

When Canada's
avant garde went
gloriously to war

How vanity-press
vultures prey on
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John Hofsess on
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BOOKS IN CANADA

KIDLIT'S MAGIC MARKER

A profile of designer Frank Newfeld



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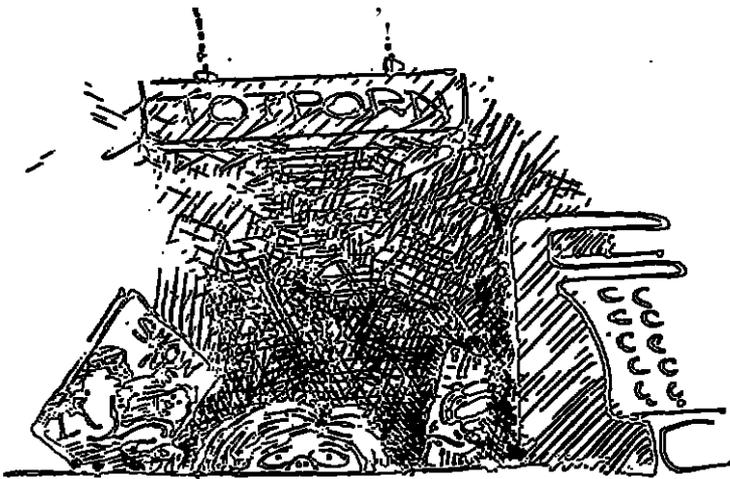


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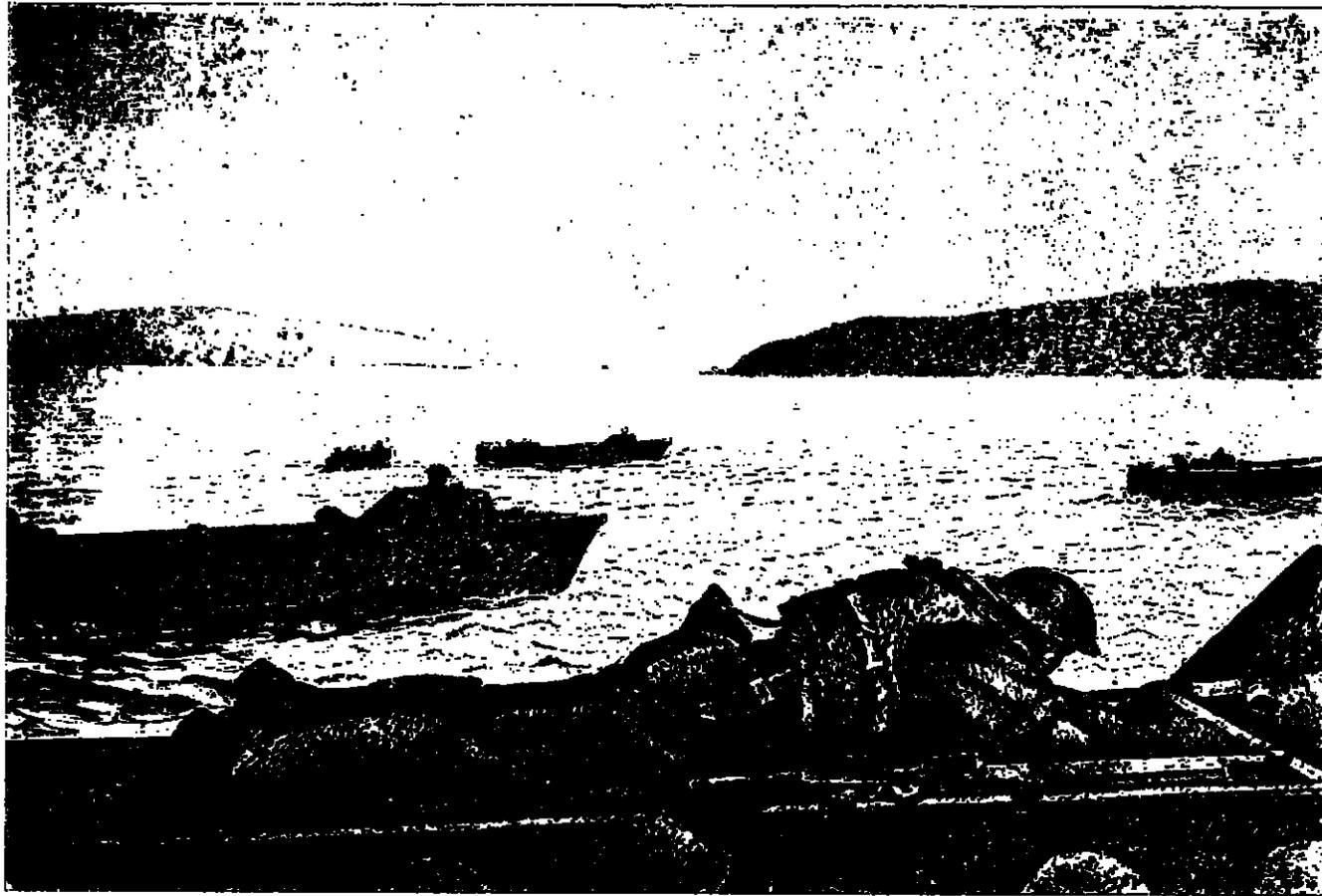
BOOKS IN CANADA

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LET SLIP THE DAUBS OF WAR

Heather Robertson's collage of fact, fiction, and official war paintings attempts to bring us face to face with one of the great taboos of our history

by Terrence Heath

A Terrible **Beauty: The Art of Canada at War**, by Heather Robertson, James Lorimer and Co. in association with The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa, and the National Museum of Man, Ottawa, illustrated, 240 pages, 529.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88862 144 2).

"THE NATION we live in today was created at midnight. August 4, 1914... " If an Englishman or a Frenchman or a German saw that remark and understood it as referring to his own country, he would assent to what has become for him an unquestioned truism. Heather Robertson believes, and states with no little passion, that we as Canadians have refused to face the facts or implications of our involvement in the two world wars of this century: "War is taboo. It is an experience loaded with so much human anguish, freighted with so much primeval terror, that we seem afraid to speak the word...."

For *A Terrible Beauty: The Art of Canada at War*. Heather Robertson collected memoirs, fictional pieces, radio broadcasts, poems, songs, and letters home and formed them into a Canadian account of the everyday reality of the wars. In conjunction with the book, Joan Murray, director of the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in Oshawa, Ont., has organized an exhibition of war paintings that will travel throughout the country during the next 2½ years. The visual part of the book is a series of reproductions, many in colour, of works that will be in this exhibition.

Robertson is nothing if not clever at making the most of her material. It is arranged skilfully for dramatic effect. Sometimes I felt I had been made to jump through a hoop, as when she reproduced the last two letters of 'a soldier writing home and then the curt letter from the government, informing the mother of her son's death. In other places, she has achieved a much more sophisticated synthesis of material. For example, she gives the account of a

soldier, describing an old chaplain, who with only the vaguest directions comes down the trenches to find the grave of his son. Against all expectations, the two of them find it: they exhume the body and the chaplain gives the remains a solemn burial. The next text, describing the same event, is taken from the memoirs of that clergyman. The reader is given a sense of the strange coincidences of war, and this small, individual drama becomes more important than the war itself. I think that is Robertson's ultimate goal: to give back the individual and personal voice to what has become an historic period, to give back the agonizing experience of war to those who suffered it, and to pass it on to us.

It is unfortunate that Robertson's energetic wiling style and passionate social concern are not supported by a more careful treatment of her sources. It disturbs me, for example, that she

The impressionist palettes trying to adjust to the dark and horrible subject matter of war do not record the war scenes; they have a feel of the art school and the studio, not of the trenches.

quoted from novels and fictional accounts without distinguishing them from memoirs and eye-witness accounts. One of the most striking and grisly accounts in the book is taken from Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed*, a novel published in 1929. Harrison describes the bayonetting of an enemy soldier and the horrible difficulty of getting the bayonet out of the still-living man. Undoubtedly, it happened many times, but the reader should know that this particular account comes from a novel. She must have considered the problem, because she does not include the equally grisly, and more famous and more controversial, passage from the book, describing Canadian war atrocities. Not only does she not identify the sort of writing, she also does not identify the source of individual quotations. The only way the reader can find the sources is to work his way through the copyright acknowledgements at the front of the book.

Nor is there any information given as to the identity of the writers. I can see that this omission &es give them some equality, even anonymity, that may be appropriate, but I experienced a constant annoyance at not having these people identified. In war accounts, even the rank of the person adds an important dimension to what he or she says.

Robertson could have drawn from a wider selection of materials. For example, the soldiers of the First World War — and to some extent, the Second — produced the most extensive contribution to the literature of the limerick since Edward Lear made the form popular in the 19th century. Most of them, of course, were too salacious to print at the time; but the more harmless ones have some claim to a place in the book.

*Sergeant Sammy from distant Regina
Was a highly fastidious diner.
"Bully beef," he said, "true,
May be bully for you,
But for my part, I have tasted finer."*

Or, she could have included more jokes. Wounded Canadian: "As I was being carried away in the ammunition wagon. . . ." Visitor: "Sorely you mean the ambulance wagon." Wounded Canadian: "No. I don't! I was so blamed full of bullets they put me in the ammunition wagon!" It is what one of our better-known literary critics would call humour "in the ironic mode" — that black humour that was to find its domestic home in the bitter jokes of the Depression.

A Terrible Beauty is not, however, simply a book of war documents; it is meant also to serve as a catalogue for the exhibition of war paintings. As a catalogue it fails miserably. The only useful item in the book for the exhibition is the list of paintings and the exhibition schedule. We are told that there will be a "future publication" that will supply information about the exhibition and its

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DIVIDED WE STAND

EDITED BY GARY GEDDES

The Parti Québécois won an election in Quebec. . . Suddenly Canadians became conscious of the many forces at work in this country which led not only to the possibility of Quebec's separation, but also to intense dissatisfaction at many levels and in many places with the current state of confederation.

Gary Geddes has provided a forum for eminent Canadians to express their feeling about Canada and its future. The contributors do not always agree. But this is not a book about Canadian unity. It is a disturbing, moving and powerful book about where we are today, and where we might hope to go.

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artists. But without this information, what, in fact, is A Terrible Beauty?

The men who established the program for official war artists in 1917 (headed up by Lord Beaverbrook, then still Sir Max Aitken) attempted to set guidelines for the painting that would avoid the rather flamboyant war paintings of the romantic school. They stated that the paintings should not be of the heroic type of battle scene of past painters, but should record the acts of the men who fought and laboured in the war effort, should be eye-witness accounts, and should depict when possible typical scenes. What they could not do was legislate a new technique for painting the subject of modern warfare. The impressionist palettes trying to adjust to the dark and horrible subject matter of war do not record the war scenes; they have a feel of the art school and the studio, not of the trenches. Always the reader is struck by the distance that the highly self-conscious styles of painting set between the scenes and the viewer. An exception is the work of Alex Colville, which stands out in its graphic starkness and "photographic" realism.

In my opinion, the reproductions of the art works and the texts simply do not go together. They are two different animals that neither complement nor explain one another. One is struck by how elitist the paintings are compared to the texts. Not only do the techniques of art, which developed in the ambiances of high culture, seem distant from the experience of war, but also the viewpoint is less immediate than in most of the written accounts. I think it would have been useful to know, for example, that all the official Canadian war artists of the Second World War held the rank of captain. Anyone who knows anything about the armed forces knows what the officer's rank means in terms of experiencing the "typical" scenes of war. Heather Robertson's texts would have been stronger with a good selection of the large number of excellent photographs from the two world wars; the paintings would have been better served with a text that informed the reader/viewer of the art and the artists. □



Paul Goranson's "Dorsal Gunner" (1943).

GARBAGE DESPAIR

A small-press editor rages against the tipsters who keep the vanity presses in business by encouraging junk

by Allan Safarik

IN A SPRING, 1977, issue of *Vancouver's The Georgia Straight* there was an article on poetry containing advice for the aspiring unpublished writer. The author, a someter-published poet, gave generous tips on everything from how to type each precious page (only one poem per page, name and return address in corner) to how to psych out the anticipated reader. It was the sort of writing that one generally witnesses in sleazy writers' guides or magazines devoted to publishing at any cost. Several years ago somebody discovered that there are literally millions of frustrated would-be poets in the world. Most of these people exist in a state of total obscurity, with no idea how to write anything more than a cliché-studded hunk of verse. But, what's worse, they also have the burning desire to see it embroidering the pages of a journal.

These people are junk food for vanity presses run by little men with vulture hearts and big bank accounts. If you read the big Canadian daily newspapers you may sometimes notice advertisements that proclaim: "New York publisher looking for manuscripts." Invariably the "publisher" has reserved a suite at the local flash hotel and is busy booking appointments in advance. I'm sure the stock response to the pigeons who take this mute is: "Yes, this is a fine manuscript, but publishing is a risky business. If you will give us \$3,000, we can bring the book out. Many writers have started this way." Should the money be forthcoming the vanity publisher then cranks out a few hundred copies of the manuscript in a squalid edition according to a set formula.

Some of these publishers take out ads in reputable book-review magazines to show off their wares. This, of course, is a sham, merely to cover the vanity press's ass. The publisher eventually tells the author that the book has not made it commercially. The author happily takes charge of the remaining books and gives them to friends. Usually the authors who succumb to this form of the cheapest literary shuck in existence are one-book authors. Occasionally a vanity

press is lucky enough to pluck a pigeon more than once. And even man occasionally, one of these authors twigs to the game and blows the whistle. However there is nothing illegal about such practices.

I know of a local author, a man in his mid-80s, who was given the same ride by a Vancouver printer. He spent most of his savings to see his family history in print. In the end he received 75 copies of a badly



printed, poorly designed, unmarketable book. The 300 copies the printer kept for sale were deposited in his Smithrite garbage container. The bill for this masterpiece: \$3,800.

Fortunately most unpublished writers are too poor to subject themselves to the rigours of seeing their work in print by paying the price. And most of them are too confused and lazy to get involved with publishing themselves in the tradition of the small press. Apart from that, most of these verse dreamers are convinced that they are the underdogs lurking in need of one big break. You know, submit four poems, editor is speechless, rushes to the phone and dials big publishing house: "Look here give me the president. I've just discovered the hottest prospect in poetics since Algernon Charles Swinburne."

The Georgia Straight article was not written for money not was it designed to bilk anybody. Its author was merely revealing his formula for making it on the literary trail. I have chose" to lift his scalp for the moment because his topic and the treatment he gave it point out the worst feature that plagues Canada's leading cottage industry. The truth is, most publishers of poetry (be they small press or commercial publishers) are completely engulfed in piles of manuscript pages, postal coupons, and self-addressed return envelopes (known in the trade as SAEs). Shuffle the pile and 95 per cent of these poetic missives fall together

Shuffle the pile and 95 per cent of these poetic missives fall together like grains of sand. It might all be written by a battery of clones humping away on identical IBM Selectromatics.

like grains of sand. It all might be written by a battery of clones humping away on identical IBM Selectromatics. I am always leery of the manuscripts that are rubber-stamped "First North American Serial Rights." I imagine there' is some Ann Landers of the writers' market who teaches this practice. The result of it all is that it's difficult to see the odd tree through the forest of weeds.

-The writer of *The Georgia Straight* article commented on his system for sending out batches of his work, usually having at least 200 poems swirling through the postal turnstiles. He remarked that when a poem had been rejected a half-dozen times.. perhaps the writer should remove the offending piece because it had outlived its chance of making the grade. *Never a word about craft or the higher instincts he must feel as he composes his masterpieces. Rather, hi message seemed to be that each*

new publishing coup equals the blue-ribbon award waiting at the finish line in the Grade 2 sack race.

Once up" a time *The Georgia Straight* published poetry in its writing supplements, as well as interviews with writers and essays and criticism of extraordinary quality. This was during its heyday as one of the finest underground newspapers in North America. It supported a wide and varied readership and hundreds of people virtually lived off the proceeds they made from selling it on street corners in Vancouver. It had some sense of the pulse of the times. Today it is the ghost of itself. *The Straight* has deteriorated badly. its focus on community news, music, movies, massage parlour ads, and articles on seal savers and the heroics of whale people have created a limp liberal anachronism. Now it is reduced to publishing hack tripe on how to go about getting published, aimed specifically at the plethora of annoying dilettantes who drive editors crazy. Some things go on to" long. The grotesque irony in this situation need not be laboured to" hard. The twist is complete. The world has changed. There are no underground papers. The counterculture has evaporated like a wet dream. □



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ESCAPE ARTIST

Once upon a time Frank Newfeld faked Goyas for a living. Today he is one of Canada's top book designers and a magic marker of kidlit

by Terry Kelly

FRANK NEWFELD is a **deft, articulate** man. He smokes a **cigarette** with the same **precision** he might use on the lead soldiers he once painted **as a hobby**. Some of the brushes needed to **colour** these **miniatures have only one bristle**. Newfeld uses the **same** sort of core in choosing words. He is **definitive, considered**, thorough.

Newfeld has been **many things** in his 49 years, as we'll see later. He trained as **an artist** and worked for **years** as a type **director and designer** for McClelland & Stewart. **These** days, however, he is probably best known to the reading public as **an outstanding illustrator of children's books**. This fall's **crop of kidlit for Christmas** contains two contributions from Newfeld. He worked with Dennis **Lee** on **Garbage Delight** (Macmillan) and with Peter **Desbarats** on **The Night the City Sang (M & S)**. Both **are reviewed** elsewhere in this issue.

"Ask me how I illustrate."

I dutifully put **the** question to him at the **launching of Garbage Delight** in the Boys and **Girls House** of the Toronto Public **Library**. The reception **was complete with balloons** for the kiddies, a rented **garbage truck** to bring the triumphant authors to the back door, **CBC cameras** and **Maclean-Hunter executives**. **Frank** talked to me, and answered the question, in a work room **at the beck of the library, away** from the crowd. Uniformed **maids** dumped ice in a sink **normally** used to clean up glue and paste. They paraded boxes of **date squares, tarts, and brownies** past us. Newfeld exhaled: "I work, if possible, in solitude."

Newfeld insists he is **first and foremost a professional, a communicator**. His public **persona** is as efficient **as** his business one. The performance he **gave** at the reception **was elaborate and courteous**. He seemed like a **European father asking** leading questions — "Would you like **an alligator?**" — to his very small children. His **drawings, with magic markers** on newsprint, were generous: his gestures, **as he drew them, were** expansive, almost courtly. The **audience was respectful**, then **began** to shout **answers** back. They **were always** delighted.

The solitude Newfeld insists on is achieved in a small, orderly studio in his townhouse in Toronto's suburban **Agincourt**. He works **at night**, after "getting everything else out of the way" and puts in a solid eight to **10 hours**. Illustrations from **Garbage Delight** and his own book, **Simon And The Golden Sword**, **are** pinned over his drawing **board**. His **instruments, rulers, pencils**, all seemed lined up **etright angles**.

The **major part** of my **conversations** with Newfeld **took place** in his living room. **We drank Melitta** coffee, a recent **discovery** of his that is replacing the tea he usually requires as he works, and **began** by **talking about the art on his walls**. There is **an Indian** mask cawed by Richard Hunt, a small Goya drawing from the **Disasters of Man** series, and a prominent **angel** blowing a bugle, one of **Frank's own works** and the **original cover** of **Leonard Cohen's The Spice Box Of Earth**.

