbiage is all out of proportion to this "cruel but eloquent minor art." Boxing is not, and never has been, a "sweet science" but simply one of the few ways its practitioners can rise up out of poverty and hard times — crime and entertainment being the others. In decades past writers who addressed themselves to this reality produced some good boxing prose: Jack London's classic piece on the Johnson-Jeffries meet (which began "The fight? There was no fight."); and the work of Damon Runyon and Ring

Lardner, and later that of Robert Lowry, Budd Schulberg, and Robert Gardner. It all became a little silly when reality was replaced with metaphor, a modernization of the Roman gladiator routine. Hemingway probably started it all describing a world he knew nothing whatsoever about. Universal truths notwithstanding; his boxing stories were ridiculous. Then along came Son of Hemingway — Norman Mailer, who invented pugilistic *chic*. But unlike Papa, he at least has a sense of humour. For example, see his *Playboy* piece on the Foreman-Ali contest in Zaire. Norman is doing roadwork himself for some reason that is unclear, and whilst jogging through the bush he hears the roar of a lion and fantasizes his own romantic end. What a way to go, how fitting, King of the Hill ripped apart by King of the Beasts in Papa's own backyard. The next day he discovers the lion was roaring from his cage in the city zoo.

Anyway, since Mailer has made it fashionable, everyone south of the border is getting into the act. Even Wilfred Sheed. Not to mention Tom Wolfe, Seymour Krim, and Dr. Thompson. There are currently at least 25 new boxing books on the shelves. At least half of them about Muhammed Ali. The only Canadian representative of the intelligentsia to enter this ring has been Charles Templeton who, under the title "Essay," contributed 500 or so eminently forgettable words to the *Globe and Mail* book page.

Canada's full-length contribution to all this pugilistic prose happens also to be one of the best. *Call Me Sammy* is the real unmitigated stuff, written from the inside by a man who has been associated with the sport and the milieu practically all his life.

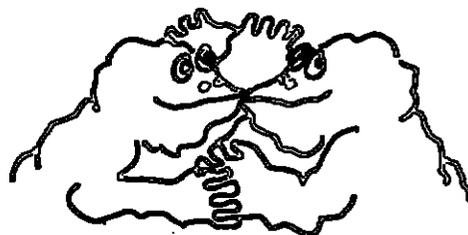
Although Luftspring began as an amateur when he was eight years old, his professional career was mercurial but all too brief. It ended in 1940 one fight away from a shot at the welterweight championship of the world. In round one his opponent, Steve Beloise, threw an errant bolo punch and his thumb caught Luftspring in the left eye. When the round ended Luftspring's vision was blurred and his eye partially closed. Ironically, it is probably Luftspring's very determination, so evident throughout this book, that cost him his boxing career and perhaps the championship. Instead of lying down or not answering the bell, Luftspring not only lasted the whole fight but also held his opponent to a split decision. The refusal to quit,

the repeated punishment taken over 10 rounds, tore the retina from Luftspring's eye and resulted in permanent blindness. His description of the moment he accepts this fate is moving indeed.

Luftspring describes coming of age in the 1920s and 1930s in Toronto's Jewish ghetto of Kensington Market, a world away from waspish Toronto the Good. It's the unromanticized, non-Richler version of the experience. In fact, Luftspring writes, "Duddy Kravitz, you bore my ass off." He introduces readers to the likes of Maxie Apples, Maxie Chicago, Gimpy the Athlete, Ya Punchick, and Little Itch Leiberman, "who sold papers at Queen and Yonge for a hundred years."

There is some interesting Toronto lore, too. For instance, anyone who has ventured into the Morrissey Hotel for a beer has seen the large oil painting of one of the greatest Canadian race horses of all time, Willie Morrissey's 1938 Queen's Plate winner, Bunty Lawless. But who knows that this noble thoroughbred was named after a street fighter that Morrissey used to shoot craps with in the old days in the east end?

So what you get here is not only a story of boxing in its golden days, but a bit of local history and colour as well. Luftspring is aided in the telling by Brian Swarbrick and the resulting style is a mixture of Damon Runyon and Georgie Jessel. It was probably put together over whisky and White Owls in the back room of a saloon where occasionally, out of the midst of the cigar smoke, there would arise images of Baby Yack, Baney Ross, Stillman's Gym and a 10-year-old kid in a Toronto



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movie theatre of the 1920s watching his idols perform on newsreels direct from Madison Square Garden.

Garry Wills wrote that Muhammed Ali "has nothing to say, really, except with his fists." Not true of Sammy Luftspring. □

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Adrian Macdonald, the editor, described the years before the First World War as marvellous years to be alive. An era of perpetual progress.

206 pages, hard cover \$7.95

### HOW TO BE SURE YOU GET THE "RIGHT" R.R.S.P.

by Christopher Snyder

Over the last few years there has been a tremendous interest shown in the area of Registered Retirement Savings Plans. Competition has increased greatly and often has led to confusion in the mind of the potential buyer. During this period many R.R.S.P.'s have been mis-sold and many have been bought for the wrong reasons. Much has been written in the area of R.R.S.P.'s mainly by the institutions who are promoting them. However it is often difficult to obtain a comparison because of the vested interest of the institution.

This book will tell you how to choose your R.R.S.P., with a separate chapter on R.H.O.S.P.'s, how to get the most out of your money when you retire, and what investments are eligible and what are not.

84 pages, soft cover \$4.95

### THE IRRATIONAL IN POLITICS

by Maurice Brinton

The internalized patterns of repression and coercion in which the "mass individual" is today entrapped are exposed here. It probes the various ways in which the individual psyche has been rendered fertile for an authoritarian, hierarchical and class-dominated culture.

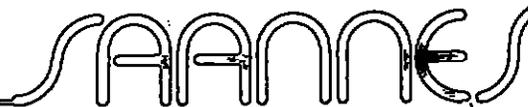
76 pages, hard cover \$9.95, soft cover \$2.45

### PHAP — THE PORNOGRAPHICS OF POLITICS

by Peter Whalley

PHAP is dedicated to the "phootery pholly phoolery phob-offery phluffery phlatulence phlopery phopery phallacity phability . . . phoneyiness phythisis and phapocracy of Canadian politics".

48 pages, soft cover \$4.95

The logo for SAANNES is a stylized, outlined font where the letters are interconnected. The 'S' and 'A' are particularly large and decorative, with the 'N' and 'E' also having unique, flowing shapes. The entire word is rendered in a thin, black outline.

### LE SUCRE DU PAYS

by Jean-Claude Dupont

This comprehensive history of maple sugaring and all its processes shows the evolution of transportation from snowshoe to horse to tractor to pipeline. The various means of heating sugar from a suspended pot to modern industrial ovens are effectively illustrated. Decorative wooden sugar moulds that originated in Quebec, roosters, elaborate "maisons", "coeurs d'amour", and elaborate stars and flowers are photographed and described.

This book, in large type, is written in clear concise French that is highlighted by the large number of diagrams, charts and photographs. Definitions of sugaring terms aid the reader in understanding the text. You will be surprised at just how much of our other language you do in fact remember.

117 pages, soft cover \$3.95

### THE PRINCESS STORY

A Saga of Memorable Ships

by Norman R. Hacking and W. Kaye Lamb

Here is the story of ships that, over a period of nearly a century and a half, served cities and settlements along the entire Pacific coast of Canada and the Panhandle of Alaska.

The contribution of the coasters to life and the general well-being of British Columbia has been immense. Tourists from all over the world were awed by the magnificence of the Inside Passage to Alaska. It is not surprising that many of the ships that have vanished are remembered by thousands of people with admiration and affection.

360 pages, soft cover \$9.75

### THE POLITICS OF OBEDIENCE

The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude

by Etienne de la Boetie

De la Boetie has been best remembered as the great and close friend of the eminent essayist Michel de Montaigne, in one of history's most notable friendships. He would be better remembered not only as a founder of modern philosophy in France, but also for the timeless relevance of many of his theoretical insights.

90 pages, soft cover \$2.95

### SPORTRAITS OF THE STARS

by George Shane

Here are sparkling caricatures of some of the world's finest and most famous athletes such as Muhammad Ali, Bobby Orr, Billie Jean King, Bobby Hull, and many others in a wide variety of sports.

In addition to the full page pen-ups a brief biographical record of the achievements of these international superstars is included alongside the drawings.

112 pages, soft cover \$1.95

### FOUR SEASONS WEST

A Photographic Odyssey of the Three Prairie Provinces

by R. H. Macdonald

Seventy-five full-colour photographs, collected over 25 years, show beauty as it is found in the prairie regions of Canada. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are shown in their many moods in all seasons.

Winter — our most difficult season — has been effectively captured in its frozen reality. You will never look at a Canadian winter with the same eyes after viewing *Four Seasons West*.

116 pages, hard cover \$25.00

### THE STATE

by Franz Oppenheimer

The state affects the most mundane as well as the most important aspects of our lives. As a powerful, sprawling institution it shapes the other major institutions of our society and reaches into our most personal everyday affairs.

Oppenheimer's *The State* seeks to understand the institution through his study of history and political economy. His conclusions are that the state is "forced by a victorious group of men on a defeated group, with the sole purpose of regulating the dominion of the victorious group over the vanquished, and securing itself against revolt from within and attacks from abroad".

122 pages, soft cover \$3.95

### THE POLITICIAN or THE TREASON OF DEMOCRACY

by James G. Gardiner

Few politicians, before their careers have begun, have set down clearly their ideals and aspirations, enshrined in an autobiographical novel. *The Politician or The Treason of Democracy*, is a novel in form, but it is also James Gardiner's autobiography, written when he was twenty-seven years old, and four years before he contested the first of his fifteen successful elections. The book was written during 1910 and 1911 while Gardiner was an undergraduate student at the University of Manitoba. It is typical of its time in its emphasis on morality, on how virtue is rewarded and evil overthrown. But more importantly, it is Gardiner's own assessment of himself on the threshold of his long career as legislative member, cabinet minister and premier in Saskatchewan, and federal Minister of Agriculture. (He held the last portfolio for twenty-two unbroken years, the Canadian record.)

240 pages, soft cover \$5.95

### SWEDEN, 1975: TROUBLE IN THE WELFARE STATE PARADISE

An Omen for British Columbia

by Paul Hurruses

This slim volume about the world's most highly publicized yet least known or understood Social Welfare State is germane to the current politics of Canada in general, and British Columbia in particular. This book is a searching assessment of a nation of just over eight million Swedes after two generations of rigid State Socialist regimentation and centralized planning that are, for all intent and purpose, totalitarian in concept and execution.

76 pages, soft cover \$2.95

### TANYA

by Eli Popoff

Here is a timely biography about a woman whose inner being and soaring spirit was an integral part of her life. Tanya's physical stamina matched her spiritual strength. She helped to plough the fields of the new Doukhobor settlement in Canada when there weren't enough horses to go around. The women decided to take the place of horses, against repeated attempts of the men to dissuade them.

This strongly matriarchal society has a unique message for our situation today. Lushechka, the wise Doukhobor leader, was revered by Tanya and the rest of the group as a woman who knew and understood their innermost feelings.

*Tanya* is an important book that is not only a narrative of Doukhobor history, but a piercing insight into a remarkable woman.

276 pages, hard cover \$9.45

### TRADING FOR MILADY'S FURS

In the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1923-1943  
by Jack Milne

The treatment accorded him by the H.B.C. was so inexplicably high-handed at times that it was a decisive factor in his eventual decision to resign. In spite of the treatment, however, he served the Company with a devotion approaching affection and was rewarded by a satisfying sense of achievement and by an accumulation of wonderful stock of experiences.

From 1923-1943 the north developed from an isolated wilderness to a community linked by highway, aircraft and radio to the no longer remote "outside". The Hudson's Bay Company had to cope with this change, and in many ways acted as a stimulant to the development. Jack Milne's story, therefore, stands as one man's record of survival during the rapid changes which confronted the Canadian North West.

