

A NATIONAL REVIEW OF BOOKS

BOOKS IN CANADA

LE QUEBEC, YES SIR!



Focus on writing from the other solitude by
Roch Carrier (above), Jacques Ferron,
André Major, Michel Tremblay, and others
A report on the year's short fiction from Quebec
Plus reviews of new books by Mary Meigs,
Audrey Thomas, and Miriam Waddington

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BOOKS IN CANADA

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CONTRIBUTORS

Expatriate poet Mark Abley surveys the Canadian literary scene from Bladon, Oxfordshire. Bob Blackburn writes frequently about English usage in these pages. Jacques Ferron's novel, *The Cart*, is reviewed on page 14. Geoff Hancock, editor of *Canadian Fiction Magazine*, is currently editing an anthology of French-Canadian short stories in translation for Aya Press. Douglas Hill's first novel, a thriller, is to be published this year by Breakwater Press. Jane W. Hill is a Toronto freelance writer. Christopher Hume is a contributing editor of *Books in Canada*. Ruth Kaplan is a Toronto photographer. Steve McCabe, whose drawings appear throughout the issue, is a frequent contributor to these pages. David Macfarlane's profile of Timothy Findley will appear in a forthcoming issue. Henry Makow recently completed his Ph.D. dissertation on the unpublished essays of F.P. Grove. Albert Moritz is a Toronto poet, editor, and translator. Barbara Novak is the author of a children's book, *The Secret* (Three Trees Press). I.M. Owen also reviews books for *Saturday Night*. Frank Rasky is a Toronto writer. T.F. Rigelhof's novella, *Hans Denck, Cobbler*, appears in *A Beast with Two Backs* (Oberon Press). Simon Ruddell is a freelance writer in White Rock, B.C. Judy Stoffman is an editor at *Today* magazine. Paul Stuewe writes frequently about books in translation in these pages. Sam Tata is a Montreal photographer. Paul Wilson is a full-time translator of, among others, the books of Josef Skvorecky. Morris Wolfe teaches film history at the Ontario College of Art and has a special interest in reference books.

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FROM A CERTAIN COUNTRY

Through a mixture of fantasy, satire, and *joual*, Quebec's short-story writers affirm their independence from 'sterilizing conformism'

By GEOFF HANCOCK

THE SHORT STORY has long been one of Quebec's favourite literary forms. As John Harris notes in *Contes et nouvelles du Canada français 1778-1859*, it was one of the earliest forms of story-telling, developing from a strong oral tradition. Yet there are few recent anthologies, even in Quebec. In 1968 Gérard Bessette edited *De Québec à Saint-Boniface*, and in 1970 Adrien Thériot edited *Conteurs Canadiens-français*. The only two recent anthologies in translation are Philip Stratford's *Stories from Quebec* (1974), and *Voices from Quebec* (1977). But the short story has continued to grow in the 1980s, and Québécois writers are developing the wider range of short fiction's possibilities.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SAM TAMA



Michel Tremblay, 1973: *Endurance in spite of social change*

The social changes that have racked Quebec over the past decade have also led to profound literary changes. As Ronald Sutherland has noted, French Quebec is being transformed into a pluralistic society. Birth control has reduced the size of traditionally large families, although, as Roch Carrier suggests in his novel, *No Country Without Grandfathers*, "People stop making babies because they don't want to live anymore." Michel Tremblay's novel, *The Fat Woman Next Door Is Pregnant*, on the other hand, has seven pregnant characters, which may suggest endurance in spite of social change.

Quebeckers are moving around. Graduates with degrees in, say, chemical engineering, have moved to other provinces. Immigrants from Vietnam, Cambodia, Haiti, and North Africa, as well as the major European nations, have made their imprint on the province's literature. One publishing house, Editions Namaan, has published several collections of stories by Haitian or Moroccan authors. Naim Kattan, head of the Canada Council's writing and publication section, is from Iraq. He has published four collections of stories, most recently *Le Sable de l'île* (1981), which includes a dozen stories about the inability of men and women to communicate.

The election of the Parti Québécois in 1976 and the effects of Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language, effected major changes within Quebec society. New Quebeckers were obliged — some might say coerced — to integrate into franco-phone rather than anglophone society. Whether these writers are to be considered Quebec authors is, of course, hotly debated among Quebec literati, but the changed political

climate made itself felt in Quebec fiction. As Ronald Sutherland says:

The traditional soul searching, tormented egocentricity of Quebec writing is quickly vanishing, at least among the creative writers. There is no need to be *engagé* now, to explain what it means to be Québécois. The Government takes care of that. The Government, in fact, produces so many white papers and blue papers, and directives, and pamphlets, and explanations, that there is really nothing more to say. As a result, writers are free to explore new subject matter, new themes, new techniques, and that is exactly what is happening.

Politics and protest have certainly not disappeared from Quebec short fiction: the metaphor of isolation often appears in *la nouvelle écriture*. Quebec writers might say they are not writing about politics, but with a Trudeau-like shrug they add that it's up to the reader if he wants to read politics into their work. For example, Marie-José Thériault has a story called "The Scribe" in which a professor rewrites the English dictionary by discarding all the words he does not like, thus reducing the book to 500 words. He then discards the work and crossbreeds his children. Isolationist? One of the best-selling books of the past year has been Léandre Bergeron's *Dictionnaire de la langue québécoise* — a dictionary of the Quebec, not the French, language: in his preface Bergeron proudly celebrates "the day-to-day creativity shown by the Québécois, who are not overly influenced by the sterilizing conformism that paralyzes most Western societies that have

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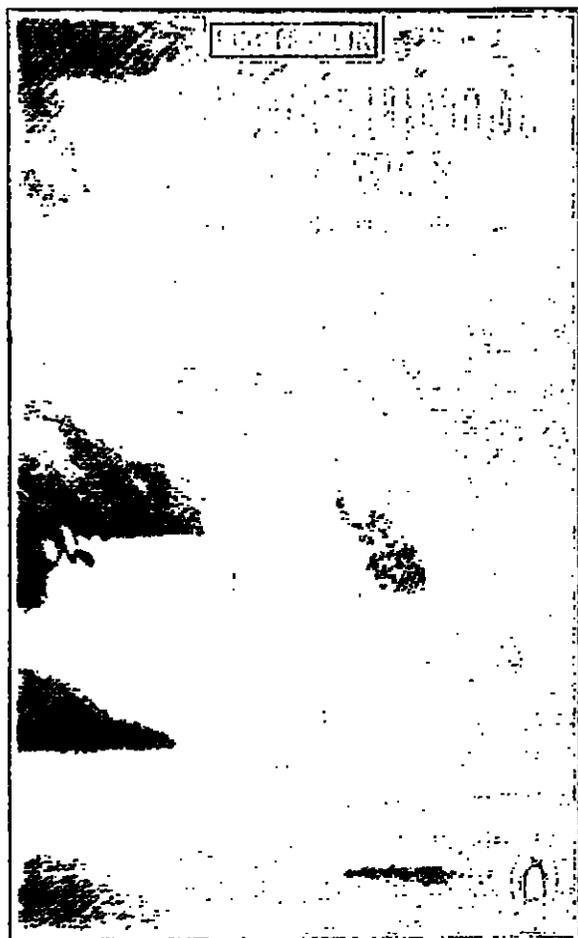
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been too well educated." In Quebec, true independence means freedom not only from English Canada, but also from a cultural dependence on France. Contemporary short fiction in Quebec may be seen as an attempt to create a language with which to express that freedom.

It may take some time before English Canada finds out much about this new mood. The writing simply is not immediately available to most of the country. Translating a book may take years, and even the original books are not that easy to find. Fewer than half the fall titles were on display at Montreal's annual Salon du Livre, the gigantic book fair at the Place Bonaventure in November, where publishers and their representatives line up by the hundreds. The staff at book stores were often poorly informed. And as Ray Ellenwood, president of the Literary Translator's Association of Canada, has bitterly noted, despite Canada's official policy of bilingualism the country is "something less than spectacular" at making our two literary cultures available to each other. (Philip Stratford has pointed out in his 1977 *Bibliography of Canadian Books in Translation* that as a publisher of literary translations, according to UNESCO statistics, Canada is ranked between Iceland and Albania.)

At seven cents a word, the Canada Council's rate of payment (compared to 20 cents a word for those fast and fluent translators who make the Kent and MacDonald Commission Reports and other government documents immediately available), literary translators are not keen to work on poetry or fiction. As a result, short fiction comes to English Canada unsystematically, often years after original publication. Anne Hébert's important first collection, *Le Torrent*, contains stories written between 1945 and 1960. Yet this collection, which marked the start of the modern era in Canadian short fiction, did not appear in translation until 1973. Since nickel-and-diming it through literature doesn't pay off in coin of the realm, only classics, prize-winning books, or books by well-known authors are translated.

Also, the French-Canadian story is *different*. In its search for a new language, contemporary Quebec short fiction bristles with problems for the translator. *Joual*, street slang, country argot, and Acadian French often mean even the Quebec editions require glossaries. Satirical writers such as Jacques Ferron are often given extensive footnotes that name the names and define the targets. Puns and blasphemy often cannot be translated at all.

The Quebec story often dispenses with the well-ordered plot, structure, theme, and characterization of the English Canadian story. Philip Stratford's well-known observation is worth repeating: French Canadians don't write short stories, they write *contes*, *récits*, or *nouvelles*. "The English term is more generic, the French more precise. . . . The *récit* is a small slice of life with a strong historical or autobiographical basis. The *conte* is more playful, a symbolic tale which stems in Quebec from folklore and a rich oral tradition. It is sometimes an intellectual conceit, or a contemporary fable. The *nouvelle* is generally longer, more concerned with character, more complex, and more subtly structured." Indeed, the Québécois writer takes the subspecies a few steps farther. In breaking down the boundaries between prose and poetry, sometimes new terminologies emerge. Writers call their stories "*textes*," "*contes poétique*," "*petite prose presque noires*," or "*sorcelleries lyriques*."

In addition, the story-telling technique is different. As Stratford notes, the teller is often in the tale. This goes back to the campfire, the trapper in the woods spinning a yarn about something that happened to him. The reader used to the longer trajectory of the English-Canadian story has to readjust his reading pace to deal with the compressed time, digressions, or even flat endings that sometimes generate new stories in Quebec.

The content is also much different. Certainly elements of



Jacques Ferron, 1978: *Hard truths within a changing Quebec*

social realism and political commentary are found. But the new writers have moved far beyond the ground-breaking work of Hubert Aquin and other writers of the early 1960s who commented on Quebec's nationalist problems in often angry prose. The Quebecers also reach back to the surrealists of France. Roch Carrier was writing a thesis on French surrealism when he wrote his first collection, *Jolis deuils*, in 1964. Michel Tremblay's first book, *Contes pour buveurs attardés* (1966, translated by Michael Bullock as *Stories for Late-Night Drinkers* in 1977) also owes much to the surrealists. Mordecai Richler wouldn't recognize what happens on rue St. Denis in André Carpentier's 1978 book, *Rue St. Denis: contes fantastiques*. These elaborate stories of God, Time, Space, and bookshops that mysteriously appear and disappear derive more from Jorge Luis Borges than the social realist tradition. Twenty years of Gilles Vigneault's fabulist stories have been reissued in a retrospective collection called *La Petite heure*. Mountains, trees, grass, books, lamp posts, and stones come to life, often with horrid (or at least blackly humorous) consequences for the characters: a carpenter frames the morning; mysterious characters warn others not to open the mail. Quebec fiction has a rich fantasy tradition that is now beginning to be further explored.

The Quebec short story has one other important distinction. An English story often works through the sensuality of language, and then by an accumulation of images, scenes, and metaphors leads to a deeper meaning (as in the stories of Alice Munro); the Quebec story writers are more interested in the quality of their *idea*. Quebec short stories are packed with

ideas: philosophies; pedagogies; linguistic theories. At times the English reader might find that this lends a dryness, abstractness, even thinness, to Quebec fiction.

The most extreme are those writers associated with such magazines as *La Nouvelle barre du jour* (*New Daybreak*) and *Les Herbes rouges* (*Red Grass*). Both, despite their small circulations, publish some of the most important experimental writing in Quebec. In their innovative stories, writers sweep aside, smash totally, the central metaphor of the traditional story. They explore language, tease the printed page, twist and define their new perception of the limitations of so-called "realistic" writing. Based heavily on the linguistic theories of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and other French structuralist philosophers, the extremes of Quebec fiction are purely language centred. Nicole Brossard, founding editor of *La Barre du jour* and its successor, *La Nouvelle barre du jour*, edited a special issue of *Room of One's Own*, featuring Quebec feminists, in 1979, and in 1980 she edited *Les stratégies du réel*, published in Coach House Press's *Story So Far* series. A sample of their prose indicates how far the language explosion has gone. Abysses separate Gabrielle Roy's prose from Nicole Brossard's. Compare the opening of a recent Roy story "Ely! Ely! Ely!" — "I still ask myself what could have prompted me that evening to go from Winnipeg to Ely, a village only some thirty miles away, by train" — with that of Brossard's "*Simulation*":

the appearance of ink
 the sacred secret of dream in action
 SPACE
 the skin came to me from
 a story
 a random sign of this troubled vitality
 a glance shining
 vividly glimpsed at elbow and knee

Clues for the directions Quebec fiction might take are found in the popular, literary, and scholarly magazines, few of which are as extreme in their approach to fiction as *Les Herbes rouges*. A broadsheet called *Livre d'ici* publishes monthly reviews by well-known writers about each others' work. *Québec-Français*, published by the French teachers' association, has regular profiles and bibliographies of major Quebec authors and a generous review and commentary section. Adrien Thério's *Lettres Québécoises*, somewhat like *Books in Canada*, features reviews, interviews, critical articles, news of current literary events, and announcements of the seemingly endless winners of Quebec prizes. *Spirale* is the best-known feminist magazine. *Estuaire* is the classiest literary magazine in Quebec City. From Montreal *Liberté* publishes the majority of French Canada's short fiction. To keep Quebec authors from becoming too insular, the magazine publishes essays on world literature, with special issues on such authors as Czeslaw Milosz and Julio Cortazar.

Science fiction has always had an appeal, and for the younger Quebec writer SF marries technological change with the search for new subject matter and a new language. Magazines like *Imagine* and *Solaris* (and gruesome comic books at every news kiosk) chart the progression. In September, 1981, the Université du Québec à Montréal sponsored a three-day symposium on science fiction and the fantastic in Quebec literature. In June, 1982, Chicoutimi will be the site for the second international Conference on Science Fiction (the first was held in 1979). Organized by Elisabeth Vonarburg, who came to Quebec from France in 1973, the conference is expected to draw science-fiction fans and writers from around the world. (In 1981, Vonarburg published six nouvelles in *L'Oeil de la nuit*. Other science-fiction collections include René Beaulieu's first book, *Légendes de Virnie*, and Jean-Pierre April's *La Machine à explorer la fiction*. One of the oddest hybrids of the language explosion, science fiction

and feminism, is Louky Bersianik's 1976 novel, *The Eugélonne*, published in translation by Press Porcépic.

Scholars of Quebec fiction will find single-author special issues and lengthy articles on various aspects of major novels in *Voix & Images; littérature Québécoise*, published by the Université du Québec à Montréal. The current issue features Adrien Thériot.

Women's writing has also been strong in Quebec: Anne Hébert and Gabrielle Roy helped pave the way for Marie-Claire Blais, and it's interesting that much of their work has been in the field of short fiction. More recent feminists have tended to band together to form schools (especially in Montreal and Quebec City), using a form of group dynamics to launch strong, intense attacks on language, philosophy, and *idées reçues*. Susan Paradis has written an important study, *Femme fictive; femme réel*, and Madeleine Oulette-Michalska explores the feminine psyche in her books, most recently in *L'Échappe des discours de l'oeil (Escape from the Eye's Discourse)*. Frances Theoret, Yolande Villemaire, Lise Lacasse, Susan Jacob, Susan Lévesque, and Claudette Charbonneau-Tissot each have two or three collections. In 1930 Yves Thériault's daughter, Marie-José, published *La Cérémonie*, a collection of Gothic *récits*: tales of vampires, witches, trolls, and women who turn into bats, spiders, or wolves. Dark mountain trails and cobwebbed gloom appear often in contemporary Quebec short fiction.

It is not easy to pinpoint exactly where the story is going in the Quebec of the 1980s, but several interesting first collections might provide hints. Claude Boisvert's *Tranches de néant (Slices of Nothingness)* is based on puns and an attack on European authors such as Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. André Couture, a CBC employee in Ottawa, has formed his own publishing company, Editions Asticou, and has published

his own book, *L'Enfer et l'endroit (roughly, Hell and Here)*, which purports to be an unedited text written by an unknown author, Joe Hasard. Found, as it were, by chance. Perhaps anticipating hostile reviews, the dustjacket shows a character thumbing his nose at the world.

Some other first collections go in different directions. Diane-Monique Daviau, a 30-year-old Ph.D. candidate in German literature, has published *Histoires entre quatre murs (Stories Between Four Walls)*. Some of her characters need walls for refuge, others flee emotional confines to find new forms of solitude and despair. In Françoise Dumoulin Tessier's *Visions d'amour* the legal and religious difficulties of marriage are examined. Desirée Szucsany, a 26-year-old Hungarian immigrant, has written six stories about women in *La Passe*. Fantasy and the grotesque appear in Denys Gagnon's stories in *Le Village et la ville*.

Another new Québécois author is Marilu Mallet, a Chilean emigré whose first language is Spanish. Her first book, *Les Compagnons de l'horloge-pointeuse (Companions of the Time Clock)* is about the ambiguities of human relationships. Her characters are despairing victims who still have some faith in life, in surviving, and in preserving their belief in a continued history. In the longest story, "*Voyage à l'extrême*," characters who have survived torture in a Chilean prison pass around Valium to ease their pain, and drive out of their way to avoid the stench of the 70,000 prisoners in Santiago's National Stadium on their way to meet a flight out of the country.