"I used to **fake Goyas** as an art student in England," he **says**, "but at least I **always** signed them. A friend of **mine** didn't, and wound up in some **trouble**. He did **Rembrandts**. The buyer wanted it verified." Newfeld shrugs. "What did they expect if they bought a **Rembrandt** for £ 25."

"I'm cautious about the things I do now. **While** I worked at **McClelland & Stewart** I designed **everything**. **But** there **are** things I run down now I'm freelancing. Poetry **particularly**. It's so bloody personal."

Gone **are** the days **when Newfeld** had to copy paintings for a living. His list of previous occupations reads as if it belonged on the beck of a **first novel**: mercenary, construction worker, publishing executive, boutique owner, **stage** designer, cobbler, **official war artist, and farm hand**. Not in that order. His ideas of what he is now, and of what a designer should be, **are very** definite.

"A designer should **learn** fairly **quickly** what he can and **cannot** handle. I made a mess of **one of Earle Bimey's books**, and I



Frank Newfeld

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WITSEND

Days and Nights of the Algonquin Round Table

by James R. Gainer

This is a literary excursion into the Jazz Age, 50 years ago, at the fires of a celebrated group of writers and wits who embodied an era. Caught up in a publicity-crazed world, they, to enormous talent and, with few exceptions, lavished it only on themselves. Drawn to the contrary flame of Alexander Woollcott, a petty snob, as jealous of others' successes as he was vainglorious about his own — these men and women, Dorothy Parker, George Kaufman, Heywood Brown, and Robert Benchley among the most, lived and played as their talents burned.

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haven't forgotten it. I can't do **concrete** poetry. It's simple; I don't know what to do with it. In poetry the design is **so** damned **important**. Poetry has a look."

A designer is not **an** artist.

"I'm not an originator. I prefer the **term** communicator. I'm certainly not convinced **of** the pristine beauty of what **I** do — **that** is, in **terms** of **art** with a **capital** A. I hope I've **done** the tight thing **as far** as **communicating** with kids. I **have** certain specific ideas regarding children's illustrations that I tried to carry through in **Garbage Delight**.

"**You see** I like to leave a piece of work **so** the **kid** can say, 'Hey! I like this but that's not the **way** I would **have** done it.' I

"**Usually** **the** author thinks the designer an intrusion. I don't like being thought of as a pair of hands. I don't like to be handed imagery; I have my own imagination."

don't think one gives a definite solution to children. I think that's unfair; it leaves the work dead. It's killed forever. The best thing **one** can do, I think, is to have a kid pick up a **kid's** book, **especially** poetry, **and** say, 'I like this but I see it **differently**,' rather than **force** them to say, 'Oh, so that's what it's **supposed** to be like.' That's pretty disgusting, but **that's** what happens."

Were there **any** influences on his work for children? I mention the **Victorian** illustrators **Randolph** Caldicott (who has an **award** named after him) and **Leslie** Brooks. No influence, **Newfeld** says. I mention **Morris** Sendak in the **U.S.** and **Ezra** Jack Keats. **Newfeld** likes **Sendak's** work, and says it's **hard** to get **away** from his influence. **OF** **Ezra** Jack Keats and **Elizabeth** Cleaver **he** says: "It's beautiful, but I'm not **sure** it doesn't have some difficulties, their work."

"It is **very** important to know what one **is** trying to do. It **has** taken me years to come to the **realization** of what I should be doing. It's the same with certain **illustrators**. Though they're **very** good illustrators, I'm not sure they're completely correct **as far** as children **are** concerned, **as far** as communication is concerned. You have **some** very **beautifully** painted children's book **illustrations** done **as** **abstracts**. There's nothing wrong with **abstract**; you **can** go **abstract** with **abstract** **shapes** and **montages**. The light fleers beautifully through. But it doesn't **let** the children escape. They stay **within** the **page** and **that's** it."

"Does your work **allow** a child to escape?" I ask.

Newfeld laughs. "I don't know if it lets them escape, but it's done **nudely** enough that they **can** say, 'Shit, I **can** do **as well** as **this** **bastard!**'"

These ideas of what a **designer** is, and of what he should be able to do, **forced** **Newfeld** to stop work altogether in 1970. He felt he'd **lost** **perspective**.

"By **that** time I'd done **640** books and I was just pulling **out** the same solutions for each new **challenge**. Not even the **same** solution, but solution **17**, solution **17b**, **every** time I had a **new** book. I simply stopped. My wife **and** I own a boutique in **Fairview** Mall, which my wife **runs**, and I spent **most** of **my** time **there**. I didn't **want** to go near design. I **left** all **of** society. I resigned from the **Graphic** Designers of Canada. I **was** dry. I'd had it **up** to here.

"Something I remembered then — of course now I **prefer** to Forget it — **was** that when I **first** came **out** here to Canada **as** a **young** man I said, 'Why don't any of those old bastards **make** room for me?' Well in 1970 I figured I'd reached the point where I had to quit. It was time for somebody else, for **younger** people. *

The **return** to his profession **was** accidental.

"**Jean** **Boggs**, director of the National **Gallery**, phoned **me** up **one** day and asked if I'd **go** to Ottawa and give a lecture to the gallery **staff**. On the bus (the lecture **was** to be at one **of** those hideaway places). **Jean** and [then **Secretary** of State] **Hugh** Faulkner said: 'Hey, would you like to be a publishing consultant one day a week for the National Gallery? We won't **ask** you to design anything.' I had made it clear that I didn't **want** to **do** **designing**."

Well, that's how it all started again. I'm back; in fact I'm back at M & S as a publishing consultant."

"So people began to ask you to make exceptions to your no-design rule?" I asked. Mercifully Newfeld didn't tell me he wasn't an artist again, but said:

"They didn't ask me to make exceptions. They said, 'Do ya wanna jaab?' I answered 'Yeah!' " As he speaks he reminds me of a caricature of an old Swiss watchmaker, a caricature in a book illustrated by Frank Newfeld. His full moustache and the seams round his eyes help the impression.

Frank Newfeld was born in Czechoslovakia in 1928 and was educated in England. His family had moved there in 1937. His mother having remarried a Scot. He's a Canadian citizen now. He is also a chauvinist on the subject of his profession:

"I'm utterly dependent on the word. For me the image and the verbal text are one. I think it obvious that design is nothing without a text, but a text is nothing without the design. I appreciated Pierre Berton including my name on the jacket of *The Great Railway volumes*. It was the first time an author has done this. Usually an author thinks the designer an intrusion. I do not like being thought of as a pair of hands. I don't like to be handed imagery; I have my own imagination, flight of fancy, what you will, and I respect it. And let's face it, a book is a marketable commodity, and a designer is the link between the author and the public."

Newfeld has been a very successful link. His awards and achievements cover pages, ranging from the Art Directors Club of Toronto Award in 1955 to the Type Directors Club of New York Award in 1977. He received the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 1975 and the Canadian Centennial Medal in 1967. Newfeld is the author of three books, *The Princess of Tombo* and *Simon and the Golden Sword*, which he illustrated and designed, as well as *Typography in Canada*. His work has been exhibited in IO countries. He's a member of the American Institute of Graphic Arts and the Royal Canadian Academy. Newfeld may claim he isn't an artist, but his colleagues disagree.

"Frank is a marvellous illustrator, there's no doubt about that," says fellow designer Alan Fleming, "and I think he's a bloody good artist whatever he says. He's adopted the look of the board-mom, or the successful salesman, but that's not Frank. Frank really cares. True, he has always been a bugger to work with; he's cynical, or thinks he is. But beneath the polish he's a puppy dog."

Newfeld admits he's obsessed with "the vocabulary of design; I don't want to stutter." Regardless of the definition of the word artist, the orderly, organized technician gives it away when he says in his resumé that he is "by nationality: Canadian; race: human; religion: impressionist." □

Let's ear it for aural Lee

by Bryan Newson

Garbage Delight, by Dennis Lee, illustrated by Frank Newfeld, Macmillan, 64 pages. \$6.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1566 5).

DENNIS LEE won the 1972 Governor General's Award for poetry with *Civil Elegies*, a series of late-1960s meditations on man and the state. Later, in response to his needs as a parent, and doubtless for relief, Lee left the moral universe of *Civil Elegies*, re-entered the imaginative rabbit-hole life of childhood, and wrote it up as nonsense verse for children. This work culminated in *Nicholas Knock And Other People* and *Alligator Pie* (1974), both illustrated by Frank Newfeld. They were wildly and deservedly successful; kids all over Canada adapted the rhymes to their street games and skipping ropes. Now comes *Garbage Delight*. Lee and Newfeld's latest collaborative waltz and I am pleased to report it's another winner. Here is a slice of typical "garbage delight," replete with puns, rhymes, and a wonderful goofyness an Lee's own:

Once a big molice pan
Met a Bertie Dumb,
Sitting on a wide sock
Booing gubble chum.

"Hey," said the molice pan,
"Gum and simmy come."
"Got your rotton kicking pox!"
Cried the Bertie Dumb.

Then the big molice pan
Ran Jamaica drum,
Wide at dunce, but grows with runs,
(Kate to strinkum. DUM.)

Kids love this sort of nonsense and, it's time to confess, so do I. In fact, I suffer from a distinct and quite atavistic addiction: I'm helplessly hooked on thyme. Rub two words the tight way, and you'll get my immediate, admiring attention. Tell me rhymed verse is stupid stuff or worse, if you will, but don't ask me to believe it because I cannot. It's an addiction that runs too deep for forgetting, all the way back to the earliest echoes of memory.

Lee knows all about such afflictions, of course; part of the homage he pays to his time down the rabbit hole works itself out in rhymes. He reminds us, further, that the logic beginning-talkers use to select their words owes its primary allegiance to the tongue and ear. Sound and rhythm, the elements of language children learn first, are the way they first articulate the world. Rhymes are signposts; only adults could see them as unnecessary or nonsensical.

Lee's belief in the importance of nonsense to the imaginative development of the

This special section on children's books was organized and subedited by Bryan Newson.

child is implied in the title poem of *Garbage Delight*. After running through every kid's list of festive foods — candy, ice cream, fudge, and jelly — the first stanza concludes:

But none is enticing
Or even worth slicing
Compared with *Garbage Delight*.

The poem ends with a request to "Please pass me the *Garbage Delight*" — a plea, surely, for aural as well as oral gratification.

Lee's most amazing achievement is his ability to write without condescension or embarrassment of the child's world from the child's point of view. In dozens of poems about tigers or teddy bears, monsters, bullies, or bratty brothers, he takes for his own the linguistically limited but powerful language of children. With it he gives voice to their secret delights and anxieties, making concrete and humorous their own struggle with language. A universe away from the high purpose of *Civil Elegies*, it is willing of no less importance.

Frank Newfeld's illustrations counterpoint and occasionally extend the verse with a stylish visual wit of their own. The bold, four-colour compositions were quickest to catch my eye; the sketches set against single-colour backgrounds are flat and much less attractive. However, such things are doubtless decided by considerations of cost. □

A whale for the thrilling

The **Night the City Sang**, by Peter Desbarats, illustrated by Frank Newfeld. McClelland & Stewart, 48 pages, 55.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 2685 4).

By JANET LUNN

SAYS HALIBUT YORK to God:

*This is my wish: a whale,
A whale with a necklace of seals and walrus
With dolphins dangling from his tail,
A whale for me on Christmas day. . .*

And a whale she gets, wiling into Montreal harbour with the greatest flotilla of marine life the world has ever seen.

"Halibut York's Christmas" is a marvelous idea for a story. The small Innuite girl lies in her hospital bed in Montreal and prays her Christmas wish. God hears and grants it. And Mot, the whale, gets the message. Peter Desbarats describes Mot's progress as he takes off from the coast of Iceland, crosses the Atlantic, and ploughs up the St. Lawrence, picking up his coterie as he goes. Unfortunately the idea is never fully realized. For one thing it doesn't really become a story and it's much too long for a simple chronicle. For another, Desbarats is obviously not as comfortable with poetry as he is with prose. He alternates uneasily between free-verse and doggerel and, while some of his lines sing, others are an embarrassment: ("Engulfed the bridge in a cloud of freezing/Spray. What a sight!/Gesundheit!") The result is a patchwork piece that is too often ludicrous where it could—and probably should—have been a tale of delicious hihi nonsense.

"Halibut York's Christmas" is the best of Desbarats' three Montreal stories in this Christmas offering. "The Night the City Sang," the second end tide story, is about an old musician sitting on the church steps dreaming of the sort of Christmases his city once knew. He has an idea. He staggers to his feet and, waving an invisible baton, he conducts the city in Christmas carols. The church begins—"Within the chapel, the first notes trembled"—Bonsecours Market picks up the tune in "a rich baas." The Calvet House, joins in, then Rascoe's Hotel. Notre Dame, City Hall, and soon all Montreal is bursting with song while the old man rushes wildly about, his cape "streaming in the wind," directing the whole grand chorus. A most charming idea but it doesn't work any better than "Halibut York's Christmas" and for the same reasons.

The third story is all about Lucretia, a most appealing little ted-haired devil, who escapes from Hell on Christmas Eve and makes an amazing Christmas for a derelict old man in a basement mom. This story is pet together better than the other two. There's a tighter plot, the verse is a little more even, but the idea is not as exciting and the sentimentality that threatens at the edges of the others all but sinks any sense of fen Lucretia conveys.

Frank Newfeld's black-and-gold illustrations are slick and handsome. The book is well-designed, as can be expected from Newfeld, but should appeal more to adult buyers than child readers.

The text reads as though it has had little or no editorial guidance, which is too bad. Peter Desbarats has a sprightly imagination and what looks like the potential for a nice verse style. With some judicious pruning, tightening, and rewriting, the stories could be first-rate. □

Mr. Dressup runs with the Beowulf pack

Dog Power Tower, by Beverley Allinson and Barbara O'Kelly, illustrated by Alan Daniel, Methuen, 32 pages, \$5.95 cloth (ISBN 0 458 930 504) and \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0,458 930 601).

By ARAMINTA WORDSWORTH

THE GRANDCHILDREN of Marx and Coca-Cola will be surprised to discover that, once upon a time, books existed as books in their own right. They were not the retreads and spin-offs of previously tested successes from other media: nor were they tidily disguised attempts to m&e a fast buck fester, along with T-shirts, comics, and "novelizations of the fantasy film." They were objects to be savoured and treasured for their own sake, and the images they produced were of the reader's own devising.

Now the book of the film, of the TV series. The trend is even penetrating the comparatively sheltered world of children's books. One of the main reasons for this is that children watch the most television—which accounts for the abysmal level of much of it, but that is another story—and so are seen to be a lucrative market.

Of course, there have been books on television for years. Dramatizations of children's classics used to be sewed up by the BBC on Sunday afternoons: finely crafted versions of *The Secret Garden* or *David Copperfield*, for example, and often

of such high quality that they occasionally turn up on this side of the Atlantic on Masterpiece Theatre, considered fit for adults. Meanwhile Sesame Street and The Electric Company have been showing that children's programs can be fun—and sell.

Canada's most, noteworthy contribution to children's TV has been Mr. Dressup. Now in its 12th reason, this deservedly successful series brings warmth and humanity to the small screen. Mr. Dressup himself, Ernie Coombs, plays out his daily adventures with Judith Lawrence's puppets. Casey and Finnigan. The formula is simple: and it works.

Eyeing this goldmine, Methuen had the bright idea of trying to cash in on it. Dog Power Tower is the first try and will be published simultaneously here and in the U.S.: there are also hopes of Britain. And tomorrow—the world?

The book is good to look at, apart from an irritatingly mannered typeface; lavish even, with lots of double-page spreads with full-colour illustrations. And, best of all, the text demands to be read out loud—perhaps not unexpected, considering its performing origins.

The adventure itself is straightforward, concerning a wicked scientist and his attempt to take over the world by harnessing dog power (a solution to the energy crisis?). Authors Beverley Allinson and Barbara O'Kelly have written in lots of the detail, beloved by preschoolers, some of it slightly stupefying. Here is what Casey and Finnigan eat during the course of a long afternoon at Aunt Bird's: custard tart, jelly donuts, cherry cheesecake, buttered scones and chocolate mousse. . .

As well as gauging what's on the minds of their audience, the authors are pretty hot on alliteration, a feature of successful story re-telling since Beowulf and Homer at least. And it's not as long a shot as you might think to connect entertaining restive thanes in a smokey mead-hall with the parental art of telling stories to not-so-sleepy children.



Love of repetition and the familiar, insistence on the Vied and tested, make the old oral formulas as valid here as they were in the primary epic.

SUNFLAKES AND SNOWSHINE

... and other good things



Illustration from *Sunflakes and Snowshine*

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Allinson and O'Kelly have a good ear for it. A laboratory scene in the evil scientist's kit produces:

The tall, thin scientist walked carefully past rows of beagles and bleeders, dalmatians and dryers, terriers and television sets. The entire experimental section was humming. Hordes of unhappy dogs were harnessed to hundreds of household gadgets.

A bit of a mouthful perhaps, but it makes for a great delivery. □

The boys of winter

Frozen Fire: A Tale of Courage, by James Houston. McClelland & Stewart, 149 pages. \$6.95 cloth (ISBN 07710 4249 3).

By SHEILA A. ECOFF

IT WOULD BE easy to be unfair to James Houston in reviewing his latest children's book, *Frozen Fire*. For those of us who are nitpicks of children's literature and who thereby search for trends and patterns, the arrival of another "survival" story in

already overpopulated territory could cause no more than a shrug of the shoulders or a lift of the eyebrows. But the best children's books are not written to express trends and patterns and are not so read by children, unless they are particularly addicted to the Hardy Boys, horse storks, or some other such obsession.

In the case of *Frozen Fire*, the theme of survival goes automatically with the locale, which is the Canadian Arctic, and the characters, who are the Inuit. Perhaps only the Inuit feel that their environment offers even the necessities of life, let alone the potential for personal development. Anyone else must write about the Arctic in terms of the struggle for existence. Houston, certainly an authority on the North, offers the best white-man's interpretation of this struggle, and of the Inuit's qualified success in turning a hostile environment into the means of shaping a life-style.

His earlier survival stories for children, *Tika'liktak* (1965), *Akavak* (1968), and *Wolf Run* (1971) are set completely in the Inuit environment and have a legend-like approach and style. In *Frozen Fire* Houston moves us into the 1970s and the destruction, or at least the lessening, of the traditional native skills. The story not only asks whether an Inuit can survive in a cliff-hanging situation, but also whether a way of life can survive a changing environment.

The plot, as with all fine novels for children, is simple and direct, although the emotional tone is quite complex. Mr. Morgan is an American geologist in search of a discovery that will make him wealthy. His search brings him to Fmbisher Bay with his school-aged son Matthew, who makes friends with an Inuit boy of his own age, Kayak. Mr. Morgan flies off with his pilot friend to investigate his belief in the existence of a lode of copper ore, and deceives the pilot about the direction. The flight plans are consequently misled and only Matthew knows the correct location. In 8 storm the plane is lost, but air-rescue operations are held up by fog. Matthew and Kayak decide to go off on their own to find Matthew's dad. They "borrow" a snowmobile, taking extra gasoline and supplies, but of course disaster strikes — more than once — and we have the classic tale of two boys against the frozen North.

Houston tells us that the story is based on many of the true events that happened a few years ago when a boy was lost in the Arctic. "A giant air and land search for him was undertaken. The boy in the face of fearful weather and immense danger showed tremendous courage during his incredible struggle for survival." And "incredible struggle" is the phrase for *Frozen Fire*. Most of us would not last an hour. The true events have, of course, been embroidered

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and enriched by the addition of another boy. And so we get the culture conflict, which is happily played out without confrontation and didacticism.