250 pages, hard cover \$8.95

### TRANSFORMATION

A Message of Hope, Love and Faith

by Donald Pollock

Don Pollock went through a childhood of sufferings from juvenile detention centres to prisons, penitentiaries and mental institutions. In this, his second book, he discusses the establishment of his rehabilitation programme, Transformation Centre Inc., to aid drug addicts and ex-convicts.

There is a critical analysis of our prison system and what changes should be made to effectively reduce crime. Sensitivity and love are the foundation of his solutions.

212 pages, soft cover \$6.95

### VANCOUVER: MILLTOWN TO METROPOLIS

Third Edition

by Alan Morley

Few cities in the world have equalled Vancouver's rapid rise from wilderness to metropolis.

Less than 170 years ago the northwest coast of North America was unmapped, unexplored and unknown to the rest of the world. Nature alone ruled this violent land, hemmed in by massive mountain walls, rolling forests and the restless sea.

Yet today, it is one of the world's most beautiful cities. Busy docks and ocean ships share in the activities of more than 892,000 dwellers in this jewel of the Pacific Coast.

This is the story of the people who came to this land, conquered its wilderness and laid the foundations for the growth of a great city.

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### THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE BEFORE 1492

A Historical Outline

by Stuart S. Seaman

Did the white races and most of the Indian peoples migrate from the east and settle in the new world before 1492? Has our true heritage and historical record been suppressed? Yes! says Seaman in this gripping investigation of our pre-Columbian history and who admonishes intelligent men to remove the blinders and ignore the theories of history which have been imposed on them. This book is an authoritative study of the westward migrations of the white and red man from the Middle East and Europe, 1486 B.C. to the present. Read about 3500 years which has not been told before.

67 pages, soft cover \$4.95

### WELCOMING DISASTER

Poems 1970-1974

by Jay Macpherson

Oxford let me do this book,  
Kindly, on my private hook:

Hine *sub regno*, Poetry

Printed, some time since, Part Three:

Friends assisted, not a few —

Bear up, Muse, we'll list just two

(Pausing, though, to not pass over

Picture sourcebooks pub. by Dover):

Best of readers, Northrop Frye

Cast a sure arranging eye:

David Blostein helped design,

Caught, with finer hand than mine,

Ted, glum chum, in subtle line.

Major debts thus briefly noted,

Muse, let's jump: our vessel's floated.

64 pages, soft cover \$2.50

### YELLOWHEAD MILEPOSTS

Route of the Overlanders

by Richard & Rochelle Wright

This first volume of Yellowhead Mileposts takes the reader from Mile 0 at Portage La Prairie, Man., to Mile 1252.1 at Kamloops, B.C. Not only is the history of the settlements along the old trails given, but also general facts about early life on the prairies and through the mountains. There are commentaries on the Riel Rebellion, the Doukhobors, steamboats, Red River carts, prairie folksongs and the architecture and natural life along the trail.

Through color photographs and sections from diaries of early settlers one will get a real sense of how history was shaped in this part of Canada.

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London Free Press

250 pages, hard cover \$10.00, soft cover \$4.75

### VANCOUVER TOMORROW

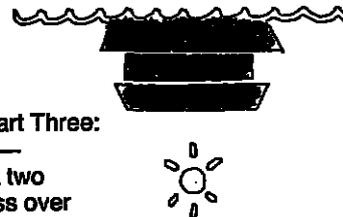
A Search for Greatness

by Warnett Kennedy

A city can be botched by charming, well-intentioned people, as readily as by political bias or greedy speculation. This was Warnett Kennedy's reaction in 1952 to the mayor's desire to pave False Creek to make more space for industry.

Like most major cities today, Vancouver is facing decisions that, once made, cannot be undone by future generations. Their stamp will determine the image and character of the city. Kennedy, an architect and town planner, deals with the necessity of preserving the Fraser Valley as farmland, the suggestion of housing on hillsides, and the need for a system of tunnels for traffic. The problems this book reviews are unavoidable subjects for urban communities. Let's hope the enlightened solutions will be implemented.

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## COMPTINES

Les Comptines  
de la jeunesse



### COLLECTION LITTÉRATURE DE JEUNESSE

This cleverly rhymed and rhythmic French verse, in large type, is complemented by simple, colourful illustrations.

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*Forty Years at Sea*

by *Andrew Horwood*

Though this story centres around the life of one man and the Port of Grand Bank, the book is a history of Newfoundland exports and imports, the kind of transportation employed and the life of those men who go to sea in small ships.

Andrew Horwood's sea stories were a weekly feature on the Newfoundland Network of the CBC. A native Maritimer, his first book, *Newfoundland Ships and Men*, found a responsive audience. This companion work won't be different.

142 pages, hard cover, \$6.50

#### FOLK SONGS OF CANADA

by *Edith Fulton Fowke and Richard Johnston*

Fowke, the well-known folklore collector and Canadian authority on folk songs, and Johnston, noted composer, conductor and critic, have compiled this selection of songs from many regions of Canada. There are lumbering songs from Ontario, sea-shanties from Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, songs of the French Canadian habitant and *coureurs-de-bois*. Fowke believes that there is a danger that the songs which our forefathers preserved through many generations of loneliness and hardship will die out because of the pervasive aspect of radio, movies and television. She says, "It is our hope that this book may help a greater number of Canadians to know and love their native folk songs."

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#### CALL ME A GOOD THIEF

by *Donald Pollock*

Donald Pollock was 18 years old. He was hungry and cold. He stole \$12.75. He was caught by the police, charged and sentenced to three years in federal prison. The place was Montreal. The year: 1958.

Some people wouldn't have believed Donald Pollock's incredible but true story before... but now he has written and published a book to tell the world... Now believe him.

His story is about the 18 terrifying and lonely years he spent in and out of Canadian prisons... how he was savagely addicted to drugs for nine years... how he attempted to escape time and time again with no success... and how all this led him to try and kill himself several times... In all honesty, Donald Pollock shouldn't be alive today.

His story will be a shocking but exciting educational learning experience for anybody who has ever wondered what it would really be like to be classified as a criminal and to live behind bars.

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G. Edmond Burrows

Ten years ago there was little interest in "Canadiana" and even less interest in "Canadian Clocks". Since the celebration of Canada's one hundredth birthday in 1967 the overall interest in "Canadiana" has grown extensively. At the same time the growth in the hobby of collecting clocks has been nothing short of fantastic.

Recently many books have been written on various aspects of "Canadiana" but until the publication of this book there was little information available about "Canadian Clocks and Clockmakers". In fact few people realized that clocks were actually manufactured in Canada and that there are numerous examples of beautiful Canadian clock craftsmanship on display in museums across the country.

With this book the author has made a substantial contribution to the recognition of the clock industry in Canada.

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#### CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES:

*The American Takeover of the Mind*

by *K. Jean Cottam*

The statistics reveal that the takeover of our universities by non-Canadians will be imminent if the situation at present does not change. Cottam fears also that qualified Canadian students are being denied access to graduate education while American students take advantage of the less expensive graduate education here. This is an important study of one of our most pressing problems.

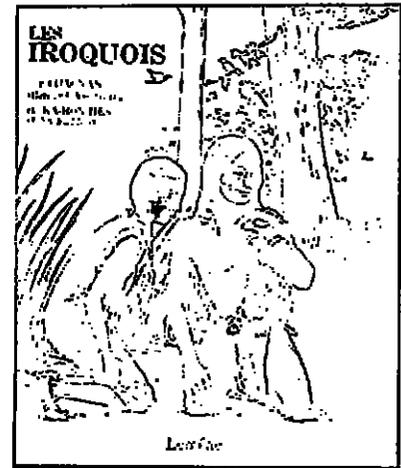
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arranged by Martha Knapp

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by Bruce Peel

The first book we know of on a subject seldom mentioned in western history books. There really were a number of unwieldy steamboats plying the shallow Saskatchewan River in the last decades of the 19th century . . . carrying supplies and settlers, even troops for the Riel Rebellion. Author Bruce Peel has researched his subject with dedication and the payoff is a fascinating history, illustrated with carefully reproduced old maps and photos. A valuable addition to any Canadian bookshelf.

240 pages, hard cover \$7.95

## UPROOTED HEATHER

by Wemyss Cavalock

Fictionized but with many of its characters drawn directly from history, this is the story of the eviction of the Sutherland Clan from their cottages and farmsteads in Scotland and of the arduous trek by sea and land to Hudson's Bay and the Red River Valley in Canada. Product of years of reading and research by the author, *Uprooted Heather* is a valuable contribution to Canadiana as well as to readable fiction relating to pioneer Canada.

275 pages, hard cover \$6.95

## GROWING UP IN MINBY

by L. H. Person

Growing Up In Minby captures all the fun and frolics of growing up in a prairie town in the late 1920s, where young boys lived life to the full, with their plots and pranks and "hanky-panks". More seriously, the novel is a sensitive commentary on the decline and slow death of all those small towns which were so prevalent 40 years ago. It is a valuable historic record of times and places that have virtually disappeared from the prairies for all time. A social document, yes, but few social documents are as humorously entertaining as Minby.

Hard cover \$8.95

## MOTHER WAS NOT A PERSON

edited by Margaret Anderson

Canadian women became persons in 1929 when, after four days of debate, His Majesty's Privy Council overruled the Supreme Court of Canada which had decided in 1928 that under the BNA act of 1867, women were not persons.

This and other interesting facts peculiar to the situation of women in Canadian society are described in this anthology of writings by women.

258 pages, soft \$3.95, hard \$10.95

## NO VIRGIN MARY

by Jonathan Simpson

Simpson explores the plight of the Indian today through the eyes of Mary Waboss, and Ojibway on the Broken Spirit reserve in Northern Ontario. The antithesis between tribal brotherhood and individual competitiveness is made evident in Mary's harsh initiation to city life. All the wrongs that have been done to the Indian because of the mistaken assumption that they can be moulded to fit a white man's form are given light here. The novel is truly a compassionate one.

124 pages, soft cover, \$2.50

## LADY LUMBERJACK

by *Dorothea Mitchell*

When Miss Mitchell looks back upon her life as she does in this autobiographical account she is amazed herself at the variety and adventurous quality of her many experiences. She was indeed a lady lumberjack — in old Ontario in the Pee Dee country around Fort William and Port Arthur. She was in the lumber business seriously, contracted for railroad ties, piling, cordwood and pulpwood. She owned and operated a sawmill. She was the first unmarried woman to be awarded a Free Grant homestead in Ontario. She was the author and co-producer of *A Race for Ties*, the first feature length movie made in Canada entirely by amateurs in 1929 (now in the vaults of the Canadian Film Institute in Ottawa). Now ninety years old, Miss Mitchell lives in Victoria, B.C.

135 pages, hard cover, \$4.95

## NEVER SURRENDER

by *Mary Pack*

Once identifying the desperate needs of arthritic patients why does no one come forward to help them? What is the matter with society that it turns its back on those in need? Is the medical profession really callous to the pain of these patients? The answers to these questions are provided by Miss Pack herself as her story unfolds.

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## GHOST TOWNS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

by *Bruce Ramsey*

Ghost towns come mainly from the mining industry, since the destiny of every mine — even the highly successful — is to be closed down eventually. Thus, British Columbia, a colourful mining province, probably has more ghost towns than any similar region of Canada.

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by *Cliff Kopas*

At a lonely channel-end on the deeply cut mountainous North Pacific Coast of North America the Indians had a settlement of ancient descent they called Bella Coola. In the summer of 1793 they had two interesting visitors: F. N. and Alexander Mackenzie — explorers, in separate expeditions.

Two generations later the pass and harbour at Bella Coola were surveyed with a view to making it a terminus of the first Atlantic to Pacific railway.

Bella Coola will one day be an important seaport center. But in this book we are concerned with its history, the native Indians of the region, and the people from other lands who have made it their home. A vigorous people — they put their town on the road system of British Columbia by their own efforts.

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—Ivan Illich

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recorded by *Eloise Street*

From generation to generation, dating back, it is thought, to the Sun rites of Central America, the Songs of Y-Ail-Mihith (The Ancient Singer) were passed along to the religious leaders of American Indian tribes.