An important collection published in 1981 was André Major's *La Folle d'Elvis (The Girl Who Loved Elvis)*. Major, 39, was one of the founders of the radical *parti pris* movement in the 1960s. A political essayist, poet, story-teller, and novelist, he won the Governor General's Award for fiction in 1977 for *The Scarecrows of St. Emmanuel*. *La Folle d'Elvis* is his first collection since 1965. In the 10 stories, his characters learn to strain against their own emotional barriers in order to see things as they really are. In the title story an unnamed man picks up a woman. She takes him home, where they make love to Elvis Presley records. Annoyed that she dismissed him so easily, he returns to her apartment and discovers her with someone else. Through the music of Elvis, and through the men she meets, she keeps her memory alive.

One of Quebec's most prolific authors, 65-year-old Yves Thériault, has recently brought out two volumes of a four-volume project: *La Femme Anna et autre contes* and *Valerie et le grand canot* (published by VLB Editeur, named after the publisher/novelist Victor-Levy Beaulieu). These contain 60 previously unpublished works dating from the 1940s and 1950s, originally written for the CBC. *Valerie* is Thériault's 40th book, and the 100th title on VLB's list. The introduction, written by Beaulieu, notes that Thériault has written more than 1,000 stories, yet only 60 or so had so far appeared in book form. The preface (which in turn is an outline for a biography entitled *Salute to a Giant*) places these stories within the context of Thériault's career. A carpenter's son from Quebec City and Montreal, he is indeed a great subject. Trapper, bush pilot, truck driver, then printer, editor, and author, whose novels include the award-winning study of the Inuit, *Agaguk*, Thériault could almost be a symbol for Quebec. "I became a top tennis player, an undefeated boxer, and a known writer," he says, "to spit in the faces of the bourgeois bastards who wouldn't let me speak to their daughters because I was of such low levels. For a long time I carried a chip on my shoulder. Now I don't give a damn anymore." In 1970, he suffered a massive stroke that forced him to learn how to walk and speak all over again. Now he says, "At my 1925 Anglo-Saxon bourgeois-type home in the Laurentians, I have a most complete wood-working shop, and fool around there most evenings, now that age, arteries, and incentive fail in the women chase." His stories are simple, in a

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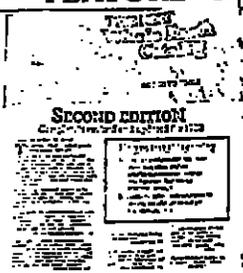
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Roch Carrier, 1974: Quebec's "Writer of the Year" for 1981

poetic style, and charged with imagination and drama.

Possibly Quebec's greatest story-teller and most prominent literary figure, Jacques Ferron, 60, now is reissuing some of his earlier work. His 1962 story, "*La Barbe de François Hertel*" now appears in an elegant (though overpriced) format, also from VLB. When this story first appeared it marked the debut of the noted Ferron style: the caustic irony, the vivid details, the anecdotal departure, the fantastic and magical surfaces that reveal the hard truths within a changing Quebec. Scholars are a favourite Ferron target, and in this story Ferron aims his barbs at the elderly Quebec author and revolutionary, Françoise Hertel, who grew a beard, moved to France, and became an academic. Ferron, himself a separatist, physician, and novelist, was also founder of the satirical Rhinoceros Party. For his work in life, literature, and politics I think Ferron is the Canadian author most deserving of a Nobel Prize.

Jacques Ferron's younger sister, Madeleine, has published her fourth collection, *Histoires édifiantes*. She writes of her adopted home, the Beauce, an area near Montreal that she portrays as a land of gentle people. Unlike her brother, she does not write fantasy or satire. In her introduction she says she longs for the stories her father told, and when she moved to the Beauce she sought out the local story-tellers. Each story, based upon an event that actually took place in the Gaspé or Abitibi regions, supposedly shocks the moralist in her. She

tells how a marriage led to suicide; how an artist gave liquor to an old man with cirrhosis of the liver; how a violin-maker's career was nearly ruined by an economic depression; how simple country people became Americanized and accustomed to suburban living.

The dustjacket of Louis Haché's collection, *Toubes Jer-siases*, notes that each story "is like a barrel full of cod." With the possible exception of Antonine Maillet, Acadian writers are almost unknown in English Canada. Haché writes about religious fanatics, the great cholera epidemic, tricks of the tradespeople, and tales "of the shipwrecks that break hearts as well as boats." Filled with anecdotes, facts, characters, and drama drawn from life, Haché's stories require a glossary even in the French edition to crack some of the difficult New Brunswick French.

But not all collections are so earthbound. Jean-Yves Soucy's *L'Étranger au ballon rouge* (*The Stranger with the Red Balloon*) tells about an extra-terrestrial being who comes to earth, somewhat like the little prince of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry to see the weaknesses of humanity. He doesn't survive the experience; as the narrator notes, "One would have thought that the coming to earth of a new person, of a real little prince, would have created some interest. But the thirst for the marvellous, which he would have awakened, was not quenched. A truck crushed the stranger."

Soucy, 37, is a former banker and social worker from Montreal who travelled for three years in the American Deep South. His novel of an independent trapper in northern Quebec, *Creatures of the Chase*, was translated by the late John Glassco in 1979. Now Soucy has turned away from the northern experience, a change that indicates as much as anything the changes within the new generation of Quebec writers. His new stories are futuristic, science fiction. One, a fable set in prehistory, tells how governments were formed by cynical people. Another, "Things," is told from the point of view of a house whose occupants have left.

The fabulist mode continues in the work of Donald Alarie, who received the Jean Beraud-Molson Prize for his collection *Jérôme et les mots*. An epigraph from Julio Cortazar sets the tone: "What interests me is not the laws, but the exceptions to the laws." Alarie's characters live on the fringe of society, and his short, dense stories give the impression of people surrounded by a great solitude, not unlike the experience of Quebec. He writes of an autistic child, an old man confronting death, and children with the wisdom of old men. One story is told from the point of view of a woman in a painting, who hears the sad comments of spectators passing by. "How much time do I have before me?" she sadly wonders. "Maybe eternity."

In Louise Maheaux-Forcier's *En toutes lettres* (*All in Letters*, 1980) each title of the 25 stories corresponds to a different letter of the alphabet (except "Billets de Clara," which combines B and C). Packed with anecdotes and digressions, puns and wordplay, these elegant experimental stories cover a wide range of women's experiences. "X" is about a woman who buys an alphabetical binder to help herself get organized, but finds that "X" is missing. This prompts a Proustian memory in which she finally recalls her father, who helped her mark her homework with crosses. It gives her "such a fanatical respect for our language and its idiosyncrasies" that she immediately returns any mail that omits the X at the end of Maheaux.

When Jacques Ferron received the Governor General's Award for *Tales from an Uncertain Country* 20 years ago, it was possible to describe Quebec not only as uncertain, but unknown. Things have changed. Today writers are certain of where they are going. Now we know Louise Maheaux-Forcier is being ironic when she puns that a writer (*l'écrivain*) cries in vain (*le cri vain*.) □

Je me souviens

Roch Carrier's new novel, the inaudible soliloquy of an old man nearing death, is both an eloquent plea for Quebec and perhaps his most anti-English work

By WAYNE GRADY

No Country Without Grandfathers, by Roch Carrier, translated from the French by Sheila Fischman, House of Anansi, 139 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 88734 090 6).

THIS NOVEL, originally called *Il n'y a pas de pays sans grand-père* and published in 1979, was inspired by a trip Roch Carrier made to his own grandfather's farm in southeastern Quebec during the making of the film *The Ungrateful Land*. (This trip also inspired some of the stories included in *The Hockey Sweater*.) It takes the form of a single, long soliloquy by a 73-year-old man known as Vieux-Thomas, or Pépère, over the course of about 24 hours. Confined for the most part to his rocking chair by his family, which he refers to simply as "the Others," he feels he has been "nailed to his rocking chair like Jesus on his cross." To keep his mind alive he rehearses to himself the story of his life.

He remembers his Late Wife (though he can't quite recall her name), the winters he spent in the bush cutting down trees for the *Anglais*, killing deer with his bare hands and a hunting knife, building his own house, and raising his large family. His thoughts are periodically invaded by the Others, whose ways are more foreign to him than those of the *Anglais*. "The Others have enough poison in their mouths to infect a poisonous snake," he thinks. When he reads a newspaper his eyes fall on the obituary page: "Do you see your name there, Pépère?" his grandchildren ask. When a letter arrives from the Government, Pépère tries to read it, but he has forgotten so many words: "You'll have to go back to school, Pépère," says one of the Others. "It'll be handy, Pépère," adds another; "the school's right next to the graveyard."

Because Vieux-Thomas can't or won't speak to the Others, no one guesses how deeply he is affected by the news in the Government letter that his favourite grandson, Jean-Thomas, has been imprisoned for demonstrating against the Queen of England "and of

Canada." The Others are ashamed that their honour in the village has been stained, and even Vieux-Thomas is confused at first: "In Vieux-Thomas's day," he muses, "people had learned to be silent the way Jesus Christ suffered on his cross, without a word: to suffer in silence to atone for the sin of being born."

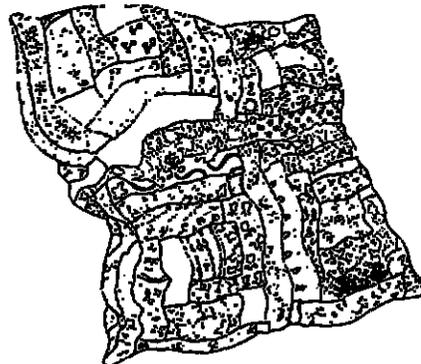
Gradually Vieux-Thomas realizes that Jean-Thomas's anger and resistance are not only justified, but have been inherited, passed down from father to son since the initial resistance on the Plains of Abraham. Jean-Thomas's father (Vieux-Thomas's son), Dieu-donné, had rebelled against his English bosses by dumping a load of logs on the lawn of the paper company's president, and had done nothing since but smoke cigarettes and read books. Vieux-Thomas, when he worked as a logger, had been "young himself in those days and scatterbrained like all young people; a young man didn't have blood in his veins back then, he had fire." When he left his home for the lumber camp the first time he had walked for days through the bush, alone, unsure of his way, and when he had arrived at the camp he had heard English spoken for the first time. Terrified, he had turned and fled. But still, the resistance of this new generation leaves him cold: their

very language is foreign to him. "If we analyze history," he overhears them saying, "the aspirations of the people of the Land of Quebec have always been censored by the dominant power."

"Words aren't the true reality," Vieux-Thomas has told himself earlier on. "But words make a kind of magic that revives dead things and brings to life other things not yet alive: Words bestow life." For Vieux-Thomas, words also threaten life: the Others' words cut straight into his heart, and Jean-Thomas has been thrown into prison for shouting words at the Queen. Throughout the entire soliloquy Vieux-Thomas does not audibly utter a single word, though he is often told to keep quiet by the Others. He occasionally addresses a silent question to his God: "And how much longer, dear Lord, will you let me keep the gift of standing on my own two feet?" In the end, as Jean-Thomas has taught him, it is actions that count, however fruitless and life-denying those actions might be.

As Vieux-Thomas's narrative progresses the tone becomes more and more anti-English — perhaps as specifically anti-English as Carrier has ever been — and the old man's memories become correspondingly darker and more eloquent. There is, for example, Carrier's version of the "Rose Latulip" story, in which a beautiful village girl dances with a handsome stranger who turns out to be the Devil. In Carrier's version the handsome stranger is a well-dressed *Anglais* from the city, who is physically beaten by a village lad and sent packing back to his office. There is also the very powerful story of Vieux-Thomas's winter spent shovelling coal in the bottom of an old steamship run by an English captain. Vieux-Thomas — who at that time might very well have been called Jean-Thomas — worked side-by-side with a black man whose moans of sorrow and pain became a new but, unlike English, entirely understandable language to Vieux-Thomas.

The end of the novel is a long, passionate, and eloquent appeal for the



return of Jean-Thomas, in which the young man assumes mythic proportions as the Saviour of Quebec. Vieux-Thomas represents the *idea* of Quebec

that Jean-Thomas is trying to protect — it is not an intangible idea, like freedom, but a very real and specific idea, like the land, like the rocks and trees and rivers

that make up the Country of Quebec and were stolen by the English. And without which, indeed, there would be no Country at all. □

FEATURE REVIEW

Women in love

Mary Meigs's autobiography combines a vigorous, literate portrait of the women in her life with a pleasant contempt for Freud

By I.M. OWEN.

Lily Briscoe: A Self-Portrait, by Mary Meigs, Talonbooks, 260 pages, \$8.95 paper (ISBN 0 38922 195 2).

I OWE MUCH to the occasional quirkiness (or conceivably the superior wisdom) of book-review editors, which so often leads them to send me books that, left to myself, I would never think of opening. Take this one: it's a set of autobiographical essays by Mary Meigs, an American painter whose work I don't know, who lives in Canada as the lover of Marie-Claire Blais, a writer whose work I admire but don't find enormously attractive; its title is taken from Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, not one of my favourite novels; much of its subject-matter is female homosexuality, not one of my major preoccupations.

What a pleasure, then, to be able to report that it's a good book that I'm glad to have read, glad to possess, and glad to recommend to other readers who share my limitations. For one thing, it's written in a singularly pure and vigorous English prose that does credit, probably in equal parts, to the author's American boarding-school and to her innate literary sensibility. (A mark of her good taste is that in all her discussion of homosexuality she never once uses the epithet "gay.")

Though Mary Meigs says that "love has always taken a secondary position in my life, secondary, that is, to my work as an artist," it takes the lion's share of her book; I could have wished for more of her ideas on art, because what she does say is interesting. She confesses frankly that her principal talent is for drawing, not painting, that she has a stronger natural sense of line than of space or colour. This is borne out by the self-portrait reproduced on the cover (a

painting in which the main forms are heavily outlined) and by the two illustrations to Blais novels reproduced inside the book — brilliant drawings these, reminiscent of George Grosz but with their own strong individuality.

Mary Meigs was born in 1917. Her close friend Edmund Wilson used to say, "We belong to the same generation," though he was old enough to be her father. He was right, she says, "in the sense that I was brought up as a child of *his* generation and not of my own. My parents, in turn, belonged to a generation before their own." These parents were well-to-do, well-connected pillars of the Democratic establishment in Washington in the days of the New Deal, yet deeply puritan. They were Episcopalians of the very low church, rigid abstainers, and almost unbelievably prudish. ("You do *not* say to a young man that you've seen your sister in her pyjamas!") This may well account for her having come to sex late, but any assumption that it accounts for her joining the sexual minority founders on the fact that she has an entirely "normal" twin sister. Mary Meigs has a pleasantly sharp way of dealing with easy Freudian explanations:

At the age of eleven, I had never heard of sex, . . . and had never wondered where babies came from. On a voyage to Europe at this time, I wrote a poem about the sea beating against "Miss Porthole," which I found thirty years later and showed Edmund . . . "A sexual image," I could almost hear him thinking as he laughed delightedly over it, but couldn't Miss Porthole really have been a porthole, and the sea, the sea? For [the Freudian] . . . a little girl who has never seen a vagina, who does not know the meaning of the word "virgin," somehow achieves a pro-

phetic use of sexual imagery.

There is something here of Samuel Johnson's sturdy refutation of Berkeley. Later she deals with the Freudian analysts' interpretation of Lewis Carroll:

I infinitely prefer the morose and irritable Dodgson, whose genius could only be released by living out his neurosis, to one who has been analyzed, and who, knowing now that Alice represents his own penis, has come to abhor his love for little girls, and in his contented state of complete virility, dreams no longer.

Her first long-term lover was Barbara Deming, the writer and radical activist, who shares the dedication of the book with Marie-Claire Blais. Meigs tried and failed to emulate Deming's activism, which she still admires. She wouldn't say this herself, but her intelligence is too clear and balanced to accept the easy generalizations of placard-carrying demonstrators. On feminism, for example: Deming's "radical" feminism is of the kind that adopts the traditional stereotypes and uses them to assert the superiority of women.

"Don't you agree," asks Barbara, "that if men don't become more like women, they will destroy our planet?" Yes, I agree, I say, for the people who . . . cut down the great trees of the rain forest, who hasten the march of the deserts . . . who kill and torture each other . . . who are presidents, premiers and dictators . . . they are all men, yes, every one of them. "They are doing these things because they want to prove they are men," says Barbara, whereas I think they are doing them because they are caught in the inexorable momentum of habit . . . "It's not a question of sex," says Marie-Claire, "but of conscience."

To this I can only say, "Hurray for Marie-Claire." Which is what a large

part of this book says too. The picture of Marie-Claire Blais is vivid, loving, funny, and altogether charming. For this alone, the book would be of permanent value in the record of Canadian literature. But there is a great deal more in it. Approaching the end of my allotted space, I'm surprised to find how few of the topics in this fairly short but very rich book I have touched on. (I haven't even mentioned Mary McCarthy, who figures prominently.) All the better: if I have succeeded at all in conveying its quality, you will want to discover the rest yourself. Do so. □

REVIEW

Life
after man

By PAUL WILSON

The Eugélonne: A Triptych Novel, by Louky Bersianik, translated from the French by Gerry Denis, Alison Hewitt, Donna Murray, and Martha O'Brien, Press Porcépic, 348 pages, \$9.95 paper (ISBN 0 88678 192 X).

REMEMBER THE LAST scene in *Some Like It Hot*? Joe E. Lewis has just discovered that the woman he has married is a man. Unruffled, he smiles beatifically and says: "Nobody's perfect." That, in a nutshell, is my response to *The Eugélonne*, a long and passionate tract from Quebec that comes lurching into English trailing clouds of glory in its wake. Praised as "a truly great book, absolutely feminist" by no less a personage than Simone de Beauvoir, it sold more than 15,000 copies on its home turf and stands, along with Jovette Marchessault's play *The Saga of the Wet Hens*, as one of the pillars of the new Quebec feminism.

The Eugélonne (which apparently means "The Bearer of Good News") is a female creature from another planet who is scouring the universe in search of "the male of her species." She lands on earth and goes through a series of vague adventures during which she and the characters she encounters expostulate on the plight of women now and throughout the ages. The book is an anti-Utopian satire in the tradition of Swift or Voltaire.