The two boys are intelligent, high-spirited, and courageous. They support one another. But as in Farley Mowat's *Lost in the Barrrens*, it is the boy native to the environment who is the leader. And the message is the same: "One must conform to the North rather than fight it." The traditional skills do count. Kayak rays:

A *Kaluna* once told me my grandfather was ignorant. You hear that? Ignorant! But everything we do right yesterday, today, tomorrow, comes from my grandfather. You'd be dead, I'd be dead already without the knowledge of my grandfather.

It is Kayak who CM build the igloo; Kayak (much to Matthew's wonder) who can make a lamp stove out of a frozen seal's heart. But it is Matthew who brings the mirror from the abandoned snowmobile with which he can signal an airplane. And at the end it is Kayak's fast, unconscious, superstitious gesture of encircling the fast-breaking ice floe with seal's blood, that points the helicopter to their location.

Perhaps one could be picayune and quarrel with a few points. The episode of the "wild man" and his family living under the Arctic snow seems to an outsider a little far-fetched. However, in the Shakespearian tradition, it gives the protagonists and the reader a much-needed breathing spell.

The swift action of the story, the contrast or culture shock, the natural conversations and use of Inuit words and phrases, are packed into a taut 149 pages of fairly large type and numerous illustrations. With its basic and vital theme, its melange of the familiar and unfamiliar, its good writing, *Frozen Fire* deserves to find a wide audience. □

In the Family Compact's bosom

To Hang a Rebel, by D. Harold Turner, Gage, 218 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7715 9368 6).

The Hand of Robin Squires, by Joan Clark, Clarke Irwin, 145 pages, \$7.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7720 1091 9).

By PAUL MURRAY

ADVENTURE IS the central concern of these two novels written for teenagers. Both novelists exploit moments in Canadian history to launch their narratives. The results provide for an interesting study of two divergent approaches to historical fiction.

To Hang a Rebel is a fine novel in its own right; the plot line is simple and the prose straightforward. But Turner has quite masterfully brought 1837 to life. He moulds

his narrative around Doug Lachlan's education in the social realities of the Family Compact. Beginning with the personal hardships of rural life, we follow Doug from the then-village of St. Catharines, to the relatively new urban complexities of Toronto. In the latter half of the novel the narrative moves out again in a political context to a study of Upper Canada and the colonial situation in general. Turner manages this telescopic technique with seductive ease.

By incorporating character and theme, Turner manages to develop a wide range of representative figures without sacrificing brevity and clarity. He is not a neutral historian. Nor does he soften or censor his political stance for children. He unabashedly supports Mackenzie and the Reformers, while the members of the Family Compact are portrayed as a brutal group, unscrupulous in their use of violence and deceit. But the characters are so well-crafted that there is little chance of the narrative becoming an ideological diatribe. Mackenzie emerges as a multifaceted and humorous figure whose excesses endear as well as foretell his ultimate failure.

One weakness is that the novel fails to give us any kind of female characterization beyond the, simpering stereotypes that are all too familiar. And on occasion the prose lapses into strings of short sentences. Overall, however, the novel is well-composed. It is the best sort of historical fiction, both informative and exciting.

While the few problems D. Harold Turner has are stylistic, those of Joan Clark are more seriously thematic. *The Hand of Robin Squires* is carefully written and researched and is complete with ingenious drawings of maps and mine shafts. This veteran story-teller is trying to capture her audience with the sheer energy and excitement of her narration. Unfortunately, many other possibilities are eliminated by this approach.

The novel is too self-consciously a children's story. The plot is embarrassingly familiar and unfortunately when this occurs to Joan Clark, she overcompensates with violent scenes that are both excessive and unnecessary. Although Robin's hand is a central metaphor, there seems to be little reason for the description that follows. Auctadin, Robin's Micmac friend, has just severed Robin's hand with an axe in order to avoid certain death at the hands of Robin's uncle. Noticing his severed hand nearby, he reflects:

My hand lay in front of me, separate, apart, its bloody stump already congealing into dark red clots, its back scared by an ugly slash mark, its fingers grotesquely clenched into the tight fist I had made. Beside it was the empty iron Lund.

To Hang a Rebel capitalizes on historical incident to produce a vision of society and to provide some excellent character studies. *The Hand of Robin Squires* abandons history for adventure and sacrifices both to self-consciousness. □

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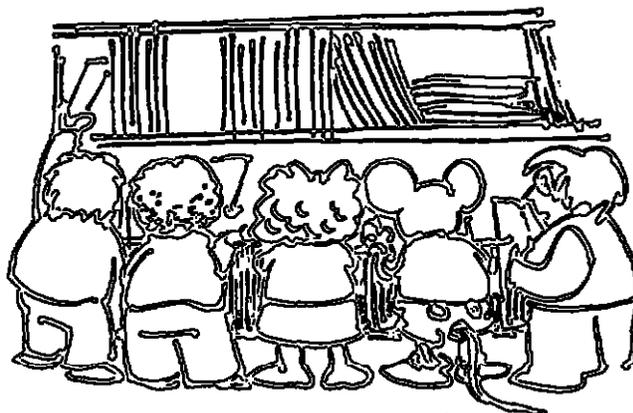
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plines - physics, chemistry, and biology
- have been given equal time, and all the
activities are safety-proofed and ecology-
directed. Included are old favourites such as

the spinning colour wheel and the prism.
Challenging experiments such as the fire
extinguisher and the mini-aquarium will
attract the more experienced. But this is no
dry textbook. Those crazy birds flit about on
every page, offering suggestions for more
fun, explaining what's happening, and
making outrageous jokes and puns. Hand-
&awn pictures illustrate the simple, non-
technical directions for each experiment.
It's all sound science and terrific fun.

Magook (that's magazine/book) is an
original publishing and marketing idea from
a new firm, an offspring of McClelland &
Stewart. This magazine/book combination
will be available for 81.95 in mass-market
outlets such as supermarkets and chain
stores, although the book will be sold
separately at 84.95. Four issues will be
published at a time, four times a year.
Sound confusing? New mind: the kids will
love it and at those prices, so will the adults
who buy for them. Magook has enlisted
some exciting Canadian talent, old and
new. The magazine part is colourful, well-
designed, and crammed with goodies. Den-
nis Lee and Farley Mowat have contributed
poems; a new song by Sylvia Tyson looks
like a winner: and there are plays, short
stories, and a handicrafts page. And that's
just for the first four issues. However, it's
the books that give Magook substance. The
Cottage at Crescent Beach is by author and
illustrator Ann Blades. It's a quiet stay of
beaches, summer sun, and wiener masts.
The plot is minimal but Blades' understand-
ing of the importance of small excitements
in a child's life gives the book strength and
believability. Her paintings here have more
action and humour than are evident in her
previous work. Madeline Kronby's A Sec-
ret in My Pocket mixes French and English
in its text to tell of Michelle's attempts to
conceal the pet frog she's carrying in her
pocket. I'm not sure if the use of two
languages is successful. One character
translating for the other makes for a lot of
repetition. Anna Vojtech's illustrations, all
soft lines and sun-washed colours, add a
great deal of charm.

COMIC BOOKS



All kinds of wild creatures in their natural environments are depicted in Kathryn de Vos Miller's superb paintings for *Snails, Slugs, Spiders and Bugs*. These full-page spreads in colour are accompanied by rhyming couplets of doggerel verse. The real information is contained in the key to the pictures at the end of the book. Numbered diagrams help the reader to identify all the wildlife and tell which season and location is depicted. A good bit of flipping back and forth is required but the persistent reader will be well-rewarded.

Writing fantasy is a tricky business. It demands not only an energetic imagination but also one that can accept the discipline of fantasy's particular rules. Paul Bailey's *Charlie Meets the Goomby* is a brave attempt at creating a new imaginative world. The land of Urd. Charlie is sent to Urd by Zena, the sea witch, in quest of an enchanted sword that helps people be kind to one another. There he meets the Toatles, who lead him to the Goomby and so the magic sword. Somehow it just doesn't hang together. The series of magic happenings has no logical explanation and Charlie himself never comes to life. Dan Wladyka's stylized drawings have a Disney-like quality at times. When he gives his own considerable talents full rein, he has a good eye for detail and characterization.

The books end magazine material are a successful attempt to reflect the Canadian experience without any nationalistic heavy-handedness. It's a good beginning for this publishing venture. □

Getting it all together

Canadian Children's Annual 1978, edited by Robert F. Nielsen. art director Mary Trach, Pottlach Publications. 178 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 919676 09 x).

Discovering Stamps, by Bryan Buchan, Scholastic-TAB Publications, 91 pages. \$1.05 paper.

By ADRIENNE STEINBERG-JONES

WHEN I WAS a kid between the ages of seven and 12. I had to forage to find my reading entertainment, buying or borrowing from various sources: Donald Duck here, Little Lulu there, a smidgen of Flash Gordon, and the ubiquitous Bobbsey Twins everywhere. Canadian kids on the other hand, have since 1975 been able to get a pleasant blend of

fiction, biography, non-fiction, comic strips, puzzles and poems all under one cover in a glossy magazine called the *Canadian Children's Annual*.

The cover this year is school-bus yellow graced by a Ken Danby painting of his son on a carousel. (The 1977 edition was bright scarlet surrounding an intricate, sensuous painting by Toller Cranston.) This is a first-class presentation.

As for content, the mixture generally is a decent selection of adventures, reminiscences, and fairy tales. Most of the writing is good if conventional, with the odd lapse into something downright mediocre, as in "La Belle et La Laide," a Cinderella imitation that endorses the coyness and the feudal values of the original with none of its charm. Others, like "Sweet Baby," (Geoff Brandon), and "The Day Death Celled on Ellie Mitchell" (E. Jane Hildebrand, with linocuts by Lida Kotacka), are well-written, imaginative, and well-controlled in terms of sentiment. The non-fiction contributions, with the notable exception of "Tricky Tongues" (Robert F. Nielsen, illustrated by Tom Nesbitt) — a gem of a story about the history and use of tongues — are informative but bland.

What makes the collection worth the price are the cartoons and comic strips. The image-laden poem "Bookworm" is beauti-

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PROLATCH
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fully illustrated by Gisele Daigle while cartoonist John McLeod performs like a Gahan Wilson for kids.' The gorgeous drawings and clever wiling of Marlin Springett ("The Mirror of Angelus") and the kinky whimsy of Tom Nesbitt ("Bud's Zoo") raise the level of the magazine from the attractive and competent to the outstanding.

As a whole the annual is a nice present to give a kid, or even to scan through yourself.

For those kids interested in philately, *Discovering Stamps* is a compact introduction to the history and use of stamps. Written for the beginner in simple and lively language, the book includes a dictionary of terms to help the budding collector understand the different markings on a stamp, and explains what it is that makes a stamp valuable as well as pretty. □

We were born to wonder

Little Badger and the Fire Spirit, by Maria Campbell, illustrated by David MacLagan, McClelland & Stewart, unpaginated, \$7.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 1882 7).

People of the Buffalo: *How the Plains Indians Lived*, by Maria Campbell, illustrated by Douglas Tait and Sharon Two-feathers. J. J. Douglas. 47 pages. \$6.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88894 089 0).

Nivek & Nala from Sirch, by Marj Trim, illustrated by Ludo Schmidt-Fajlik. Hoot Productions, unpaginated, \$8.50 cloth (ISBN 0 919994 01 6).

By ANNE GREER

MARIA CAMPBELL's *Little Badger and the Fire Spirit* is, as my seven-year-old puts it, a "wonder book, because it's full of wondrous things." Ahsinee, an eight-year-old Indian girl, is thrilled at the idea of spending the summer with her grandparents in

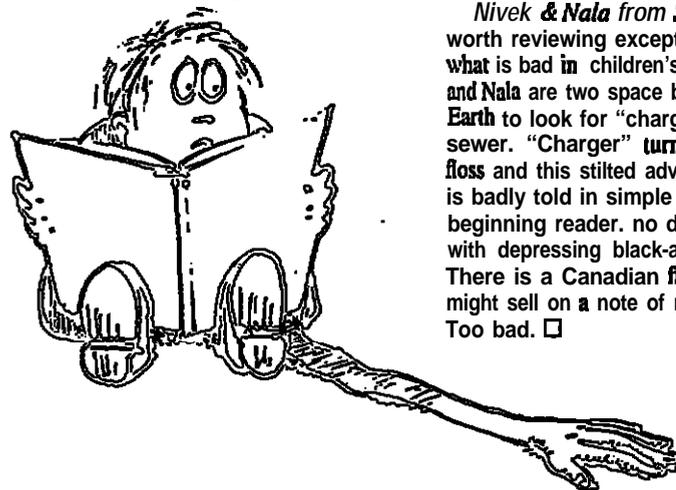
present-day Alberta. After supper on the first evening of her stay she asks for a story and is told the classic Indian legend of how human beings acquired the gift of fire through the courage and love of a small, blind boy-Little Badger. When the story of Little Badger's terrifying journey to the centre of the mountain and his encounter with the Fire Spirit is finished. "Ahsinee's eyes were shiiding" and she begs to hear another from her grandfather, Mooshoom. Kookoom, her grandmother, reminds her that there will be many more stories and, as she falls asleep to the call of the loon. Ahsinee reflects: "Yes, they had all summer together, and Mooshoom and Kookoom had so many stories to tell."

The next best thing to spending the summer with Mooshoom and Kookoom is being able to read *Little Badger and the Fire Spirit*. It touches the child on many levels: it's a story well told; it gives plenty of scope to the imagination; and it has what so many young children crave-something to reflect and dream on.

One is always a trifle disappointed with any illustrations for marvellous tales. However, David MacLagan has managed very well to combine realism and fantasy. The world of the dandelion and the dumptruck is defdy blended with the world of magic. *Little Badger and the Fire Spirit* is a book well worth the money and I know there will be many children waiting to hear more of the tales of Kookoom and Mooshoom.

People of the Buffalo: How the Plains Indians Lived is a very different kind of book. Here, Maria Campbell gives us a reference work with a moral focus. Its range covers beliefs and ceremonies; shelter, food, storage and utensils; clothing, transportation, and warfare. It is dedicated to "my grandson Tomas John, and the other children of his generation. Perhaps they will be completely liberated." I prefer the moral imagination of *Little Badger* and I suspect that many children also will, physically. this book will probably not stand many readings. For a reference work seeking a future on library and schoolroom shelves, it should simply be made of sturdier stuff. Nevertheless, there is a need for information about Indians from Indians and at least the book attempts to supply that need.

Nivek & Nala from Sirch is scarcely worth reviewing except as an example of what is bad in children's publishing. Nivek and Nala are two space beings who land on Earth to look for "charger" for their flying sewer. "Charger" turns out to be candy floss and this stilted adventure of discovery is badly told in simple sentences (for the beginning reader, no doubt) and illustrated with depressing black-and-white drawings. There is a Canadian flag prominent, so it might sell on a note of nationalistic fervour. Too bad. □



Extinction and overkill

The Red Ochre People. by Ingeborg Marshall, illustrated by Martin Springett, J. J. Douglas, 48 pages, \$6.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88894 157 9).

The She-Wolf of Tsla-a-Wat. by Anne Simeon, illustrated by Douglas Tait, J. J. Douglas, 44 pages, 57.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88894 145 5).

By CAROLE HENDERSON
CARPENTER

DRIVEN TO express our national myths, to mea Canadian-content demands, or simply to find a subject, writers for children persist in portraying the Indians and Inuit in works of various forms. Publishers ought to discourage many such writers, for their works usually fail to attack the white-man's problem of ignorance about the native people. Occasionally a truly fine book appears that puts lesser works in perspective. Unfortunately, neither of the recent children's publications from J. J. Douglas on Indians is a fine work, though Marshall's book is far superior to Simeon's.

The third in a series of ethnographies for the young. The Red Ochre People is a factual account of "how Newfoundland's Beothuck Indians lived." It contains an introduction on the people and the land, seven sections on artifacts and customs; and a conclusion explaining how the Beothuck become extinct. Martin Springett's drawings are quite good, though the sketches by the lost known full-blood Beothuck, Shanavdithet, spark the imagination most.

While mystery surrounds the Beothuck, one feels that this work is sparse and sometimes confusing. The text lacks depth and the result that the information given is incomplete and sometimes unclear. For example, we learn about combs, but no other specifics of grooming; and about how men, but not women, dressed. The Beothuck artistic life was unquestionably less meagre than this account of it indicates: in fact, it is largely unknown, as the reader deserves to be told.

Ms. Marshall's book is not as well written as it is researched. Top frequently she writes in point form, and shifts awkwardly between tenses. Nonetheless, the book is worthy of a place in children's libraries. Readable documentaries like this fill a gap in their literature.

Ms. Simeon's writing is rife with weaknesses. For this reason alone, The She-Wolf of Tsla-a-Wat should not have appeared in its present form. Especially during a period of concern about literacy, children's books should contain good, if not the best, writ-

ing. Simeon's phrasing is repetitious; she tends to write in one-sentence paragraphs and to over-use conjunctions in starting sentences. These are common (though not tie best) characteristics of oral tale-telling, which Simeon is perhaps trying to emulate, but fails.

The book contains six heavily rewritten Northwest Coast folktales, mostly fables. George Clutesi's Son of Raven, Son of Deer (Sidney, B.C., 1967) contains similar material but is a much better book -- one of the finest collections of Indian tales for children. Clutesi presents the tales as they would be told -- crisply, clearly, with emphasis on action, not description. The illustrations in his work are bold and realistic. By contrast, Simeon's style is plodding, frequently bogs down in description -- albeit good folklife information -- and Douglas Tait's illustrations are unconvincing.

The best part of Simeon's work is the introduction, where she synthesizes many facts into a description of Indian life, and presents it in an "imagine you are an Indian" format that works. Yet even this commendable section is marred by a stereotyped portrayal of the white man. This book is not a polished work and cannot be recommended. □



Rum story for a cold night

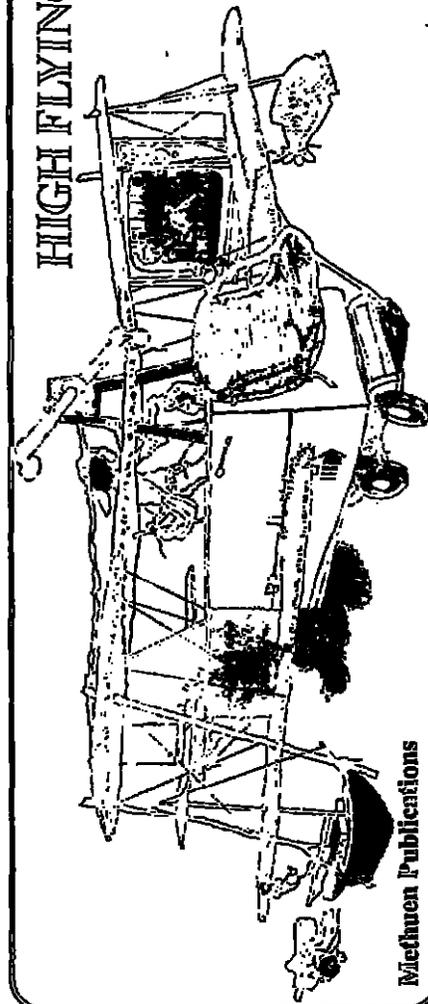
Tom Penny. by Tony German. Peter Martin Associates, 175 pages, \$8.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88778 171 3) and \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88778 172 1).