Chief Sepass of Chilliwack wished that future generations of Indians would always remember the greatness of their people as shown through these songs. He entrusted the translation of them to Mrs. C. L. Street, the daughter of the Reverend Edward White, one of the first four missionaries sent out to British Columbia by the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Mrs. Street could speak the Salish dialect of the Chilliwack Indian fluently.

The introductory material on Chief Sepass and his people was written by the late Oliver N. Wells, an authority on Chilliwack tradition. Illustrations are by George Cletust.

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by *William Dekur*

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by *R. G. Large*

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*Prince Rupert*, a copiously illustrated volume, is a revised edition of an earlier book published at that time to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the city. New facts and photographs bring the story up to date, providing material that will be invaluable to researchers in years to come.

Every modern community stands as a legacy from its pioneers. The Prince Rupert book is highly recommended as a record of the successful efforts of dedicated citizens of a Canadian west coast seaport city.

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The *S.S. Beaver* was the first steamship to ply the waters of the northeasterly Pacific Ocean, linking the scattered coastal trading posts of the Hudson's Bay Company. The doughty little vessel played a vital part in helping Governor Douglas keep the flag of Empire flying in a region where some ambitious United States policymakers threatened to cut off British America from the Pacific Coast.

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Premier Douglas is given credit by author Pethick for saving British Columbia in gold rush days from being overrun and lost, much as the old Fort Vancouver and the Oregon country opened by the Hudson's Bay Company were engulfed by a tide of American settlers. Douglas let it be known that the horde of goldseekers pouring into Victoria and across to the Cariboo were on British territory and subject to British law. Without this firm stand who knows what changes in ownership there might have been of this province of ours?

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The story of the Mennonites. Blodwen Davies was a sound and painstaking researcher with a warm-hearted and understanding perception of the Mennonites amongst whom she lived. She tells the story of their migration from Pennsylvania to Ontario to make a unique contribution to a new society. In her own words: "This was a place where their traditional skills of husbandry and of fine craftsmanship could earn them the security and peace they had sought for so long."

The account of the Mennonites in Ontario is their story, too, in other parts of North America where they live and keep their identity based on a practice of religious beliefs and a down-to-earth philosophy of fundamental happiness.

Dress, artifacts, household goods and farm implements, all of historic interest, are shown in a section of photographs in colour and black and white. The cover of the book is an illustration of a string of ancient amber, one of many treasured by Mennonite families as heirlooms of a past that had its roots in Europe.

244 pages, hard cover, \$8.50

**VICTORIA: THE FORT**

by *Derek Pethick*

The first small settlement of the area that would become modern Victoria was sheltered behind stockade walls and guarded by a sturdy, axe-hewn timber bastion. The Hudson's Bay Company's fur trading centre took the name Victoria, honoring the young queen in far-off London.

Here is the story of this isolated Fort and of the early Colonial and gold rush days. It is the first of what the author plans will be a trilogy of books on the beautiful capital city of British Columbia, Canada's most westerly province. Historian Derek Pethick makes the trading place and the colonial capital live again, gives personality and significance to the struggles of the pioneering leaders who laid the groundwork for British America on the Pacific Coast and for Canada's Far West of today.

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**"WE'VE KILLED JOHNNY USSHER!":**

**The Story of the Wild McLean Boys and Alex Hare**

by *Mel Rothenburger*

Researched and written by a newspaperman descendant of the family, this is the story of a new legendary crime involving the sons of respected Hudson's Bay Company factor Donald McLean. It happened 90 years ago. Four young halfbreeds were tried in one of the most notable criminal prosecutions for multiple murder in British Columbia history. After a long trial, the gallows at New Westminster ended the case. Now celebrated in song and story, the wild McLeans and Alex Hare are part of the lore of British Columbia of colonial days when Sir Matthew Baillie Begbie represented the law and implacable justice. A summer of '72 release.

212 pages, illustrated, soft cover, \$4.50

**SAANNES Publications Limited;**  
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SAANNES

# Taking stock in the West

Father Lacombe, by James G. MacGregor, Hurtig, illustrated, 350 pages, \$10 cloth.

By MARJORIE BOYLE

A COMPLIMENTARY biography of a missionary is an event in a decade when even churchmen deplore their zeal. This history of Albert Lacombe, Quebec farmboy ordained Catholic priest, narrates how he secured the affectionate respect of Métis, Cree, Blackfoot, and Assiniboine as he foraged for souls in the Canadian West. In fatigue, epidemic, and war, hewing missions, gardening, parrying with Protestants, catechizing, colonizing, and saying Mass with his mittens on, Lacombe emerges as a "new Moses," leading "great hunters before the Lord" whose manna is Prairie meat.

Historians may agree with MacGregor that "no one did more for the early West than he." Yet this full biography did not sustain my interest. Once Lacombe is retired from the Indian camps, to solicit funds in the salons of Montreal and Ottawa, his character seems thin and unfocused. Accounts of his chaplaincy for CPR construction gangs, mediation in the North-West Rebellion, and entanglement in the separate-school debate diminish rather than reinforce the reader's conviction about his stature. With the plaintive portrait of Lacombe preaching against the vagaries of Loisy's radical (modernist) biblical criticism — to tourists gathered on shipboard to hear about the Indians — one senses that the man or his biographer has lost his spirit. As Lacombe, surveying the rowdy railroad gangs, confided to his diary: "My God, send me back again to my old Indian missions. I am longing for that."

MacGregor's writing is adequate, sometimes vivid. Dependent on archival research, he nevertheless advances over the cloying style of Katherine Hughes, who had the benefit of interviewing Lacombe (*Father Lacombe: The Black-Robe Voyageur*, McClelland & Stewart, 1920), and even Lacombe's own memoirs edited under the priest's direction (*Le Père Lacombe d'après ses mémoires et souvenirs*, Devoir, 1916). Yet Lacombe's vocation is exaggerated as "mystic" and the por-

trayal of him as an adolescent seminarian is sentimental. The reader is too often reminded about Lacombe's "itchy feet" (yen to travel) and stumbles easily over such stock as "a pretty kettle of fish," "thrown to the wolves," "trigger-happy," "crying over spilled milk," and "the magic of a summer evening" — all within a short section.

The author of 13 other books on the West, MacGregor has finely orchestrated Lacombe's career with its historical backdrop. One error: "Father Lacombe's church, realizing that Ukrainians were divided into Eastern rite and Roman rite Catholics . . ." The Ruthenian or Ukrainian rite is one of 18 canonical rites within the Catholic Church whose members owe allegiance to the Roman pope and it is also used by Russian Orthodox believers who honour the patriarch. Both groups are Eastern rite, neither Roman rite, differing in their spiritual leaders.

Western buffs and historians, missionaries of course, will read and relish *Father Lacombe* without persuasion. The public may need nudging. □

## A model of urbanity

Compassionate Landscape, by Humphrey Carver, U of T Press, 256 pages, \$15 cloth and \$6 paper.

By MARILYN POWELL

IN THIS DECADE of the fall of cities, it's comforting to know that a man like Humphrey Carver is around and still making his voice heard. *Compassionate Landscape* is his autobiography, but it is also a history of the fight for decent housing for Canadians, the day-by-day, year-after-year fight with affluent "I'm alright Jacks" who don't want to finance urban renewal or redevelopment if it means middle-class bucks out of pocket. You know who I mean: businessmen, bureaucrats, and politicians at every level — all those in charge who decide for the rest of us what our landscape will be.

Carver of course is far more diplomatic about the opposition he has encountered, struggling to make "compassionate" an active adjective. Perhaps it was his diplomacy that enabled him to survive and work well inside a govern-

ment bureaucracy. Other of his colleagues, he observes dryly, didn't. Just to fill you in. For almost 20 years, Humphrey Carver was a member of the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the federal housing agency established in 1946. For almost 20-years within that agency, he cared about cities and how they grew, writing books for the public and reports for the experts, making the reports and the books relate, bringing the experts and the public together, because Humphrey Carver was and is a popularist.

This present book is in keeping with his past. In fact, he gives it all to us, his youth, middle age, even the youth and middle age of his parents and their parents. He reaches back for gentle connections and forward, as he says, for subtle developments, continuity in his grandchildren. So there are no dramatic revelations in a quiet story about a steady progress.

Carver was born in England, grew up in Birmingham, and studied architecture in London. He came to Canada, worked in Toronto, went to Ottawa, and lives there now. What is remarkable in his long life is the total absence of digression, as if he always knew intuitively what he should be and do. At least his telling would have it so.

Unfortunately, I found the narrative flat at times, lacking tension, and the style less than dynamic. Too much grist for the mill. Too much time spent inside the corridors or offices of power, where committee follows committee follows planning board and commission. Well, change is brought about by such undramatic means, as we all know, by patient, decent, single-minded toilers, by pragmatists if not by visionaries. We're not talking about revolution.

When the conference on housing and urban affairs, called by Lester Pearson in 1967, was scuttled by ill-prepared and ill-informed ministers, Carver and the Advisory Group of the CMHC continued to hope. Their legislative proposals, involving more public money for middle- and lower-income people among other things, were finally accepted without publicity in 1968 and entered the statute books in 1973. Let me go back to 1959 for a moment. That year the Advisory Group made it possible for a young architecture student to travel through North America and return with a dream. With charming candour, resorting to a paragraph from Moshe Safdie's book, Carver admits he didn't think that dream was possible. But Habitat was built, and a

• \$50-million housing experiment was paid for by the government.

What we have here is not merely a memoir, illustrated with snapshots from the family album and drawings, but also a record of productive effort, unsensational yet sustained on the public's behalf. Many of those engaged in it with Carver, some of them his friends, some of them well-known, are mentioned in the book. Occasionally an eccentric appears too, chafing at limits he cannot exceed. At one point the author laments that Canadians don't discuss passionately. But, as he is a perfect witness, they do discuss. And act. And in the end he applies the adjective "compassionate" to his adopted countrymen, all those who have been open enough to entertain new ideas and put them into practice wherever they originated. Yes, they came from America, many of them — brilliant, enlightened, innovative ideas. But take a look around you. In this decade of urban blight that's spreading, Canadian cities are still alive and growing. *Compassionate Landscape* is, at the very least, corroboration that our houses are in order. □

## Territorial comparatives

**This Was the North**, by Anton Money with Ben East, General Publishing, illustrated, 244 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

**Ghost Town Trails of the Yukon**, by Don Sawatsky, Stagecoach Publishing (Box 3399, Langley, B.C.), illustrated, 120 pages, \$4.95 paper.

By ERLING FRIIS-BAASTAD

I HAVE NOTHING but respect for anyone who has managed to live alone year round in the Yukon wilderness; so many people have failed at it. So if *This Was the North* were a lousy book, I'd still feel compelled to praise it.

Anton Money arrived in the North from England in 1923. He was 22 and worked at the Hudson's Bay Company post in Telegraph Creek. The position bored him silly and he soon left it to lead a prospector's life in northern British Columbia and the southern Yukon. Money was one of the lucky ones; he did strike it rich. At one point, he had 17 pokes of gold dust and nuggets stacked in his cabin. But Money

makes it clear he was after something other than gold when he decided to make a life for himself in the back country. He wanted to become a self-reliant bush man and according to his own account, succeeded brilliantly. He learned to make the right moves around grizzlies, suspicious natives, white water, and incredible sub-zero temperatures.

Almost everyone who has lived in the Yukon is an expert on bears and most of us have our own bear-scare stories, but I've never heard or read such an exciting account of a grizzly encounter as Money's description of an enraged sow trying to force him off a cliff.

The chapter called "The Christmas Cariboo," is either the most moving account of a man's rapport with wild animals or the saddest admission of cabin fever I've run across. Alone and gloomy one Christmas, Money succeeded in enticing a herd of cariboo to surround him and provide companionship on the one day of the year he couldn't bear to spend in solitude.