Because the structure is so rambling and the range so vast and encyclopedic (no stone is left unturned under which a stray male chauvinist attitude might be lurking), because the characters are merely mouthpieces for aphorisms and have no strong identity of their own, and because the tone is constantly shifting back and forth from parody to high seriousness, the book, for all its intellectuality, is extremely difficult to come to grips with except on a basic gut level. Readers will either want to clasp it to their bosoms or throw it out the window in exasperation.

If there is anything like a coherent argument in *The Eugélonne*, it seems to be this: Once, in the protozoan phase of evolution, "we" were individual cellular creatures (Paramecia) happily and uncompetitively reproducing "without conjugation," as biologists might put it. Then along came the spectre of sexual reproduction, and "we" were separated into sexes and bludgeoned into higher forms of existence, and thus into hierarchy, by the phallus, the baton, the sword, the pen, the cross, *homo erectus*, the virile impregnator and enslaver who for eons browbeat and conned compliant women out of their birthright and chained them to hearth and cradle with the devices of myth, religion, war, psychology, politics, law, and above all, language.

In her quest, the Eugélonne becomes a messiah figure ("Lay down your dishtowel and follow me," she tells one of the characters) whose mission is to demystify the holy writs that have bound women (and only women?) over the millennia. The book concludes with a vision that completes the circle: "Listen my brother man . . . here comes the *Age of the Paramecia* . . . Free yourself, finally, for what you are: a human being tenderly riddled with holes of pleasure and creative power." Forgive me if I am reminded of St. Sebastian.

Despite flashes of an engaging and playful sense of humour, and despite Bersianik's sincere appeal for peace in the valley (she is by no means crudely anti-male), it is her manifesto, finally, that is riddled with holes. Part of the problem is that she frequently attacks attitudes that are no longer current, at least not outside Quebec, and the effect is rather like heaping elaborate and strident scorn on people, for example, who still take Genesis literally. Similarly, her lengthy critique of the sexism inherent in the French language is amusing and erudite but not particularly relevant. In the first place, French is much more gender-ridden than English and thus her satire, in translation, frequently loses its edge. And in the second place, language

THE
FEMINIST NOVEL
OF THE YEAR

THE EUGELIONNE

Louky Bersianik

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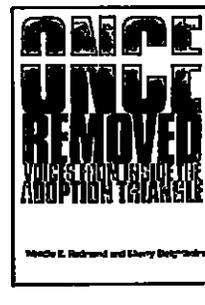
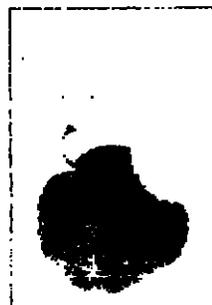
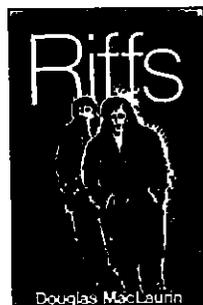
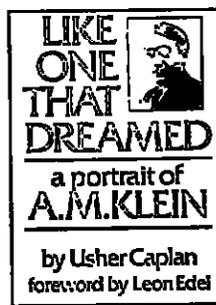
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by its very nature is a repository of all sorts of archaic ideas and attitudes, not just sexist ones. Would it make sense to condemn someone as a pre-Copernican reactionary because he refers to the dawn as "sunrise"?

The novel is also riddled with generalizations. Bersianik's extended attack on Freudian psychology, for example, ignores such other systems as Jungian analysis, where the feminine principle, the Anima, has pride of place in the healing process. And every reasonable man knows that such statements as "All

power is at the end of the Phallus" are absurd. Women know it too. They also know, or would if they thought about it, that under a political tyranny — or simply in the many natural disasters that plague life on earth — men and women alike suffer. We are bound together by more than our orifices.

The infrastructure of *The Eugélonne* is ideology rather than life, and the trouble with feminism as an ideology — as opposed to concrete action to right concrete wrongs to concrete people — is the trouble with all ideologies: it treats

men and women as though we were infinitely malleable, infinitely perfectible beings and, conversely, as though we were all miserable failures at the business of trying to be men and women. The century has already provided us with plenty of bloody evidence of what happens when that attitude gets the upper hand.

I much prefer Joe E. Lewis's tolerant reminder of what the human condition really is: nobody's perfect. It is a condition that, for better or for worse, is no respecter of sex. □

ESSAY

On the alert

Led by Terence Byrnes, a powerful new chorus of Montreal writers is ready to confront the rest of North America

By T.F. RIGELHOF

Matinee Daily, edited by Terence Byrnes, Quadrant Editions, 118 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 86495 008 X).

WHEN GARY GEDDES launched Quadrant Editions barely two years ago, he undertook something novel in Canadian publishing: the formation of a subscription press that promised to deliver seven titles a year for \$30. He said, in part, that it was his intention to restore some of the creative energy that had dribbled out of the book business in this country over the past decade, and he promised that Quadrant books would contain the best serious writing available without regard to source, style, or subject matter. These aims were certainly laudable, but initially it looked like Geddes was more interested in doing favours for a small circle of old friends than in establishing an outlet for new, fresher talents — especially local ones. Happily, the cynics are being confounded. With its second season well in hand, Quadrant can lay some claim to providing the base for a literary movement that is centred squarely in Montreal but has firm connections to the rest of the country and to more distant places.

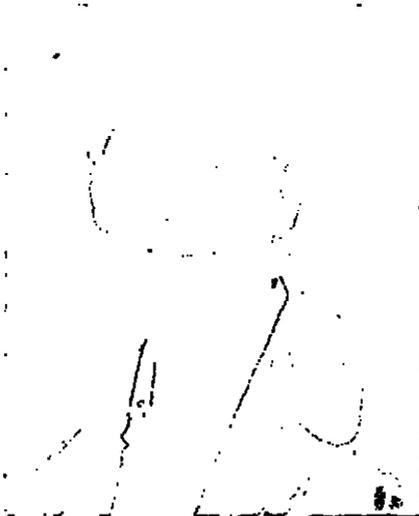
Terence Byrnes is the most fully developed of the writers concerned and the movement owes much to his large and generous talents. Byrnes was born in Toronto 33 years ago and raised in the

United States. After settling for a few years in Ohio, where he mixed freelance journalism with the designing and building of electronic equipment for biological research, he came to Montreal in 1975 to study writing at Concordia University with Clark Blaise. His choice of teacher was carefully deliberated. Byrnes saw in Blaise a kin of sorts: both men have some French ancestry and powerful eyes for objective details.

That kinship comes through in his own stories but doesn't swamp them. Byrnes has his own voice and vision, and

his first collection of stories, *Wintering Over*, is distinctive and distinguished — the real gem in Quadrant's first series. On first reading, the thing that impresses the most is the interest he takes in the lives of others and his ability to view them in ways that never violate their integrity. He is never simply voyeuristic: everything he writes is informed by a quiet, almost Oriental, compassion. The four Montreal stories in the collection — "Coupal Street," "Listening In," "Food People," and "Wintering Over" — suggest that if there is anyone at work on the English side who is capable of writing a novel of Montreal in the '80s that maintains continuity with the work of Gabrielle Roy, it is Terence Byrnes.

Repeated readings heighten those first impressions but add something more: the stories offer a broad and detailed criticism of contemporary life, a reevaluation of North American culture and its domestic myths. Things that seem at first just skilful reworkings of "genres" — the young academic at his Chairman's welcoming party in "A Member of the Department" for instance — take on greater weight. In each of the stories Byrnes clearly delineates a collapse of the social and economic distinctions that once ruled North American life and the self-colonizations that arise to replace them. His characters escape from cold and



Terence Byrnes

hostile environments into more bone-chilling cages of their own making. He examines the "wintering over" of lives from within without losing compassion for their frozen inhabitants. By doing this, he asserts the necessity of working out alternate routes and ways of transvaluating conventional values.

This year, for Quadrant's second series, Byrnes has edited an anthology, *Matinees Daily*. In it, he employs the stories of nine other writers to broaden the scope of this critique and to drive home the point that North American culture is *invasive*, that the categories of "urban," "rural," and even "national" are no longer possible in fiction or in life. With the exception of Robert Harlow, the story-tellers of *Matinees Daily* are more or less centred in Montreal and its environs. That is not their only point in common. Brian Bartlett, Peter Behrens, Mel Dagg, Angela Monserrate, Miriam Packer, Edeet Ross, and Sandy Wing are serious, skilled, unsentimental writers who are remarkably free of self-indulgence. They get down to the business of telling powerful stories of our time with a minimum of fuss in language that is clear, accurate, free of cliché and cleverness. They have learned a great deal about the craft of hard representational realistic story-telling from the Montreal writers of a decade ago — Blaise, Hugh Hood, and John Metcalf. Like those older writers, they know how to be simple and direct without being simplistic or needlessly offensive. And they have a wonderful edginess: they write of muddled and troubled lives in a troubling way. They are alert, and alert the reader to the contrary motions within the spirits of their characters.

The anthology is very *telling* in its treatment of diverse lives: Miriam Packer's social worker in "The Helper," Sandy Wing's farmwife in "Casualties," and Peter Behrens's homeless romantic in "Music" are fully realized. In the best of their work, there is a strong echo of American writing, especially the stories of Anne Tyler and Ann Beattie. And that is salutary. These writers — this is the sense in which they form a movement — seem bent on smashing through the garrison mentality of much Canadian writing and connecting with realms of experience that are far less haunted by Puritan nightmares.

What one likes best about these writers is their willingness to confront the whole North American continent and more distant places without selling out to an "international style." Byrnes, as editor, has served them well by putting them together in a collection that allows their individual voices to form a powerful chorus. However, he does

allow two discordant voices to rise in their midst. Harlow's "Heroes" is sloppy in style and sentiment and the pseudonymous Ludmilla Bereshko's "The Only Place On Earth" is folksy and cruel "dialect" writing — a sort of unfunny Maara Haas tale of Ukrainians in the Eastern Townships. His rationale in including them is elusive.

Terence Byrnes is now a part-time faculty member of the creative writing program at Concordia that Blaise did so much to establish. From that vantage point, one hopes that he will continue to lead other writers in the direction he has mapped in his own writings. It has the capacity to lift readers above the heartlessness and mindlessness of our time and place. If he does that and if Quadrant Editions continues to publish his own work and that of the other writers he most respects, Gary Geddes will accomplish all that he set out to do — and something more. □

REVIEW

Styx and stones

By GEOFF HANCOCK

The *Cart*, by Jacques Ferron, translated from the French by Ray Ellenwood, Exile Editions, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 92042 38 X).

JACQUES FERRON is one of the most extraordinary fiction writers in Canada, or indeed in North America. A physician in a Montreal suburb, political activist, separatist, and author of nearly three dozen books of plays, essays, stories, and novels, Ferron is at once revered and despised by writers in Quebec. Victor-Levy Beaulieu dedicated *Jack Kerouac: A Chicken-Essay* to Ferron, "with whom the countries of Quebec begin." A leading political figure, he is also founder of the satirical Rhinoceros Party. Yet during the October Crisis of 1970, he negotiated the surrender of the presumed killers of Pierre Laporte. For all his literary and political accomplishments, however, scarcely half a dozen of his books have been translated. Any reading of his work is often out of the context of his immense prose landscape, and often at the expense of changing political views or artistic growth.

The Cart is a translation of *La Charrette*, which was written in 1968. Chronologically it comes after a 1962 short story, "The Bridge" (reprinted by House of Anansi in *Tales of the Uncertain Country*), and a novel, *La Nuit* (1965), and precedes *Les Confitures de coing* (published by Coach House in 1977 as *Quince Jam, Appendix to Quince Jam, and Credit Due*). A full understanding of the novel emerges when it is placed in this context, especially since Ferron's work underwent a radical change of vision and attitude after the October Crisis.

The Cart is an allegory set in Montreal. On the south shore of the St. Lawrence River is the working-class suburb of Longueuil, which for Ferron represents the daytime world of life, reality, and reason. Across the river is the city of Montreal, the electric castle of the underworld — night, death, fantasy, and the subconscious, peopled by strange characters. The link is the Jacques Cartier Bridge, over which, at sunset, travels a little cart, drawn by an ailing horse. The driver of the cart, Madame or Monsieur Rouille, must do all his errands before dawn. His job is to pick up the dead, then return to a rubbish dump on a farm where goats run through the farmhouse.

A Quebec physician inherits the medical practice of a century-old doctor who nobody believes is dead. A practical, pragmatic man, as he goes about his rounds he sees how the road of life also leads to death. His patients die, and he becomes aware of the cart that crosses the bridge to Montreal. Then, one day, on St. Denis Street at rush hour, the doctor dies. He becomes another passenger on the cart. (The horse dies too, and is heaped on the cart, which is pulled first by the driver, then by the Devil, who wears a horse's head.)

Ferron's narrative strategy changes at this point, from first-person to third, from italic type to medium. With a mythological whisper the dead narrator is joined by the first of a number of strange characters, Barbara, daughter of Caron, the black ferryman from Cape Breton. They go to a cabaret called Hell's Gate and meet an odd assortment of characters: transvestites, demons, a devil named Belial, a whore with a heart of gold (who tells a story about a street that talked to itself when it discovered someone had painted *Québec Libre* on it.) Among the more prominent characters is a Scottish poet named Frank Archibald Campbell, the blarneyman-bailiff of the night, a flatterer and smooth-talker.

The narrative starts getting rather muddled, and without Ray Ellenwood's notes doesn't always make sense. Ellen-

REVIEW

Above the
urban jungle

By JACQUES FERRON

La Folle d'Elvis, by André Major,
Editions Quebec/Amerique, 137 pages,
\$8.95 paper (ISBN 2 89037 080 X).

ALL WRITERS WORK in solitude using words that belong to the whole world. Some of them think they *are* the whole world, and it goes to their heads. Others, more cautious, go out in search of another solitude, an equal, a brother: a reader. These are the finer, more penetrating writers, and André Major is one of them. There is a definite architectural harmony in this collection of 10 stories entitled *La Folle d'Elvis* (*The Girl Who Loved Elvis*). In the first story the girl, biting into an apple, smiling up at Elvis, is a sculpture painted in brilliant colours.

And her down-at-heels lover is a sort of Monsieur Ripois (of all Quebec writers Major is closest to Louis Hémon). The lover learns that for the girl Elvis will continue to exist, either through him or through someone else — there is no love, no communication. In the stories that follow, each one admirable for its economy of means, each one as concise and certain as a thunderbolt, the reader takes part in a series of experiments, more or less precarious, designed to re-establish that lost communication; in the buzzing of crowds, in furtive meetings, and in this line from Baudelaire: "*O toi que j'eusse aimé, O toi qui le savait*" ("O you that I loved, and who knew it").

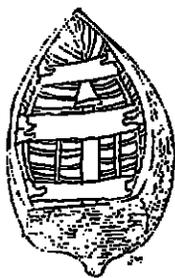
For a young man from the bourgeois Hochelaga district of Montreal, his hopeless search is for a woman who can be sensual without being vulgar. This search gives consistency to his life and meaning to his language. There she is, suddenly right in front of him, a waitress in a Greek restaurant, and their fated meeting never quite takes place. By contrast, in "*Une Image de la vie*," the failed artist, reduced to selling shoes and suffering from "an extreme humility before women," yet nonetheless consumed with desire, suddenly finds Claire, a pretty, promiscuous girl with

wood notes the character of Campbell bears "a certain resemblance" to F.R. Scott, the noted translator, poet, and constitutional lawyer. Ferron launched amiable jibes at Scott for many years, as a postscripted essay and letter show. The character, who represents the English presence in Quebec, would "really like to be a true Québécois" but he doesn't succeed and remains a kind of disinherited witness. . . ." The characters note of Campbell that "he is a second-rate poet," that "silly notions are his specialty," and after a poetry reading in a cabaret, Campbell says, "I always get good applause when I play the fool." His critics add: "Drollery in poetry is so rare nowadays it should be encouraged wherever it is found."

In *Quince Jam* Ellenwood says the identity of Ferron's characters "is inextricably linked with language and culture. It is an amiable quirk of Ferron's work: that this recovery of identity often takes place in opposition to various manifestations of Frank Scott, the devil's Queen's Counsel, a worthy enemy, symbol of all that is admirable and deplorable in what Ferron calls the Quebec Rhodesians." After the October Crisis such denunciations became more and more angry, to the point of attacking Campbell as an "imbecile" who sided with the Liberals, the true makers of social terrorism, "all friends of [Hugh] MacLennan, who imitated Hitler."

Ferron's satire is so compressed that even the spaces between the lines seem charged. Sometimes he has a tendency to digress, even to be unclear in his targets. Often anecdotal, he requires a patient reading. The Communist Party of the 1930s, Dr. Norman Bethune, a Pope who was indifferent to the Holocaust (and a successor who is indifferent to Vietnam) are coupled to ideas about Israel, South Africa, and the Devil's purchase of souls. All in two pages.

The Cart, unlike *The St. Elias* — a novel with a sailing ship as a symbol of Quebec — is not one of Ferron's best novels. Nor does it have the poetic achievement of his 1972 novel, *The Wild Roses*. But seen against the background of his other fiction, it is worth reading. □



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THE DEAN'S
DECEMBER

by Saul Bellow

Fitzhenry & Whiteside

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greasy skin with whom he believed he could spend a night without consequences. Instead he finds in her a country that holds for him a refuge for his inextinguishable ardour. But that is the exception: the stories from the Montreal series end with "L'Influence d'un rêve," in which an employee, possessed by his desire for his boss's secretary, who only torments him in his dreams, comes to the disillusioning conclusion that he can escape from her only by drowning himself in his work, "thanks to this daily routine that is for us so comforting, and upon which we do ourselves great harm if we do not call in times of need."

André Major is strictly a writer of Montreal, but above his urban jungle stretches the blue sky of the Laurentians, and of the past. The last three stories are devoted to that sky. One of them we can say deals with a dream that has already died. But the second, "Le Souvenir de sa douleur," is probably the most faithful recounting of the 1837 Revolt that I have ever read. As for "L'Egarement," with which the book ends, it is a perfect backdrop to the title story: Alpha, the carpenter, the builder, the firebrand of the "Vieilles-pipes" of Maria Chapdelaine, and of Monseigneur Savard.