By MARIA HORVATH

THIS BOOK proves that the formulas of the old adventure novels, if applied with skill, can still be effective. The author has used almost every cliché in the book (so to speak): the daring young hero, a thoroughly despicable villain, friendly smugglers and

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voyageurs who speak with accents, and seemingly insurmountable natural elements. And yes, there's even a cliff-hanger at the end of almost every chapter.

The tale begins in a peaceful English village in 1829, when Tom Penny and his family decide to cross the Atlantic to settle in the wilds of pioneer Canada. What happens to poor Tom in the following year is almost unbelievable. But only almost, for in true heroic fashion, the 11-year-old youth manages to persevere.

German's writing is tight and vivid as he describes the sea voyage and the cities of Portsmouth, Montreal and Bytown (Ottawa). His depiction of the plight of the Newfoundland fishermen forced to indulge in rum-running and the work of the voyageurs and shantymen, provides a painless history lesson.

It would have helped if some of the more obscure words spoken by the characters had been explained. Nevertheless, this book is ideal for the classroom and would do very well as the basis for a CBC-TV series.

In the meantime, it should be read aloud, one chapter at a time, in front of a glowing fireplace on cold winter nights. □

When it's bad to be Bowlder

Indian Tales of the Northwest, 102 pages, \$5.15 paper; Teacher's Guide to Indian Tales of the Northwest, 36 pages, \$4 paper, both edited by Patricia M. Ellis. Commcept Publishing (Suite 234, 470 Granville St., Vancouver).

Song of the Forest, by Isabel Barclay. Oberon Press, unpaginated, 56.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88750 228 8).

Mouse Woman and the Mischief-Makers, by Christie Harris. McClelland & Stewart, 102 pages, 97.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 4022 9).

By DORIS 'COWAN

IN THEIR episodic, rambling, and dream-like form, the stories and legends of the Indians are like the stories children tell. But the resemblance is superficial; the sometimes nightmarish violence, the graphic sexual detail and humour, and the underlying moral seriousness are all entirely adult. Accomplished story-tellers were highly respected, as teachers and prophets, as well as entertainers. In the absence of a written language, the oral tradition was of the greatest importance in maintaining the continuity of the culture. The stories embody a mythology and a complex system of historical and religious beliefs, as well as providing a guide for social conduct.

But these tales of heroes, tricksters, monsters, and miraculous transformations are strange to non-Indians. And in a way it's unfortunate that the form done makes

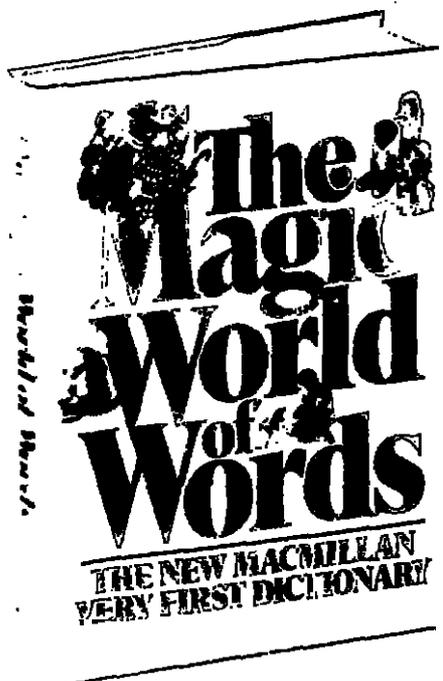
writers think so often and so exclusively of adaptation for children, especially since "adaptation" in this context almost always means expurgation and a general tidying-up of the structure, bringing the tales more into line with what we have been taught to recognize as stories. Often the result is that



they lose almost everything they had of distinctiveness, charm, and interest for children as well as adults. In fact, whether we like it or not, most children are fascinated by exactly those elements we fastidiously or squeamishly suppress — the lurid sexual jokes and bizarre violence.

These three books for young people illustrate three different approaches to the problem. *Indian Tales of the Northwest*, with its companion *Teacher's Guide*, seems to me to be the most successful. The oral form is preserved intact, a wide range of tales is presented, and they are edited only slightly. The characteristically free humour is here, and the touches of horror have not been shirked or softened. In one story, for example, a giantess steals children; their mother weeps, and her nose begins to run with water. The water drops to the ground and a little boy begins to grow. He is a supernatural child who eventually defeats the giantess, killing her by shooting an arrow into the hole in the floor where she keeps her life-spirit. In another story, a man named Snips is "playing an odd game with his eyes . . . taking them out and throwing them in the air, and then running along and stopping until they dropped back in his sockets again." He encounters the trickster, Coyote, who steals his eyes for a joke. Snipe is angry and in return takes Coyote's eyes and runs away with them. "Now you know how it feels," he says. Coyote makes himself new eyes. First he uses gum from a tree, then foambubbles from a stream, then huckleberries, but none of these works very well. Eventually he kills an old woman, and disguised in her skin he goes to Snipe's house, where there is dancing and celebration, and manages to steal back his eyes. There the tale simply ends: no moral is drawn. But since we know that in the great days (more than 100 years ago) a good story-teller could go on for two or three days without stopping, we can see how the repetition of themes and the recurring

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pattern of rewards and punishment would gradually, cumulatively create a moral universe. a world of imaginative explanation for the mysterious and frightening real world.

The *Teacher's Guide* provides much useful background information on the history and culture of the Indians of the Northwest, and suggests ways for the teacher to present the tales so they convey something of their original impact and meaning.

Song of the Forest by Isabel Barclay seems to be intended for slightly younger children. I found it the least interesting of the three. The stories here are all of birds, animals, and insects. and they are meant more to entertain than to teach, but so much has been left out that they seem dull and inadequate. Some of the original flavour remains, but in so incomplete a state that it hardly seems worthwhile. I found one of the stories — "Why the Loon Wobbles When He Walks" — in its adult unexpurgated form in another collection and read both versions to a 10-year-old, who was mildly interested in the children's version and fascinated by the other.

In *Mouse Woman and the Mischief-Makers* nothing of the oral form has been retained. The stories are like European fairy-tales; you almost expect dragons and elves. *Blouse Woman* herself is a bit like

Cinderella's fairy godmother. However, the stories are charming and entertainingly told; the illustrations by Douglas Tait are wonderful, and I can only hope that the children who read it will some day get their hands on the real thing. □

Alphas minus but pennies plus

The *Alphavegetab*, by Louise Ellis, Collier Macmillan, unpaginated, \$6.95 cloth (ISBN 0 02 976730 x).

The *Canadian A B C Book*, by Roy Peterson, Hurtig, unpaginated, \$4.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88830 146 41).

The *Money Tree*, by Will Reese, illustrated by Phil Switzer, J. M. LeBel, unpaginated, \$4.95 cloth (ISBN 0 92000 8 03 8).

By RICKI ENGLANDER

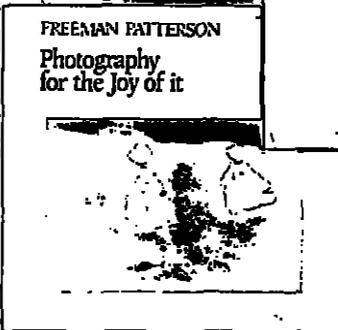
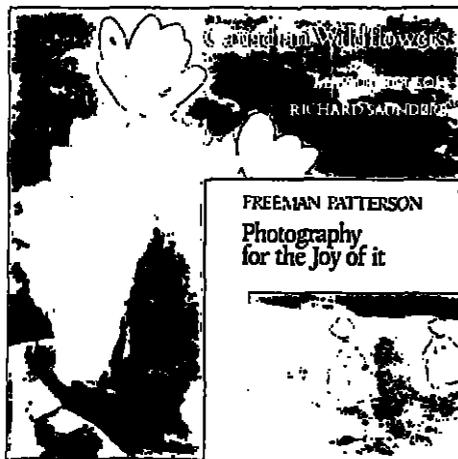
LOUISE ELLIS'S poetry-picture-book, *The Alphavegetab*, has won the Collier Macmillan prize for juvenile literature, awarded to books of exceptional worth written and illustrated by Canadians. The illustrations.

in earthy browns and vegetable greens, are clearly those of a talented, thoughtful and careful artist. Had she been willing to confine her statements to this medium, and thereby provide a true alphabet book, she might have been more successful. Instead, the book seems to have a dual purpose. By imposing the alphabet arrangement on her poetry, she presumably hopes to instruct young children, in an amusing and stimulating fashion, as to the importance of vegetables as well as the alphabet.

Unfortunately, she fails. The alphabet arrangement is superfluous because the illustrations and poetry have little to offer the young child. The themes and rhymes of the poems are contrived in excess of legitimate poetic license. They attempt a level of humour and sophistication beyond the realm and interest of childhood. The poetry on its own is inconsequential; it is neither provoking in thought nor intriguing in rhyme and metre. Had her artistic skill been matched in degree by a poetic one, this might have been a more successful venture. It is sad that such a well-designed and carefully produced book has so little to offer its reader.

Roy Peterson's *The Canadian ABC Book*, on the other hand, announces with embarrassing zeal and misplaced nationalism that the complete Canadian answer to

BOOKS PEOPLE TALK ABOUT



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 Judy Waldner McGrath \$14.95

Photography for the Joy of It ♣
 Freeman Patterson \$19.95 hc, \$9.95 pb

Cross-Country Canada ♣
 Michael Keating \$6.95 pb

Canadian Wildflowers ♣
 Mary Ferguson and Richard Saunders \$19.95

God's Images
 James Dickey and Marvin Hayes \$19.95



Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd.

1410 Birchmount Road, Scarborough, M1P 2E7, Ontario

alphabets has arrived. The book is a small, glossy, and vibrantly coloured attempt systematically to classify the Canadian experience. In so doing, the illustrator has chosen things with a characteristically Canadian reference: E for ermine, eskimo, evergreen; H for habitant, helicopter, hockey; M for Métis, Mountie, musk-ox. For further interest, one finds little caricatures that I think are intended to be funny. A for artist shows Emily Carr (I presume) with an animal of some sort perched on her shoulder, while F for fisherman shows a smell, rain-coated Joey Smallwood with a big fish slung over his shoulder. Most of these cartoons are beyond the recognition and interest of children, Canadian or otherwise.

Whatever humour one may discover is conceded by gross stereotyping. Indians and Eskimos appear traditionally dressed; one of the former leaps off the page warrior-style, menacingly waving a lacross racket: one of the latter grins beatifically, holding a fish-pole while sitting with legs sprawled on the ice. This whole effort cannot seriously be intended for children, despite the goofy little mouse that laboriously tries to provide continuity with its frantic antics. *The Canadian A B C Book* is neither imaginative nor clever, makes no sense as a leaching aid, and provides no statement, Canadian or otherwise.

The Money Tree offers a simply told tale about two young boys, a treasure mop leading to a money-bearing tree, and a fearful old man. On a more subtle plane, this rhyming story touches on old age, loneliness, and a friendship that bridges the generation gap. These potentially disturbing themes are simply expressed and pot well within the reach of the young reader. The tale has several nice mucks, one of which is the discovery that:

*The squiggly letters were clear to me
For I was six and could read you see.*

The six-year-old's pride in what is clearly a new skill is heightened by the presence of the younger friend who reverently peers over his shoulder.

The book is illustrated with dreamy watercolours entirely suited to the quiet story. Also effective is the print, which is large and appears to be inked by hand; it lends a personal feeling to the story, and gives the reader a subtle intimacy with the young heroes. The inner covers are truly inspired and depict endless rows of Canadian pennies, maple leaves up! While not a memorable classic in the field of juvenile literature, this is a pleasant and readable picture book for preschoolers and those who are just learning to read. □

Peer glint and sibling rivalry

Making Waves: Stories and Poems by Kids for Kids, edited by Anne Millyard and Rick Wilks. Books by Kids, 68 pages, \$3.95 paper (ISBN 0 919984 02 9).

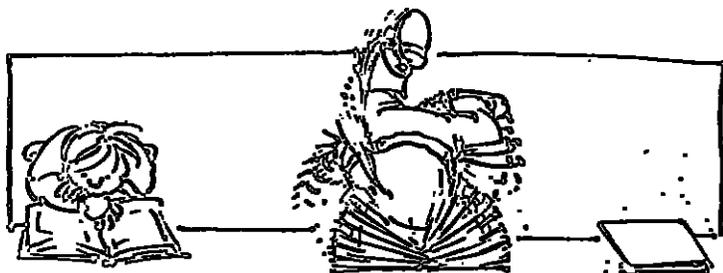
Your Own Story, by Barbara Salsberg. Annick Press, 50 pages. \$6.50 paper (ISBN 0 902236 014).

Zama's Book: Visions of a Six-Year-Old, by Zama Jason-Hearne. Leprechaun Books, unpaginated, \$4.95 paper.

By MARIE LOUISE PIGOTT

GIVEN A choice, I would present a child with a highly imaginative effort by an adult rather than a book written by his peers. I say this in spite of the current theory that says children need to produce their own literature to develop self-esteem, and certainly in spite of these three books that support the kiddit-as-therapy philosophy. But such a choice is not meant to discredit these books: two of them have managed to mitigate toy dislike of "therapy" literature.

The editors of Books by Kids, Anne Millyard and Rick Wilks, have mounted a campaign to make children sensitive to their potential. Says Millyard: "Children think very poorly of themselves and reading peer literature to them is immensely supportive. They realize they aren't alone." She and Wilks are in fact so supportive that they trust children to be critics: their policy is to have children of the same age criticize each other's work. The only contributions that made it into *Making Waves* were those approved by children; adult opinions were not forced on them. One story, entitled "My Brother," is a glaringly therapeutic piece about sibling rivalry. It begins "... my brother is an idiot. I hate him." and ads with, "Steve! I hope you hear this. LEAVE ME ALONB!!!!" According to Millyard, this is one of the most popular pieces in *Making Wows* because the child has articulated what so many other children feel. At this level, the book functions in a junior Ann Landers capacity with little imaginative drive. But there are enough examples of pore flights of fancy to allay my fears that children are too busy "relating" to fantacize. My favourite, if adults can enter the



The Letters of Virginia Woolf

Edited by Nigel Nicolson
and Joanne Trautmann

The letters provide an invaluable background to the works of Virginia Woolf and an intimate experience of this great literary figure.

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The Flight of the Mind

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Volume III, 1923-1928

A Change of Perspective

The period of Woolf's greatest fame. Her letters to Vita Sackville-West, her sister Vanessa Bell and Jacques Raverat display her as teasingly malicious, often sympathetic and always aware of life.

A CHANGE
OF PERSPECTIVE
The Letters of Virginia Woolf
1923-1928

PAUL YERGEN
Illustrations by Paul Yergen



CLARKE IRWIN
the national publishers

rating game. is "A Tragedy." The author, David Atlas, writes in the same breath of three deaths: that of the lady who drank 16 bottles of wine; that of his grandfather; and that of his fish (which ends up down the toilet). The story combines a touch of fantasy with a big dollop of reality.

Your Own Story, from Annick Press (also run by Millyard and Wilks) takes the on-as-therapy idea one step further. This book is entirely pictures: its only words tell us that it contains infinite stories. Waiting within these pages and yourself is your own story. The book's three characters are so amorphous, and the setting is so ambiguous, that it's not hard to believe no two children would "see" the same story in the same series of pictures. The characters are deliberately sexless, ageless, and raceless so that children can respond in any way they want. The value of the book, as the editor sees it, is that all the stories coming from the pictures are equal; there is no "tight" story. Clearly, the implication is that once children are given a certain verbal diction their imaginative capabilities atrophy; if you allow them full rein they can all create.

Zama's Book: Visions of a Six-Year-Old is substantially different in intent. It is the record of a child growing up in British Columbia. The editors (who are also Zama's parents) stress that Zama is not unique, but "a girl very much like other young girls." They invite other children to make "books of your writings and drawings." So this book too encourages children to create their own story. In this case, their own life. But the book misses, where the other "therapy" books don't, because the editors/parents take their kid so seriously. They write: "The result [that is, the book] is a clarity and depth of vision, astounding in its directness and vibrancy." Add to this the fact that Zama wiles about mandalas, and you have a six-year-old that sounds more like the second coming. *Kidlit* as therapy is one thing, but to suggest that *Kidlit* is prophetic is nonsense. How many six-year-old prophets do you know? □

Old men don't always forget

Peter Pitseolak's *Escape from Death*, by Peter Pitseolak, edited by Dorothy Eber, McClelland & Stewart. 48 pages. \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 3030 4).

Why the Man in the Moon is Happy, and Other Eskimo Creation Stories, retold by Ronald Melzack, McClelland & Stewart. 67 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 7710 5832 2).

By DON COLES

FIRST RECORDED by its protagonist-author in Eskimo syllabics, edited and persuasively introduced by Dorothy Eber, Peter Pitseolak's *Escape from Death* is the story of a walrus-hunting expedition undertaken by an Inuit father and son. They were trapped by an ice-field, despaired and were despaired of, dreamed a powerful dream and trusted that dream, and returned "back to Baffin Island and home to our wives and children and grandchildren. The wind brought us home when we had nothing else to help us."



It's a simple tale but, one notes gratefully, neither simple-minded nor sentimental. Instead, it's laconic, terse, and rapid. Notice the quick physical movement in this passage, unobtrusively embracing a character sketch and an existential discovery:

During the night a very strong wind came up. I have always feared the wind. This wind began moving us far from whom had started, out of sight of land. We could do nothing. I was always a driving man, one who gave orders, but I knew now I was no stronger than anyone else.

Facing-page illustrations in colour, done by felt pen or crayon or pencil, are as stark and undecorated as the text. It's a fine little book, I think, written by a man evidently well known as a Baffin Island hunter, historian, and all-round character, who died in 1973 at the age of threescore years and 11. He was a "communicator" who berated his own people for their inattentiveness to the need for written records and this is his minor but hard-edged testament.

The eight stories in the second Inuit entry from M&S have been chosen by Ronald Melzack from, as his acknowledgement advises, hundreds of Eskimo legends and folktales recorded by anthropologists and explorers. The stories have been recast "in a way that would appeal to children of our culture." I enjoyed reading the collection (which may or may not mean that the recasting will achieve its object). But I find the implications of another line in the acknowledgement to be potentially disastrous to the book at least in the eyes of those who insist on taking their anthropology straight or whose offspring are of the same earnest persuasion. The perhaps overly candid line in question* (my italics) is: "Wherever it was possible, however, portions of the story were left unchanged, in order to retain the flavour of the original tale."

Well, so some of the more dour local infants won't be tempted: but in my opinion at least four of these eight stories are rich in imagery, consistent, and satisfying in resolution. "How Living Things Were Created" starts marvellously, like enriched, primal Beckett:

In the beginning, there was only Raven and the world of clay. There was no light, and Raven was on his hands and knees, crawling slowly on the soft, moist earth. Once, as he moved across some Rat land, his hand slipped down into empty space. He lay down and stretched his hand into the abyss to feel how deep it was, but he could not touch the bottom. He drew back.