Much of the prose in *This Was the North* is as exciting as bannock without raisins, but you really don't notice unless you make a point of looking. The exciting events carry the narrative along and Money's years in the bush were a worthwhile substitute for a lifetime spent chasing language around in a studio. This is a moving book that I'd rank just behind *Nunaga* and *The Dangerous River* as a work likely to encourage people to pack up and go North.

*Ghost Town Trails of the Yukon* is the first of Stagecoach Publishing's planned series on Canadian ghost towns. It's a travel-history book aimed at summer tourists.

I wish the publishers had included some good up-to-date maps of the Yukon with the sites of the settlements mentioned by author Don Sawatsky clearly marked. I live in the Yukon, but found myself lost geographically several times while reading this book. For instance, there are at least two Ogilvies in the Yukon, one an old settlement and one a modern territorial government highway-maintenance camp. A tourist could end up on Mile-124 of the Dempster Highway taking pictures of prefabs and gravel trucks. The two Ogilvies are a couple of hundred miles apart.

Apart from that one flaw, however, *Ghost Town Trails of the Yukon* would be a worthwhile investment for anyone planning to visit the Yukon. Along with many excellent old photo-

graphs, Sawatsky has packed a surprising amount of information into the 120 pages. And unlike many authors, he is aware the Yukon didn't suddenly appear on earth in 1898; there is much more to the territory than gold and Dawson City. □

## Diddled masses

**Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930**, by Robert Harney and Harold Troper, Van Nostrand Reinhold, illustrated, 212 pages, \$14.95 cloth.

By GEORGE MELNYK

ONE CAN approach this book in two ways: as an observer of a distant but curious phenomenon; or as a participant in the reality that is being portrayed. The latter is my perspective.

A small ship deck crammed with hundreds of bodies, a toothless "baba" peering sadly from a train window, a gang of lean men sitting listlessly on a single bed, a rag picker dragging a sled through the snow are some of the images I found so striking in this book of 150 photographs cemented together by the unequivocal commentary of two Toronto historians, Robert Harney and Harold Troper. Like skillful bricklayers they have created a structure that is strong and long-lasting and which expresses integrity.

Though the setting is early 20th-century Toronto, the ethnic immigrant experience that they document and interpret is similar to that of other North American cities. That experience is tainted by unwelcoming racial superiority, the hunger, poverty, and degradation created by free-enterprise landlords and factory owners and the essential pain of separation and adjustment. This book is about "Jews, Italians, South Slavs, Greeks, Syrians, and Chinese" and their lives that flowed from ship to slum to sweat shop, from wedding to children to funeral.

The book exposes the tension that existed and still exists between the immigrant and the dominant society. In so many ways, the city was a huge crate of thorns for the ethnic immigrant, a bed of sweat and struggle. For the writers of the day, the foreigner was an intrusion, an economically necessary but cultur-

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ally distasteful phenomenon. This mass of labourers who dug sewers, dusted china vases, sewed clothes, and talked in strange tongues offended the sensibilities of British imperial society in Canada.

The black-and-white photograph is a striking indictment in itself as it records immigrant conditions, but when it is supported by the analysis of socially critical historians, the result is explosive. The authors point out that the great migration was as much a result of the work of an army of agents hungry for profit as it was the result of a general crisis in rural life in Europe. They state that "migration was a great free-enterprise commerce and the commodity was human flesh." Behind this vast net of agents stood the indigenous capitalists of Canada eager for cheap manual labour and consumers.

These two men write with empathy and passion and they have selected photographs of devastating impact. The thinly scribbled and overly stamped pieces of paper called passports, the reading-room ads, the night-school diplomas are as vital and telling as the human faces against a backdrop hung in a huge British flag. They talk about the split between children and parents brought on by education; they talk about the social mobility that takes generations to achieve and they show human warmth and generosity in the midst of everything. But like the reports and photographs of the health inspectors, nurses, and social workers on which the book is based, the view is that of the observer. They fail to reach to the soul of immigrant life, to the ethnic communality, to the letters written in one's own language, to the heart of the individual and the buffers he created in a hostile world.

The anger, the frustration, the fire inside created by the sweat shops, the pick and shovel, the crumbling slum dwellings, the stares, is not here. Only one who has lived it can express the rage. The ships have been replaced by planes, the Eastern European faces by West Indians and Pakistanis. But the slot reserved for them in Canadian society is much the same. Forty years ago the Moscow-oriented Communist Party of Canada worked with the Eastern European immigrants and did well. Today the Peking-oriented CPM-L (Communist Party of Canada, Marxist-Leninist) works with the Third World immigrants and does well. Nothing has changed since these photographs were taken. It's the same Canada. □

## Heroes whose time has come

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**Bethune: His Story in Pictures**, edited by Barry Lord, Toward a People's Art series, NC Press, 77 pages, \$6.95 cloth and \$3.95 paper.

**The Story of Unions in Canada**, by Jack Williams, J. M. Dent & Sons, 252 pages, \$4.50 cloth.

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By DON WEITZ

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DR. NORMAN BETHUNE was the Louis Riel of the Canadian medical profession. He was probably the first revolutionary health worker in Canada — a friend of the working class and a fighter for people oppressed by fascism and imperialism. However, as Barry Lord points out in his righteous introduction, it was only 3½ years ago that Canada finally recognized Bethune — 33 years after he died. On Aug. 17, 1972, the Canadian government declared Bethune's birthplace in Gravenhurst, Ont., to be "of national historic significance." So much for the token and belated recognition Bethune received at the hand of the government, not to mention his chronic neglect by the capitalist Canadian Medical Association.

In publishing this bilingual book — translated into both English and French from the original Chinese version published by Shanghai People's Publishing House — NC Press has honoured Bethune, revolutionary struggle, and itself. The fine, sharply defined pen-drawings by Chinese artists and Lynn Hutchinson Brown, together with Rita Briansky's moving painting, bring dignity and life to a story that even most eight- or nine-year-olds can understand.

Most of the illustrations and text are devoted to documenting many of Bethune's heroic achievements and self-sacrifices in China for nearly two years (1938-9). For example, he once "treated over 500 wounded men" in a week and "performed about 1,400 operations" in less than a year. Furthermore, Bethune refused the \$100 monthly salary Mao offered him; he used the money to buy food and medical supplies for wounded Chinese soldiers and peasants. (Imagine today's Canadian doctors doing this.) Tragically, Bethune worked himself to death; he died in China in 1939, only 49, from septicemia (blood poisoning).

*Bethune* is exciting Canadian biography and revolutionary history told in simple capsule form; it's a fine companion piece to Ted Allen and Sydney Gordon's *The Scalpel, The Sword* and Peter Stevens' *And the dying sky like blood*. I gave this book to my 11-year-old son and daughter. They could do much worse than identify with Bethune. He is a beloved national hero in China. It's past time he became one in Canada.

Jack Williams, a freelance writer and former PR director for the Canadian Labour Congress, has tried to document the labour pains, birth struggles and conflict-ridden growth of Canadian unions in his *Story of Unions in Canada*. Unfortunately, the book fails to do justice to the many big rights issues and struggles — any one of which deserves separate treatment.

Williams' story reads more like a textbook or a computer print-out. He barrages the reader with so many facts about major and minor struggles that it's difficult to experience any understanding of any one issue. Moreover, the text leaves the impression that there were few if any real heroes or legendary leaders in the unions. However, Williams does praise Daniel O'Donoghue as the "Father of the Canadian Labour Movement." O'Donoghue was a political activist who became the union workers' first MPP in Ontario. Like Bethune, he never was officially recognized or honoured: "he was not even accorded a place in the Hall of Fame established by the Canadian Labour Congress in 1972." Yet Joe Hill, a young organizer killed by a firing squad as an alleged murderer, is remembered in a folk song. Strange. □

Scribo,  
ergo sum

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**André Gide and the Art of Autobiography: A Study of "Si le grain ne meurt,"** by C.D.E. Tolton, Macmillan, 122 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

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By GRAHAM FORST

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ANDRÉ GIDE's autobiographical masterpiece receives its first full-length study in this book by Dr. C.D.E. Tolton. *Si le grain ne meurt* has attracted little interest in English, and its neglect is quite undeserved. Its lyricism, clarity of prose, sincerity of purpose, and

moody, spell-casting evocation of things past begs serious comparison with Proust's best. And in fact a large part of the reason why *Si le grain* has not had the same public as *A la recherche du temps perdu* is less inherent than generic: one is fiction, the other autobiography.

This distinction is interesting; indeed, for Tolton, it is central, since he believes that until autobiography is seen as a unique "art" with "its own history, problems, and criteria for success," works such as *Si le grain* will be misunderstood and underestimated for want of recognized standards. Consequently, Tolton directs fully the first quarter of his text to defining autobiography as a genre, which he distinguishes from memoirs, confessions, diaries, letters, and so forth, primarily on the grounds of "structure."

Here, Tolton, like Frye, Wayne Booth, Roy Pascal and others, relates the art of the autobiographer directly to that of the novelist, noting in Gide's work especially the presence of such novelistic techniques as pacing and suspense, balance and distance. In fact, so "novelistic" does Tolton find *Si le grain* that he quotes with assent Aragon's judgment of Gide's *Pages de*

*Journal*: "Ce livre capital, on peut le lire presque à la façon d'un roman." Tolton goes even farther, suggesting that "the structure of Gide's autobiography can be, and in fact should be, studied in the same way as that of a first-person novel."

Possibly, this appeal, in the case of *Si le grain*, to the criteria of fiction is forced, since one of the most important criteria of an autobiography is truth to fact, a serious problem with Gide's work. And it is an irony of Tolton's book that, while admitting the reader "must . . . respect the truth of the work for it to be successful as an autobiography," he goes on to document in such detail the "inconsistencies" in *Si le grain*. Some of these, such as Gide's doctoring of certain letters, Tolton rationalizes with almost comical obviousness, citing for example the precedent of Henry James, which simply begs the question. Other "inconsistencies" are attributed to Gide's "faulty memory" or to his acceptance of "faulty information." But as Shakespeare said, "oftentimes the-excusing of a fault/Doth make the fault the worse by the excuse."

Ultimately Tolton's defence of *Si le grain* turns on that old catch-all, sincer-

ity: "Gide confessed that facts external to himself could indeed become twisted in his memory; but the personal emotion evoked by the events remains constant." That "constancy of emotion" be more important than veracity is a remarkable position, but it is one Tolton seems to hold: "Even where there are doubtful facts in *Si le grain ne meurt*, the emotions are honest." How this squares with Tolton's earlier position that "the effectiveness of an autobiography depends on the authority's factual dependability" is hard to see.

Tolton concludes his book with some odd conjectures as to why Gide, a successful novelist, should have chosen to write his "defense of homosexuality" in the form of an autobiography. The most remarkable of these is that the importance of Gide's subject matter would take on added significance when administered directly, without the artifice of fiction, like a pill without the sugar. As if it were possible for a student of Gide to hold that truth is better served when divorced from imagination. As Gide himself said at the end of Part One of *Si le grain*: "Memoirs are never more than half sincere, however great the desire for truth. . . . Possibly one gets nearer the truth in a novel."

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edited by Dean Tudor, Nancy  
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Aside from some eccentric punctuation and an annoying penchant for the double negative ("should not pass unnoticed" appears three times, "not dissimilar" twice), Tolton's writing style is clear and readable. But unfortunately his little volume, in trying to do too much and in failing to define its terms accurately enough, will do little to bring a wider audience to *Si le grain ne meurt*. □

## Pulp and circumstance

**Renegades of Time**, by Raymond F. Jones; **Herds**, by Stephen Goldin; **Crash Landing on Iduna**, by Arthur Tofte; **Gates of the Universe**, by R. Coulson and G. Deweese; **Walls within Walls**, by Arthur Tofte; **Serving in Time**, by Gordon Eklund, all in the Laser Books series edited by Roger Elwood, all 190 pages, 95 cents each.

By DENNIS DUFFY

WHAT WE NOW call his science-fiction, H. G. Wells named scientific romance. Fitting then, for Harlequin to open a sci-fi line. Same uniform styling and quality control, reliability of product guaranteed; what works for motel and food chains, hamburger franchises and muffler shops, works for literature also.