This tender and cruel book, without complacency, evokes in counterpoint the nemesis of Monsieur Ripois. I liked it very much. □

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REVIEW

The quiet evolution

By DAVID WINCH

Montreal in Evolution, by Jean-Claude Marsan, McGill-Queen's University Press, 456 pages, \$27.50 cloth (ISBN 0 7735 0339 0).

"ARCHITECTURALLY AND urbanistically . . . Montreal remains Canada's premier city," one reads in the urban design journal *Trace*. Montreal's striking inheritance, however, has been marred, neglected, and senselessly bulldozed to a disheartening degree.

Perhaps the city's effortless chic of the 1960s was too reassuring; it disarmed Montrealers just as a second period of recklessly rapid development began. The urban battles of the early '70s, moreover, provoked an acute new awareness of the city's architectural vulnerability.

Jean-Claude Marsan, architect, urban designer, and Montreal enthusiast, has risen to prominence in direct response to the demand for creative urban solutions. Marsan's *Montreal in Evolution*, while mapping the architectural distinction of the "métropole" since the 1600s, is utterly frank about the city's shortcomings — the abdication to the could-be-anywhere international style in the towers of the business district, the lack of green spaces (New York's Central Park is larger than the combined area of Montreal parks), and, of course, Drapeau's brutal indifference to the Victorian heritage of the *grands boulevards*.

Nevertheless, the city is still characterized by its distinct and coherent neighbourhoods, a development that Marsan is able to relate to the pattern of city growth in the 17th and 19th centuries. He underlines how the *côtes*, or seigneurial divisions, formed the agricultural and eventually social divisions that, over the centuries, lent such coherence to the development of the Côte-des-neiges and Côte Ste-Catherine districts.

He also describes in great detail the architectural developments of St-Henri, Ste-Anne, and St-Jacques — working class districts huddled around the shoe and textile factories of the East End and the southern tip of the Island. Bare-faced, monotonous, three-storied flats, with their circular stairways, arose throughout these areas. As the popular classes resettled in more salubrious districts, far from the mills and factories, these styles were adopted as characteristic of the Plateau Mont-Royal and Verdun. Marsan notes in dry, professional terms the contrast between the adjacent solitudes of Victorian Westmount above, and squalid St-Henri below.

The Quiet Revolution, of course, upset the apple cart, freeing francophones from a state of chronic economic passivity. This liberation is reflected to some degree in the planning and building of the downtown area over the past 20 years. There had been prominent French-speaking architects in the past (Ernest Cormier's tower at the Université de Montréal and his art deco homes testify to the vigour of this tradition), but francophones have historically been on the outside looking in at the economic action in the downtown area. It seems incredible that *Place du Canada*, comprising the Château

Champlain and built in the mid-1960s, was the first major commercial project to be designed by a firm of francophone architects.

Today, with the aggressive rise of French-Canadian capitalism, the question to which Marsan does not address himself is, What styles will this rising mercantile class impose? For example, if one can go by early indications, Hydro-Québec's mammoth new head office project in Montreal — to be larger than Place Ville-Marie — will be as architecturally bound to the glass and steel tradition as anything the Anglos have ever built. Is there any hope for a break with the international style, as a new generation of architects starts reshaping the downtown area? Marsan's work can also be reproached for its major blind spot, its failure to answer the question, Whither Montreal? Like Jane Jacobs's famous, flawed thesis, Marsan's work passes over in silence the formidable force that is suddenly re-emerging as the city's economic trump card: the port. Again and again, when commenting on the *raison d'être* of Montreal, Marsan goes back to the city's geographical situation at the confluence of two rivers, the Great Lakes, and the North Atlantic — in effect, of Europe and America. As late as the mid-1950s Montreal was a major world shipping centre, on a par with the great port centres of the American Northeast and northern Europe. However, with the construction of the Seaway in the late 1950s, maritime traffic was suddenly able to bypass Montreal for the centre of the continent — Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland. Montreal's economic slide over the last 20 years has been *directly* related to its decline as a port city.

Today there is a radical change in this situation. For with the energy crisis, shipping becomes a much more important mode of heavy transport, and the preferred form of shipping is containerization. Suddenly, shippers find it very attractive to unload their containers at Montreal, to be sent by train to the centre of the continent, particularly Chicago. This trend is bound to accelerate in the 1980s. Pierre Laurin, of the *École des hautes études commerciales*, has predicted that the return in force of Montreal's importance as a shipping centre will be "an extremely important, dynamic factor for the city's economy, stimulating transport, finance, warehousing and light transformation work." What is Marsan's conjecture about its effect on city growth patterns? It would have been interesting to know. □



Food of love

More than just a browser's delight, the new encyclopedia of music is the most impressive national reference book Canada has produced

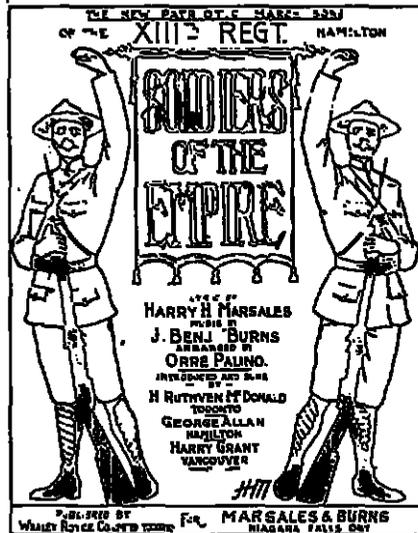
By MORRIS WOLFE

Encyclopedia of Music In Canada, edited by Helmut Kallmann, Gilles Potvin, and Kenneth Winters, University of Toronto Press, illustrated, 1,076 pages, \$75.00 cloth (ISBN 0 8020 5509 5).

CANADA DOESN'T get much space in international encyclopedias. Indeed, what "international" usually means when it comes to English-language reference works is "American." The recently published *Variety International Show-business Reference*, for example, includes the names of everyone who has ever won an Oscar, Emmy, Grammy, or Tony, and has a list of the 100 "All Time Film Rental Champs" (every one of them American). The only Canadians who make it into the book are those who've made it on the American entertainment scene — people like Donald Sutherland and Anne Murray. Canadian Film Awards, Cannes Film Awards, Venice Film Awards, etc., simply don't exist.

One has similar difficulties even with such widely respected works as *Encyclopedia Britannica* and *The New Columbia Encyclopedia*. The new (15th) edition of *Britannica* tells us that it was created "from a world point of view, by the worldwide community of scholars, for a worldwide audience of laymen." Sounds terrific. But half "the worldwide community of scholars" who contributed to *Britannica* are American, and another quarter are British. A member of "the worldwide community of laymen" approaching *Britannica* for a sense of Canada's cultural life would be sadly disappointed. It isn't there to be had. Not one Canadian artist, not one Canadian film-maker, is named. *The New Columbia Encyclopedia* modestly states that its range "is the entire accumulated factual knowledge of humanity." Given that claim, one wonders if it's reasonable that the Beatles should get far more space than any Canadian. And that Marshall McLuhan, Maureen Forrester, and Margaret Atwood (to name three) shouldn't be there at all?

There are only a handful of countries that have produced multi-volume national encyclopedias. Predictably, they are countries that get little space in international reference books. Mexico is one; Canada is another. We have now produced three such works: J. Castell



Hopkins's *Canada: An Encyclopedia of the Country* (1899-1900), Stewart Wallace's *Encyclopedia of Canada* (1935), and J.E. Robbins and W.K. Lamb's *Encyclopedia Canadiana* (1958). Although there have been attempts to update *Canadiana*, it remains, for the most part, a 1950s reference work. A new Canadian encyclopedia now is in the works, but it won't be available before the fall of 1985.

Meanwhile, several useful single-volume reference works have appeared: Norah Story's *Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature*, William Toye's *Supplement to the Oxford Companion*, *The Macmillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (an update of an earlier work by Stewart Wallace), and *Colombo's Canadian References*. Now we have by far the most impressive achievement of all — the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*, edited by Helmut Kallmann, Gilles

Potvin, and Kenneth Winters.

EMC, handsomely designed by William Rueter, contains more than 3,100 signed entries on all aspects of Canadian music (concert, folk, jazz, religious, rock, etc.); 500 illustrations (of programs, scores, places, and people) and almost 2 million words. Unlike the 15th edition of *Britannica*, which reads as if it were written by humanoids, *EMC* is written with style and with the layman — me — clearly in mind. The decision to use quotations from contemporary reviews and articles adds to the relaxed tone of many of the entries. The extensive bibliographies and discographies are first-rate. No wonder, then, that at the remarkably low price of \$65, the first edition of this book sold out within weeks of its appearance. Compare *EMC's* price with that of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music* — each of whose 20 volumes is considerably smaller — which sells for \$1,900 the set.

I must say I expected to be disappointed by *EMC*. I was taken in by the horror stories that abounded during the nearly 10 years the book was in production: the editors didn't know what they were doing; contributors were being allowed to write at any length and to go off on wild tangents; *EMC* was out of money and the project was going to go belly up; the Canada Council was so concerned about the book it was going to withdraw its support. No one I spoke to believed anything very good could come of it all.

But the fact is that *EMC* is a browser's delight, full of fascinating tidbits of information. I've spent considerable time over the past month happily rummaging through its pages. If you want to know about famous musical families like the Brotons and Adaskins, or the story behind such songs as "Mon Pays" or "When the Ice Worms Nest Again," if you want to know who the only woman cantor in Canada is, what Northrop Frye was saying about Delius in 1936, who George Wade and His Cornhuskers were, how McCarthyism contributed to

Sir Ernest MacMillan's departure from the Toronto Symphony, when Canada exported "The Diamonds" to the U.S., how many years "Opportunity Knocks" was on the radio, where folklorist Ruth Rubin was born (I hadn't known she was Canadian) — if you want to know these and thousands of other things, they're all there in *EMC*.

EMC, however, is much more than just a repository of factual information. It offers useful opinions and perspectives on a variety of subjects. An essay on country music, for instance, points out that "Canadian country vocal styles . . . differ from U.S. ones in their reflection of Canadian regional speech accents. Canadian singers generally have a lower-pitched, less nasal sound than their U.S. counterparts, with clearer enunciation, and less drawling and slurring. The Canadian style, . . . particularly that of Hank Snow and Wilf Carter, has influenced several U.S. singers, including Johnny Cash." The article "Dictionaries of Music" traces the amount of space Canada has received in international reference works. "Complaints about Canadian coverage in the major international music dictionaries," says *EMC*, "should be focused not on quantity — which is reasonably gener-

ous — but on accuracy and choice. When the fifth edition of *Grove's Dictionary* appeared in 1954, entries on MacMillan, Mazzoleni, and Willan remained 20 years behind the times, while [Canadian adviser] Léo Roy was able to persuade the editor to include a number of Quebec City musicians of relatively minor importance . . ."

The entry on "Muzak" discusses the effect of Canadian-content regulations on Muzak and of the recent development of French-Canadian Muzak. The article concludes by stating that

Canadian composer and writer R. Murray Schafer has questioned the validity of Muzak's claim to mask less desirable sounds such as factory machines or supermarket clatter. He has . . . described the product in its growing ubiquity, as an invasion of privacy and a denial of freedom of choice. He . . . sees in Muzak the seed of a general dulling of aesthetic sensitivity, whereby the inescapable exposure to its quasi-music could make unwary ears gradually less and less receptive to the conscious listening experiences not only of true art — and entertainment — music but also of the natural environment."

John Beckwith, we're told, "is, perhaps, the most characteristically English-Canadian voice in composition." Godfrey Ridout's music, states the encyclopedia, "is prevailingly sunny and affirmative; it eschews the 'doom and gloom' manner and self-conscious profundity of much 20th-century concert fare. Ridout likes fun in music and cannot easily resist concluding a work with a 'good tune'."

Reviewers have complained about the lack of critical opinion in *EMC*. What they mean, I suspect, is *negative* critical opinion. It's true that *EMC* doesn't say that Hagood Hardy's music all sounds just the same — i.e., like his Salada Tea commercial ("The Homecoming"). Or that nine columns on Healey Willan — more space than anyone else in the book — fail to make clear that Willan is now widely considered to be an overrated figure. As well, it's true that sometimes one has to read between the lines to find a negative opinion. According to *EMC*, for example, *Globe and Mail* critic John Kraglund's "drily sardonic, usually brief reviews, pragmatic in the face of a midnight deadline, [have become] a hallmark of Toronto skepticism and it has been said that . . . measured enthusiasm from Kraglund [is] the equivalent of a panegyric from a colleague." As if to prove the point, Kraglund wrote a highly skeptical review of *EMC* for the *Globe*, mischievously comparing it with *The Encyclopedia of American Music* (a book half its size) without explaining why the Canadian book, considering the

absence of any other such material, *needs* to be larger.

My own complaints about *EMC* are minor ones. I would have preferred the use of boldface to indicate cross-references rather than asterisks. The book titillates us by saying that Herman Geiger added Torel to his name when he was 31, but we're not told why. (It wasn't his mother's name.) Gerald Fagan isn't the conductor of the Toronto Mendelssohn Youth Choir; he was replaced by Robert Cooper in 1979. The article "Art, Visual" doesn't mention Graham Coughtry's series of jazz prints. The entry "Literature with Musical Content" omits Alice Munro's "Dance of the Happy Shades." Nancy White is mentioned under "Political Songs" but it seems to me she deserves an entry of her own. And there's the whole familiar question of balance. Does Anne Murray really deserve three times as much space as Elmer Iseler? Does Paul Anka? Does Healey Willan deserve one-third more space than Harry Somers or John Weinzweig? (One can go on and on.)

But these are trivial concerns compared to the breath-taking achievement of the *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*. Anyone seriously interested in music, or Canada, or both, will want to spend time with this volume. But beware. Reading *EMC* is addictive. □

REVIEW

Lunar distractions

By BARBARA NOVAK

The Man Who Sold Prayers, by Margaret Creal, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 198 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919630 18 9).

Real Mothers, by Audrey Thomas, Talonbooks, 168 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 88922 191 X).

THE LIVES OF these two authors have quite literally crossed, somewhere near the border. Winnipeg-born Margaret Creal now lives in Duchess County, New York. *The Man Who Sold Prayers* is her first collection of short stories (she has also written a novel), and is one of the latest titles in Lester & Orpen Dennys's

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International Fiction List. Audrey Thomas, who was born in Binghamton, New York, has been living in British Columbia for almost 20 years. Her novels and short stories have earned her a well-deserved reputation as one of the finest writers in the country.

Both authors write on similar themes: women in a state of internal and external transition and conflict. Their approaches, naturally, are different. Creal's narrators are distant, unobtrusive, and their voices change from story to story. In Thomas's collection the narrator is deeply involved in the process of each story, as though experimenting with a stereopticon (a striking image in one story) for a three-dimensional effect "which would take on depth and a wonderful illusion of solidity. *That* was the trick."

The result is that *Real Mothers* is a particularly unified collection. Although the narration shifts in tone from story to story, stylistically it remains consistent, a single voice struggling from parenthesis to parenthesis toward the intuitive goal that the mother, sleeping under the moon with her daughter in "Natural History," achieves for a fleeting instant: "wholeness, harmony, radiance: all of it making a wonderful kind of sense." In short, Creal's narrators start from a point of clarity; Thomas's narrators end up there.

Both collections include stories in which a woman's sense of responsibility toward her child is in conflict with her sense of responsibility toward her mate. Thomas examines this problem in two stories, one comic and one tragic. In "Real Mothers" the idea is distilled into a conflict between the need to nurture and the need to be nurtured. The latter wins out ("Sometimes, I think that you're the mother and I'm the teenager, Marie-Anne!") as the mother relinquishes control over herself and her two daughters to the demands of a selfish, brutal lover. First excluded, then emotionally and physically neglected, her children leave her to live with their father, much to her anguish. In "Harry and Violet" a woman is caught in the middle, trying to satisfy the needs of daughter and lover. "They both wanted to possess her. No. Each wanted her to say that each was number one. What did *she* want? Both of them, but not so much pulling and tugging." A balance is struck, but it is quickly upset with a comically inevitable twist at the end.

Creal explores the same subject in "Prairie Spring," in which the narrator recalls an event that occurred when she was a child. Her neighbours, an elderly couple, are reunited with their daughter after a separation of 52 years. The husband, who had found the six-week-old

baby "very trying to his nerves" had persuaded his wife to leave her in the care of his sister in England while they went on a "little visit" to Italy that lasted 15 years. Afterward, they emigrated to Canada. The father did not send for his daughter until his sister's death. "It is possible," the narrator says of the wife, "that like countless women of her generation and kind she believed that her duty was to bend her will to that of her husband." It says much for Creal's writing that she is able to make the story absolutely believable.

Women's fears run rampant in both collections. In *The Man Who Sold Prayers* women fear for the safety of their children ("Inland Beach"); they are afraid of being trapped by the past ("A Town Without a Graveyard"); afraid of not measuring up to the expectations of a son ("Tales from a Pensioner") or a lover ("Counterpoint"); they fear death and loneliness ("At Sunnyside Villa").

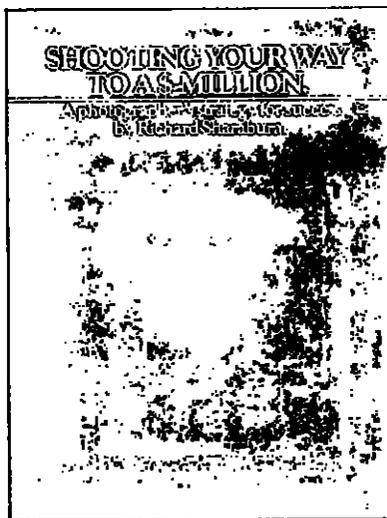
Thomas's women grapple with a more insidious fear, most evocatively presented in "Natural History." The leitmotiv in this story is the moon: "And the moon up there, female, shining always by reflected light, dependent on

the sun, yet so much brighter, seemingly, against the darkness of the sky; so much more mysterious, changing her shape, controlling the waters, gathering it all in her net." The moon, inspiring a host of old wives' tales, is to be feared. The mother in this story prays for her daughter (named after the sunflower) to be "strong, yet loving." At the end of the story she shields her from the moonlight.