Not all the stories (which concern such matters as the creation of the sun, the moon, the narwhal, and the mist) live at this level, but they are close enough for that single quotation to represent them. Altogether, I feel, a successful mingling of the Inuit and Melzackian imaginations. □

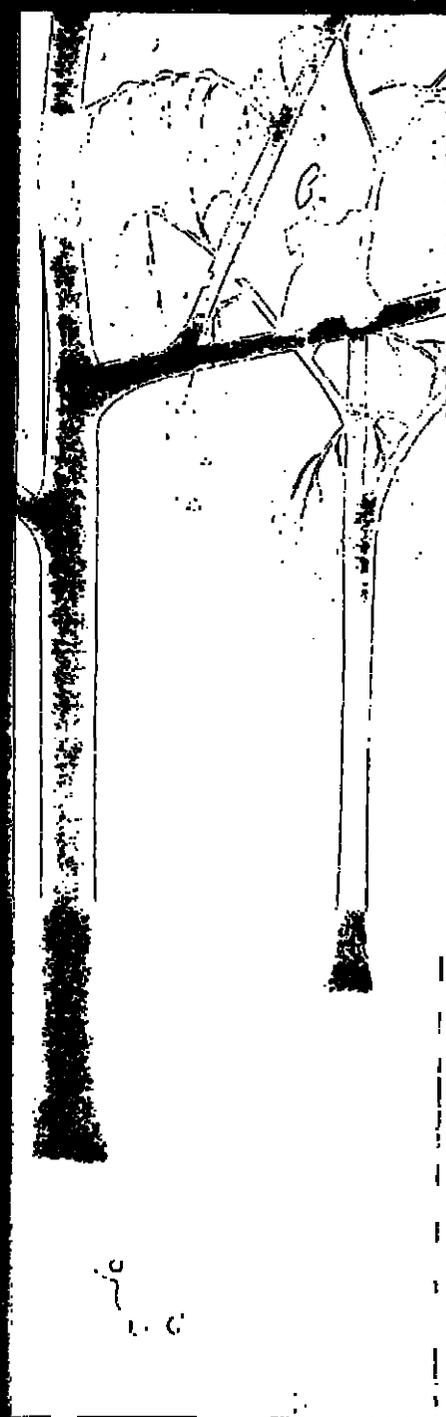
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Children
of the
Yukon

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chats

At Grand-
mother's
House



The best-laid plans of squice and men

Willie the Squowse, by Ted Allen. illustrated by Quentin Blake, McClelland & Stewart. 57 pager. \$5.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 0730 2).

Fleming Star, by Nicky Millard. illustrated by T. Merle Smith. Scholastic-TAB Publications, 119 pages. \$1.05 paper.

Lucky the Horse Nobody Wanted, by Doris L. Ganton. Hancock House. 143 pages. \$1.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919654 56 8).

The City Beyond the Gales, by N. Roy Clifton. illustrated by Tibor Kovalik. Scholastic-TAB Publications. 118 pages. \$1.05 □ aper.

By ROSE ENG

TED ALLEN'S *Willie the Squowse* is one of those children's stories that combines a delightful variety of elements that result in a happy if coincidental ending. Written in a wry vein reminiscent of E.B. White's *Stuart Little*, the story concerns an unusual little fellow named Willie who "has the best features of both his parents," a squirrel and a mouse. As in so many children's books, the plot hinges on a series of coincidences. Willie takes the money that the well-to-do but worrisome Mrs. Pickering stuffs into her kitchen wall, and transfers it to the kitchen wall of the poverty-stricken Smiths; and so Willie becomes a sort of modern-day Robin Hood. In the course of these events, the Pickeringes realize that "money isn't as important as some people think," and the Smiths are relieved of their poverty. The story ends when Willie finds his long-lost trainer who had abandoned him in hopes of finding a belter "box-office" act. The book is illustrated appropriately with cartoon-like ink drawings by Quentin Blake, who understands the line art of combining detail with dash.

As long as there are books written for young people, there will be books about horses. *Fleming Star* by Nicky Millard and *Lucky the Horse Nobody Wanted* by Doris Ganton are stories of high-spirited horses seeking a lost or rightful owner. In *Fleming Star*, Jago, an orphaned gypsy boy, befriends a foal whose mother died while giving birth. A fire in the stables separates the two and the rest of the story revolves around Star's struggle to find Jago again. Ms. Millard makes much of the fact that both the boy and the horse need each other, both having known ill treatment and loneliness. The characters tend to be one-dimensional but are nevertheless drawn clearly.

There is never any doubt as to whose behaviour is praiseworthy.

Doris Ganton's *Lucky the Horse Nobody Wanted* also concerns a mare's search for a kindly owner. Lucky comes to know poor and often cruel treatment from horse dealers who seem interested only in profit. In both stories, adults are portrayed in a generally cruel or thoughtless light while the young people are portrayed as humane and kind. Both authors articulate pleas for the humane treatment of animals — a noble lesson indeed.

N. Roy Clifton's *The City Beyond the Gores* is the somewhat strange adventure of a young girl in a machinery-dominated world. The story has all the trappings of a *Star Wars* adventure, set in a city where nothing natural thrives. The scene is complete with a Big Brother type called the Kemarch and a diet of such foods as "Mish-mash" that have no variety of taste or texture. Naturally, Janey, another plucky, caring youngster, succeeds not only in escaping, but in aiding another fugitive. And she does so without the help of a fell god-mother. □

Pony tales, cat treks, and fur trails

Captain: Canada's Flying Pony, by Lynn Hall. Thomas Nelson & Sons. 48 pages, \$4.50 cloth (ISBN 0 81164857 5).

Lucifer & Lucinda, by Kenneth Dyba, November House. 106 pages, \$7.95 cloth (ISBN 0 920 156 002).

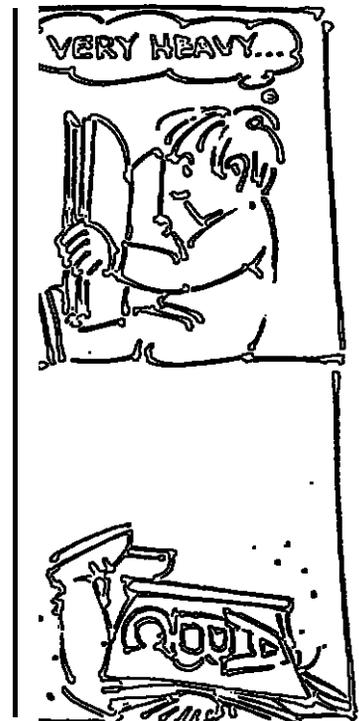
Tim at the Fur Fort, by Hester Button, Thomas Nelson & Sons. 88 pages, \$3.50 cloth (ISBN 0 2418 9571 5).

By Nanci White

LYNN HALL'S *Captain: Canada's Flying Pony* is a "girls are crazy over horses" book with a difference. Unlike other magical and misty-eyed treatments of this theme, Ms. Hall shows that living and working with a horse is back-breaking and possibly heart-breaking. Tracy, the young girl who grows up through the hard work of horse competition, is well-matched by the spunky little pony, Captain. By the end of the story, the rewards of horse-care are made clear but not at the expense of realism. Tracy's long hours on the mad road with her academic tutor, while riding the circuit, gives readers a new view of horse herding work. This book would be good for anyone contemplating getting themselves or their offspring closer than five feet to a horse.

Kenneth Dyba's *Lucifer & Lucinda* has a cat as its unlikely picaresque hero. This very capable cat undergoes a string of insane and magical transformations as he travels across Canada from Vancouver to Halifax in search of his lost owner, Lucinda. Some of the more memorable characters he encounters on his trek are Chee Chee Wong and Miss Destiny while the arcane place names include St. Louis Du Ha!Ha!, Ste. Rose du Degelé, and East Florenceville. Despite all the mad-cat adventures, the story serves as a good children's guide to Canadian highways. This book would be ideal for anyone planning a cross-Canada trip with children: it would make the journey a sort of heritage trail of Thomas the cat, across our native land. The trip from Sudbury to Toronto was particularly for-raising!

One of the more attractively printed and illustrated books this season is *Tim at the Fur Fort*, a semi-historical treatment of a young English immigrant boy. A "son of Susanna Moodie" type, Tim Barton sets sail from London in 1822 at a time when the Hudson's Bay Company was extending its trading posts deeper and deeper into western and northern Canada. Tim's ambition is to become a map-reeker, and his hem is David Thompson. Like "The Hardy Boys Visit Fort Fredericton," Tim and his friend Jamie undertake a desperate journey during an Indian uprising, and return heroes. However, Ms. Burton has documented the narrative well with historical data that produces a pleasant and painless Canadian history lesson. The illustrations by Victor Ambrus are especially attractive rustic lithos; this plus the fact that the text and cover of the book are printed on recycled paper makes *Tim At The Fur Fort* a thoughtfully produced work all round. □



Atwoodioni presents . . .

. . . a collection of unhappy middle-class women,
none of whom look like Monica Vitti

by John Hofsess

Dancing Girls. by Margaret Atwood, McClelland & Stewart, 254 pages. \$10.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 0810 4).

A SHORT-STORY collection is the opposite of "a good read" - something to sink oneself into for an evening or several days; just as one becomes engrossed in the turn of events, the subtlety of character, the evocation of landscape, the thing ends. With the turn of a page, the reader is shunted along to the next segment, as if standing in line in some literary cafeteria. Since most collections are gathered from work done over a period of years, and for various "markets," then is an additional unevenness in the reading experience. The chief problem with short stories is in finding a satisfactory way of appreciating them.

The best collections, it seems to me, are those in which the stories are thematically related — *Spit Delaney's Island* or *The Butterfly Ward* or better still, as in Hermann Broch's *The Guiltless*, conceived from the outset as discrete parts of an "extended" novel. The least satisfying collections are those consisting of a titer's random short fictions. Unless the pieces are brilliant — as they generally are with Dorothy Parker or Vladimir Nabokov — so masterfully written and self-contained that a reader wants to stop after each story to catch his breath and collect his wits, the usual effect of reading such a book is jarring. The reader must shift emotional gears every 10 to 15 minutes or ho. mow ahead in stop-and-go spurts. The accumulative effect is incoherence.

Margaret Atwood's *Dancing Girls*, a collection of 14 stories (three of them, "Training," "Giving Birth," and the tide story, published for the first time) doesn't have a unifying theme but it does have a pervasive mood — rather like watching an early Antonioni film, set in Canada. The strong characters are women, not as beautiful as Monica Vitti but equally neurasthenic. The men are burnt-out cases of a corrupt and obsolete patriarchal civilization. Everyone, it seems, is waiting for the end. The characters are not wealthy and decadent, as they were in *L'Avventura*, *La Nona*, and *The Red Desert*; but they are sufficiently privileged, in their middle-class

lives, that they too have become unhappy wanderers in a motel vacuum. Jet-set boredom has become charter-flight ennui. Also, as with Antonioni, action is minimal in these stories and there is rarely a sense of release or resolution. The weak crack up; the strong passively survive. But which is better off is hard to say, because there is absolutely nothing to live for.

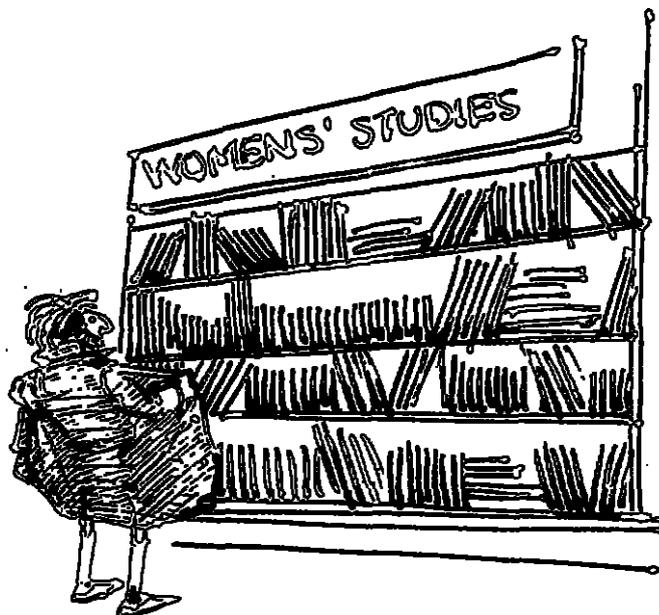
For all its apparent pessimism, Atwood's fiction is not a cry from the heart. Perhaps her sense of the ridiculous prevents her from expressing a howling despair. In any case, her wit intervenes, so that practically every story culminates in an epiphany of slapstick tragedy (to borrow a label from Tennessee Williams). It is this moment (or several) of dark comic art that is Atwood's hallmark as a prose writer. For the style of writing itself contains few surprises; it rarely undertakes the risk of producing an epigram, or any other form of memorable phrase. It is a self-effacing style, with deadpan delicacy: what matters is the accumulation of details, line by line, until a picture of complex irony is achieved.

In "Under Glass," one of several stories about bridges of love falling down, she writes:

"Hi," he says, "Jesus I'm hung over."

It's rude of him to 'be hung over' when I've come all this way to see him. "I brought you a flower," I say, determined to be calm and cheerful. . . . "I've missed you," he says. Why should he have missed me. I've only been gone five days. The last time wasn't good, I was nervous, the wallpaper was bothering me and the bright peel-off nick-on butterflies on the cupboard, not his, prior to him. He kisses me: he does have a hangover, his mouth tastes of used wine, tobacco resin and urban decay. He doesn't want to make love, I can tell, I stroke his head understandingly; he nuzzles. . . . "Want to have lunch?" he says. This is his way of telling me he's in no shape. . . . He finishes my cheeseburger and lights a cigarette. I'm annoyed with him for some reason, though I can't recall which. I thumb my card-file of nasty remarks, choose one: You make love like a cowboy raping a sheep. I've been waiting for the right time to say that, but maybe peace is more important.

In four other stories — "The Grave of the Famous Fat," "The Resplendent Quetzal," "Liver of the Poets," "Hair Jewellery" — we meet similar young couples in the last stages of their relationships. Given a



large jolt of energy, they would probably become like Edward Albee's George and Martha; but Atwood refuses to give her characters that much ferocious life, predatory skills, or even intelligence, so they keep snipping away at one another, inconclusively, like amateur guerillas still learning to shoot. Atwood's vision of relationships is truer by being more trivial: but having once beheld a fantastic monster it is difficult to be much impressed with a puny mortal wearing a scary mask.

The stories I enjoyed most — "The Man from Mars," "Polarities," end especially "Training" — are also about preposterous relationships, but each seems to express all that the author wants to say on the subject.

so they are complete, and fulfilled, in ways that the other stories are not. (The two best "idea stories" in the book — "Rape Fantasies" and "A Travel Piece" — good as they are, scarcely begin to realize their potential.) In "Training," a summer-camp counsellor in his late teens befriends a nine-year-old girl with cerebral palsy. He is impressed when she shows a skill for games that matter to him (like playing checkers; he wonders if he can teach her chess) but one night at the Fair-Eden Follies, a collection of skits and entertainments put on by the children, all of whom are disabled one way or another, he realizes that what she wants to do, most of all, is to be able to square-dance in her wheelchair. The pros-

pect strikes him as so ridiculous, he bursts out laughing, and has to leave the auditorium. His laughter is the dividing line between the world of the "norms" and that of the "crips." He knows it. She knows it. Their lives, thereafter, will move in different directions.

Dancing Girls is more a record of where Atwood has been than it is a probe into where she is going. Some of it is minor fiction indeed; but the saving grace, even there, is the playful intelligence behind the scenes. Even when her characters drift through days with deadened nerves, suffering hum mononucleosis of the soul (it's rarely fatal, but what a dreg) there is a little voice, off-stage, making raspberry noises.

You can't judge a spook by his cover

Spying isn't as simple as it was back in the good old days of international intrigue and forever Amber

by I. M. Owen

Blueprint, by Philippe van Rjndt. Lester & Orpen, 267 pages, \$9.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919630 76 6).

THE DIFFICULTY with enjoying spy stories — as I do — is that nearly all of them demand at the outset much more than the normal willing suspension of disbelief. First, both the writer and the reader most pretend to think that great issues really hang on the success or failure of the very odd illicit activities of a handful of secret agents. (You don't have to be a Tolstoyan to have serious doubts of this.) Second, most of the books in this genre written in the last 30 years assume a view of international affairs that few readers, end certainly no writers as sophisticated as Len Deighton or John le Carré, can accept for a moment: a view in which the government of the Soviet Union devotes all its energies to the achievement of instant world conquest, end the doily frustration of its agents' knavish tricks by our own tricksters, who are knaves too but knavish on the right side, is all that preserves our immaculate democracy.

In the two books he has published so far, Philippe van Rjndt has cleverly avoided this difficulty by showing the intelligence community busying itself with other objects in mind. His first, *The Tetramachus Collection*, featured an organization that,

it exists (and he assures us that it does), is a living refutation of the view outlined above: a semi-private agency for espionage end assassination that is jointly owned by the CIA and the KGB. It can net es a front for either of its parents but most never work against either of them, end with this one restriction can take on mercenary commissions from anybody. In *The Tetramachus Collection* its client is the Vatican, whose complicity in Nazi war crimes is in danger of being exposed by the theft of a secret file.

In *Blueprint* we seem at first to be in the mainstream of the novel of espionage. Alexander Roy, a captain at headquarters of the GRU (Soviet military intelligence), NM a small network in West Germany, whose star performer is Otto Berg, a deep-pew trancer man who is security adviser to the Chancellor — a reminder of Günter Guillaume, whose exposure led to Willy Brandt's resignation. One by one, the members of this network are murdered end Roy sets out to find out whose doing it is; clearly West German counter-intelligence would want to interrogate spies, not snuff them out. So we find ourselves, not in the usual international contest, but in an internecine struggle in which the rivals are the GRU, the KGB, and Special Investigations, a higher organ set up to look for traitors in the other two. Roy is determined to prove that Bibnikov, the head of Special Investi-

gations, is himself a double agent and responsible for the destruction of the network.

That, at any rate, is what the situation seems to be at the beginning of the book. The brilliance of the author's achievement lies in the ingenuity of the series of revelations and counter-revelations that gradually lead us to the final and stealing knowledge of what has really been going on. Obviously I can't reveal this, except under torture; hence I can't demonstrate the book's main excellence, and you will have to find out for yourself.

The Tetramachus Collection suffered from a plot cluttered with too many people and groups working at cross purposes — appropriately, perhaps, to the Italian political scene that is the background to the book. *Blueprint* is clearer and faster-moving, and the author's English has improved considerably, or else his editor had more time to work on it. There is no improvement in characterization, though; in the earlier book one person flickered briefly into life — just before she died, unfortunately — but in this one they are all consistently wooden. There is no sense that any of them has had a past, a childhood, parents (except where they are necessary to the plot), humour, or MY pleasure or interest outside the professional life. The story of Roy's brief love affair is

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Canada in the Second World War



W.A.B. Douglas
Brereton Greenhous

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Canada in the Second World War

W. A. B. Douglas and Brereton **Greenhous**

With the aid of 150 carefully chosen illustrations, and a text interspersed with countless **anecdotes**, this book offers the **first** general overview of Canada's contribution to the Second World War that **considers** the operations of **all** three armed forces. It takes the reader from **1939** when Canada was in the **throes** of the Depression and totally unprepared to take part **in a** war, through to 1945 when Canada emerged with a new confidence and with the status of a 'middle power'. The authors describe the build up of industry the painful **growth** of the armed forces; such important achievements as the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan; the vital support to Britain in supplying raw materials, financial assistance, convoy **escorts**, and **in** ferrying aircraft overseas; the disasters of Hong Kong and Dieppe; and Canadian action in Sicily, Southern **Italy** and Northwest Europe. The book concludes with a discussion of the Home **Front**.

256 pp., 150 black and **white** illustrations.