Consider: pulp fiction has been around for a long while, just as motels existed before Holiday Inn. But whereas the old-style product was tacky and quirky (sandpaper sheets and a paranoid peckerwood for a manager), the new style is middle-mass-respectable, with highs and lows blipped out. So the bedbugs are gone, but so are the Mom and Pop types who would watch the kids for you on a slow night. The Laser Books won't really thrill you, but you won't come across anything really rotten and stupid, either. No purple prose; contact-lensed rather than bug-eyed monsters.

Except as practised by a very few writers, sci-fi isn't exactly a major art form, so it isn't as if Laser were defacing St. Paul's. It's more like throwing confetti on the steps of the Bleeker Street Gospel Tabernacle. In fact, wooden characters, absurd situations, and bathetic utterances scar the creations of better works than these. What instead sets these apart is what I'll call

thinness. It's the sort of quality associated with the sets for daytime TV: canvas a little thinner, glitter a bit thin, the camera sometimes swoops beyond the flat's borders when the director isn't fully awake. So here. For instance, there'll be a Swiss Family Robinson set-up (*Crash Landing on Iduna*), but instead of getting into all the knick-knacky little improvisations (like making gunpowder) that keep an implausible piece of nonsense like Verne's *Mysterious Island* still fun to read, the writer quickly drops that for an encounter with the natives. And of course, we are told nothing really substantial about their society (some of their guys are good, some not), but instead move on to some kind of war they're having.

The books aren't so much bad as dull. For example, there's a chain of badness that descends from Poe to Eugene Sue to the film-maker Franju, but at its worst, boldness, shock, and bizarrerie are never absent. Take all that gothic craziness, translate it into the morals and manners of mid-North America; 1975, and you've got a soap opera whose "bad" characters are slightly faggy. And that's the sort of process we have from William Burroughs to Edgar Rice Burroughs to Laser. This Laser might be able to cut cheddar, but I'd feel better with a .357 Magnum if I had to get through brick.

However, these bland booklets do reveal the sort of cultural malaise that is often the subject of higher entertainments. Their sexless story-lines (boy and girl clinch at the end, but no hanky-panky before then) reveal that more than ever, men are running scared. These heroes win the maidens not through courtship but through the endurance of classic bitchiness. No strutters here, that's something those working-class guys with their DAs go in for. There aren't the distinguished, greying Mr. Rights of the Harlequins either. Not that the heroines are feminists — that's out too. It's just that neither Ken nor Barbie possess sexuality but merely project various attachments.

The works also display a pervasive concern with threats to individuality. It's all garbled, because in the same way that these works are the product of late-capitalistic marketing techniques, so they reflect a concept of individuality that is nostalgia for a loner, robber-baron ethic. Our heroes do well to worry, since they are about as distinctive as a Big Mac, but neither they nor the system producing them possess a

vocabulary for getting at a more possible and humane version of individuality. Mutuality, support, synergy: these qualities appear only in the sterile techniques of teamwork, of keeping a tight pucker so everybody can get on with the job. Our heroes, and most of us as well, are still unable to shape our group behaviour in a way that enhances the talents of its several members. These Lasers are about very frightened people, and for very frightened people whose culture — look what Kubrick did to Burgess's Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* — can portray individualism only within a context of loony or kinky or brutally anti-social behaviour. When they start getting nervous even in the pulps, you know a big blow's coming. □

## Grandfather's clock too far from the self

*Stepping Stones*, by Jamie Brown, Clarke Irwin, 152 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

By DOUGLAS HILL

THE POPULAR myths that any relatively new country or region needs to provide imaginative depth and background for its cultural identity usually announce themselves in narrative literature twice. First come the naive and often accidental discoveries of an age awakening to the value of personal experience in its own national landscape; some time later we get the sophisticated and self-conscious rediscoveries of another generation trying to locate or invent its past. The earlier mode is basically experimental — stories of men and women against nature and place. The latter may involve similar experiences, but must search for their meanings within and through the economic, political, and above all social or family structures that the modern world has wrapped around them.

For the United States, the two significant epochs are 1840-1860 and the 1920s. In Canada, though we may have some difficulty deciding whether the first has yet ended, we can be sure that the second — that which produced books like *Surfacing*, *Beautiful Losers*, and *Riverrun*, or Robertson Davies' Deptford trilogy and Hugh Hood's recently started tetra-trilogy — is emphatically upon us.

Jamie Brown's *Stepping Stones*, the first of a planned three novels that will chronicle the fortunes of the Moncrieff family of Shrewsbury (read Brantford), Ontario, derives from this common source of myth-making energy. The young narrator's expressed wish is to make sense of his present being by recovering and understanding the past that has shaped it. "Maybe as I work," he says, "I can catch . . . for myself . . . a glimmer of where I came from, who I truly am." Space and time, land and the fathers and sons who move across it — these are the subjects he intends to investigate.

If such concerns are to be developed effectively, the reader needs to feel an insistent palpable tension between the past and the present: this is what will turn the meanings the author finds into the reader's meanings. The problem in *Stepping Stones* is that once having introduced the tension in his prefatory pages, Brown does not sustain it. The narrator disappears as a mediating force, and so the story he tells fails to reach out from his grandfather's day to the present. It's perhaps unfair to criticize the first novel of a trilogy for not realizing the aims of the whole work,

especially when they are no less than the aims of an epic. Still, the reader knows what could or should be happening, and he has read what the narrator believes the work will accomplish: he cannot be expected to wait forever, or even for the second volume, to be rewarded.

Since the novel fails to maintain and explore the connections between 1900 and 1975, between story and teller, the reader must look for satisfaction in the elements of that story itself. A straightforward narrative, following Grandfather Moncrieff from agricultural poverty in Manitoba to automobile-manufacturing eminence in Shrewsbury, it records the events of his life in workmanlike if skeletal fashion. There is some clumsy stereotyping — most noticeably of women and immigrants — and a superficiality in characterizing the protagonist that simply doesn't work, as Brown seems to trust it will, to reveal the spiritual hollowness of the man himself. When the narrator declares, near the end of the book, that his grandfather "was as insensitive to himself as ever; it took other people to show him who he was, and how he felt," the reader feels he has been cheated. He

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has not been made to sense something wanting in the character. He has merely been told about it, just as he has been told rather than shown that the cause of the lack is "romanticism."

I think that the trilogy will come alive as it continues, that it will flesh itself out as it recognizes its own past, the myths it is working with, and begins to feed upon them. But the writing will have to assume greater strength as well. There is too much lifeless prose — wooden and occasionally anachronistic dialogue, out-of-focus diction and imagery — much more than is necessary for the tone that Brown apparently wants his narrator to strike. This suggests another question that may be cleared up in a succeeding volume: Ought the reader to attribute the flatness in the writing — the telling — to the author or to his narrator? At the moment it's impossible to tell. I would hope for the latter, but I fear it may be the former.

*Stepping Stones* is thin. The author's long-range artistic and even pecuniary interests might have been better served by publishing these 150 pages as the introductory section of a single large novel. His emphasis so far is on action and events, not on what they mean, and meanings are essential if this sort of novel is truly to open up our shared past. Certainly *Stepping Stones* tells a good, fast-paced story — it's a successful fictional memoir — but it's not informed by the spirit Jamie Brown obviously felt was moving him, and that he promises will be the reader's to share. □

## The system doesn't work

*The Assassins*, by Joyce Carol Oates, Vanguard Press, 568 pages, \$9.95 cloth.

By MARK WITTEN

FRESH FROM A sea of timely images, Joyce Carol Oates brings to us her latest novel, *The Assassins*. It's a chilling psychodocumentary of our times. Whereas the daily assault by the media is immediate and direct, fiction tends to project its vision of collective insanity by indirect means. This novel is a case in point. It originates in an event of collective importance — the assassination of a major American political figure, Andrew Petrie — but focuses on the impact this has on the lives of the

three individuals most strongly affected by his death. Under scrutiny are Stephen, the dead man's younger brother; Hugh, the older brother; and Yvonne, Andrew's wife — as well as Petrie himself, the American Dream gone sour.

The novel spins riddles of psychological intrigue. It's real mystery lies not in the identity of the assassin or assassins but in the compulsive need to sift through the accounts ledger of an American experiment that failed. The failure, which these characters somehow feel involved with, is all too vast in its ramifications. It extends from the hollow dance of political gesticulation and rhetoric down to the betrayal of the nation's individual citizens. Their destinies seem to be doomed by the moral gangrene that has inescapably set into the very fabric of their lives. The novel is a relentless documentation of the inner gropings of each of these three characters towards some bearable comprehension of this process.

Petrie's death is important not as a local event but as an image of futility. To those locked into his personal and political orbit, the revelation (after the initial shock) that his death hardly matters frees them to face alone the emptiness of his life and "ideals" — and of their own lives. Each character is forced to stop in life's midstream to contemplate the ruins that surround him. We witness, in turn, the stage-by-stage psychological fragmentation of each character with each dark new revelation. (The novel comprises three units, each of which is devoted to a particular character and his or her perceptions of America and the world.) Out of this struggle, intimations of mass insanity feverishly multiply until, borne down by horror stiffened into insensibility, Hugh suffers the ignominious fate of deliberately murdering a fish and killing himself at the same time; Yvonne is murdered when her instinct for survival falters; while Stephen, confirmed in his mad ways by the experience, totally abandons himself to them.

Joyce Carol Oates is not the first North American writer to be haunted by glimpses of democratic idealism despoiled. The theme has obsessed most of the great American writers. It appears different now only in that the forms of disappointment take on shapes ever more bizarre and incomprehensible. The legacy of disappointment has given way to despair; the chronology of moral decay suggests that the point of no return has perhaps already been pas-

sed. For Oates, the frontiers of the outer world intrude deeper into private spaces that until now have been reserved to the inner world; psychological and political realities collide in a cataclysmic shock. Oates' metaphorical equation of the political and psychological is perhaps dubious, but nevertheless it's an effective, novelistic approach. And it offers an indictment of America's past and present almost too frightening to accept. □

## Begging to differ

*A Gamut of Stones*, by Larry Reynolds, Simon & Pierre, 215 pages, \$8.95 cloth.

*The Treehouse*, by Helen Duncan, Simon & Pierre, 271 pages, \$9.95 cloth.

By JOHN OUGHTON

THESE TWO novels represent a bold attempt by the Toronto firm of Simon & Pierre to launch a Canadian fiction list. Bold because both novels are first efforts by relatively unknown middle-aged writers: Larry Reynolds is an actor with many radio and TV supporting roles behind him; Helen Duncan is a librarian and former researcher for *Reader's Digest*.

The novels both deal with the interaction between an unusual family or individual and a small town with limited cultural values. Reynolds' protagonist was born in a small midwestern town but went away long enough to develop into a mild bohemian with Pied Piper of Hamelin tendencies. He attempts to inject Porter, population 700, with "real values" by letting a select group of children experience art, music, and nature in the nude sense of raw. Of course, he is martyred by the town squares. But his disciple and friend is only slightly stoned (hence the title) and lives to tell the tale.

It may be a reflection of Reynolds' acting career that the book's only strong point is its dialogue. Straightforward dialogue alone cannot make characters live, and their lack of substance weakens the novel's catharsis. The writer is not helped by the text design, which separates generally brief paragraphs of sans-serif type with large spaces. The typeface is conducive to fast, uncritical reading, but the curious spacing implies that something

significant or difficult to understand has just been delivered. Perhaps it underlines the spare form, almost like a radio script, that Reynolds has given the novel.

Helen Duncan's *The Tree House* is a finely woven novel in the traditional psychological-fiction form and owes more than a little to Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Ms. Duncan has successfully created a family of five personalities, complex but never wholly explained, who are given emotional security by one of them, the mother. When she dies, the house that set the family off from the little Ontario town around them loses its protectiveness. As in Woolf's novel, the mother is the mystical centre of the family solar system; the father is an aloof, orbiting planet. When the mother's spirit returns to the house the children feel a momentary sense of all-surrounding love.