Thomas's women are afraid, not of men, but of themselves, of their own strengths and needs. They are afraid of their strength, because loneliness may well be the price they have to pay for it. And they are afraid of admitting their need of men, of allowing themselves to become dependent, for then they risk being mere reflections, like the moon, or like the "wasted light" reflected from the eyes of animals at night. But even the cat in "Natural History" doesn't like to sleep alone: "The cat was old, but very independent, except for wanting to sleep inside at night."

The images in "Natural History" reverberate throughout the entire collection. In a story called "Out in the Midday Sun" a woman conceals a letter from her husband, knowing that when she

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shows it to him he will leave her. The letter is not from a lover, but from a publisher accepting a manuscript she wrote secretly. She knows that her success will upset the balance of power with her writer-husband, will equalize it, and destroy the relationship. "In the Bleak Mid-Winter" is about a *ménage à trois* involving two women: one dependent, one independent. Their lover caters to the woman who needs him the most.

Thomas's stories are created with such a complete mastery of form that to discuss them in linear terms is to do them an injustice. One story begins with a quote from a guidebook in the Jeu de Paume, the Impressionist gallery in Paris: "A picture must be built up by means of rhythm, calculation and selection." This approach applies equally well to all the stories in Thomas's collection.

The stories in *Real Mothers*, though shorter than those in *The Man Who Sold Prayers*, seem to be longer. Thomas demands much more of her readers than most writers, but the rewards are much greater, too. □

REVIEW

Soul on spice

By HENRY MAKOW

The Spice Box: An Anthology of Jewish Canadian Writing, edited by Morris Wolfe and Gerri Sinclair, Lester & Orpen Dennys, 310 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 919630 75 8).

THE EDITORS of this anthology faced a dilemma. Their aim was to collect the best fiction, non-fiction, and poetry by Jews on "the subject of being Jewish in Canada." Should they reflect the range of available writing or concentrate on the best work by the best writers? By presenting examples from 37 authors and poets, they have chosen to produce a general introduction and a source of sociological insight. But only a small number of selections demand republication in their own right.

The chronological arrangement of the material, the editors say, reflects a transition from the old world to the new, from "a strong awareness of Jewish identity to a sense of growing ambi-

valence." The early work, however, does not convey a clear or positive Jewish image. The initial story, "The Pact" by Solomon Ary, is a sordid tale, set in Poland, of sexual blackmail maintained by primitive mores.

The mood of the collection as a whole is one of loss, complicated by the sufferer's inability to know the character of what he is missing. "The Spice Box" is an apt title. Devout Jews inhale from a family spice box at the end of the sabbath to fortify and comfort themselves for the loss of an "additional soul" believed to inhabit their bodies during the holy period.

A large number of stories and poems are wistful recollections of childhoods in closely knit families and communities. These often idealized reminiscences reflect a desire for something greater. "I seek the strength and vividness of nonage days," A.M. Klein writes in the poem "Autobiographical." "It is a fabled city that I seek; It stands in Space's vapours and Time's haze."

For Mark Sarner, what is lacking is the spiritual content of Judaism. In his honest and deep-reaching essay, "Beyond the Candles of Chanukah," first published in 1978, Sarner defines the choices of immigrants faced in Canada. They could either take the opportunity to lead a traditional Jewish life, free from persecution, or cast off the cumbersome past and accept Canada's invitation for material success.

Because most Jews chose the latter course, Sarner says Jewish life today is sustained only by the cultural milieu: the pleasantries, the food, the (streamlined) observances. However, "there is a distinct feeling of being wanderers once more, but this time on a barren internal landscape." He says the upcoming generation of Canadian Jews, in their 30s, has "no personal knowledge of . . . what could be wrong with what is happening," yet there is "ambivalence" and "frustration" and "a sense of atrophy that is internalized and inarticulate."

In another remarkable essay, "Growing Up a Jewish Princess in Forest Hill," Erna Paris describes her quest for a larger vision of life absent from her upper-class ghetto upbringing. Toronto's Forest Hill Village was a place where ideas held great prestige yet Jewish girls were expected to "save" themselves for a doctor or a lawyer or, "if you weren't so classy," a rich businessman. "We grew as hothouse flowers and more than one of us had trouble 'outside.'" At 15 she took a summer job in the kitchen of Sunnybrook Hospital but was eventually exposed as a rich girl slumming. She later studied in France and fell in love with a French Catholic. In open defiance of her community she married her

"shaygitz" at Holy Blossom Temple. The marriage failed: "Forest Hill hadn't prepared me for life outside the village, let alone in a foreign country." At the time of writing (1972) she was contemplating her next move in the "safe" environs of Bathurst and Eglinton.

Both Sarner's and Paris's essays take the reader into their confidence and this accounts for their power. In contrast, Mordecai Richler's ironic memoir, "Their Canada and Mine," keeps us at arm's length. Richler's recollections are amusing, intelligent, and informative but because of his personal detachment they lack dimension.

Shirley Faessler's "A Basket of Apples" is the best short story in the volume. Outwardly the narrator's stepmother is an obese, primitive, slatternly woman but in the course of life she reveals an unpredictable nobility and wit. The story teaches what is so difficult these days, to look beyond people's exteriors. The story is set apart from the others by its natural hues. Verisimilitude is too strong a term for something apparently achieved so effortlessly.

In contrast there are some magnificent contrivances in this book: Jack Ludwig's "A Woman of her Age," Jerry Newman's "An Arab Up North," David Lewis Stein's "Fresh Disasters," Matt Cohen's "The Watchmaker," and Helen Weinzeig's "Hold That Tiger." They fall flat in the end because the effort of invention is not directed to saying anything original or important. Newman, for example, succeeds in convincing us that an Arab and a Jew — co-workers at a Dew-line station and friends — want to enlist on opposite sides in the 1957 Sinai war, but are denied permission to leave. So what happens? The Arab kills himself by accident.

The anthology includes excerpts from five novels: Adele Wiseman's *Crackpot*,



Henry Kreisel's *The Rich Man*, Leonard Cohen's *The Favourite Game*, William Weintraub's *Why Rock the Boat?*, and A.M. Klein's *The Second Scroll*. Only the chapter from Klein tempts me to

reread the whole. Similarly only the poems by Klein and Irving Layton display the authority and universality that command attention.

The Spice Box reveals the pitfalls of selecting an anthology on sociological rather than literary grounds. While many Jewish writers address the loss of a soul, only a few do so in a way that fortifies. □

REVIEW

Meandering toward the end

By MARK ABLEY

The Visitants, by Miriam Waddington, Oxford, 80 pages, \$5.95 paper (ISBN 0 19 540380 0).

READING *The Visitants*, I was struck by the absence of something I couldn't exactly place: some quality, some attitude that these 40 poems simply didn't contain. Anger? Sorrow? Bitterness? No, because in a few public lyrics, a few civil elegies, Miriam Waddington does express these dark emotions. What was it, this absence? It took me a while to realize that I was missing all sense of fear, and that *The Visitants* is a fearless book. Its main preoccupations are death, old age, and solitude — all of which are usually tackled with regret, unease, or the kind of boisterous swagger that seems a poor disguise for fear. But Waddington is undaunted at the prospect of death, and unafraid of direct feeling. She can, in consequence, write with warmth about the cold.

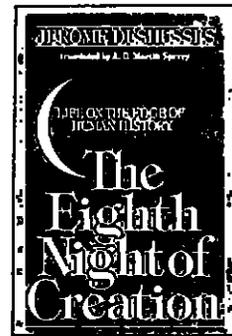
The rich texture of her language arises partly from another sort of courage. When the mood and the occasion are right, she's happy to use simple rhymes and verse-forms that more "sophisticated" poets might scorn. (Sophistication can be an awful burden.) Waddington is particularly adept at using internal rhymes to knit the various elements of a poem together. Embedded in a poem called "When the Shoe Is on the Other Foot for a Change" are the phrases "old bread," "spidery red," and "unleavened as lead" — but the natural link-word, the underlying rhyme of *dead*, is never uttered. She often directs her energies to the nurture of a simple

lyricism that will be able, if necessary, to carry complex emotions. In the 40 years that she has been writing poetry, Waddington's vision of life has probably changed less than the means by which she expresses it.

Perhaps the title poem of the new book is as close as she gets to personal despair. It describes things that have been lost, things that are no more: friends, her father, Gabriel Dumont, ancient stories, and so on. Unusually, she uses the term "emptiness," and the dead friends who come to her are "anguished." But these visitants bring with them gifts of music and light, and the ending of the poem is characteristic: "they come to console/your cries they come/with their firefly lanterns/to lead you amazed/through their blazing/gateways of stone." Not only the images but the very rhythms suggest acceptance, even delight. Her words flow like galvanized honey. Two of the poems in this collection, "Crazy Times" and "Prairie" (16 and 13 lines long, respectively), use not a single word of more than two syllables. If you think that's easy, try it!

Most of her work is written in long meandering sentences — a delta of words, giving her images and thoughts enough time to develop through time. Waddington has never been a poet of broken, isolated fragments of ideas. In some of her poems a sweet sense of narrative underlies the lyric form, keeping us in touch with an oral, story-telling tradition. When you scan the lines with your eyes, and neglect to listen for the sound of her words, you miss at least half the effect. She is essentially a poet who connects: Canada with the Eastern Europe of her Jewish forebears, the Prairies with Toronto and Montreal, our lives with other generations, and our language with the speech of the dead.

This suggests one reason why her longer-than-usual poem "Real Estate" comes as such a surprise: for here the connections are snapped, and the twining familiar voice is broken constantly by brutal injunctions from another mouth: WE COULDN'T CARE LESS, SO LET THEM EAT GRASS, HURRY UP TIME IS MONEY, and so on. To this second voice everything is material, and everything is profane. Waddington's own vision takes things from this world (late flowers, lost languages, even the hard-working earthworms) and makes them into a sacrament. Her poems teem with things that are somehow ordinary, sacred, doomed, and eternal — "a breakfast tray/with a cupful of light/and a saucer of day." The words sing, the world gleams. The danger is easy lushness, a vice to which she occasionally, but only occasionally, succumbs.



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I think that the mood behind *The Visitants*, for all its awareness of death, is the mood of William Blake in "Jerusalem": "Albion gave me to the whole earth to walk up & down; to pour/Joy upon every mountain, to teach songs to the shepherd and ploughman./I taught the ships of the sea to sing the songs of Zion." The pronoun "I" appears frequently in *The Visitants*, yet it's a book that escapes the dreariness of egotism. Waddington is always ready to be fascinated — by the weather, the land, the past, by anything in fact. She knows that full attention is a blessing without price.

To end on a prosaic note: many readers of good prose, and many lovers of films and plays, feel thwarted, alienated by contemporary poetry. Its devices, its postures, its rhythms, even its appearance on the page seem to them wilfully at odds with what they were taught poetry should be. Such people (and they're often right to be baffled, though wrong to condemn) would do well to read Miriam Waddington. Her work is immediately accessible, it's both timeless and timely, and much of it will give delight. □

REVIEW

World of wanders

By ALBERT MORITZ

Far from You, by Pavel Javor, translated from the Czech by Ron D.K. Banerjee and Alfred French, Hounslow Press, 83 pages, \$7.95 paper (ISBN 0 8882 056 9).

Evenings on Lake Ontario, by Waclaw Iwaniuk, Hounslow Press, 60 pages, \$6.95 paper (ISBN 0 8882 054 2).

"IT SEEMS THAT the finest and most famous works of the ancients were also induced by exile," wrote Plutarch, commenting on Thucydides and Xenophon. Certainly, literary history will say something similar of the literatures of eastern Europe in our era. And Canada will be honoured for the role it plays in providing many writers-in-exile a place to stand.

In almost every case, these writers have responded by seeking to contribute

their work to Canada and to English literature. Far from isolating themselves in an expectation — or a pipedream — of return to the native land, they have painfully accepted separation and the need to become part of a new language.

Many have, like Pavel Javor, sought to communicate through translation; Javor's verse is already known in Québec through French translation, though this is his first book-length English volume and is, unfortunately, posthumous. Others, like Waclaw Iwaniuk, have been able to make the extraordinary transition to writing some of their work directly in English.

Their own exile is the theme of Javor and Iwaniuk, as it is for many eastern European emigré writers in Canada and elsewhere. Yet, as serious poets, they automatically overleap the bounds of nationalism, factionalism, and local history. Their exile becomes, in their work, something that lends energy and concrete immediacy to a universal human condition.

At the level of universal concerns, the eastern European voice speaks of inevitable loss and of man's pilgrim state, his sense that he is by necessity a wanderer on the earth. There are tones here seldom attempted by contemporary English poetry. Pathos is one of them, and it is a major strength of the poetry of Javor, pen name of Dr. George Skvor (1918-81), a leading Czech exile poet who lived in Montreal from 1950.

Javor's theme is the classic one of man's frailty and the brevity of the individual life in the context of nature's vast, cyclic renewal. The economy and reticence of his forms and his image-making power give freshness and distinction to his handling of this basic intuition. He has the ability to convey the concrete experience through which his insight into this theme, and his right to use it, were acquired.

He gives the savour of what is lost: Czech childhood and family, village culture, the ethos of his native countryside, a friendly land of rich harvests and peasant wisdom. The central Europe of the folk tales, with its blend of humanity, vitalism, and enchantment, is recognizable:

*From the depths of the valleys
Wafting to the stars . . .
The odour of honeycombs of ploughed
earth,
Black and warm like the bellies of mares.
An ocean of corn ripples with a siren's
song,
Poor stubble-fields, from whose
wounded stalks
Sap spouts on bare legs.*

The total effect is of a disciplined sense of loss. The poet recalls a deeply longed-for, fully human land that inevitable changes are not merely removing

but destroying. Still, it is an eternal country of imagination and desire:

*There, at home, my god, the corn stirs
now,
and the clover-leaves rustle by the pond.*

This is a pathos, a nostalgia that has been discovered to be not sentiment but a truth of the human condition.

However, this pathos does pass into sentimentality at times in Javor's poems. In part, this may be the fault of the translators. In free verse, both produce straightforward, informative versions. But Javor was primarily a poet of traditional lyrical forms, and the translators attempt to reproduce these in some cases, with indifferent success. The poeticisms, uncertain rhythms, faulty rhymes and line lengths certainly reflect the translators' problems with English forms, and not Dr. Skvor's ability with Czech ones.

Another tone rare in contemporary English verse is a fully informed, mature skepticism with regard to scientific and ideological claims, and with regard to the possibilities of politics. This tone might be called political and social irony; but there is a depth of feeling in it, a wisdom underlying the satire, that is the fruit of a more ancient viewpoint, as well as a more bitter historical experience, than that which gives rise to much English poetry of this type.

This tone is the most common one of Waclaw Iwaniuk; it was dominant in his earlier book, *Dark Times*, a selection in English translation of poems from his many Polish volumes, and it is equally evident in *Evenings on Lake Ontario*, his first book written in English.

For the idiomatic ease of its language, and for occasional fine poems, this is an impressive book. But it is not as impressive as *Dark Times*, and not merely because that book was of his "selected poems." What is missing here is not just consistent quality from poem to poem, but often the sense that anything fresh is being said. Certain phrases and sentences are given a pointed ring but are in fact banal, and these have a tendency to come at the conclusion of poems: "And today is/what has bypassed us/with yesterday's memories." We are left with an impression of disillusionment, but little or nothing in the way of thought.

Still, there are many impressive poems here, and the book would be fully justified by one of these, "I, Leonardo, Say So," a candidate for the anthologies of the future.

Neither of these books mobilizes the pathos and the hard-won political realism of eastern Europe with the same depth, power, and consistency as a volume by Joseph Brodsky or Czeslaw Milosz. But both are important and attractive for their maturity, their

seriousness, and a power of expression that creates, in each case, a handful of deeply impressive poems. Few books have more to offer. □

REVIEW

Who has sniffed the wind

By SIMON RUDELL

Uncle Percy's Wonderful Town, by Bruce Hutchison, Douglas & McIntyre, illustrated, 203 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 93994 318 0).

AFTER SO MANY years and words devoted to chronicling Canada's development, both as historian and journalist, Bruce Hutchison has again turned to fiction. At 80 years of age he presents this latest undertaking with the honesty and lack of illusion that have long been his trademarks, pointing out that James Douglas

has launched many better books and noting that *Uncle Percy's Wonderful Town* will surprise and distress his friends who "expect a reporter to stick with reality."

He counters these feelings by taking solace in the belief that "fiction is often truer than fact, more accurate than memory," and is at pains to present this book as simply a further attempt to bring out our past and relate it to our present way of life. He is careful, then, to point out that the wonderful town, Emerald Vale, and its characters are entirely imaginary — not just slight disguises of what used to exist. At the same time he pointedly sets Emerald Vale in the "dry country" of British Columbia's interior, with Kamloops as the nearest large centre and Vancouver the closest bastion of true civilization.

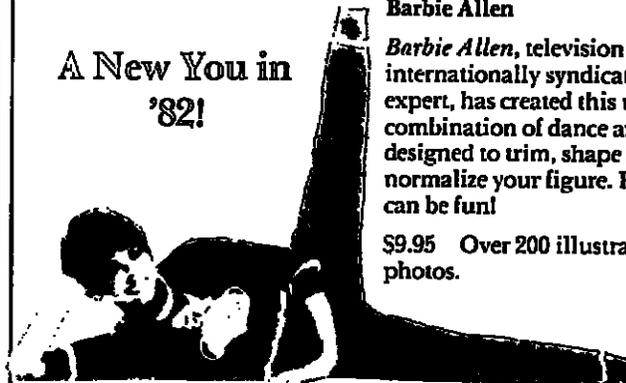
The form of the book is truly Canadian — a collection of 13 loosely connected mini-stories. They are related by 14-year-old David, who lives with his Aunt Minerva and Uncle Percy, editor of the Emerald Vale *Weekly Echo*. But David appears as a character in only three of these stories, leaving the reader with no single individual to follow from story to story. This is unfortunate, for on the occasions when David does take part the narrative has an impact and immediacy that bring it to life.

In the best of these David finds himself providing an alibi for a friend suspected of murdering his father at a time when the two were supposed to have been together fishing. A "big town lawyer" is called in from Vancouver and David successfully perjures himself to protect his friend, whose father was "no good" in any case. In this story David's character emerges with thematic potential for the first time.

