find only passing reference to actors and actresses from the legitimate theatre.

The names of the movies Mr. Ackery successfully promoted (he won several awards for his skill in this area) will be part of the nostalgia for some readers of this book: *Gone With the Wind* (a run of three months), *Canadian Pacific*, *War and Peace*, *The Bells of St. Mary's*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, etc. (The last was surely premiered in Vancouver before 1944.)

Even if one has only a limited interest in movies and their stars, this book has at least one alternative pleasure: the skill with which this relaxed and articulate writer captures the atmosphere of Vancouver over six decades — the crystal sets, speak-easies and rum-running, the grim years of the depression, the tone of fear and suspicion during World War II (especially after Pearl Harbor), the boom years of the 1950s. He refers, for example, to empty mansions in Shaughnessy during the 1930s and to housing shortages during the war years. Lack of space here forbids recounting any of the many humorous anecdotes, but this sentence catches the 1930s in Canada: "There were places where, if you wanted a drink on Sunday afternoon, they'd serve it in silver tea services and pour it out into china cups."

One of Ackery's statistics tells succinctly the later story of the Orpheum: in Canada in 1948 movie attendance was over 219 million; by 1977 it was just over 76 million. Intermittently Ackery proudly focuses on the beautiful Orpheum building (built 1927, 2,871 seats, staff of 65; usherettes earned $15.00 a week), and he briefly refers to his contribution to the recent "Save the Orpheum" campaign.

The book under review cannot stand scrutiny as serious social history, or as a comprehensive history of either the movies or theatre in Vancouver, but it makes very pleasant reading. It will make many readers say: "So that's what Vancouver was like then."

University of Victoria ROBERT G. LAWRENCE

Stephanie, by Joan Austen-Leigh. Victoria: A Room of One's Own Press, 1979. Pp. 284.

If Joan Austen-Leigh has written a disappointing book, the fault does not lie in the theme, the classic one of what happens in an immigrant family when to the generational struggle is added youth's repudiation of

the parents' social values. The family in *Stephanie* is that of Edward Carruthers-Croft, some day to become Sir Edward Carruthers-Croft, Bart., a not too successful lawyer in Victoria in the mid-1930s. Carruthers-Croft, "this sad shy complicated man," has more than his faltering practice to depress him. His wife, the beautiful Celia, characterized by one of her friends as "a selfish shallow woman," is a bitch who epitomizes everything that is false, hypocritical, snobbish and unfeeling about the "Island English" of a generation ago. Such at least is the view of the narrator, her elder daughter Stephanie, who on the verge of her teens secretly writes romances in the woodshed.

Mother is presented to us as bad, bad, bad. Dreaming of being invited to dinner at Government House, she deprives her overworked husband of his Banff holidays in order to mount an extravagant garden party to which she inveigles the Lieutenant-Governor and the press. Wanting her children to grow up with English accents, she proposes to send Stephanie to Cheltenham Ladies' College. She will not permit Stephanie to call Robertson, the gardener, "Mr. Robertson." She winces to hear somebody described as "well-heeled." In the flower shop she loudly laments: "If only there were a really *good* florist in this town." She insists that Stephanie's new bicycle be a Raleigh, not a CCM. She glares at a poor old Chinese pedlar. She doesn't like dogs in the house. Entirely without shame, she observes ". . . how much I dislike Canada. The sooner we can go back home to live, the better." Mother is clobbered enthusiastically throughout the novel. Only at the end does our author, who seems to identify very strongly with Stephanie, administer the *coup de grâce* and have Mother die of pneumonia brought on by her own vanity (going out on a cold night she insists on wearing her swansdown boa instead of the coat urged on her by her husband).

Not all the Brits in this novel are bad. There are the good Brits, those who are earnestly working away at becoming real Canadians. Thus there is Cousin Winifred, who has become plain Miss Croft and has won her reward, becoming secretary to a deputy minister. At the opposite pole from Mrs. Edward Carruthers-Croft is the Canadianized Scottish woman, Mrs. MacPherson, mother of Stephanie's friend Maggie. Mrs. MacPherson is a compendium of all the virtues. She talks of her "hubby," eats in the kitchen, does not use a butter knife, and says "eether." Whereas the wretched Mrs. Carruthers-Croft buys *petits fours* at Pierre's, Mrs. MacPherson does her own baking, and she "wouldn't go back to Scotland for all the tea in China." As for Maggie, she bravely asserts: "If Canada is

good enough to work in, it ought to be good enough to live in," a piece of precarious logic which nobody challenges.