The children make the novel work. Lily, the oldest of the three at 14, is sensitive but less precocious than her 13-year-old brother Chester. Tim, the youngest, loves to draw caricatures of Ramsay MacDonald and von Hindenburg on wrapping paper. There are minor weaknesses in the portrayal of the younger characters. Tim, for instance, comes out with statements that are far too carefully phrased for a small boy. But the strategies that the children develop for the survival of their "special status" are carefully drawn, and the adults (except for the mother) treat them with an appropriate degree of incomprehension. What Ms. Duncan shows of small-town life in Canada has some of the detail of Margaret Laurence's and Alice Munro's work, and is a more subtle view of life than the trumpeting of Ayn Rand in the novel's preface might suggest. □

## The Muse that roared

A Poet's Calling, by Robin Skelton, Book Society of Canada, 214 pages, \$5.65 cloth.

By GWENDOLYN MacEWEN

THIS BOOK is Robin Skelton's fourth work dealing with the meaning, craft, and inspiration of poetry. It differs from his three previous books "about poetry" in that it attempts to provide the reader with insights into what it's actually like to be a poet. This is no

easy task, for poets on the whole are usually unable or unwilling to discuss their particular "calling," let alone their unusual life-styles that result from their chosen vocation.

Drawing on notes and letters written by Yeats, Roethke, Hart Crane, and others, and on personal interviews with Kathleen Raine, Susan Musgrave, and many more poets, Skelton probes the fascinating and often terrifying depths of the poet's mind. In chapter nine, "A Way of Life," he reminds us of the fact that the poet's unconscious is often startlingly close to the surface. In a discussion of Edwin Muir's "waking dreams," he notes that Muir's experiences resemble those of Roethke in that they were both aware "of being separated by only a thin film from some other world of experience." I found this chapter particularly interesting and disturbing, especially when Skelton observes that poets are people who "have no walls," who are continually open and vulnerable to their immediate environment, and have difficulty shutting out the countless sights and sounds around them in order to get ahead with daily tasks.

Skelton also explores the actual craft of poetry in the chapters headed "The Many Modern Modes," "Poems in Their Beginnings," and notably "Poet's Workshop." Worksheets of Robert Graves and James K. Baxter show us the amount of conscious craftsmanship involved in the completion of a poem, after the Muse has had its say. These chapters, I think, will be of special interest to students of literature, whereas the average reader (a term I deplore, since there's really no such thing as an "average" reader) will be more drawn to Skelton's attempts to describe poets as *people* who, for a number of reasons, become full-time practising poets.

Although not insisting that early childhood experiences actually shape a poet, Skelton does point out very convincingly that most major poets realized their "priestlike task" at a very early age, and were deeply moved, even seered or scarred, by incidents in childhood. All children register experiences more deeply than most adults and children live very much in a world of private fantasy and dreams. In adulthood, most people put away childish things — but not the poet. Skelton makes effective use of his own early experiences in showing us how the writing of his poem "The Ball" finally came to be. He also mentions a few instances of poets who have felt that the

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sheer power of the word can be magically potent. Poets can "cast spells" — sometimes literally.

Ultimately, of course, the only true explanation of poetry is found in poems themselves, and most poets would rather write a poem than attempt a coherent analysis of their work in prose or by giving lectures and readings and answering questions from people in audiences. But for those readers who would like to have some light shed on the poet's mysterious calling, Skelton has done an admirable job. As a poet, he knows what it's all about; furthermore, and luckily for the reader, he can also talk about it. Although the book cannot encompass every aspect of poets' lives and work, it does clarify many of the enigmas most people associate with strange vocation, this "calling." □

## Reports from the front

**Sometimes, Suddenly**, by Sally Bryer, J. J. Douglas, 25 pages, \$3.95 paper.

**Conversations with Bibi**, by Alexa de Wiel, The Women's Press, 45 pages, \$2.75 paper.

**The Pandora Sequence: Alice Among the Sisterpeople**, by d. h. sullivan, Cherry Tree Press (Box 122, White Rock, B.C.), 59 pages, paper unpriced.

By DAVE CAVANAGH

HERE ARE THREE poetry books worth reading — two by women about men and women, one by a man about women and men.

Sally Bryer's first book, *Sometimes, Suddenly*, presents 25 poems in chronological order, outlining her progress as a poet over six years. The early poems are often self-conscious and sluggish, with imagery straining to be original but ending up either trite or obscure. But there are good poems here too (especially the more recent ones), clean, honest poems that touch deeply and simply: "You are a little scythe/cutting death/from a cataract eye."

At her best, Bryer writes personal lyrics with music and passion. The last poems in the book are less self-conscious, and show signs of an impassioned perspective that can look both

inward with clarity and outward with warmth: "I must, child-like, bring to you/in woven baskets/the many colours of my vision . . ." Bryer's vision is sometimes clouded, never really brilliant, but always honest and sensitive. It is a vision learning its limits and refining its form.

Another first book, *Conversations with Bibi*, by Alexa de Wiel, is as exotic as its author's name. The poems move in and out of dreams, conversations (with Bibi, no less), history, nature, trances, and long distance telephone calls. In a year gagging on "Why Not?" writing, *Conversations with Bibi* manages to deal with traditional male/female relationships in a manner fresh enough to be incisive: "Raccoon coats to keep mama doing dishes all year round/on the hill back home in the outskirts of the city./just her and the kids and the valium."

De Wiel moves easily from social comment to the more personal: ". . . I married a broker./Money was time. We bought and bought." Here the relationships are more subtle, complex, and warmer than in the more social poems: "I hold you/like a little fish/or a baby/or clouds."

The poems move quickly, stacking image upon image to create intensity. The technique often fails, resulting in obscurity, but sometimes the stockpiling works, as in the title poem, or in "Daydream she would rather," where the poems glide like sailboats and end in an exquisite kind of quiet:

*She had very many daydreams*

*She was careful with them*

*She'd rather*

*She'd much rather*

*Daydream she would rather*

*Conversations with Bibi* is an interesting book, partly for what it does, and partly for what it promises. And who is Bibi, you ask? Perhaps a real person; perhaps an inner voice; for certain, a refuge from the world, and a guiding spirit: "Conversations with Bibi/connect night to morning/branch to leaf."

*The Pandora Sequence*, subtitled *Alice Among the Sisterpeople*, takes devastating pokes at feminists, chauvinists, and lots of other "ists." Sometimes one feels that the poke is the thing. At other times, d. h. sullivan gets beyond the cheap shot and shows a real awareness and compassion for the person facing the sexual, personal, social, and general confusion of the contemporary world.

The humour in these poems is often racy and good fun; at other times, it

begins in laughter and ends in a serious statement:

*doctor, as I  
was going down  
the third time  
my whole life  
passed before  
my eyes & I  
wasn't in it  
anywhere*

The sequence features Alice, wonderland woman, as heroine, and Irving (Irving who?) as her male counterpart. Both are effective satiric figures, occasionally human, occasionally one-dimensional, as they move in and out of the decadent, machismo world painted by sullivan. They are alternately victims of each other and of their world's conventions.

Many of the poems are flash insights, almost imagist in nature. They are witty, precise, and unpretentious, not always as probing as one would like them, but sometimes piercing, and often funny. What else can be said about a book with such poem titles as, "But Madame Blavatsky I Don't Want To Be An Auto Mechanic"? □

## Poetic torrents, erotic jewels

**Georges Zuk: The Underwear of the Unicorn**, by Robin Skelton, Oolichan Books (Malaspina College, Nanaimo, B.C.) 77 pages, paper unpriced.

**North Book**, by Jim Green, Blackfish Press (1851 Moore Ave., Burnaby, B.C.), 55 pages, \$4.95 paper.

**Lizard on the Scalding Stone**, by Michael E. Latter, Valley Editions, 30 pages, \$5 cloth and \$2.50 paper.

**Splices**, by the Writing Workshop of the University of Ottawa, Valley Editions, 55 pages, \$2 paper.

**The Mind of Genesis**, by David Slabotsky, Valley Editions, unpaginated, \$2.95 paper.

By HUBERT de SANTANA

THERE IS probably no other country in the English-speaking world where poetry flourishes as conspicuously as it does in Canada. Canadian poets are both prolific and popular — verse often outsells prose in bookstores. It has been suggested that poetry thrives here because we have an oral tradition. I don't

agree. Having spent a decade in Dublin — with Irish rhetoric ringing in my ears — I can say with some certainty that North Americans are not noticeably eloquent or articulate, except on paper. Which is why they write so much.

Another reason for the torrents of verse flowing unabated is the relative ease with which a Canadian poet can get his work into print. Thanks to the munificence of the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council, a poet can get published without having to serve a long and bitter apprenticeship.

But the obsession to create a national literature in the shortest possible time could make us victims of cultural overkill; and I hope I won't cause hackles to rise when I say that too much poetry is being published in Canada, without sufficient attention being paid to quality and craftsmanship.

The proof of this lies in the unevenness of the verse presently under review. Far and away the best of these books is Robin Skelton's "translations" from the French of Georges Zuk, allegedly a Franco-Hungarian poet born in Algeria. For me Zuk is no more real than Carlos Castaneda's Don Juan; but he does provide a suitably enigmatic persona through which Skelton can express without inhibition his

bizarre and entertaining sexual fantasies, mixed with some profoundly serious observations about the human condition.

*The Underwear of the Unicorn* is organized into three parts: one, the Zuk poems; two, selected prose; three, the Zuk letters. These are followed by commentary and notes, along with a "chronology" of the main events in Zuk's life. The book is an anthology of aphorisms, epigrams, and paradoxes. Skelton's imagery is vivid and startling.

*Construct the sympathetic hand:  
a leather glove with fingernails.  
Construct the sympathetic pudenda:  
a pair of women's trousers  
with pubic hair.*

One would like to see this book illustrated by an artist such as Dali; but that is wishful thinking, for Skelton has been wretchedly served by his publishers. The design and printing of this book is so shoddy that it lends an unwarranted cheapness to the excellent text, which contains lines like these:

*Space is defined  
by interruptions of matter,  
and life's intensities  
by the incursions of death:  
the skull upon the cupboard  
invents the carpet . . . .*

It's a little like finding a many-coloured jewel wrapped in newspaper.

It would require extensive quotation to do justice to this fascinating book, with its flickering humour continually illumining the weird landscape. Skelton's writing is genuinely erotic, without a trace of obscenity. But in anticipation of complaints from morally squeamish readers, he has Zuk say with disarming candour: "Is it not better to give a man an erection than a headache?" Write on, Robin!

Jim Green must be congratulated for his courageous and beautiful *North Book*. The poems are spare and manly; and some of them are not for tender stomachs. He can be marvellously evocative, as when he describes an old fisherman in "September":

*Grey skies crowd down  
close on the water  
heavy fog  
creeps along the shore  
among dark wet boulders  
Man bends double  
over the bow of the boat  
stiff fingers crab walk  
the sagging net  
along the river's back*

The effect is achieved by an economy and precision rare in modern poetry. Again, writing of oil workers blasting in the permafrost, Green makes his pro-

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by Judy Blume  
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## Emily

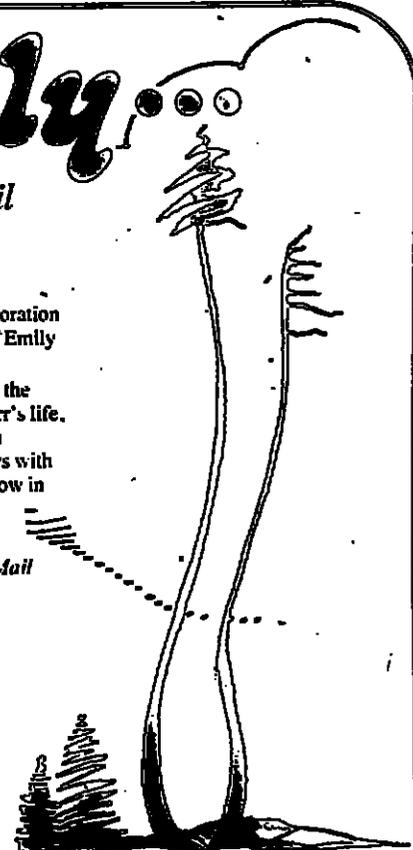
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test by focusing on the image of a fox mortally wounded by dynamite:

*a white fox slithers from her den  
stands on quivering legs noses the wind  
blood wells out around her eyes  
drips from her ear hairs*

The anger is unmistakable, and the carefully arranged typographical spaces give us time to reflect in.