The next, and last, occasion on which this process takes place is the final story. Here David returns to Emerald Vale at the age of 70, accompanied by his grandson, David, aged 10. It is a sad chapter in all respects. Both Davids are dismayed by what they find, one because it is all so modern, the other because it is all so hick. The new town itself, and its people, stand no chance of a fair trial from either of them.

There is a bitterness, a pettiness here that seems unworthy of Hutchison and of the previous stories. It leaves the reader with a bad taste, one I suspect Hutchison has been leading up to all along. The old man and the boy search for a place to eat: "We couldn't find a good place but the restaurant was clean, the hamburgers edible. David quickly consumed three of them while I nibbled one and left most of it uneaten." The new town is a mill town, the smell of

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which bothers the visitors: "... the inhabitants, I guessed, were hardened to the money smell and didn't miss the whiff of sagebrush and alkali." The book, and Hutchison, would be better off without this sort of conclusion, or at least without it being made in this sort of tone.

The irony is that in this final chapter the author's prose seems most in keeping with its content. This may be because the narrator has finally come out into the open, but I suspect it is because he has at last done away with fiction and resorted again to what he does best — journalism — but it's no way to finish a collection of stories. □

REVIEW

Spreading it thick

By FRANK RASKY

The Marmalade Man, by Charlotte Vale Allen, McClelland & Stewart, 377 pages, \$16.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 8674 1).

"I FEEL GOOD being able to divert people, to keep them entertained for a while. That's all writing is: story-telling, diversion. I don't see myself as a great literary figure . . ." This confession is made by Sherrill Westcott on page 280 of her novel. Rather, I should say, on page 280 of the novel by Charlotte Vale Allen. This may need a little unravelling: Sherrill Westcott is a fictitious Toronto actress turned novelist and the heroine of *The Marmalade Man*. She is also the alter ego of Charlotte Vale Allen, a real-life Toronto actress turned novelist, who is the author of *The Marmalade Man*.

On page 280, then, of the Allen-Westcott concoction, Allen allows Westcott to belittle herself as a literary figure and declare she is nothing but a teller of tales, a mere diverter of time. On those terms, *The Marmalade Man* is acceptable fiction — that is, if you like soap opera. The novel is as frothy, episodic, and melodramatic as any of the soapers that bubble along on daytime television.

The Marmalade Man is not really about a man at all, although Allen dedicates the novel to her quite substan-

tial husband, the Toronto actor Barrie Baldaro, calling him her "most beloved Marmalade Man." And there is a character named Jamie Ferrara, a Toronto stage actor and TV spokesman for a marmalade commercial, who is supposed to be the key symbolic figure of the novel. But he never emerges either as a real person or a meaningful symbol. We're constantly being told that he's a "charming, witty, sweet gentleman," but we must accept that evaluation on the author's say-so. If Allen-Westcott is to be believed, he is so prodigiously endowed with charm that he spreads it around like marmalade to the three infatuated women in the novel who seduce him.

The three Marmalade Man-chasers are as shallow and unbelievable as the glucose male who attracts them. Anne Reynolds is a middle-aged Toronto suburbanite who, when jilted by Ferrara, disintegrates into a promiscuous crazy lady, picking up men at the bar of Toronto's Park Plaza Hotel. Dene Whitmore, a magazine photographer who also has a fling with Ferrara, becomes a zombie after her husband drives off with her young sister and both are miraculously killed in a crash before they reach Hamilton.

Curiously, though our actress-novelist heroine is permitted more space than her rivals, she is the least realized character of the lot. We learn a great deal of trivia relating to Sherrill Westcott's external life: how she won her first TV audition for a cat-food commercial (by putting on French and cockney accents); her favourite Toronto restaurants (Fenton's and La Scala); her snobbish attitude toward boyfriends not in the theatrical profession (hopelessly civilian); even her opinion of Richard Nixon (a megalomaniac). But we get no sense of her interior life. It's difficult to comprehend why the idealized Marmalade Man finds her so singular a person that he proposes marriage to her in the last, ridiculously contrived chapter, when all the characters are brought together trapped in a hotel fire.

I hate to pick apart *The Marmalade Man*. Despite its many flaws, Allen is clearly more than a romance writer. Her potential to become a gifted novelist is often reflected in throw-away lines that deal with the entertainment world. "I stay off the sauce for a few weeks," says one minor character, an alcoholic. "Then, when it all starts turning a bit too black and white, like those Swedish films, I get out the Chivas and tone down the edges." Such moments lead one to hope that, in her next novel, Allen will dispense with the treacly marmalade and spread around more black and white. □

REVIEW

Jude the unsure

By JANE W. HILL

Rough Layout, by Doris Anderson, McClelland & Stewart, 221 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7710 0742 6).

JUDITH PEMBERTON "did want it all. The works. The children. A great job with some purpose to it. And a terrific marriage. Why not?" It's 1974 and Jude is 33, attractive, bright, ambitious — managing editor of *Young Living* magazine (read *Chatelaine*) and aiming for editor. Rufus (why that name? I kept expecting Br'er Rabbit to hop out from behind him) is an old pro but would rather drink than edit.

Doris Anderson leads us through the world she knows so well — magazine publishing in Toronto as undertaken by a vast corporation (called Meridian here, read Maclean-Hunter), even down to the true fiasco of the computer purchased by the bigwigs to modernize the circulation department, but which only fouls everything up. Jude is at the centre of the book, surrounded by her husband Marshall, charming and ironic, dissatisfied with his futile job as a PR man for a trust company; her two young children who enjoy their father more than her; Adele, her mother (even as a child, Jude had tried to be the father in the family); Lenore, her unfulfilled friend; and the two men who come into Jude's life — the writer, Huntley Pearce, who is supposed to be suave and self-confident, a worthy suitor to Jude, but who seemed a phoney to me, and the wealthy James Partridge, sweet and ingenuous, who tempts Jude with his need for her.

At first Jude seems enviable — she has a job she loves, is getting public recognition, and is supported by a devoted family. She and Marshall had long ago agreed: "They were to take turns in the Fast Lane according to whoever got the best chances. It was a partnership. Right now it was probably going to be her turn." But then Marshall begins to chafe under the egalitarian setup and Jude notices his increased absences from home; she, in turn, who has always felt entirely committed to her marriage, finds herself attracted to other men. You can feel the real rapport between them, but Jude is competent and aggressive —

she would be miserable as a full-time wife and mother and she knows it. She wants Marshall to do more of the practical chores at home and to be a stronger disciplinarian with the children; he prefers to do the fun things, like taking them to the zoo and reading them stories at night. This leads to an angry confrontation between them and when Adele proves unwilling to fit into Jude's plan for a new domestic arrangement the two are left to work things out as best they can. Feminist issues are important to Doris Anderson and are important to Jude Pemberton, both in her life and her magazine.

Almost the best part of the book is its rendering of the business of putting out a magazine and of the corporation politics that impinge upon it. Jude's nemesis is "Crazy Horse," the publisher, who is overly persuaded of his own aptitude for running a woman's magazine. A meeting to discuss circulation's problems with the computer is a delight; the hierarchy of participants is clear, with charts and graphs taking far longer to explain the situation than a straight report would do. Jude makes the mistake of speaking out forcefully on the computer disaster in the presence of the vice-president whose "baby" it is.

The interplay between Jude's working life and home life is well worked out, with humour and charm and, most of the time, a good ear for dialogue. Somehow the book does not seem very substantial — it reads easily but the impression it leaves is ephemeral. But if you're in the mood for a story combining career, romance, and family problems in an authentic Toronto setting, then this could be it. □

REVIEW

Dial M for molars

By JUDY STOFFMAN

By Reason of Doubt: *The Belshaw Case*, by Ellen Godfrey, Clarke Irwin, 224 pages, \$15.95 cloth (ISBN 0 7720 1354 3).

BEFORE THE DISCOVERY of the "le Sépey Corpse" — a putrefied female body stripped of its jewellery and clothes, stuffed into three garbage bags, and

eventually identified as that of Betty Belshaw — there had been only one unsolved murder in the Swiss canton of Vaud. Its victim had been a prostitute. It is a safe bet that about that prostitute no book has been or will be written.

The case of Betty Belshaw, however, an upper-class matron in a Burberry rain coat, an English instructor at the University of British Columbia who was writing a book about Katherine Mansfield, and of the man tried for her murder, her husband, Professor Cyril Belshaw, a world renowned anthropologist, is profoundly disturbing. It calls into question a lot of comfortable assumptions about the relationship of education and social class to violence. If a man so eminently civilized as Belshaw is capable of the barbarous act of which he was accused, then surely the very idea of civilization is a sham, a paper-thin veneer over our cruellest impulses, and none of us is safe.

I picked up Ellen Godfrey's book with some misgivings. I had followed the Belshaw story as it was told and retold in the press; Godfrey herself had written a long piece about Belshaw's trial for *Today* magazine. It was amply reported that the Belshaws had been spending a sabbatical year in the Swiss resort of Montana-Vermala; that on a trip to Paris Betty had apparently disappeared en route to the Bibliothèque Nationale, and that two and a half months later a body with well-cared-for teeth was found thrown down a ravine in Switzerland.

When Belshaw was asked by the Swiss police to supply his wife's dental records, he obtained them from her dentist in Vancouver and improved on them with liquid paper before passing them on. This falsification of her dental chart, which delayed the identification of the body by six months, was the sole substantive piece of evidence the court was able to cite against Belshaw. He had had a mistress, a young married woman, but their affair was hardly torrid enough to provide a motive for homicide. Besides, it was not the first time he'd been unfaithful. Was there anything more to write about?

As it turns out, there isn't much more to say about the facts, and the libel laws forbid guesses and conjectures or even the naming of Belshaw's mistress, for whom the pseudonym of Margery Wilson is used throughout Godfrey's book. Godfrey is the author of two crime novels, *The Case of the Cold Murderer* and *Murder Among the Well-to-Do*, but here she cannot tell us whodunit.

But for all that, and despite the occasional clumsiness of the writing ("In the whole district there are less than a

hundred lawyers") the book makes compelling reading because of Godfrey's sensibility. She is plainly not after cheap thrills. Instead she would have us grapple with ideas — ideas about justice, the comparative merits of the common law and civil law systems, the workings of the European mind, what is rational and irrational behaviour, and the impossibility of understanding another human heart.

The subtext of her book is two cheers for civilization. Civilization is the medieval architecture of Aigle, where Belshaw's trial takes place. It's the feather-light croissants she eats for breakfast, and "the litany of smiles and thank yous, courtesy and friendliness making graceful the small exchanges of every day." And in the end it appears to encompass justice for the accused, who wins his case "by reason of a very light doubt."

"And when you consider the conclusion of the tribunal of Aigle," writes Godfrey, "... a tribunal of men whose ancestors had fought hard for their liberties, and who prize them now, you will see a subtlety, a compassion, a breadth of understanding that speaks very well for the human condition." □

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Murder at Moose Jaw, by Tim Heald, General Publishing, 188 pages, \$14.95 cloth (ISBN 07736 0094 9). Detective addicts with prodigious memories (which is a tautology) will recall a short story by Tim Heald published in *Weekend Magazine* in 1978 entitled "The Case of the Frozen Diplomat," in which Heald's bumbling but likable detective, Simon Bognor of the British Board of Trade, was cold on the trail of Sir Roderick Farquhar. Farquhar turns up again in *Murder at Moose Jaw*, this time as a corpse, and Bognor is once again sent to Canada to lay down the scent of Farquhar's killer. Sir Roderick, who seems to be an amalgam of Bud McDougald, E.P. Taylor, and the Studhorse Man, was the head of the giant Mammoncorp, and Bognor's mission is to make sure that his successor keeps Mammoncorp's money invested in British interests. His suspects include Farquhar's personal secretary, who is a Quebec separatist; one of Farquhar's associates at Mammoncorp, a political power broker with his eye on 24 Sussex Drive; and so on. But for Bognor, as usual, nothing is as complicated as it seems.

Heald writes with wit, verve, and

social insight, and as a result Bognor is not so much a bumbler as a believably fallible modern anti-hero, a kind of hybrid of Sir John Appleby and Inspector Clouseau. John Braine's anti-hero in *The Pious Agent* also works for the Board of Trade, but Braine is serious, and the book is terrible. His closest Canadian counterpart is probably Howard Engel's Benny Cooperman: both Heald and Engel indulge in genre parody and social satire as a means of

affirming traditional literary and moral values. This is Heald's sixth Bognor book, the only one without a pun in the title (*Just Desserts* is about the death of a pastry chef, *Deadline* involves a murder on Fleet Street, etc.), and the lot have been adapted for television by London's Thames TV. Bognor is big business, and his books bristle with intelligence — it's refreshing to see that none of it has gone to his head.

—WAYNE GRADY

ENGLISH, OUR ENGLISH

Fascinating words on the fix our language is in, and other indispensable reasons for mending our ways

By BOB BLACKBURN

WRITING THESE COLUMNS has been a humbling experience. I refer here to the actual writing process, which entails a ridiculous amount of thumbing through dictionaries and other works of reference in the hope of avoiding the commission of some solecism or barbarism that would earn me your scorn. This pursuit all too frequently results in the discovery that I have been misusing this word or that construction throughout almost 35 years of writing, and therein lies despair. The next step is to refer to one "authority" after another until I find one permissive enough to cheer me up a bit.

The other day I picked up a copy of *Paradigms Lost*, by the critic John Simon, in which he repeatedly snarls that people who say "intriguing" when they mean "fascinating" are fools. I flushed guiltily, but went off to check four reputable sources, two of which agreed with Simon and two of which placidly accepted *fascinate* as one meaning of *intrigue*. However, I am inclined to agree with Simon: *intrigue* should not have its denotations of clandestine romancing or secret plotting watered down by such careless use.

Anyway, although I would not give the acerbic Simon the last word on any topic, I would recommend the book, which is now available in a Penguin edition. Subtitled *Reflections on Literacy and Its Decline*, it is suffused with the sort of deep concern for the welfare of the language that you find in such other best-sellers on the subject as those of William Safire and Edwin Newman. It isn't as much fun, but there is some

satisfaction in discovering that Simon, for all his dogmatic blustering, lives in a glass house.

He writes: "The term 'functional illiterate' designates someone who, although he can technically read and write, cannot do it well enough to be a fully functioning member of our society. In other words, you [sic] cannot read road signs or the instructions on a medicine jar and draw the correct inferences. Yet even these frequently adduced examples of functional illiteracy ought to point to an inescapable conclusion: what good is reading and writing to people who cannot think?" I put it to you, Simon, that a question is not a conclusion, but, if it is, my conclusion is: how did "he" become "you" between sentences?

A NEWS SERVICE report on plans for future missions of the U.S. space shuttle described how an astronaut equipped with a personal jet-propulsion device will leave the shuttle to "jet over to a malfunctioning satellite designed to study the sun and fix it." Laugh if you will, but bear in mind that that same writer's sloppiness some other time could result in your being misinformed in some way that could have very serious consequences to you. The mistake was ludicrous, but not funny.

The same example also brings to mind the *fix fix is in*. It's only recently that lexicographers have stopped affixing the label *colloq* to the use of *fix* in the sense of *repair*, but that use is fixed in the minds of most of us. While we still may



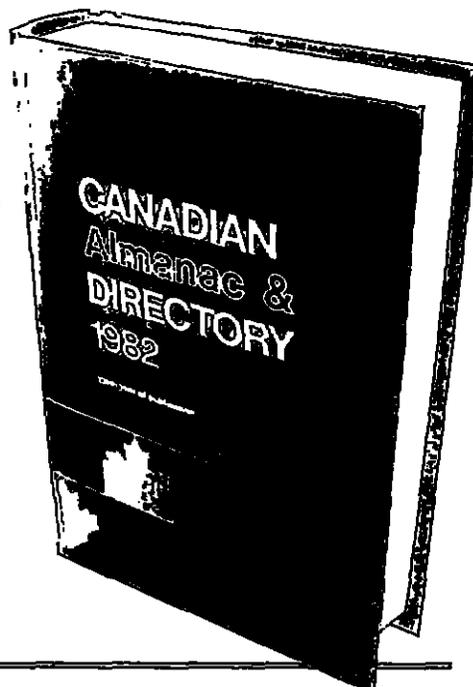
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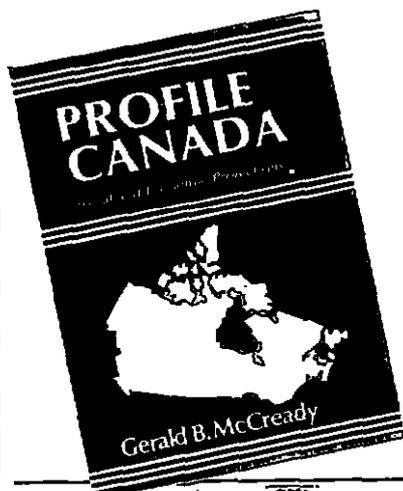
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fix our eyes on something, when we speak of fixing an object we are speaking of repairing it, not fastening it in place. When you ask a repairman to fix your television set, you don't expect him to nail it to the floor. We have *repair* and *mend*. We didn't need *fix* to replace them, but by putting it to that use we have made it useless as a short, sharp, accurate way of saying something for which we now lack an unequivocal word.

Another reporter spoke of the government's having "dispensed with the constitution." That is patently ridiculous; we know the government hasn't got rid of the constitution. But suppose there had been a debate going on in the Commons about, say, a proposed increase in the gasoline tax, and the same reporter suddenly told us that the government had dispensed with the gasoline tax. What would we make of that?

A reporter on CBC-TV's national newscast said this of a man whose attempt to rob a bank was foiled: "He

never got any money." Were that true, I suppose it would explain why the poor fellow was driven to try robbery. The use of *never* for *didn't* is a vulgar error of the lowest sort. I have long since abandoned the hope that the CBC would one day take seriously its responsibility to offer us a model of good English, but I still wasn't prepared to hear that line.