To be published October 1977 "

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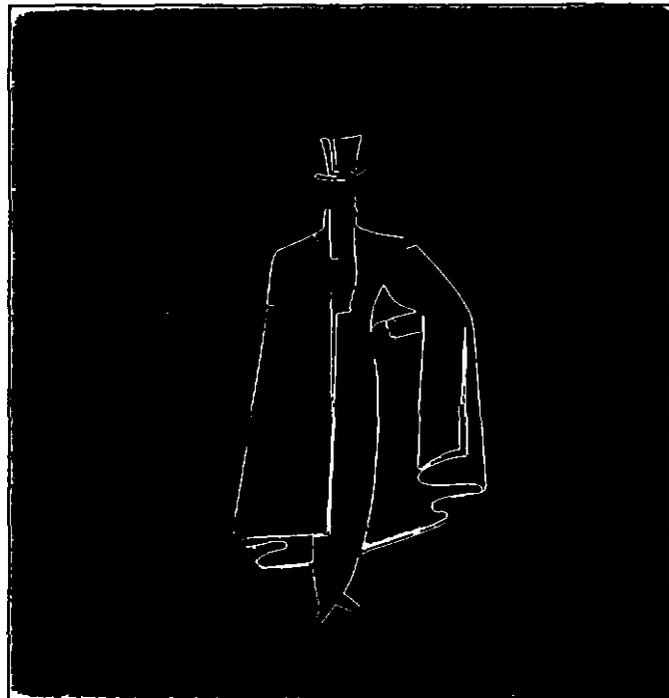
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Michel Proulx

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- The Canadian Forum

CLARKE IRWIN



strong and well-conceived: if the principals had only been brought to life its terrible ending would have had genuine tragic power.

Also lacking is any sense of place. Events happen in Bonn, Berlin, Moscow, Leninsk ("the invisible city"), but these are only stage-directions. Landscape, townscapes, and atmosphere are missing.

I keep wondering if there is some message, some significance hidden in the un-Russian naming of the principal Russian character in each book. In *The Tetramachus Collection* the organization's top executioner, born in Kiev, is called Alexander Players, and this seems to be meant as his real name; certainly it is not the one (never given) under which he pursues his cover occupation — teaching in the McGill faculty of law, of all things. And now we have Alexander Roy. Perhaps van Rjndt's next book will have a third Alexander whose last name will reveal a pattern.

Both books have a convincing air of authority about the intelligence networks, their structure and their ways. Knowing nothing about them, I am inclined to accept van Rjndt's expertise. He is not infallible on Soviet political history, though; there is a notably garbled account of the events of 1931 that preceded the Kirov assassination; he confuses the Seventeenth Party Congress (which he calls the Eighteenth) with the subsequent meeting of the Central Committee, and the chairmanship with the general secretaryship of the Party: not an important

blemish, but worth mentioning since it would be quite easy to correct in a reprint. The main point of the passage — that Kirov was gaining support at Stalin's expense, and that Stalin engineered the assassination — is an unprovable but tenable conjecture, legitimately used in this context.

If Philippe van Rjndt can find out how to breathe life into his characters he may well become a major thriller-writer. He is already a very good one. □

Going round the bend at forty

The *Rosedale Hoax*, by Rachel Wyatt, House of Anansi, 136 pages, \$4.95 paper (ISBN 0 88784 061 2).

By DOUGLAS HILL

RACHEL WYATT's earlier novel, *The String Box*, was published in 1970, with the exciting first round of Anansi fiction. It had a Monty Python wackiness, a sort of frantic, unfocused energy; if it was entertaining — good and occasionally hilarious fun — it was also not particularly memorable. The

Rosedale Hoax is a better book. Shorter by nearly one half, it's more relaxed yet tighter, more serious but no less humorous, and measurably sharper and sadder.

The novel is set amid the muted greens and reds of Chellow Street, an obviously atypical but not unbelievable cul-de-sac in Toronto's sedate Rosedale. It charts the course of Robert Ferrand — nuclear engineer with a Québécois name, son of Niagara Peninsula fruit-farmers, peasant intruder by marriage into the upper-middle class — as he scrapes his way over the reefs and shoals of his mid-life crisis, Wyatt is adept at depicting a world in which everything seems to be disintegrating, in which nothing is certain. The collapse of ideals and illusions is symbolized, for her part, by the hoax of the title: Ferrand faces a situation that may be either a deep and murky conspiracy involving the incomprehensible machinations of various weird neighbours and a 60-year-old paper-boy in a Mercedes, or else simply — simply? — the menacing hallucinations attendant upon his gaining 40, fumbling his marriage, and losing his grip.

At first Wyatt's prose seems oddly flat, lacking in flexibility and resonance. The first few pages are distracting, and it's something of a struggle to catch hold of the story. Once her style establishes itself, though, the erratic rhythms and persistent images and attributives put pressure on the reader and force him to concentrate. The



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stutterings and incongruities of behaviour that poke up through the surface of the novel reveal deeper disturbances beneath. A scream in the night may be one neighbour's cut investigating another neighbour's homemade insect-trap: or it may connect somehow to the black limousine in front of the minister's house at dawn or the black-mail note in the mailbox. But how explain the girl, naked under a long brown cloak, who moves in summer lightning across the lawn? All these perceptions and possibilities create moods, summer memories. for Ferrand and the reader: the disjunctions of plot and dialogue imply emotional fracture. separation, a loss of joy.

Rachel Wyatt mirrors the same streets as Margaret Atwood, Marian Engel, Richard Wright - she waits for the same elevators. hears birds in the same ravines - but the effects of her fiction are distinctly different from theirs. The reality she reflects is uniquely distorted; at the edges of her glass the world blurs and dissolves. Her characters suffer the inexplicable and incommunicable pangs of the ordinary, the burdens their pests have imposed. *Sunt lacrimae rerum* - there are tears of things: simple to conceive of, difficult to express. I think *The Rosedale House* succeeds at this quite well. b's a funny, depressing, and wise little book. □

Incline and fall of two rebels

The Sidehill Gouger, or What's So Deadly About Caterpillars?, by Shane Dennison, Doubleday, 288 pages. \$8.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 12515 1).

Wanted: Donald Morrison, by Clarke Wallace, Doubleday, 221 pages. 58.95 cloth (ISBN 0 385 12647 61).

By WAYNE GRADY

THE SIDEHILL gouger is (apart from the title of Shane Dennison's novel) a fabulous beast unknown to any bestiary or book of imaginary beings. It lives on the sides of mountains, a precarious habitat to which it has adapted by growing one set of legs shorter than the other. To catch one (why anyone would want to do so remains unclear) you must first be a member of the Establishment - in this case a school superintendent, a Mountie, a reporter - and you must hate and fear any glimmerings of individualism in the masses. Then you simply chase the gouger out of the hills and on to the flats, where it topples over.

Dennison's novel advocates the gouger ethic: don't let them get you on the flats; or beat the system, not your kids. The novel takes place in Chance, B.C., one of those

mythical remote villages forever springing up in Canadian fiction, where the main point of interest is a large rock (called an erratic) and the main communal activity is drinking and child-beating. His sidehill gouger is a 16-year-old schoolboy, Ross Lorringer, who conceives a passion for his teacher, Laura Wilson Bloody, and throws an axe at his superintendent to demonstrate the individual nature of his love. Laura, at least, is convinced and their love is quickly consummated, a lucky thing for Ross because soon afterward he falls into a well and stays there for the rest of the novel. Meanwhile, Laura is tired for being a good teacher, a lucky thing for her because she can spend her free time stumbling about in the woods looking for Ross. But Chance, either as village or motive, is not allowed to play too important a role in the life of a sidehill gouger when Laura falls down the same well, she does so deliberately.

The novel also descends from there. With his two protagonists and his tonal theme disposed of, Dennison seems to have written himself into an empty corner, a problem he hastily solves by promoting a few of his minor characters - a local newspaperman and two cretins named Elbing Walters and Freon Gurk - to a level of prominence they are too feeble-minded and too feebly drawn to support. The climax manages to be both inevitable and incredible (200 cases of stolen beer, a caterpillar tractor) and the recapitulation, despite the well, lacks any real depth.

If the citizens of Chance ever read anything but the label on an Uncle Ben's beer bottle, however, they might recognize in Donald Morrison a real sidehill gouger. And Clarke Wallace, Morrison's diligent biographer, would probably agree with them. Known as the Megantic Outlaw (Megantic is a town in Quebec's Eastern Township), Morrison was a Scots farmer who shot and killed a bounty hunter named Jack Warren on June 22, 1888. With the aid of everyone of Scots descent in the county, Morrison eluded for 10 months the more than 200 soldiers and policemen sent to track him down, the longest manhunt in Canadian history. He was eventually captured by two gunmen outside his parents' cabin, brought to trial, found guilty of manslaughter, and sentenced to 18 years' labour in Montreal's St. Vincent de Paul penitentiary, where he died less than five years later of "wasting sickness."

The bare bones of Morrison's story can be found in Colombo. Wallace fattens them up with meaty matter from private letters, newspaper accounts, and trial records and gives them "a fictional approach . . . to bring alive the hardships, joys and tragedies which faced unwary immigrants and to portray better one man's struggle to live by the code 'to thine own self be true'."

Despite the unpromising nature of that preface, the result is a pleasant sort of biography. The writing is clean and controlled, and the natural drama of the events is not too severely tampered with. Though the

fiction suffers slightly from a lack of focus (we are privy to the inner workings of too many minds: Morrison himself; his fiancée; Pew Spynyardt, the Montreal Star reporter who covered the story; Judge Aimée Dugas, who finally took charge of the search force), Wallace isn't really pretending to be writing a novel. His purpose is to establish his hero's innocence, to make him a victim of the system, and he does a better job of it than Dennison. Morrison is made much more real: he defies the Establishment and gets burned. □

Home is the 'hoonta'

The Prime Minister, by Austin Clarke, General Publishing, 191 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 7736 1030 8).

By CHRIS SCOTT

AFTER 20 YEARS of exile in Canada and the U.S., poet John Moore returns to his Caribbean island home to take a government job. The omens of his arrival are inauspicious: plane and passengers are sprayed with disinfectant; a Torontonian tourist asks about the availability and price of "broads"; Moore is hassled by a customs officer who is a member of the "other" party, the not-so-official opposition; there is very little to tell him that he is not, still, in Toronto. Even his job title is uncertain. It could be, according to his letter of appointment, "Director of Cultural Relations" or "Director of National Culture and Information Services, or whatever title is decided upon." More ominously, "This would be the kind of job which would last only the life of a government."

John Moore soon learns that the government is intent on converting Thii World chaos into First World dictatorship. The civil service is a bureaucracy of gossips, or "yardfowls" - confidants of the Prime Minister. One such is the Reverend Lionel Lipps, whom Moore meets at a cocktail party where the men are all dressed in "the 'shirtjack' suit, the official attire of the newly independent country." Moore's friend, Weeks, tells him that "people don't talk anything political when Lipps is around," and when a man called Harris is seen and heard to laugh too loudly at a joke, the profane Lipps announces: "Something has to be done about that type of behaviour."

Harris later turns up in Moore's office looking for a job. "Julie," as he is called, is a riven, Dickensian character, whose appearance is followed by ministerial phone calls warning of his unemployability because of "that type of behaviour." John Moore, who is having an affair with Harris's

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ex-wife, is bewildered, and his increasing sense of alienation from island life soon turns to a comic kind of paranoia. He acquires a reputation as a black-power radical (mainly for questioning the necessity of reading obituaries four times a day over the radio: the funeral directors retaliate by wondering "whether he was not out of the country too long to know anything about the culture of funeral directing"). Armed with this reputation, and a pistol after Weeks is poisoned at another cocktail party, he blunders into conspiracy with the minister (and would-be island patriarch), the Reverend Lipps, and a self-styled grass-roots agitator, Kwame. This "hoonta" blows up Moore's office ("Police have not ruled out sabotage as the cause of the bomb explosion," announces the radio), burns down his house, and generally makes life difficult for its co-conspirator. Finally, without realizing that the conspiracy has been encouraged in order to justify role by emergency decree (a familiar trick to Canadians). John Moore is beck where he started, at the airport with the tourists and their paradisiacal reflections.

The Prime Minister, as a novel of power and its dislocations, is reminiscent of times of Kafka's *The Castle* — an extraordinary departure for Barbados-born Austin Clarke. The prime Minister himself is deliberately drawn as a shadowy figure who appears twice in the novel — in a bar, and on TV as "an upholder of social democracy." (There is talk of "destabilization," which is Jamaican Rime Minister Michael Manley's term for CIA subversion — but this is an island of the mind.) The setting is vintage Graham Greene (there are several allusions to *The Comedians*). but Greene is not interested in the minds and languages of "native" characters. Clarke ranges from the Miltonic to the vernacular; the book is lyrical and vitriolic, sad and at the same time very funny — a brilliant *roman à clef* of the exile's return. □

The loneliness of the half-landed immigrant

Garden in the Wind, by Gabrielle Roy, translated from the French by Alan Brown, McClelland & Stewart, 175 pages, \$10 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 7834 x).

By CAROL SHIELDS

THE IDEA OF Canada as a cultural mosaic is a popular conception, useful to sociologists and literary historians alike in describing the peculiar ethnic stubbornness that has persisted in this country. But is it an apt image? Gabrielle Roy, in her new book of stories *Garden in the Wind*, seems to suggest that it is not. In her vision of Canada the cultural

bits and pieces sometimes fail to fit into a prescribed pattern; the edges are blurred with homesickness and regret; more important, there is too much space in between, and this space flows with a profound and incurable loneliness.

The four stories in this fine new collection (two of them previously published in slightly different form) focus on the chinks in the human mosaic, on the pain of cultural and private separation. Each story sits squarely in its own isolated context: A French Canadian farm family adrift in rural Manitoba; a restive colony of Doukhobors in search of a Prairie home; a nearly abandoned Polish settlement in Alberta; and what may be one of the most desolate of human islands, the single Chinese restaurant in a Saskatchewan village.

The individuals in these stories have imposed upon themselves a sort of chaos of the spirit; these are people who are shot off by language and custom from the country they have chosen; many of them cannot even recall the impulse that drove them to immigrate in the first place. These are the half-adopted children of a half-perceived country. Marta, the Polish woman in the title story, immigrated as a young woman and possesses a naturalization certificate, but after half a lifetime in Canada she still feels herself to be an alien.

But Canada seemed to her less a country than an immense map with strange cutouts, especially in the North, or was it no more than a sky, a deep and dream-filled waiting, a future in suspense? Sometimes it seemed her life had been spent on the edge of the country, in some vague zone of wind and loneliness that Canada might yet embrace.

But cultural loneliness, dramatic as it appears in these stories, is only a backdrop to a primary human loneliness. With one exception, these are long short stories, almost novellas, and Gabrielle Roy takes her time exploring the numberless ways in which people choose to cut themselves off. The mother in the story "A Tramp et the Door" walls herself up in a closet of suspicion. Sam, the lunchroom proprietor in the story "Where Will You Go, Sam Lee Wong?" is imprisoned not only by language, but by the inarticulated events of his childhood. In the story "Garden to the Wind" Marta is severed from her children, her parents, from her silent husband and, most painful of all, from a knowledge of what she herself once was. The question that rattles her as she lies dying in an upstairs bedroom is: "Who am I and has my life made any sense at all?"

Gabrielle Roy describes the agony of aloneness, but what she celebrates is the occasional and almost random breaking down of barriers: the moment, for instance, when the mother in "A Tramp et the Door" moves from suspicion to sympathy; the resolution to silence between Marta and her husband; and the bizarre faith of Sam Lee Wong who, in his old age, tries once again

to penetrate the mystery of his chosen country.

These are moving stories, translated with quiet feeling by Alan Brown. Behind the careful craftsmanship, the reader discovers a wise acceptance and a sympathetic vision of what it means to live on the untitled edge of society. □

The element of fire is not quite put out

Savage Fields, by Dennis Lee. House of Anansi, 125 pages, \$11.95 cloth (ISBN 0 8878-1 059 0) and 55.95 paper (ISBN 0 88784 058 2).

By ROBIN SKELTON

IN THIS LUCIDLY written and courageously speculative essay, Dennis Lee suggests that the "liberal" cosmology which maintains that "men inhabit an objective and value-free universe, which we know and refashion through calculating reason" is no longer credible. He credits neuro-biology with establishing that the brain is an "objectively knowable phenomenon" end that "consciousness" is therefore "merely an epiphenomenon, a subjective interpretation we have mistakenly projected on the brain but which has finally floated clear of its object." The liberal cosmology has collapsed under the weight of the discovery that what "thinks end knows" is as scientifically measurable and predictable as that "objective and value-free universe" that it manipulates.

Must we, then, return from a belief in this liberal cosmology to that earlier "sacramental" view of a universe populated with demons, angels, and spiritual forces, which were, after Descartes, considered to be simply "subjective," since we can no longer believe in the notion of the "subject"? The answer is not given, for this essay is confessedly only the first step in what may become a series of explorations, and Dennis Lee is endearingly modest in his admissions of uncertainty.

He is less modest, perhaps, in propounding a different cosmology. Taking his terms from Heidegger, he suggests that we inhabit a universe in which two force-fields operate, the one called "world" attempting to control and order the other, called "earth," which attempts to tantalize and humiliate "world" with its intuitive, instinctive, vital energies. This cosmology

may seem, at first glance, to be little more than a new version of the old dichotomies, civilization/nature, reason/intuition, intellect/emotion. It is, however, more, for it suggests, in Lee's formulation of it, a perpetual process of conflict that has become of first importance to our industrialized end ecology-conscious society, and which cannot be resolved: in this it reminds one of Karl Jaspers' description of an "absolute and radical tragedy" as one in which "there is no way out whatsoever." "Tragedy," Jaspers maintained, "occurs wherever the powers that collide are true independently of one another. That reality is split, that truth is divided, is a basic insight of tragic knowledge." I cannot, of course, know whether Lee has read Jaspers' work, but certainly his approach to the two books that he uses to illustrate the presence of his cosmology in present-day writing seeks to reveal the tragic way in which "truth is divided."

His analyses of Michael Ondaatje's *Collected Works of Billy the Kid* and Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* in terms of his cosmology are fascinating and perceptive, and his analysis of the reasons for the failure of Cohen's novel as a work of art are particularly instructive. Two books do not, however, make a literature, and the author's references to other works that utilize the world/earth conflict are too skimpy to persuade me that this cosmological view is shared by many writers of today. He must not be blamed unduly for this. He is speculating rather than arguing, end he is not attempting an academic exercise in which he would have been obliged to refer to other similar views of the dynamic nature of our universe, including that of Yeas, as well as to some of the solutions to the problems of perpetual conflict - such as that outlined by Jaspers, who points out that in the very nature of things there cannot be a truly Christian tragedy, for Christianity encompasses end unifies all oppositions.

I find myself, indeed, arriving at the conclusion that Dennis Lee's problem may only be soluble in terms that reinstate the "subject" in the universe by suggesting that after all there may be "soul" in man that is quite distinct from the neuro-biologically measurable brain, and that (possibly) the discoveries of netro-biology (which "worlds" the universe) should be set alongside those of pan-psychology (which "earths" it). That I find myself compelled to suggest further explorations and possible solutions testifies to the fine quality of this essay. Lee describes it as "tentative, leap-frog, and unfinished," which it is; had he been less modest, he might have called it both challenging end seminal, for it is calculated to arouse immediate debate, end in tackling two interesting, though flawed, works by two living Canadian writers in a fashion that presumes they deserve end demand sophisticated and rigorous exploration, it may possibly incite others to treat the literature of our country with other than the usual intellectual pusillanimity. □



Old, unhappy, far-off flings

An Appetite for Life: The Education of a Young Diarist, 1924-27, by Charles Ritchie, Macmillan, 192 pages, \$10.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7705 1573 8).