Green has some important things to say about the annihilation of native culture in the Arctic. In the dramatic dialogues "Welfare Man" and "Dialogue North," he rolls up his sleeves and lets fly with both fists at the greed and hypocrisy of government policy in the North. He ends the book with a finely written postscript (in prose) in which he speaks movingly of the original people of this land, who have been conquered: "And we plunder right along, building our dreams on the blade of a bulldozer." *North Book* is illustrated by Nauya of Rankin Inlet, whose drawings — primitive in the best sense of the term — express the solitude and endurance of elemental men in the white infinity of the ice-coast. *North Book* deserves the widest possible readership.

Seymour Mayne's Valley Editions press is a brave publishing venture, but few of the poets represented here have anything really memorable to offer. They write with admirable energy, but one has to pan patiently to separate the gold smothered in so much sand. Most of the nuggets belong to Michael Latter, whose *Lizard on the Scalding Stone* is the most promising work in this collection.

I'm less enthusiastic about *Splices*, (from the Writing Workshop of the University of Ottawa) which suffers from the salami syndrome: too much stuffing in the sausage neutralizes individual flavours. And David Slabotsky's prose poems in *The Mind of Genesis* I found the least interesting of all. Both these books contain passages that could be served to insomniacs as a substitute for sleeping-pills.

Which brings us back to the question of standards for poetry. Here is the English critic J. W. Lambert on the subject: "No matter how seismographically sensitive or abrasively intricate; poems without a pulse lie dead upon the page; mortal twitching is no substitute for the controlled surge of life."

It is something Canadian poets should reflect on before they apply to the Canada Council for a grant. When poets rush into print with reckless haste, they risk raising a tower of Babel where a cathedral was planned. □

## Where youth grows pale

Complete Poems of Saint Denys Garneau, translated and with an introduction by John Glassco, Oberon Press, 175 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

By JUDY KEELER

IT'S EASY TO imagine the life of Saint Denys Garneau as romantic. Born in 1912 into an old and well-to-do French Canadian family, he developed into a bright and self-assured student. Then at 22 a heart injury forced him to abandon his studies; he lived for the next 10 years with the knowledge that death was imminent. At 30, having virtually retreated into the country, he began to build a cabin. One night, paddling home in a canoe, he suffered a heart attack and died on the shore. That was in 1945. Until now, his poetry has been almost a shadow of his life. His *Journals* were published after his death (also translated by John Glassco). Only one book and some isolated poems were published during his life. The rest of his writing was burned by his mother shortly after he died.

The more Garneau felt he was losing himself, literally, the clearer his poetic vision became:

*I am far from easy sitting on this chair  
And the clasp of an armchair is the worst of all  
There I am bound to drowse and die.*

*But let me cross the torrent by the rocks  
Pass bounding from one thing to another  
I find my buoyant balance between the two  
It is there in suspension that I am at rest.*

That is from *Regards et jeux dans l'espace*, the one collection published before his death. He was so disturbed by the notion that he had revealed too much of himself that he was driven further into a solitude that became isolation.

In Garneau's *Journals*, the tension, the repression, and the dilemma are explicit. In his poetry, it is transcendent. The space around him is filled with the company of images, the energy of ideas moving through light and air, a sphere of love.

Garneau maps a turning-point in the history of poetry in Quebec. He rejected both fashionable influences and a style that stood for the pervading parochialism in his province. He sought his own voice — simple rhythms and familiar but ever-fresh images. In lines and silences, he glimpsed

the future. Freed from self-conscious punctuation, the language seems to come as if in a breath, an inspiration:

*I do not plan to rear a handsome building  
vast, solid and perfect  
But rather go forth in the open air*

*There where the plants are, air and birds  
There where the light is and the reeds  
There where water is.*

His poems spare decoration, but they are not merely "simple." Images recur, invoking and expanding; their ideas are complex and continually in a state of moving, preparing. How life moves. How love moves. This translation of Glassco's is meticulous. The complete poems of Saint Denys Garneau are to be read. And read again. □

## Eye thought eye saw...

We are the Light Turning, by Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Missing Link Press (1521 Dundas St. East, Toronto), 44 pages, \$2 paper.

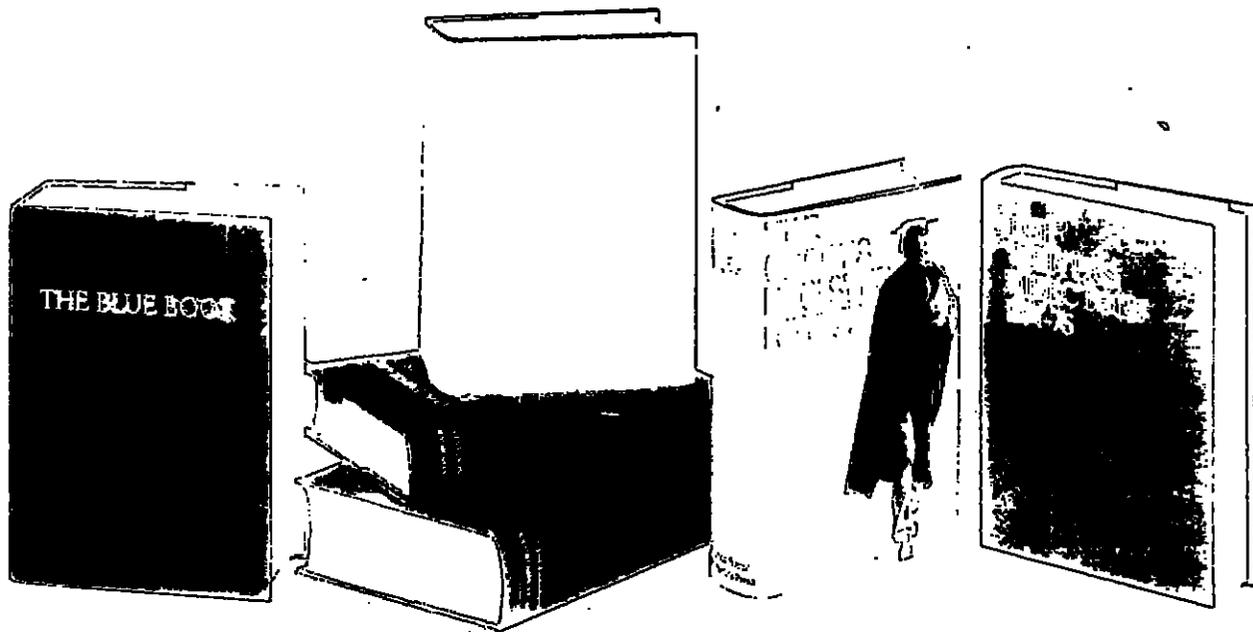
By SARO d'AGOSTINO

THIS COLLECTION should help to move some Canadian poets towards the realization that verse has uses other than levelling the sublime or glorifying the mundane.

Rather than circumambulate reality with the hope of finding workable images, Di Cicco steps into experience and gets close to where the poems begin. He funnels in with an apparent effortlessness and bridges the gap between the experience and the poem, with neither the slashing of rhetoric nor the slow boring of confession. Di Cicco draws the images that are revealed when light — going against natural law — changes direction and outlines experience from the inside. Here, terror is simply the fact that "A man is believing himself/Great stones are forming in his eyes"; here, conscience "waits like death/Going hungry for all the time in the world."

Di Cicco attempts to "photograph" rather than explicate the shapes outlined by his turning light. As we realize that the light is human perception, that we are the light turning, his shapes become as familiar as our dreams. In its deepest or most extreme turn, the inner perception may refuse to recognize the outward appearance as anything more than a mistake: "it is alright, you can come/out now, god is sorry for the

When there's something  
you need to know about almost  
any aspect of the culture of the  
English-speaking world,  
chances are we already know it  
for you.



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wrong wrapper." And when the light begins to turn we begin to ask:

*What is it now that I do not remember  
Like my own face  
What is it I see everywhere and say to myself  
I must not forget this  
Again*

The effect of these poems is to find ourselves turning our heads to catch a glimpse of what we have always known but have never touched. Here, as with all insight, there is danger: when we turn our heads back to the one-way light, we sense that, more than before, things are wrong. But this awareness and the photographs we are left with help us to remember. *We Are The Light Turning* celebrates the human ability for divine recollection and the striving to shed a little more of our forgetfulness, our one-way vision. □

## Let's hear it for an old pitch-hinter

**Rain-Check**, by Raymond Souster, Oberon Press, 150 pages, \$7.95 cloth.

By **LEN GASPARINI**

IT'S THE BOTTOM of the ninth, folks; the bases are loaded with two out. The fearful symmetry of Northrop Frye steps up to the plate. Will he hit or myth? They're bringing in that reliable relief ace — Raymond Souster. His EPA (earned poem average) is the second best in the league. The game so far has been a crêpe-hanger's carnival. Shake hands with the hangman, Ray. Souster winds up and delivers a lyrical change-up. Frye drives a long essay to centre. Symbolism makes a circus catch, and the symposium is over.

In a way, poets are like baseball pitchers; and Souster has all the know-how and savvy of a seasoned veteran. He's been in the poetry game since the Second World War, and though he's not as fast as he used to be, he still has a lot of stuff on the ball — enough to make his Oberon manager publish his new volume of 125 uncollected poems. "With this book I finally have in print all the verse up to the end of 1972 that I wish to preserve," Souster says in his introduction.

Aside from the title, the book's cover design is a clever combination of box-scores, all attesting his love of the

game. The poems themselves are short, lyrical, and often witty. Souster has always remained an imagist, abandoning early that movement's programmatic aspects, yet adhering to its basic principles of clarity, brevity, precision, and flexibility. His poetry could be best described as a hybrid derived from Pound and William Carlos Williams. Here's a sample:

*On the brown bed of our own choosing  
she lies beside me clothed in slumber.*

*A deer at rest in some sleepy woodland  
could not lie with such easy-flowing grace.*

Although Souster rarely employs the iambic pentameter, I've chosen those lines because they demonstrate a transition in his style as regards form. Compare them with the clipped lines in "Streetwalkers, Dundas West":

*Pale butterflies of night,  
they rise, flutter, follow  
the whim of the winds,*

*waiting the signal  
of the first friendly flower  
to light swiftly on.*

Massing so many early poems in a book like this is usually a risky undertaking, but *Rain-Check* seems to have a surprisingly even quality about it. The poems neither clash nor detract from each other, but flow concentrically in well-balanced sequence. Perhaps the only flaw in this collection is the sameness of subject matter — reminiscences of the war, quotidian anecdotes in downtown Toronto, prosy vignettes and sudden epiphanies. The poems seem to aim no higher than a cliché response. What Souster obviously lacks is the dynamic vision of a historical imagination. His poems are spunky for a few innings, but they don't have the grip to go the distance. All in all, I'd have to give *Rain-Check* a base on balls. □

## PERIODICALLY SPEAKING

By **LINDA SANDLER**

CANADA'S FIRST national news-magazine slithered onto the newsstands on Oct. 2. It wasn't *Time*, but it looked like *Time*, with an overexposed photograph of John Turner's not-so-reluctant heir on the cover, and on the first page, the most confused editorial manifesto in history.

Joe Slinger of the *Toronto Sun* predicts that the new *Maclean's* will be found to have less than 80 per cent Canadian content — to the surprise of people who believe *Maclean's* has no

content at all. In the opposite camp, Peter Desbarats, Global TV's Ottawa Bureau Chief, says that *Maclean's* should be read closely by anyone who is interested in Canadian politics.