BC Studies is not normally a journal of literary criticism, so we need spend little time on the strengths and weaknesses of *Stephanie* as a novel. Joan Austen-Leigh does have certain virtues as a writer. She employs a decent literate style, and she can create the occasional evocative piece of description: Stephanie's clandestine ride on the streetcar, the departure of the night boat for Vancouver, first arrival at the Westcliffe School for Girls (surely Strathcona Lodge on Shawnigan Lake). On the other hand structure is rather weak, characterization is superficial, and the dialogue at times becomes stagy and unconvincing. One cannot really believe that even a singularly unhumorous retired general, coming upon Maggie, aged about 12, dressed in Major Carruthers-Croft's Great War uniform, would declare, "How dare you impersonate a British officer . . . you're committing a criminal offence and I warn you I am telephoning the police!" As for Stephanie's escape from a fate worse than death on the night boat to Vancouver, that is creaking melodrama. The more sophisticated devices of literature are signally absent. At one point, however, we are told that the present baronet, Sir Richard Carruthers-Croft back in England, is a middle-aged idiot with the mind of a six-year-old child — presumably this is symbolism. There seems to be little point in tracing the literary ancestors of Stephanie, not the least of whom is Anne of Green Gables.

Presumably the editors have chosen *Stephanie* for review in these pages because its author has set out to recreate the Victoria of half a century ago. Sometimes a novel does so evoke the scenes and the spirit of an earlier time that it becomes a most valuable adjunct for the historian. How well has Austen-Leigh recreated the Victoria of the 1930s? Not particularly well. There are careful references to the Carruthers-Crofts' McLaughlin-Buick being angle-parked on Fort Street, to the *Empress of Russia* being moored at the Outer Wharf, to the Standard Old Broadcast on the radio, etc., but these things are pretty external. They do not take us into the spirit and values of the time as does the fact, which I find noted in my diary, that all the radio stations in Vancouver went off the air when word was received of the death of George V. Somehow Joan Austen-Leigh does not take us back to earlier years the way Ethel Wilson did in *The Innocent Traveller.*

About three-quarters of the way through her novel, our author permits Stephanie some insight into her father as he really is: "Suddenly I saw him as a man, not very happy, with an ambitious wife, a rebellious

daughter, *a man who was obliged to make his living in a country to which he could never fully adjust.*" If only the author had commenced her novel with that awareness and had maintained it, she might have given us something we could have treated more seriously. There is a fine novel to be written about the Victoria English, their absurd snobbery, their genuine attachment to values which we are unwise to scorn, and their often complex relationships with their young. But this is not that book.

University of British Columbia G. P. V. Akrigg

Sacred Places: British Columbia's Early Churches, by Barry Downs. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1980. Pp. 175, *illus.*

It is frequently assumed that once a society begins to have a proper concern for the past, it has finally reached a very real degree of maturity: it is willing to limit its youthful exuberance and with this curtailment of attitude reject the concept, at least in part, that the only good is the new. The assumption that follows is that progress is not just the novel, but that there are other aspects as well. In the not too distant past, wherever planners congregated they expounded the thesis which could be summarized as "out with the old, in with the new." The contemporary replaced what was regarded as antediluvian. But in recent years there has been a very radical change of outlook. What was thought to be uninspired Victorianism, for example, is now presumed to have a heritage character. Buildings which only a few years ago would have been bulldozed to the ground are now cherished. Indeed, it may well be that there is too much concern to preserve and not enough to be creative; that there is a kind of malaise of spirit in nostalgia which does not bode too well for a country. Not everything is worth preserving merely because it is old, enthusiastic conservationists to the contrary.

Older societies, particularly those with an abundance of so-called historic buildings, are constantly faced with the challenge of finding a way to use them in a contemporary society. In a few instances skilful conversion does give them a new life, but all too frequently such is not possible; nothing is more dreary and desolate than buildings kept for their historic character that are now merely shells. The structure survives, but it has no relationship to the community except as a curiosity.