By J. A. S. EVANS

CHARLES RITCHIE'S *The Siren Years*, the memoirs of his diplomatic career between 1937 and 1945, were a roaring success, judged by all the gauges on which the mars of successful books can be measured in Canada. It won a Governor General's Award. Naturally enough, Ritchie, who is an inveterate diarist, and a literate one, began to search through his personal archives for notebooks on the years 1945-55, with which to produce a sequel. But the scribbler that caught his eye was dated September, 1924. Ritchie was then 18, living with his widowed mother on the outskirts of Halifax, in a colonial version of an English gentleman's estate called The Bower, complete with gate posts guarded by The Lodge, which was let to an impecunious family, an old house circa 1817 with a

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Victorian front, a railway through the back yard, and, of course, debts. Debts threatened the existence of **The Bower** until **great-aunt Zaidée** died in England (she had started out in Canada **three** marriages before as plain Sadie) while Ritchie was in Oxford, and left his mother enough to save the old estate.

Ritchie's family belonged to the old mid-Atlantic Establishment that sent its scions for education to private schools modelled on the English pattern, and finished them at Oxford or Cambridge if it could manage it. Ritchie went to "an Anglican concentration camp of a boarding school in Ontario": the phrase comes from *The Siren Years*, and in *An Appetite for Life* we discover what Ontario institution may rejoice in this description. It is Trinity College School in Port Hope. Then on to King's at Dalhousie in Halifax. Hen the diary begins.

Ritchie fell in love at King's College, discovered masturbation, did well in classics and badly in mathematics, and qualified for "Junior Colonial Status" at Oxford. During the summer he worked on a farm for an English family, the du Plat Taylors, who had decided to escape Lloyd George's taxes by taking up land in Newfoundland. Ritchie's Farming career was brief, and the du Plat Taylors, whose venture was in the tradition of the *Trails* and *Moodies* and *Roughing It in the Bwh*, lasted only slightly longer. And so to Oxford, to Pembroke College, which had the attraction of no entrance examinations.

Ritchie made a nodding acquaintance with learning at Oxford. The second part of *An Appetite for Life* tells us little about his tutors, or his lectures, except that they were uninspiring. He did a little fencing, and rather more gambling than he could afford. And he met Margot, who sought solace from her husband by sleeping with assorted Oxford men. The year 1927 ended with Margot getting pregnant, and by her husband (worse luck), who insisted that there should be no abortion. Aunt Zaidée died and left Ritchie a small legacy. A few months earlier, he had dreamed of taking Margot to Paris, if only he had had the necessary money. Now he had the money, but Margot was quavering on the brink of motherhood, and Ritchie had passed off to the next stage of growing up. He returned to The Bower.

Diaries are always hard to stop, and Ritchie, editing his youthful efforts, evidently decided that a summer at The Bower was as good a place as any. It was to be some years yet before he followed the advice of his father's old law partner, Sir Robert Borden, Prime Minister of Canada in the First World War, and went into the Department of External Affairs. The young Ritchie's diary holds up a mirror to an age that has passed. The prejudices of the old Establishment, the pretensions and ignorance of the British, and the picturesque decay of an old Wasp-mafia family all add up to a fascinating slice of Canadian social history. *An Appetite for Life* is the work of a promising young diarist, who was to become a superb practitioner of the craft. □

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By PAUL KENNEDY

FIRST THERE was the *Canadian Centennial Libra-v.* Editor-in-chief Pierre Berton capitalized on the euphoric nationalism of 1967, and his patriotic picture books sold surprisingly well. In fact, the original eight titles sold so well that McClelland &

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Stewart announced the birth of the *Canadian Illustrated Library*, which sustained the series and prolonged the profits. Demand had actually exceeded supply. Obviously, there was a vast mail-order book market in Canada, just waiting to be tapped. When the original series finally fizzled out, the publishers responded with the *Canadian Natural Science Library*. Once again, sales were impressive — so impressive that we are now being offered yet another “major new Canadian publishing venture”: *Canada's Illustrated Heritage*.

A pattern is becoming predictable. Notice the similarity in the titles of the three series. *Canada's Illustrated Heritage* repeats the familiar combination of picture illustrations and popular prose. Pierre Berton has been enticed away from the railroads and the nurseries of the nation to provide his golden endorsement as editorial consultant. And Professor Michael Bliss of the University of Toronto even tags along to lend an aura of academic respectability as historical consultant. It's a proven recipe. How can it fail?

Let us count the ways.

In the first place, this series fails to live up to the extravagant promises of its own advance publicity. The guarantee of “excitement and adventure on every page” must obviously be dismissed as advertising ballyhoo. After ploughing through each and every paragraph of the six available volumes, I found little to get excited about in any of them. A few of the pictures were mildly interesting — although hardly adventurous — but my overall reaction was one of profound disappointment.

Perhaps the most disappointing feature of the series is its failure to fulfill its own prescription for a “fascinating and accurate social history” of Canada (my emphasis). A couple of token chapters in each volume are admittedly devoted to topics and issues such as alcoholism, crime, labour relations, sporting events, and fashions. But so much — or more — space is wasted in restating the well-known themes of political chronology. And Canada's familiar institutional and territorial development is similarly rehearsed. Most of the “social” history that does somehow manage to filter into these volumes was evidently gleaned from the social pages of fashionable Canadian newspapers. Unfortunately, menus for state dinners at Government House and lecture schedules for the Halifax Young Men's Literary Academy were far from the “social” reality experienced by the vast majority of Canadians.

The inclusion of such diverse and unrelated elements within a single volume cannot help but result in chaos and confusion. The authors of the series struggle in vain to provide any sense of unity or narrative coherence within their respective volumes. Unconnected anecdotes succeed one another like the footnotes of a conventional history textbook. Each volume remains a scrapbook chronicle of a single decade. Each decade remains unrelated to the decades that precede and follow it.

There is no indication that the sum of the parts should even resemble a whole.

Perhaps a few words should be said in defence of the series. It was a good idea. A readable social history of Canada is desperately necessary. The notion of asking authors with the stature and talent of Max Braithwaite, June Callwood, and Margaret Atwood to write it was intriguing. The concept of making it accessible to “students of all ages” was truly commendable. And the impulse to illustrate the series with lavish pictures and visual material deserves enthusiastic endorsement.

But the failure of *Canada's Illustrated Heritage* is all the more disappointing because it was such a wonderful idea. Maybe it is really a blessing that these books will not be found in the book stores, but will be available only through the mail. If we're lucky, there just might be an extended postal strike — which should give editors and writers a chance to return to the drawing boards. □

Assault with a beastly weapon

Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality, by Lorene M.G. Clerk and Debra Lewis, *The Women's Press*, 224 pages, \$12.95 cloth (ISBN 0 88961 033 x) and \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 88961032 0).

By JOCELYN LAURENCE

RAPE HAS become depressingly fashionable. Not only is the incidence of rape increasing, but over the last few years a spate of books on the subject has appeared, lending weight to an emotive issue that could well become the focal point of popular feminism. Obviously this runs the risk of obscuring other, equally important areas, although it's easy to see why the words “day care” don't conjure up the same dark images of sexual oppression as the word “rape”.

Nevertheless, by writing *Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality* Lorene Clark and Debra Lewis have provided a necessary and valuable addition to Canadian feminist literature. Thus far most books on rape have been American-produced, with the result that much of the factual information has little direct relevance to Canadians. Now Canadians have their very own book on tape, furnishing the first attempt at an analysis of Canadian rape laws and statistics. It's unfortunate that the authors' research led them no farther than Metropolitan Toronto: however, they make a conscientious effort to ensure as broad a scope to their subject as possible within those given limitations.

In fact one of the main criticisms that could be levelled against Clark and Lewis (albeit a somewhat unfair one) is that they are perhaps too conscientious. The intrepid

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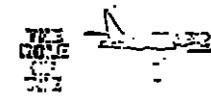


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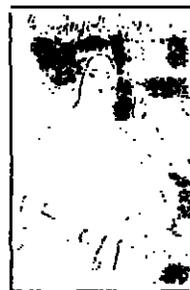


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9 1/2 x 6 1/4, 350pp.
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reader has to wade through pages of empirical dna, turgid prose, and charts reminiscent of Stats 101 in order to glean any information.

Yet to persevere is to be rewarded. If it's any consolation, research into rape is a difficult business. It has been established that the number of rapes committed is five to 10 times greater than the number actually reported. Many of the cases reported "ever make it to the courts, and Clerk and Lewis estimate a conviction rate in Ontario of between 32 per cent and 51 per cent compared to an 86-per-cent general Conviction rate.

As well as documenting the legal procedure involved in a rape case, in the first part of the book Clark and Lewis provide their research data on details of the crime, the victim, and the offender. By now it is fairly well known that the truth of a woman's story is frequently judged according to her behaviour after the rape, her clothes, her occupation and her marital status. Despite Bill C-71, a woman's past sexual history still has some bearing in a rape trial. What is more interesting, as the authors point out, is that men are discriminated against in much the same fashion. Just as women from a lower socio-economic group are less likely to be believed if they say they have been raped, so men from the same group also lack credibility in the eyes of the law when claiming they did not rape a woman.

Sadly, while making this important point on the dangers of generalising according to appearance, Clark and Lewis fall into the same trap themselves on occasion. They succumb to the temptation of describing the "typical rapist" as being five-foot-nine or less and of slight to medium build: "Though he is not conspicuously different from other men, in height and weight, he appears to be a bit smaller than average."

Almost despite themselves the authors allow this kind of tone, which sets men and women apart almost as two separate species, to creep in from time to time. Remarks such as "most men may even have an expectation of intercourse, but all women certainly do not" smack of a self-righteousness that is distressing and distracting. If the authors claim that men are imprisoned in sex-role stereotyping, they should beware of this new variation on stereotyping that sometimes appears to threaten the survival of the women's movement as a credible entity.

The historical analysis, in the second part of the book, is the standard feminist critique of women as an extension of property. Thus while men and women accept that a woman's sexuality is to be used as goods in exchange for the services of a man's protection, rape will inevitably continue. But as Clark and Lewis point out: "The concept of man-as-protector has its threatening dimension, for it acknowledges that men are also the danger from which women need protection."

Ironically it is when Clark and Lewis cease straining toward objectivity and abandon

their much-touted data that they achieve their most interesting and cohesive chapter. They can't resist listing their recommendations in the self-important manner of some futile royal commission, but their penultimate chapter is a coherent definition of the changes necessary to eliminate rape, and along with it the less dramatic but equally dangerous consequences of living in an inegalitarian society. However idealistic it may sound, it is encouraging to have an analysis presented that takes as its base the need for social change. Clark and Lewis advocate changes in the legal system as being as important as attitudinal changes. If rape were to be classified as an assault, and treated as such, it would obviate the

interview

by Geoff Hancock

For Valgardson, Gimli's gift to Canadian fiction, plots are the last refuge of a hack

W. D. VALGARDSON is a short-story writer and creative writing instructor from the Interlake area of Manitoba. His two collections, *Bloodflowers*, and *God Is Not a Fish Inspector*, both from Oberon Press, Ottawa, have gone into several printings. All his stories celebrate the humour and tragedy of the fishermen and farmers of Valgardson's home town of Gimli, on Lake Winnipeg. To find out more about the man and his work, *Books in Canada* asked Geoff Hancock, editor of the *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, to chat with him at his present home in Victoria, B.C.

Books in Canada: *Did growing up in the Gimli area contribute significantly to your development as a writer?*

Valgardson: A very important point. The Gimli area was originally known as New Iceland. It was settled in 1875 and 1876 by large influxes of settlers from Iceland. But in spite of the fact they were fleeing volcanic eruptions, they brought books with them. I was brought up in a tradition of people

caring about writers and writing. These are the people I know and write about. I've gone back there every summer for the past 17 years.

BiC: So your stories are rooted in actual bush experiences?

Valgardson: Absolutely. I'm one of those persons who believes a writer should write about the things he has known and understood. Toronto critics have been kind to me, but they keep saying, "Aren't these interesting stories about Canada's past?" Bullshit! Only this past summer did my father get electricity into his fish camp. The simple fact is not everybody lives in Toronto. In this country there is a lot of non-urban life.

BiC: Could you tell me a bit about your writing habits?

Valgardson: I simply try to write whenever I can and wherever I can. Many of the stories in *Fish Inspector* were partially written in a laundromat in Missouri, where I was teaching on a round, dirty, grey, arborite table sticky with the spilled cokes of little kids. I'd chase the kids away. I'd do two or three longhand versions of a story. When they got too marked up, I'd type up a triple-spaced copy and begin again. I worked on *Bloodflowers* for three solid months and did 40 complete rewrites. Only then was I satisfied.

BiC: Do you use outlines? Plots?

Valgardson: No, I write out of a mood, a feeling, an emotion. I "eve" work from a plot. A plot is the last refuge of a hack. I'm far more concerned with theme. Every story has to tell at least two stories, and if you're capable, if you have the skill, your story is multi-layered. Writers and readers enjoy the secrets that lie in a story.

BiC: Do your stories have a long gestation period?



W. D. (Billy) Valgardson

Valgardson: Yes. I would think most of my stories take at least a year. I'm a very slow writer. As well. I'm hard to please. For a long time I was writing four stories and destroying three.

BiC: *Where does a story begin for you? A character? A voice?*

Valgardson: I was very pleased when I came across William Faulkner's description of how one of his novels started. He saw the ditty pants of a girl on a swing. By the time he explained why her pants were dirty and what she was doing there, he had a novel. I feel secure in that.

BiC: *You seem to prefer the omniscient narrator who gives a sense of authority to your fatalistic view of the world. Is that a deliberate strategy?*

Valgardson: I mistrust the first person very much. The first person gives the writer the temptation to fall into writing a summary rather than a story that needs to be dramatized. Also my stories are set in a very small locale, which most readers haven't experienced. That requires a very authoritative tone. I also have a strong Lutheran, and conservative, background that needs to make the statement of belief that the omniscient voice has.

BiC: *Tell me about your sense of resolution. Do stories end? Your endings are usually implied.*

first impressions

by David Helwig

The whole North Pacific is on fire and under it, one of our subs is hissing

Firespill, by Ian Slater, Seal Books, 320 pages. \$1.95 paper (ISBN 0 7704 1504 0).

HERE HE COMES out of his comer, the Bantam Seal, bobbing and weaving, not much more than six inches high but going all out for the Canadian heavyweight crown, a Lady Oracle on his left flipper, the whole Canadian Establishment on his right, and now, brand new, whirling end-over-end from nose to tail, a *Firespill*.

Imagine the whole North Pacific covered with oil and gas after the collision of two supertankers. The whole thing burning. An ecological Armageddon. The U.S. Resident's mistress (who also happens to be the Vice-President) caught in the middle of it. Only one submarine neat enough to save her, and that one of ours.

See what I mean. The Bantam Seal doesn't mess around. He goes straight for the vitals.

Ian Slater's lint novel is intelligently calculated to be topical and gripping. His research is extensive and interesting. At the center of his story is the Canadian submarine *Swordfish*, on manoeuvres under the control of a new captain who hasn't been at sea for several years. The crew is full of the

Valgardson: There are two kinds of stories: open and closed. Open stories are more intriguing. I've admired Saki's "The Lady or the Tiger?" since I was a child, a story that people want to talk about five minutes after, a day after, a year after. Many stories with severely closed endings cease to be of interest once the endings have been read.

BiC: You seem to have a Chekhovian sense of destiny. So many of your stories end in suicide, death, or some form of isolation.

Valgardson: My writing has been compared to many Russian writers and I think that's fair. The Interlake area is probably similar to some parts of Russia, with people of a similar background, especially Slavs, facing the cold, the poverty, the isolation, and so on. I speak out of that environment.

BiC: *But you don't stop there. do you? How do you sell your books?*

Valgardson: My wife and I sell my books everywhere and anywhere we can. To tourists at the foot of the dock in Gimli, in shopping malls, at agricultural fairs. We sell them wherever we can set up a table. People really want to know about themselves and what it's like to be a Canadian. They want to see themselves reflected in literature. Once they know who I am and what I'm doing, all I can do is take their money and quickly get a book in their hand. □

confusions of a navy that has been forced to water down its authoritarian traditions.

The central question is simple—Will the *Swordfish* save the Veep? — and as we wait to find out, we move from Washington to Ottawa, to Vancouver, to Alaska as reaction to the disaster spreads.

The book is gripping, no doubt about it. Characterization is sufficient to move the characters through their roles, though the introduction of Si Johnson, the American navigator who brings about the twist of the ending, seemed to me a bit late and more than a bit arbitrary. The element of chance in the book's conclusion was forced on my attention. No doubt chance has a large role to play in the real world, but we don't make the mistake of believing such stories to be the real world. Still and all, it kept me turning pages, and that's what this sort of entertainment sets out to do.

And at the sound of the bell, with a quick chorus of "I don't want to set the world on fire," the Bantam Seal bobs and weaves back to his comer. He claps his flippers, bolts his fish, and prepares his ultimate weapon, so *Act of God*, with which he'll make hash of the opposition if they dare to come back for another round. □

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Brillig Seals and beamish Penguins do gyre and gimble in our wabes

THE FIRST OF the McClelland & Stewart/Bantam Seal Books have begun to frolic in our literary waters, and initial indications are that they will indeed be doing more thwimming than thinking. Marian Engel's *Bear* (\$1.95) and Peter Newman's *The Canadian Establishment* (\$2.95) are serious, substantial works that should appeal to a wide audience, and they have been attractively packaged to catch the eye of the casual browser.

Packaging isn't everything in the paperback game, but it's a lot: if a book looks good, it's going to be looked at, and you'd think that this basic principle of sexual attraction would have been assimilated long ago by book publishers. That it hasn't been is both obvious and puzzling. Publishing people certainly aren't lacking in the libido department — my sources suggest that they're a bit randier than the norm, if anything — so the explanation must be that they assume their readers just aren't interested.

Whoever thought up the basic design for McClelland & Stewart's New Canadian Library, for example, must have some odd notions about what attracts a browser's attention. When displayed with the covers visible, they look like refugees from a particularly staid deck of playing cards: when displayed spine out, the dark colours exhibited by many of the covers make it quite difficult to decipher their titles. These are minor aggravations, however, compared to what sometimes happens when you get inside an NCL book.

The next obstacle one must all too often overcome is the introductory essay, typically a lifeless specimen of academic lit-crit with few redeeming qualities. Some of NCL titles, to be sure, do require a certain amount of scene-setting. The late-19th-century Prince Edward Island of Sir Andrew Macphail's *The Master's Wife* and the 1820s Western Ontario of John Gall's *Bogle Corbet* (both \$2.95) are far removed from us in time and sensibility. But they do not need the sort of special pleading as to intrinsic merit provided by their respective introducers, whose excesses of enthusiasm are acceded only by the advertising copy on the covers. Those involved appear to assume that inclusion in the NCL line equals instant classical status, whereas the near-total artlessness of *Bogle Corbet* and the laboured witticisms of *The Master's Wife* suggest that at best there is some small amount of social or historical information to be gleaned by the patient reader.

These would all be unimportant criticisms if NCL books were of interest only to scholars, but the fact is that the series also includes a number of potential best sellers.