The anti-*Maclean's* camp includes Canadians in the city who lament the passing of *Time*, and Canadians in small towns who lament the death of the old *Maclean's*. But the new *Maclean's* is lively and well written, despite the mawkish profiles of such superstars as Carole Taylor and Johnny Rodgers. News of the world and provinces is news-in-capsule, but it's well encapsulated. And *Maclean's* provides something that no other Canadian magazine provides — a platform for commentators who specialize in intelligently eccentric irony. The columns — business by Terence Belford, sports by John Robertson, everything and nothing by Allan Fotheringham — are the high points of the magazine.

Over the fortnights, the covers have grown stylish, but *Maclean's* coverage of the arts remains skimpy, limited to brief, bright, and snappy reviews. It's sad that a magazine that claims to be reporting the activities of Canadians should skimp on cultural events.

\* \* \*

AN INTERVIEW should be an ideal platform for a public figure. It should be a vehicle of inside reports on political and other processes. This is why it has the status of a contemporary artform, and occupies large tracts of time on the electronic media, and large tracts of space in the printed media.

*Maclean's* interviews are good openers. They are topical (Indira Gandhi opposes discipline to democratic illusion) and timely (Pierre Trudeau voices his fundamental opposition to wage and price controls, circa September, 1975). Unfortunately, they tell us nothing we don't already suspect. This is because you can't interview powerful people. You can only elicit public statements from them.

But you can interview writers. Interviews are the best source of information about the writing process, and small literary magazines have come to acknowledge this.

If I were rating recent interviews in small magazines, Michael Darling's encounter with Louis Dudek (*Essays on Canadian Writing*, Fall, 1975) might head the list. Darling knows his job, and he's provocative in a subtle way. Careful questions invite Dudek to articulate his personal (highly traditional) aesthetic standards, lead him into an evaluation of current experi-

ments in poetry and publishing, and back to self evaluation. It's a well-structured plot. Dudek's perceptions are valuable: Darling gives him a platform and frames him.

The tactics of Caroline Bayard and Nick Power are less sophisticated, but their interaction with Dave Godfrey (*Open Letter*, Late Fall, 1975) is shaped by well-directed questions. It's worth hearing what Godfrey has to say on tradition and innovation, cultural politics, and his current project, the development of an *I Ching* in Canadian terms.

Interviews require careful editing. Not *processing*, so that they all sound alike (*Maclean's*, *Paris Review*), but reshaping, so that the text expresses the mind and sensibility of the subject, conveys the rhythms of speech without extraneous patter.

There are rebel schools of interviews who are interested in recording the process of interaction, as it happens. They believe that editing falsifies.

Some of the most competent members of this rebel school are the editors of *The Capilano Review*, an elegant West Coast journal favouring experimental forms of writing. The Spring, 1975, issue, which devotes a large section to Audrey Thomas, contains the transcription of an informal group encounter between Thomas and the editors. *Capilano* is planning a series of such interviews that will eventually be collected in book form, so their methods are of interest.

In spite of its occasional diffuseness, awkward transitions, and the lack of a centre, it's an interesting record of interaction among intelligent *littérateurs*. It's not pure *journalisme vérité*, where verisimilitude is all, because the interview was "pre-structured" along four lines: Thomas's experience of Africa; the writing process; specific works by Thomas; and literary politics.

Elizabeth Komisar's interview with Audrey Thomas (*Open Letter*, Late Fall, 1975) exemplifies *journalisme vérité* in its purest form — it's rambling, coy, and diffuse. And more important, the interviewer is not distinguished by her skill or insight.

Margaret Káminski's conversation with Margaret Atwood (*Waves*, Autumn, 1975) is neither fish nor fowl. Atwood is always lively, but these questions about the war of the sexes, and about the autobiographical elements in her work (there aren't many) must occupy first place in her boredom index. □

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### ONE TONGUE SOUP

Sir:

*Books in (English) Canada*. Comment?

David Lee Wilson  
Duncan, B.C.

Editor's note: *Mr. Wilson touches a sensitive nerve. We could, of course, take refuge in the separatist argument that Quebec is another country, but it would be dishonest. The truth is we simply don't have the editorial resources to cover French Canadian literature as adequately as it should be covered. However, we do have the resources to review every major French-language Canadian book that appears in translation and we believe our record on that count has been pretty good.*

### TALK ABOUT TRIVIA

Sir:

One of the less mentioned but nonetheless real misfortunes of our traditional mail strike is that multiple copies of *Books in Canada* come to one's door all at once. In single issues you seem to uncannily keep the concentration of trivial reviews just below the threshold of pain. And the usual month between copies is sufficient for the unpleasant memories to fade.

With respect to November and December, which came together this year, there is another

classic case of not knowing your East from your West: poor Clare MacCulloch taken in by Safarik. Okira's first name is, of course, Allen, pronounced "Ahr ren."

And poor Seymour Mayne! With enemies like Exasparini and friends like Rosengasp and Laytonstern, he hasn't got a chance! And how about Exasparini's rejoinder for dramatic irony?

Your reviewers are only exceeded by your letter-writers.

d. h. sullivan  
White Rock, B.C.

### DARK AND HAIRY WORDS

Sir:

Re "Malone's Toys" (Notes & Comments, December issue): the trouble with some of you people in publications like *Books in Canada* is that you are irresponsible little boys who blurt out the first thing that comes into your light heads — about any damn thing that enters your normally empty heads.

If the dreadful Malone calls all the shots, how does it happen that on the *Free Press* we do not follow his line on *Time* and *Reader's Digest*? I say his line not knowing what his line is, for so far as the *Free Press* is concerned it has never been discussed with him or by him here.

There are a great many things that Malone no doubt thinks and that we write about without knowing as much about what he thinks as you clearly think you think you know. I can only conclude from what I KNOW that what you think you know is so much bull. I wish to God people on inconsequential little journals like yours would try to achieve some measure of journalistic integrity or some measure of moral responsibility.

# Of Dust and Time And Dreams And Agonies: A Short History Of Canadian People by Pat Bird

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You're a self-interested little lot who lay about you with a penny drumstick on a penny drum and there's nobody in your book to answer to except, of course, the hand that feeds you — the Canadian publishers. I could go on and accuse you of being a stooge for Mactean Hunter or the "independent" publishers' whatever-it-is or any other damn thing I pleased and what would I be doing? I'd be doing just what you tried to do to Malone. . . . Try, do try, to grow up and now and then try to get a fact or two.

Shaun Herron  
Winnipeg *Free Press*  
Winnipeg

## OUR COUSIN GREMLIN

Sir:

It must be 40 years or so since I read *Rebecca* but I think DM is on the wrong road to "Mandalay" (In Brief, December issue).

For a moment I thought this was the title of one of her books that I had missed but it was surely "Manderly" or "Manderley" where "She did not die."

Michael Howarth  
Ottawa

DM replies: *Oops. "Manderley" is correct.*

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# CanWit No. 8

EXAMPLES OF some near-misses: *Moby Niget; This Country in the A.M.*; Peter C. Newman's *The Canadian Socio-economic Upper Echelons*; and "Mainly because of the asparagus." The usual prize (see below) for the best entries in a similar might-have-been mood. Address: CanWit No. 8, *Books in Canada*, 501 Yonge Street, Suite 23, Toronto M4Y 1Y4. Deadline: March 1.

## RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 6

READERS WERE asked to provide a dust-jacket biography for Joyce Castor, author of record for McClarkan & Newspider's committee-written novel *Resurfacing in Sarnia*. The winner was Linda Sandler of Toronto. She receives a copy of the award-winning art book *John Fillion* by Dorothy Cameron and John Reeves (Martlet Press, \$19.50) for this entry:

Born in 1918 on a homestead near Ameliasdorp, Ontario, of degenerate Loyalist stock, Joyce Castor has served in the Royal Navy and in the Royal Bank. Since 1950 he has been an anonymous columnist for the Toronto *Blab*. In 1967 he received the Governor General's Award for his first Canadian classic, *Going Down Fast*, and was hailed by critics as the most provocative Canadian novelist since Al Purdy. Aided by the Canada Council, Castor spent six years in Sudbury researching the Great Canadian Novel, *Resurfacing in Sarnia*, and this depressing experience provides the material for his poignant chronicle of contemporary life.

### Honourable mentions:

Joyce Castor, a militant hermaphrodite, is a native of Deptford, who majored in Brown Studies at the University of Wiltwatersrand, but was expelled (*cum praejudicium extremum*) for organizing a "Mafro Lib" society and demanding separate showers. After studying with Zuleika Dobson and subsequently attaining fame under the stage name of Agnes Grimacin, Castor received a Canada Council grant to study fecal colour variations in the Great Lakes. "Brown," says Castor, "is never just plain brown."

—Marvin Goody, Toronto

Publication of *Resurfacing in Sarnia*, a steamy, penetrating look at the people of a controversial Canadian city, introduces writer Joyce Castor. Born in Sarnia, Castor lived all his 32 years with the Sarnians, absorbing their ambitions and fears, always observing the changes wrought by birth and death. Critics marvel at Castor's extraordinary metaphor — the life movements of Sarnians reflected by the resurfac-

ing of the city streets. Castor is editing essays by Sarnia intellectuals, *Sarnia on My Mind*, for publication next month.

—Peat O'Neill, Ottawa

Joyce Castor was born in Sarnia in 1930. She received her education at Sarnia High, graduating in the middle of her class in 1948. She married the noted entomologist Derek (Bugs) Zeitgeist in 1949. They have three children; Bugs Jr., Jason, and Jennifer. Since 1950 Ms. Castor has written 43 novels, one of which was published and nominated for the prestigious Eric H. Cliffe award. *Resurfacing in Sarnia* is a soul-searching memoir of Ms. Castor's first date. A February "Book of the Month Club" selection.

—Jane M. Small, Victoria

Joyce Castor was born in 1935 in a Toronto suburb where she still lives with her mother, a member of the Canadian Authors Association. Joyce is currently compiling place-names in Canadian poetry for a special issue of *Beaver*, and is also writing *Blown Figures in Sarnia*, a sequel to her first novel. "She does for Sarnia what Faulkner did for Yoknapatawpha," says Pierre Berton, "and gives us, not Hollywood's Canada, but her own."

—Keith Garebian,  
Dollard des Ormeaux, Que.

Joyce Castor was born in Toronto in 1939 but immediately moved to Sarnia. She was sent to Toronto to complete high school, though she says of this period, "I might as well have stayed in Sarnia." She met her husband Jack Drifter, a geologist, while attending Dalhousie University. They married in Sarnia and subsequently spent some years in the Middle East. Castor's *Oil and Other Sludge*, a book of poetry noted for its turgid imagery, was published in 1973 after their return to Toronto. Castor and her husband divorced in 1974, and she returned once again to Sarnia where she wrote her outstanding first novel, *Resurfacing in Sarnia*; in six months.

—Joan Hennessey, Montreal

Ms. Castor was born in Point Edward in 1950, where she received her education. She joined the transients of the 1960s "to see what Canada was all about," arrived in Sarnia and made it her home. She has travelled broadly between Sarnia and Toronto "to see what Southwestern Ontario is all about." Married since 1967 to James (Big Jim) Walker, Joyce says of life in Sarnia: "People underestimate the beauty of the Chemical Valley; it really is what life is all about." *Resurfacing in Sarnia* is, as Irving Layton has declared, "possessed of a clinical passion unique in a Canadian novel."

—Gerald Lynch, Sarnia

A truly Canadian genius, Joyce Castor was born in the picturesque English village of Cobbleton, Wiltshire, in 1940. She emigrated to Sarnia in 1960, and became a Canadian citizen shortly before winning the Governor General's Literary Award in 1973. Married to financier Tony Canuckienki since 1961, Joyce is a "freelancing housewife." "For the first time in Can-Lit," says Joyce, "Canadians can laugh at themselves through Roger, my fully bilingual hero, and Sylvia, my IWY woman."

—Linda Jeays, Ottawa

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