FURTHER TO NOVEMBER'S column on *that* and *which*: On the 40th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack, I heard a replay of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's famous broadcast in which he termed Dec. 7, 1941, "a date which will live in infamy." I wonder how much that contributed to my long-lasting problem with those words. I also wonder if his words would have had the same enduring force had he said "a date that will . . ." And that also brings to mind the fact that Dwight Eisenhower used to say "nuclear" for "nuclear." Many of today's newscasters still honour his memory by using his mispronunciation. □

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The fat and thin of it: from Tremblay's neighbourhood pregnancies to an underfed plot that unwinds like spaghetti

By DOUGLAS HILL

The *Fat Woman Next Door Is Pregnant*, by Michel Tremblay (Talonbooks, 252 pages, \$8.95 paper), lives up to the promise of its marvellously evocative cover — a hand-tinted photograph, from a family album, of the author's mother smiling out a window. The fat woman of the title is Tremblay's mother, pregnant with him. Homework. "I wrote this book," he said, "to tell these people how much I love them." He certainly succeeds at that.

The novel takes place on May 2, 1942; it's spring on la rue Fabre in Plateau Mont-Royal. There's a large cast, of assorted ages, that includes a cat and a dog. Many of the humans are related, some are eccentric, a few invisible, all the married women are pregnant. The book is a series of rhythmically interconnected sketches; if at times it displays a touch more languid whimsy than fictional drive, on the whole it's a delightfully effective, lyrical memoir.

It's a book about women, chiefly — about their youth and age, maternity, affection, sexuality. Men are baffled, irrelevant accessories to the poised expectant fertility that, in Tremblay's view, turns the world. The language of *The Fat Woman Next Door Is Pregnant* — it's properly heard as a novel for voices — creates a neighbourhood tuned to the harmonies of pregnancy, to the awe of life about to be lived. There are some lovely, moving scenes. Tremblay is nothing if not eloquent, and he's found a deft poetry to speak his tribute here.

The translation is by Sheila Fischman. It reads smoothly, doesn't jar, seems to me, without the original to compare, *unexceptionable*. That's meant as a compliment.

Dead Man's Tears, by Joel Newman (General Publishing, 220 pages, \$11.95 cloth), is dreadful. It's conventional private eye versus mob stuff, but the

conventions are handled with fascinating ineptitude. The plot is like spaghetti, motive is non-existent, the writing nearly actionable. The snicker, I'd bet, is not a traditional instrument of literary analysis; it, along with the whoop, seems to have been invented expressly to deal with this novel.

The shamus, named Kaufman, says things to women like: "You're scared . . . scared of a lot of things, scared of the world. So you resign yourself to secondhand pleasures. You prefer the perfumed safety of some stupid pulp novel to the sweaty dangers of the real world." *About* women he's equally convincing: "Her movements were graceful

and elegant, with an understated sense of confidence that only those born to great affluence can ever achieve."

Other than the morality of the book, which I'd describe as muddled heading toward dangerous, everything here seems to have come out of one small, underfed, misfiring computer. There's a mishmash of useless detail — street names, clock time, exact dimensions of this or that — none of it with any logic or any bearing on anything. There's also a riveting display of italics for emphasis: "Someone was *trying to kill him.*"

The dust jacket says Joel Newman is working on a screenplay for a horror film. Preserve us. □

ON/OFF/SET

Three lively books of considerable depth, grace, and versatility, and one sad note from a small press that has, after 12 titles, given up the ghost

By DAVID MACFARLANE

AMONG THE MANY COLLECTIONS of poetry published each year by the small houses, there are always more good surprises than bad. It is something of a miracle, really, that against all odds poets continue to publish so large a body of such good work. Although most collections demonstrate a wide range of quality — a reader can often pick out the good poems that have blinded the author to the faults of the not-so-good — the best examples of the work of lesser-known Canadian poets is of a calibre that stands against all comers. Gary Geddes, for instance, although hardly an unknown, is not quite a household name; the first poem from *The Acid Test* (Turnstone Press, 79 pages, \$7.00 paper), "Tower," has a confident sense of what good poetry is about:

*I loved them, in my own way,
enough to pay hard cash for the rifle,
to plan my strategy long into the night.
I did not complain about the cold wind
or the exhausting climb to the tower;
even the long wait and the rank-smelling
pigeons never taxed my patience.
When they emerged, after a time,
into the bright winter sun at mid-day,
I spared no effort to steady the rifle,
to bring the delicate cross of the
gunsights
into line with their temples or breasts.*

*And when they began to run, after the
first
had settled to rest in the soft snow,
I never lost my cool, but took them
one by one, like a cat collecting kittens.*

Divided into three sections, *The Acid Test* is a collection of considerable depth and versatility. Geddes's lengthy narrative poem, "Letter of the Master Horse," has been revised for inclusion, and on the whole the collection is satisfying, at times intriguing. Geddes has a sensitive political and social conscience; he does not, apparently, have much of a sense of humour. Not that a poet has to be funny, of course, but the intimation of a chuckle might have provided some balancing irony.

Tim Inkster takes himself just as seriously in *Blue Angel* (The Porcupine's Quill, unpaginated, \$4.95 paper) and, as in Geddes, many of the poems justify the pervading solemnity of the collection. "The Beaks of Turtles" and "Snapdragons," for instance, are beautifully written poems, reminiscent of the finely crafted and delicate work of the Scottish poet, Tom Clark. Less successful examples of Inkster's verse, poems such as "Closely Watched Trains" and "The Velvet Glove," reveal an egocentricity that is not of very much use or interest to the reader. Inkster

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tends to be sophomoric when he's not busy being good, and as a result *Blue Angel* lacks the depth that one expects from a good book of poetry. Still, Inkster at his best is a poet of considerable potential. From "Do Not Put Trust in the Wind":

*Do not walk close by the breakwater
at night, the chains of the boats moored
there mingle their racket with that
of the wind and the weight of the water
rushing up against the stone quay.*

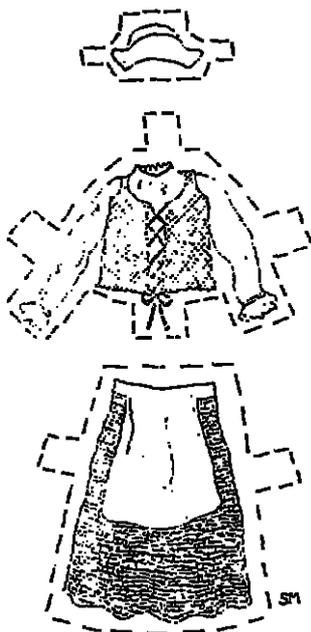
David Donnell is another poet who deserves to be better known than he is. Indeed, *Dangerous Crossings* (Black Moss Press, 61 pages, \$6.95 paper) displays the kind of unique perspective and cunning turn of phrase that set Donnell apart from most of his contemporaries. His work can be lyrical and evocative and, as in a poem entitled "Traffic," his wit can be sharp and delightful. In part, the poem was taken from an Avis rent-a-car publication.

*The last quote must be a young man
schooled in the works of Li Po. It is Li
Po's message for America:*

*I was thrown from my car as it left
the road. I was later found in a ditch
by some strange cows.*

Donnell has a matter-of-fact style that might be called flat if not for its web of ironies and peculiar juxtapositions. A thought becomes absolutely clear in a single phrase simply because it stands in such unlikely proximity to the images that surround it. Because Donnell's verse is so consistent, these moments do not have the thud of a punch line that is the usual punctuation of so much contemporary poetry.

*The men I find most attractive are
always young, pragmatic, broad-
shouldered and just a little pretentious*



*That pretentiousness, I think, is like the
flattened ninth in a good blues.*

Donnell's verse is a great pleasure to read because it grows in its complexity with each reading, and still manages to be arresting the first time through. Its remarkable grace is best illustrated perhaps with an excerpt from the very beautiful poem, "Positions":

*This is one of the most beautiful
positions of prayer,
the woman lying on her back with her
arms at her sides,
knees raised, legs spread almost
casually, eyes open, blue,
and the man kneeling between her legs,
her body swimming
in his mind, part angel and part tree.*

A THOUSAND WORDS

The way we were: from cowboys and Indians
to the vanishing Inuit, by way of
dreamy clippings from the fashion mags

By CHRISTOPHER HUME

ANYONE WHO HANKERS after the good old days should immediately be made aware of several new books, starting with *Edmonton: Portrait of a City* (Reidmore, 340 pages, \$29.95 cloth), by Dennis Person and Carin Routledge. This collection of more than 400 photographs from 1871 to the present (with accompanying notes) offers a wealth of information. Here are the solemn and sour faces of the men and women who built Edmonton. Posing in front of their horses, wagons, houses, businesses, all standing stiff and frozen for the camera, they don't look like happy people. Perhaps the harshness of the climate and living conditions denied them any excess of cheeriness. Even seeing themselves remembered in this book seems unlikely to bring a smile to their lips. There are two problems with the way these photographs are presented: with very few exceptions, they are reproduced so small that it is difficult to figure them out, and most of them are too dark. Nevertheless, as a record of Edmonton, this is a valuable document.

The *Real Old West* (Douglas & McIntyre, 144 pages, \$29.95 cloth), by JoAnn Roe, comes much closer to making the good old days look good. Her book is a collection of duotones

Included in Eugene McNamara's *Forcing the Field* (Sesame Press, unpaginated, unpriced) came the sad notification that Sesame Press is giving up the ghost. Editors Eugene McNamara and Peter Stevens are simply "out of money and hope." Citing the "rules of grantmanship" and the pressures of an inflationary economy, Sesame has suspended activity but has made available 12 titles, among them Christopher Levenson's *The Journey Back and Other Poems*, Don McKay's *Air Occupies Space* and Alan Pearson's *Freewheeling Through Gossamer Dragstrips*. These "tiny perfect dozen books" are still available through Sesame Press, English Department, University of Windsor. □

taken by a rather mysterious Tokyo-born photographer named Frank Matsura at about the turn of the century in the Okanagan country dividing the U.S.A. and Canada. There are many wonderfully evocative shots of the characters who populated this rough but bountiful land. Real-life sheriffs, cowboys, outlaws, and Indians provided Matsura with a colourful cast for his thorough and brilliant photographs. Not only did he have an excellent sense of the dramatic and the historic, but he also enjoyed the humorous.

One of Matsura's favourite subjects was Johnnie Louis, a Colville Indian from the Aeneus Valley who acted as Matsura's interpreter and appears in a number of shots. Louis looked every inch the cowboy: scarf around his neck, six-shooter stuck in his belt, and, of course, the wide-brimmed hat.

Despite the enormous significance of his work, Matsura has remained all but forgotten until now. Historian JoAnn Roe has done us the favour of rediscovering this marvellous man and his magnificent photographs.

The final glimpse of the way we were comes in *Richard Harrington's The Inuit: Life As It Was* (Hurtig, 144 pages, \$19.95 cloth, \$14.95 paper). As a free-

lance writer and photographer, Harrington made five extended visits to the Arctic between 1947 and 1953. At that time the old Inuit way of life had just begun to vanish. Harrington writes of his adventures travelling with dog sleds, living in igloos, and hunting seals. In the 20 years since Harrington's last trip much has changed for the Inuit; today even they might look at Harrington's photos with amazement and disbelief. In one series we see the inhabitants of a particularly remote community who have gone without nourishment for weeks. Many of them will obviously not survive much longer. In the midst of all this misery one man has constructed a crude violin from an old tin and is playing it to amuse his family. Another series documents the last hours of an ancient Inuit woman. "I put some tobacco into her soapstone pipe," writes Harrington, "but she was too weak to suck on it. By next morning she had died of cold and hunger. Her relatives sealed the igloo."

Certainly a man who has seen what Harrington has seen is unlikely to romanticize the Inuit and their civilization. Nevertheless, he mourns the passing of the old way of life. "I find nothing uplifting in the future of the Inuit," says Harrington, "as they move from harsh realistic life into our world of superficial and materialistic values." By now the change has occurred: snowmobiles have replaced dog sleds, igloos have given way to prefabs from the south, and young men are no longer hunters. A mere two decades were all that was needed to bring about the final demise of a lifestyle dating back thousands of years. Harrington's photographs provide an invaluable record of a remarkable, resourceful — and vanishing — people.

Returning to the land of "superficial and materialistic values," we find *The Art of Len Gibbs* (Reidmore, unpaginated, \$35.00 cloth) by Betty Gibbs, who is Len Gibbs's wife. The less said about Len's art and Betty's book, the better. He trades on visual clichés in a way that makes Norman Rockwell look like a child-hater. His favourite themes are cowboys and kids. The former come straight out of Marlborough country; the latter are sweet enough to rot your teeth. Not recommended for those on sugar-free diets.

Jack Shadbolt has long been one of the leading figures on the Canadian art scene. *Act of Art* (McClelland & Stewart, unpaginated, \$49.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper), his third book, explores his newest image-making techniques. Each of the 30 works is a sort of montage, with a cut-out taken from a fashion magazine located somewhere

within the canvas. Shadbolt explains: "At first I thought of the fashion pictures as a notebook of source material . . . I started to clip out exciting sections, or to paint around them to isolate them for the eye. But once the painting started, I could not resist trying to relate each piece to an appropriate context. . . ." The results, a cross

between the dreamy and the humorous, might be considered very close to *shitick* by some. But if viewed in the same light as they were done, Shadbolt's paintings are an expression of delight and wonderment. After all, the book is dedicated to "the fashion mags and the fabric designers, the models and their photographers." □

IN TRANSLATION

Finally translated after 26 years, Milosz's *Issa Valley* produces the same resonant ambiguities as are found in today's best fiction

By PAUL STUEWE

ANYONE WHO HAS ever attempted to predict the winner of the next Nobel Prize for literature will probably have experienced that feeling of total bewilderment, compounded of roughly equal parts of pique, xenophobia, and ignorance, that occurs when the identity of the obscure Albanian documentary novelist or Paraguayan concrete poet is finally revealed. Although might may be right on the international political scene, the Nobel jury is clearly not afraid to look very far afield for worthy candidates. There have even been suggestions that the judges pride themselves on selecting a winner whose name will evoke only a puzzled "Who?"

If this does often seem to be the case, I suspect that the judges usually have at least one good reason for flouting the literary pundits of the great powers: they simply want to be able to read the work of their selection in their various native tongues, and the only way of ensuring that talented but little-known writers are translated into other languages is to award them Nobel Prizes. Thus *The Issa Valley* (translated by Louis Iribarne, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, \$18.95 cloth), a novel by 1980 Nobel winner Czeslaw Milosz, has finally appeared in English 26 years after its original publication but only one year after the announcement of the award, and we can safely predict that more translations are on the way.

Milosz is a Polish emigré now teaching at the University of California, and probably better known for his poems and essays than for his fiction. Although *The Issa Valley* isn't a poetic or didactic novel in the senses in which these adjectives are usually applied, its sensitivity to language and awareness of how histori-

cal forces impinge upon individual destinies both add welcome overtones to what is essentially a *Bildungsroman* set in a traditional agricultural society.

It is characteristic of the book's complexity that one immediately has to begin qualifying such apparently straightforward assertions. It is a *Bildungsroman* in the sense that the adolescent protagonist comes of age during the course of the narrative, but he isn't so much educated in life's particulars as sensitized to their relativity and impermanence; and although the society he lives in is in many respects bound by ancient traditions, it is also at the mercy of disruptive outside forces such as war and nationalism. These tensions between the familiar and the unexpected operate at every level of *The Issa Valley*, and they produce the kinds of resonant ambiguities that one finds in only the very finest contemporary fiction.

Perhaps the best example of this is Milosz's treatment of supernatural phenomena. "The Issa Valley has the distinction of being inhabited by an unusually large number of devils," begins an early chapter, and several reviewers have seized upon this sentence as proof of the book's essentially fantastic nature. Again, things aren't quite that simple: it eventually becomes clear that Milosz doesn't mean this literally, but is identifying a major element in the beliefs of the Valley's inhabitants without taking a position on its truth or falsity. It isn't that devils exist, but that devils exist if you think they exist; and even if you don't think they exist, you'll still have to contend with people who believe they do. Milosz also intimates that for "devils" we might substitute

"God," "morality," and other more socially acceptable notions and likewise generate a truthful model of how thinking and behaving occur, and this constant striving for the maximum possible meaning of his material is the quality that renders *The Issa Valley* a profound as well as an informative and entertaining novel.

Only entertainment is promised by Eino Hanshi and Eric Sjöquist's *The Pink War* (translated by Davis Jones, General Publishing, \$13.95 cloth), a humorous thriller about big-power politics that reveals how difficult it is to be simultaneously, or even consecutively, amusing and exciting. The plot operates on the principle that nothing succeeds like excess, and the absence of any discernible connection to reality assures that neither satire nor suspense will be forthcoming. It's difficult to imagine why anyone thought it worth translating.

A much more seriously intended but in its own way equally objectionable book is Patrick O'Neill's *German Literature in English Translation: A Select Bibliography* (University of Toronto Press, \$25.00 cloth), which attempts to deflect criticism of its decidedly non-inclusive contents by aspiring only to be "select." Before getting down to details, however, it should be stressed that the "German Literature" listed here includes a good deal of Austrian and Swiss writing, and that "Literature in German in English Translation" would have been a more accurate title. Austrian and Swiss writers are German in the same sense that Canadian writers are American — i.e. to some extent linguistically and to a much lesser degree in any other respect — and I'm frankly astounded at such an obvious blunder. I'm also surprised that, given the author's conception of his task, Hugo Ball, Wilhelm Busch, Richard Huelsenbeck, Ludwig Renn, and Jura Soyfer are not included, although the book is strongest in offering some information about the works of most of the major German-language writers.