Mordecai Richler's deliciously snarky *A Choice of Enemies* (\$2.95) and Ernest Buckler's passionately compassionate *The Cruellest Month* (\$3.50) would do quite well on the mass market; Frederick Philip Grove's surprisingly sophisticated fantasy *Consider Her Ways* (53.50) is a natural for the sci-fi crowd; and Thomas Raddall's competent historical potboiler *Her Majesty's Yankees* (93.50) seems equally well-suited to the sword-and-garter set. Buried in the undistinguished uniformity of the NCL format; however, they will sell steadily but unspectacularly while works of equivalent quality climb atop the best-seller lists.

Elsewhere on the paperback scene we have the usual assortment of hits and misses. Totem Books has come through

the browser

by Morris Wolfe

Pennies for our tots and explorations of the Socratic method without Socrates

WHAT'S THE world coming to? Canada's newest underground press is located on the 5061 floor of Toronto's TD Bank Tower. And the views the Sutherland Publishing Company promotes — to judge by its one and only book, Bruce Sutherland's *One Penny, Two Penny* (48 pages, \$3.95) — are decidedly counter-counter cultural. According to Sutherland, school kids are no longer being taught the basics of capitalism; they don't understand things like savings and interest and profit. Unfortunately, Sutherland's attempt at teaching these things is so complicated and confusing, and his drawings are so crummy, that socialists everywhere can breathe a collective sigh of relief.

* * *

PERHAPS THE silliest Canadian book I've seen this year is Douglas Spencer's *Questions Klds Ask* (Simon & Pierre, 95 pages, \$7.95 cloth, \$4.95 paper). Spencer tells us that "kids have not forgotten how to ask questions. Adults must reclaim the right" — whatever that means. What he's looking for he says are "First Question" questions that "can form the basis of a new and more relevant school curriculum." He then proceeds to fill the book with questions asked by randomly selected 11-year-olds. They want to know such things as, "Why do old bald-headed farts try and be hippies by wearing tie-dye shirts and growing their hair long?" and "Could I be the returned Messiah?" But some of their best questions

with *Ash*, a superb suspense novel by David Walker that some enterprising film-maker will turn into an exciting motion picture, as well as the amusing reminiscences of one Mr. Ferguson, *And Now . . . Here's Mar* (both \$1.95). PaperJacks is a bit quieter than usual with John Craig's low-simmer *The Noronic Is Burning!* and Robert Smith's pedestrian thriller *The Kramer Project* (both \$1.95), which leaves us with some new Penguin titles of interest for at least two reasons.

The first is literary quality, since Mordecai Richler's *The Street* and The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz and Robertson Davies's *The Manticore* (each \$1.95) hardly require additional superlatives; the second is attractiveness of presentation, since Penguin's once-conservative designs have metamorphosed into colourful contemporary graphics. Penguin could, of course, have stuck to its traditional format, called it the Old Canadiana Library and priced their wares non-competitively. But they've opted for keeping up with the times rather than trying to ignore them. Need it be added that a few others may apply? □

are those asked about the book itself: "Why are we writing questions when we aren't going to have them answered?" and "Why are you doing this book? Why waste your time?" To which Spencer replies with this question: "To what extent does institutional action relate to the reality of people's concerns after assumed needs are filtered through a hierarchical structure and classified within tight departmental guidelines?"

* * *

THE IDEA behind Canadian Political Facts 1945-1976 — putting down in one convenient place some basic economic, political, and electoral information about this country — is a good one. Unfortunately, the result of that idea, Colin Campbell's book (Methuen, \$8.95, 151 pages) looks and feels as if it's been thrown together. It's not clear, for example, why *Canadian Political Facts* begins in 1945 or why the Union Nationale is included among the descriptions of federal political parties. And surely no list of pressure and interest groups is complete without the Canadian Broadcasting League. Still there's lots of interesting material here. Since 1945 only 24 women have been elected to the House of Commons; our GNP has quadrupled; the number of unemployed has increased a dozenfold; exports to the U.S. have gone up to 68% from 37% while exports to Britain and Western Europe have declined to 13% from 47%.

"MEMOS ARE written not to inform the reader but to protect the writer." I can't remember exactly who said that, but whoever it was deserves some credit in Cover Your Ass! or How to Survive in a Government Bureaucracy (Hurtig, \$8.95 cloth, 93 pages). To a large extent Cover Your Ass! is an extended footnote to that general principle. But a delightful footnote it is and applicable, at least in my experience, to bureaucrats everywhere, not just those in government. Here, according to the book's author, Bureaucrat X, are a few rules of the memo game:

1. The more memos you send, the more important you are.
2. The more memos you get, the more important you are.
3. If you send a memo to someone, he will have to reply by memo.
4. Therefore, the more memos you send, the more memos you will get.

* * *

WE HAVEN'T really had an inexpensive, well-promoted and distributed source of new and/or experimental longer fiction in this country since Anansi's short-lived Spiderline series of the late 1960s. Whiuh means it's difficult to keep up with the work of a writer like Abraham Ram, two of whose novellas, *The Noise of Singing* and *Dark of Cave*, published by Golden Dog Press, were reviewed in *Books in Canada* last month. The first of the two novellas had appeared in 1975 and I was unaware that it existed. I rather like the idea of Guelph's Alive Production Collective, which recently published ik first novel in tabloid format, *The Power of the People*, by Filipino writer Carlos Bulosan (44 pages, 50 cents). Obviously no one will get rich writing or publishing tabloid novels, but it seems tome a damn good way of getting non-commercial fiction into print and into the hands of a reasonably wide readership. Perhaps others could do the same thing. But not just socialist realism, please. □

Letters to the Editor

COLOMBO REPLIES

St:

I could argue with many of the corrections and with all of the general points mired by Paul Stuewe in his reappraisal of *Colombo's Canadian References* in the August-September issue. Instead, allow me to express my thanks to your reviewer, as well as to the editors of *Books in Canada*, for taking CCR seriously. Certainly all popular reference works have shortcomings and your reviewer has spotted some (but not all!) of them. All the actual errors have been noted and will be corrected to make the third edition of the book even more reliable than the second. To this end, let me invite readers of *BiC* and users of CCR to send me, at the address below, any errors of omission or commission they have spotted. All communications will be acknowledged.

John Robert Colombo
42 Dell Park Avenue
Toronto, M6B 2T6

GRUFF ABOUT WOLFE

Sir:

until recently, writes Morris Wolfe (October) books about women were being published by newly established houses. The point being, he suggests, that the larger established houses are now latching onto ideas whose lime has come — that is, whose profitability is certain.

Jeeze Morris, and I suppose that until recently all books were being published by old houses? The point being, of course, that the new ones are latching onto an idea whose time has come — that is, whose profitability is certain?

C'mon Morris, try it again.

Left hand: a s d f. Right hand: ; l k j. That frees your thumbs for the space bar Morris, and don't forget to switch on your head.

Certain profitability? Publishing?

Peter Taylor
McClelland & Stewart
Toronto

FAKERS DEPLORED

Sir:

Three cheers and hearty thanks to Paul Stuewe for his much-needed article (August-September) on CanLit "hackery"! There's more of it out there.

Now let's hear it for all those fakes who purport to review translations when they haven't read the originals!

Nigel Spencer
Sherbrooke, Que.

REVIEWER SCOURGED

Sir:

Ova the years, Len Gasparini has written some thoughtful, accurate reviews, and some which have drawn the wrath of numerous readers. Seldom has he been as unfair as in his comments ("O scourge and lamentations!") about Nancy Senior's *I Never Wanted to Be the Holy Ghost* (August-September). Instead of discussing the book and giving the reader some idea of what it is about, he quotes scripture for half his allotted space, then promises that he will be neither facetious nor profound. How true.

What he is is unfair — to a poet whose work is marked by solid craftsmanship and the simplicity that comes from true wit. The scourge, no doubt, should fall upon the slipshod reviewer.

Robert Currie
Moose Jaw, Sask.

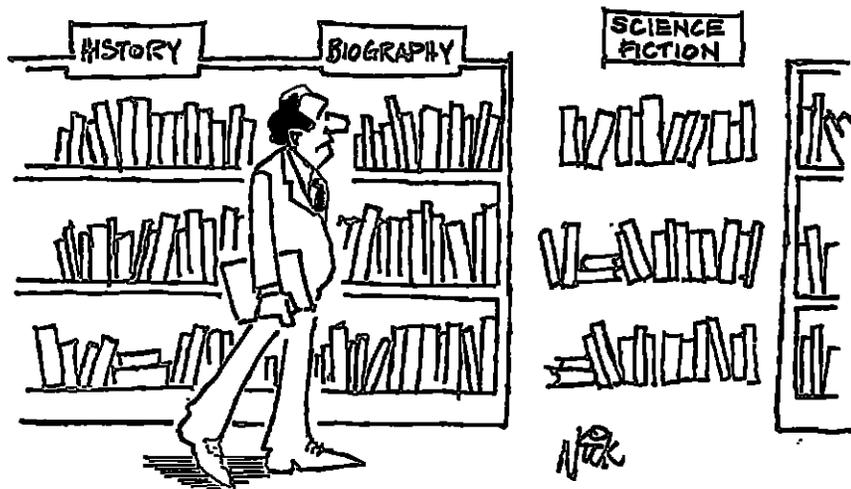
SMARTING OVER MARTIN

Sir:

There was much food for thought in Sandra Martin's letter (October issue) in which she reveals I have a bruised ego and over-weening ambitions and refers to my review of *Canadian Poetry: The Modern Era* (May) as a "silly, whining piece" and a "parochial and self-indulgent diatribe."

She falls to notice however that the piece was basically an attack on the whole concept of the book, a concept that she perhaps helped give birth to while working at McClelland & Stewart a while back. Perhaps in my review to express my dislike of this grossly cynical concept as entertainingly as possible, I might have spoken a little too obliquely for one of Sandra Martin's intelligence.

To try again, briefly: I as well as many others, including some of the poets represented in the book, strongly object to poetry being pre-packaged like McDonald hamburgers, I object to poets being listed by the results of popularity polls, and I object to the use of market-research techniques in the publishing of poetry. I'm we



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Ask us for the names of our quality of our service.

time will prove my objections valid. The book was a particular shock to me because hitherto I had believed that Canada had been Americanized as completely as possible. I was wrong. God, what next?

David McFadden
North Bay, Ont.

CanWit No. 27

It has been suggested that the pun is the lowest form of wit. Discuss, with reference to the heads in *Books in Canada*. Cite examples where possible.

WE LEARN to our chagrin that Vancouver's Simon Fraser University is offering a credit course on our distinguished British contemporary, the *New Statesman*. Some months ago the *New Statesman* itself took cognizance of the fact in its celebrated competition column (to which CanWit pays respectful homage). Readers were asked to devise examination questions for the SFU course. Although the deadline was extended in the hope of attracting Canadian entries, "one came from this country." In order to redeem our national pride, we are inviting readers to devise examination questions for the credit course on *Books in Canada* that we understand is being contemplated by the Univer-

CLASSIFIED

Classified rates: \$3 per line (40 characters to the line). Deadline: first of the month for issue dated following month. Address: Books in Canada Classified, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4. Phone: (416) 363-5426.

COULD A CANADIAN book club be better than U.S. book clubs? Let us convince you. ACADEMIC BOOK CLUB, Dept. BIC, P.O. Box 1507, Kingston, Ontario K7L 5C7.

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0 COME ALL YE HUMOURISTS! *Books in Canada* will pay well for comic situations or strip-cartoon ideas on a CanLit theme. Please submit outlines to: The Editor, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4.

sity of West Tasmania. The winner will receive \$25. Address: CanWit No. 27, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 1N4. The deadline (extended for Australian readers) is Dec. 5.

RESULTS OF CANWIT NO. 25

THE \$25 PRIZE put up by McClark & Newspider for the best last Canadian novel has been won by Bruce Bailey of Montreal. The publishers now are eagerly awaiting the full texts of these eschatological outlines:

BILLY THE BORING BEAR

Winnipeg authorities place Billy the Bear in 3. Boniface High School became they assume that his grunting noises are some sort of French. There he fails in love with his tutor Marianne, a sensitive older woman. The pair rampage across Canada boring people to death. They are finally arrested, but Marianne is excused because she is Canadian. Billy is not on the Endangered species List, so he is shot and dies in Marianne's arms.

THE LAST SPIKE

This is a futuristic novel about Canada's efforts to build a railroad to Mars. Everybody dies in the attempt except Spike. He wants to get back into Toronto, but there are no trains — so finally someone comes along with a car and drives in the last Spike.

Honourable mentions:

FEAR OF FRYING

Suzy (Ma) Jongg, a 180-kilo fry cook, tells how she "saved herself" for cabbie and cheap pastry, freak "Donut" Gribewicz. Unable to relate to her husband, Suzy joins Mate Watchers to learn dieting and karate. She loses 130 kilos, abandons her wok, preaches diet-stir fry cooking and feet-only chicken plucking, starts a chain of Zen salad bars, and is hired to host a cross-country Chinese cooking show called Network Canada.

—Andrew Allentuck, Winnipeg

LADY BORACLE

A revealing portrait of a woman who, having come to grips with her identity, gets married and has two kids.

—Ron Stoltz, Ottawa

**

LIFER.

Inspirational story Of Paddy Ryan. Convicted of sodomy and aggravated double-parking in 1947, Paddy raises a strain of giant Arctic iguana and escapes from prison disguised as the distaff half of two huge lizards in *flagrante delicto*. Appealing to animal-lovers as well as escape-story fans, the story tells how Ryan parlayed his reptilian sensibilities to become leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

-3. Raber, Winnipeg

METRIFICATION (by Richard Ruler)

The year: 1997. The United States is the last hold-out in a metrified world. Enraged beyond endurance by loss of economic

power, the Republican President invades the Republique de Québec as a convenient scapegoat. The new number-one world power, the EEC, gives neutron bombs to the rest of Canada to repel the attack. Unfortunately, all operating manuals are metric and Western Canada, never having adjusted to the system, is totally destroyed.

—W. Ritchie Benedict, Calgary

Books received

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

- Canadian Political Facts, 1945-1976, by Colin Campbell, Methuen.
Bachelard, by Jean-Pierre Roy, Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
Future Scrapes, by Robert Tompkins, Methuen.
Echoes from Labor's War, by Dawn Fraser, New Hogtown Press.
La Dynamique de la créativité dans l'entreprise, by J. C. de Schleier and P. R. Turcotte, Dunod entreprise.
The Agricultural Economy of Manitoba Hutterite Colonies, by John Ryan, Carleton Library.
Fireball, by Vic Mayhew and Doug Long, Methuen.
The Killing Room, by Marilyn Bowring, Sono Nis Press.
Canada's Threatened Species & Habitats, by Theodore Mosquin and Cecile Suchal, Canadian Nature Federation.
Three Decades of Decision, by A. F. W. Plumpire, M & S.
The Covenant, by Irving Layton, M & S.
Two Kinds of Honey, by Rosemary Aubert, Oberon.
Antie Van Blurecum, by George A. Tice, Oxford University Press.
Bloody Harvest, by Grahame Woods, M & S.
The Birds of Prey, by John Rolston Saul, Macmillan.
For Most Conspicuous Bravery, by Reginald H. Roy, UBC Press.
Inner Spaces, by Dr. Howard Eisenberg, Musson.
The Lose Parlour, by Leon Rooke, Oberon.
It's Easy to Fall on Ice, by Elizabeth Brewster, Oberon.
The Lear World, by John Reibelanz, U of T Press.
Selling Lucky, by Ari Pettig, Ovation Unlimited.
Women's Ailure, by Valerie Simpson, New Brunswick Museum.
The New Loyalists, by Don Simpson, New Brunswick Museum.
Over the Cobblestones, by L. K. Ingersoll, New Brunswick Museum.
Heritage Furniture, by A. Gregg Finley, New Brunswick Museum.
Cataloging Military Uniforms, by David Ross and Rene Chartrand, New Brunswick Museum.
The End of the Road, by Heather Gilbert, Aberdeen University Press.
The Bleached Principle, by Arthur Phillips, Simon and Schuster.
Awakening Continent, by Heather Gilbert, Aberdeen University Press.
Polenica, by Genet Reitzensla, published by the author.
Trudeau's Canada, by Philip C. Bonn, Guardian Publishing.
Beginnings, by Betty Jane Wylie, M & S.
David and Max, by Peter Simonds, J. M. Dent.
It's No Sin To Be Rich, by William Davis, Musson.
Taken By the Wind: Vanishing Architecture of the West, by Ronald Woodall and T. H. Watkins, General.
The Government Party, by Reginald Whitaker, U of T Press.
Canada: Symbols of Sovereignty, by Conrad Swan, U of T Press.
Newfoundland Portfolio, by Bea Hansen, Breakwater.
County of Ontario, by Leo A. Johnson, James Lorimer & Co.
Sex and Violence in the Canadian Novel, by John Moss, M & S.
High Water Chants, by Trevor Ferguson, Macmillan.
A Fiddler's World, by Harry Adaskin, November House.
The Little English Handbook for Canadians, by James B. Bell and Edward P. J. Corbett, Wiley.
The Other Economy, by Roger G. Krohn, Berkeley Fleming, and Marilyn Manzer, Peter Martin.
Spirit River to Angels' Roost, by Patricia Joudry, Tundra Books.
Pot of Gold, by David Walker, Collins.
The Neglected Majority, edited by Susan Mann Trofimenkoff and Allison Prentice, M & S.
How to Order Your Dinner in a Chinese Restaurant, by Robert and Lorena Chen, published by the authors.
Where Is My Doctor?, by L. DeWitt Wilcox, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Bearwalk, by Lynne Sallot and Tom Pettler, Musson.
On Stage, Please, by Veronica Tennant, M & S.
The Mind of Norman Bethune, by Roderick Stewart, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Stump Ranch Chronicles, by Rolf Knight, New Star Books.
Feminism and Moralism, by Dorothy E. Smith, New Star Books.
How to Get Things Cheap in Toronto, by Wilma Fraser and Patrick Coolon, Greyc de Pencier Books.
Wish You Were Here, by Mike Filey, Greyc de Pencier Books.

Ten good reasons to read Canadian Magazines.



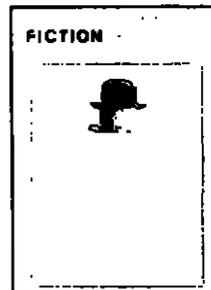
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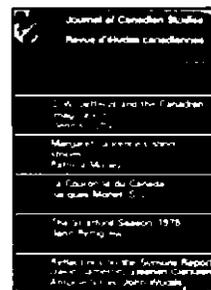
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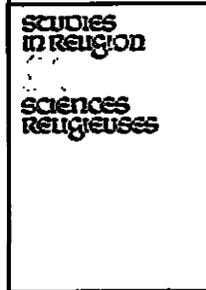
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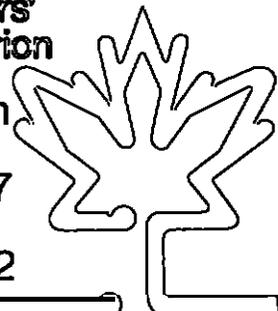
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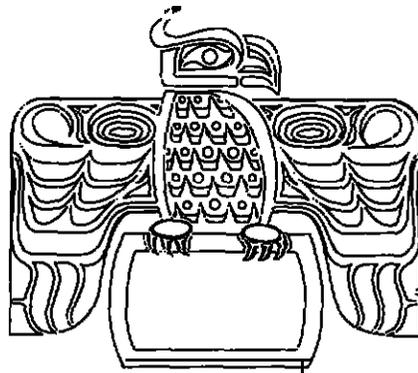
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