But it's this "select" business that seems downright inexcusable. There just aren't enough English translations of literature in German to justify a hit-or-miss attitude toward their inclusion, especially when much space is wasted on itemizing the contents of the standard anthologies in the field. Users of this volume will not be able to rely upon it as a comprehensive guide to translations of the work of Hans Arp, Hermann Broch, Bruno Frank, or Karl Kraus, because in each case it omits one or more of them; and anyone interested in Max Brod, Hans Fallada, Leonhard Frank, or Erich Kästner had best look elsewhere, since each has three or more translated titles

omitted from the bibliography. About the kindest retitling of this haphazard effort I can offer is "Literature in German in English Translation: An

Arbitrarily Restricted Bibliography," which would at least be accurate as well as indicative of the book's usefulness as a work of reference. □

INTERVIEW

Keith Maillard traces his literary odyssey from adolescent scribbling in West Virginia to writing novels in the rainforest of British Columbia

By WAYNE GRADY

KEITH MAILLARD was born in 1942 in Wheeling, West Virginia, and spent two years studying English at West Virginia University. After travelling extensively around North America he immigrated to Canada in 1970 and now lives in Vancouver, where he teaches in the Creative Writing Department at the University of British Columbia. He has published three novels, *Two Strand River* (Press Porcépic, 1976), *Alex Driving South* (Doubleday, 1980), and *The Knife in My Hands* (General, 1981), and has completed two others, one of which, *Cutting Through*, is to appear this spring. During a trip to Toronto he talked to Wayne Grady about his peripatetic career:

Books in Canada: You teach song-writing at UBC. Are you a lyrical writer?
Maillard: It varies from book to book. There are some very lyrical stretches in some of the books, but there are also some very straight-ahead, Raymond Chandleresque prose passages too. I don't know how anyone can call *Alex Driving South* lyrical; I had the language in that pared right down to the bone, long stretches that are straight declarative sentences with eight words and a period.

BIC: But there's still a rhythm, a musical quality to your writing.

Maillard: Oh yeah, I'm very definitely an ear writer. I think you can tell on the page whether a writer is a visual person or an oral person. I read everything I write out loud, and if it doesn't flow I change it until it does. I think my writing comes right out of the oral tradition.

BIC: *Two Strand River* was published first, but I think you wrote *Alex Driving South* first.

Maillard: I've written five novels, and in my mind they make a cycle. I actually blocked out for myself, back in my 20s, a body of work — I sat down and made an outline of the books I thought it

would take. At that time I thought I'd need three. Of course that outline has changed a million times since then, but the general shape of it has stayed the same. The only one that was a total surprise was *Two Strand River*, but even that fits, in an odd way, into the five-novel sequence.

In my 20s I was very strongly influenced by Henry Miller. From Miller and from Kerouac I got the notion that you could write directly about experience. You didn't have to be literary — you didn't have to be James Joyce. It was a very refreshing notion. So I imagined a series of books that would start with someone growing up in West Virginia, and would take him up to the present. This schema I kept revising as I



PHOTOGRAPH BY RHODA WILLIAMSON

got older and actually began to accumulate experience. There are layers and layers of writing that go all the way back to high school, and I've kept it all and I've used it all.

The summer between grade eight and

high school, when I was 14, I wrote what I thought was the beginning of a novel. It was sheer wish-fulfilment — I didn't know anyone like the people in the story, which was about two guys riding around in a truck getting drunk. But their names were Alex Warner and Evan Carlyle. And even in that first version Alex was a kind of a thug and Evan was a bit of a jerk. They were my characters in embryo.

When I finally disentangled myself from university by dropping out, I wandered around the United States and Canada in the early '60s — Alaska, Nova Scotia, Florida, hitch-hiking, Greyhound buses, flying youth fare. I finally came to rest in Los Angeles, because of the continental tilt, in a rented room on Hollywood Boulevard that cost \$15 a week. In my room I had a bed and a girl's vanity table. I put the typewriter right in the middle of the vanity table and began to write my first real novel. It was called *The Rest Is Silence*, and starred Alex Warner and Evan Carlyle. I sent it to a whole bunch of publishers and very luckily it was rejected by all of them. Later on in Boston I wrote a second draft of it, but I got sidetracked out of fiction by the anti-war movement, working for the underground press and such — the CIA probably have a file on me as thick as the Manhattan phone book.

Then I came to Canada and started writing fiction again, this time about the whole hippy thing in the States. My wife got a job teaching school in Alert Bay, so we went straight out of the overheated, hip, paranoid, New Left scene right into this little community that was 80 per cent Kwakwaka'wakw Indian on the West Coast, where it rained all year. I wrote a 600-page novel called *Looking Good*.

After I'd moved back to Vancouver and split up with my wife, I reviewed in my mind this plan to write a series of novels. I realized I'd been carrying around all these files — dragging behind me this huge pile of impedimenta, junk, memorabilia, stretching all the way back to when I was 12. I revised my schema, expanded it, decided that the two books I'd already written were part of it. It was 1973, an extremely productive year for me. Without looking at all that impedimenta or any of the Alex/Evan material, I wrote it again. And this was the first draft of *Alex Driving South*. That summer I also wrote the first draft of a book I called *Difficulty at the Beginning*.

BiC: *Two Strand River came after that. Did you take its title from a children's story by Allison Uttley called "One-Strand River"?*

Maillard: Well, the nursery rhyme goes:

*Grey goose and gander,
Waft your wings together,*

*Carry the good king's daughter,
Over the one-strand river,*

which is the sea. I had fallen in love with, and moved in with, a children's librarian. She was an expert on children's literature, and the oral tradition, and she used to recite to me all these wonderful rhymes. Then I had lived in Alert Bay, with the Indian culture which had fascinated me. And the other element was from Boston, where some of my women friends — Priscilla Long, who edited a book called *The New Left*, and Bonnie Cohen from New York — were involved in what we called Women's Liberation, remember that phrase? They had an enormous effect on my thinking at that time. There was a core of literature we all read — Simone de Beauvoir was about the only serious writer then. I was also interested in what was called the Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Marcuse, R.D. Laing. I was calling myself an anarchist — not the bombs-in-the-basement school, more like the George Woodcock type, intellectual anarchism. And we'd sit around and talk about sex roles, trying to get "an analysis of the concrete situation" — it was wonderful how we talked in those days — "the phenomenology of it" — and we developed schemes in which children would grow up without stereotyped sex roles, they'd get neutral names, grow up anyway they wanted. And one day I thought it would be interesting to write a book about a man and a woman with switched genders. So all these things went into *Two Strand River* eventually.

BiC: *The title for Knife in My Hands is taken from one of Susan Musgrave's poems. Did you meet her at about this time, 1974?*

Maillard: No, I wasn't to meet her until years later. I seriously believe in interlinks below the surface that go on between people. I believe, for example, that the old woman in Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel* is the prototype for Mrs. Mackenzie in *Two Strand River*, even though it was years after I wrote *Two Strand River* before I read *Swamp Angel*. I think there's something about British Columbia that seeps into you, like the rain.

BiC: *What sparked Two Strand River? You said it came as a surprise.*

Maillard: Right. I went back up to Alert Bay to do a CBC program for *Our Native Land*, about the school where my ex-wife had taught. And when I came back I had all these Indian voices running through my head, from editing tapes, and I had the Boston thing, and I had the children's literature thing, and I thought My God, I will write an adult fairy tale. It'll be built just like a fairy tale, make no pretences at all of realism,

and it'll have a formal structure. You know: Once there was a king and he had three daughters. There were my two characters from Boston, a man who wants to be a woman and a woman who wants to be a man, and they're mirror images of each other, and Wham! I sat down and wrote the damn thing in six weeks. The critics hated it, but now they call it my best work, the bastards. Where were those idiots when I needed them? □

LETTERS

Lesbian images

Sir:

I'd like to comment on a statement Victoria Branden made in her review of *The Marriage Bed*, by Constance Beresford-Howe (November).

When referring to recent novels written by women, Ms Branden applied the term "destructive, crypto-lesbian, man-hatred." The all-too-common intimations being made in that comment about lesbians and their attitudes toward men are something that, being a lesbian myself, I can't ignore. Simply because we, as lesbians and feminists, choose to reject the present patriarchal set-up of the world and not define ourselves by our relation to men, we are viewed simplistically, and often maliciously, as bitter men-haters. This is both ignorant and narrow-minded, and often directly related to our obvious success in breaking from some of society's silliest but most stalwart rules and roles.

I would like to suggest that Branden read more of Jane Rule's work. It might brighten her pessimistic (and often justifiably so) attitude toward recent "women's novels."

Karen Boegh
Westbank, B.C.

Our mistake

Sir:

I was delighted to see my book, *Land of the Peace*, in your "recommended" column in the November issue of *Books in Canada*. Thank you for your support.

Could I ask you to note, however, that the publisher is listed incorrectly? My publisher is Thistle-town Press, not Turnstone.

Leona Gom
Surrey, B.C.

THE EDITORS RECOMMEND

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

FICTION

The Knife in My Hands, by Keith Maillard, General. An impressive, perhaps improbably dazzling, depiction of adolescent sexuality — hinged on a teenager's contradictory desires both to be a young girl and to fall for young girls — set in West Virginia in the late 1950s and early '60s.

NON-FICTION

Fragile Freedoms: Human Rights and Dissent in Canada, by Thomas R. Berger, Clarke Irwin. An often disturbing excursion into the past, ranging from the 18th-century expulsion of the Acadians to the battle over aboriginal land claims in the last decade, through which Judge Berger argues persuasively for the fullest possible charter of rights in our new constitution.

POETRY

Collected Poems of Raymond Souster, Volume 2, 1955-62, Oberon Press. A darker collection than the first volume, the poems here are often preoccupied with death, though Souster ultimately defies it. Again he has painstakingly revised the poems, and few are left unchanged.

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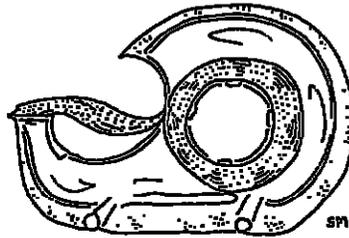
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CANWIT NO. 70

WE RECENTLY RECEIVED word that the University of New Brunswick's library insists on keeping Chaucer's *Treatise on the Astrolabe* on its science shelves — a revelation that made us wonder how Canadian titles might similarly fare at the hands of literal-minded librarians. *The Edible Woman* under health and diet, perhaps; *Surfacing* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* under crafts and trades; *The Mountain and the Valley* under geology; and *A Jest of God* under humour. We'll pay \$25 for the best list of misfiled titles that we receive before March 1, and an additional \$25 goes to A.J. Pattison of Fredericton for the idea. Address: CanWit No. 70, *Books in Canada*, 366 Adelaide Street East, Toronto M5A 3X9.

Results of CanWit No. 68

BLAME IT ON the Christmas mails, or a shortage of holiday cheer. Whatever the reason, Canadian authors received few personalized greetings from our readers. The winner is Joyce S. Jones of Scarborough, Ont., for a yuletide verse addressed to Robertson Davies:

*Within the walls of sound learning
May there be yule logs warmly burning.
Peace on earth the angels sang,
The world with Christmas anthems rang.
O, but The Rebel Angels had their say;
They sang off-key on Christmas Day!*

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:

After the War, by Andy Walnwright, Mosaic Press/Valley Editions.
Annan: A Child of the Poor House, by Pat M. Mestern, Back Door Press.
Assault on the Worker: Occupational Health and Safety in Canada, by Charles E. Reasons et al., Butterworths.
Between Seasons, by Anne Corbett, Borealis Press.
The Birch Bark Caper, by Stanley Burke and Roy Peterson, Douglas & McIntyre.
Blood Relations and Other Plays, by Sharon Pollock, NewWest Press.
Burnt Peas: Ghettos Poems, by Abraham Sutzkever, translated by Seymour Mayne, Mosaic Press/Valley Editions.

Canadian Capitalism, by Jorge Niosi, translated by Robert Chodos, James Lorimer.
Canadian Novelists and the Novel, edited by Douglas Daymond and Leslie Monkman, Borealis Press.
Canadian Papers in Rural History, Volume III, edited by Donald H. Akenson, Langdale Press.
The Charcoal Burners, by Susan Musgrave, Totem.
The Charlton Standard Catalogue of Royal Doulton Figurines, The Charlton Press.
The China Conspiracy, by Doug Hall, Nelson Canada.
Community Economic Development in Rural Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.
The Complete Guide to Astrological Sex Signs, by Barbara Justason, Brownstone Press.
Condiments to the Chef, by Ida Bruneau, Forbes Publications.
The Cost of Living, by Kenneth Sherman, Mosaic Press/Valley Editions.
The Dancing Sun, edited by Jan Andrews, Press Porcépic.
Dreadlock, by Lew Anthony, Seal Books.
The Dusty Road from Perth, by James Morton, Douglas & McIntyre.
Eighty-four Years a Newfoundlander, Vol. 1: 1897-1949, by William J. Browne, published by the author.
An Explanation of Yellow, by John Steffler, Borealis Press (1980).
Feeding Wild Birds in Winter, by Clive Dobson, Firefly Books.
50 Collages, by Ludwig Zeller, Mosaic Press.
The Fire, the Sword and the Devil, by Janet Rosenstock and Dennis Adair, Personal Library.
The Fitzhenry & Whiteside Book of Quotations, edited by Robert L. Fitzhenry, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Flash in the Pan, by James Barber, Douglas & McIntyre.
Gay Fathers: Some of Their Stories, Experience and Advice, by Gay Fathers of Toronto.
Gentleman Emigrants, by Patrick A. Dunne, Douglas & McIntyre.
The Great Wall, by Luo Zewen et al., Hurtig.
In Her Majesty's Civil Service, by David Reid, Unfinished Monument Press.
The Indian Summer of Arty Big Jim and Johnny Jack, by S. Joan Danielson Fossey, illustrated by Harold M. Moore, Gullmasters.
Industrial Development and the Atlantic Fishery, by Donald J. Patton, James Lorimer.
The Impossible Promised Land, by Seymour Mayne, Mosaic Press/Valley Editions.
Letters from China, by Maureen Hynes, The Women's Press.
Life Frobs, by Donald Galbraith et al., John Wiley.
The Lure of the Wild, by Charles G.D. Roberts, Borealis Press (1980).
Madame Beaulieu's Convection Oven Cookbook, McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
Massey at the Brick, by Peter Cook, Collins.
Meet Cree: A Guide to the Language, by H. Christoph Wolfart and Janet F. Carroll, University of Alberta Press.
Mimosa and Other Poems, by Mary Di Michele, Mosaic Press/Valley Editions.
New Canadian Drama, edited by Neil Carson, Borealis Press (1980).
Nightmare Tales, by Stanley K. Freiberg, Borealis Press (1980).
No Ordinary Pig, by Marion Ramsay, Borealis Press (1980).
No Reason Why: The Canadian Hong Kong Tragedy, by Carl Vincent, Canada's Wings.
One Solitude, by Orville E. Auli, Vesta.
Only the Best, by Meguido Zola, illustrated by Valerie Littlewood, Franklin Watts.
Open Gangway, by Stanley R. Redmen, Lancelot Press.
Party and Parish Pump, by R.K. Carty, Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
PCB Jam, by Lynne Kositsky, Unfinished Monument Press.
The Platinium Age of B.S., by Fred C. Dobbs, Van Nostrand Reinhold.
Poland: The Last Decade, by Adam Bromke, Mosaic Press.
The Quebec Problem, by William O'Grady, Borealis Press (1980).
The Real Old West, by JoAnn Roe, photography by Frank Matsura, Douglas & McIntyre.
Real Poetry, by James Deahl, Unfinished Monument Press.
Rob and the Rebels, 1837, by Jean Johnston, Borealis Press.
Say Nothing: The Art of Tibor and Peter Kovallik, by Keith Norman and J. Rebecca Robinson, Mosaic Press.
Sea Dreams, by Lyn Cook, Lancelot Press.
The Secret of Ivy Lea, by Janice Cowan, Borealis Press.
Silly Solly and the Moon-Baker, by Frank M. Tierney, Borealis Press.
Special Report on Alcohol Statistics, Statistics Canada.
Spirit Wrestler, by James Houston, Avon.
Structure and Change, by E.A. Richardson et al., John Wiley.
Summer of the Hungry Pap, by Byrna Barclay, NewWest Press.
The Super-Insulated Retrofit Book, by Brian Marshall and Robert Argue, Renewable Energy in Canada.
The Supreme Court Decisions on the Canadian Constitution, James Lorimer.
A Thousand Shall Fall, by Murray Peden, Canada's Wings.
Time Sequence Analysis in Geophysics, by E.R. Kunasewich, University of Alberta Press.
Tom, David and the Pirates, by Betty Clarkson, Borealis Press (1980).
Tom Mouse, by Glenn Clever, Borealis Press (1980).
Tom's Long Shadow, by Glenn Clever, Borealis Press (1980).
Twelve Voices: Interviews with Canadian Poets, by Jon Pearce, Borealis Press (1980).
The Vanishing Prospector, by Olive MacKay Petersen, Borealis Press.
Wake-Pick Poems, by Kristjana Gunnars, Anansi.
Where the Heart Is, by Neil Hanna, Borealis Press (1980).
Wild Mammals of Western Canada, by Arthur and Candace Savage, Western Producer Prairie Books.
The Wilderness Effect, by Charles Webb, Clarke Irwin.
Wry and Ginger, by Jack Howard, Borealis Press.

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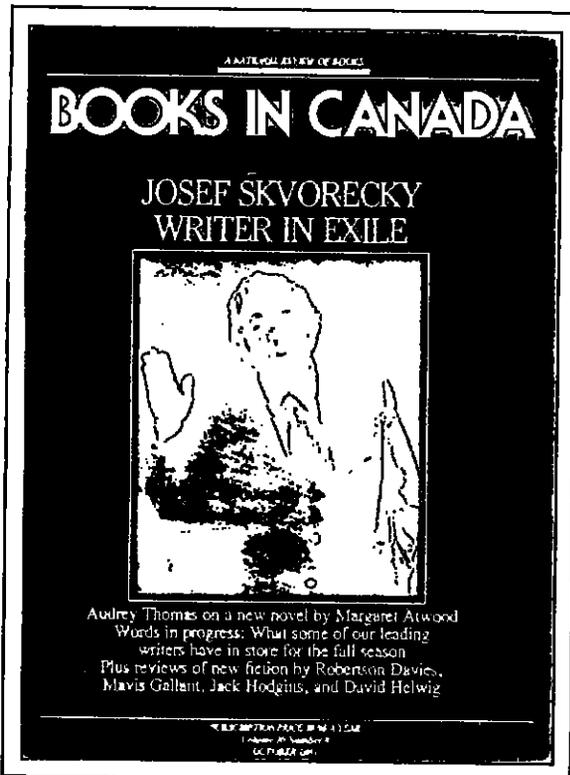
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