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Summer, 1967

PUBLISHING IN CANADA

Articles

BY GEORGE WOODCOCK, NAIM KATTAN, JOHN MORGAN GRAY, W. J. DUTHIE, JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO, WYNNE FRANCIS

Answers to a Questionnaire

BY EARLE BIRNEY, KILDARE DOBBS, ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH, ROBERT FULFORD, RODERICK HAIG-BROWN, CARL F. KLINCK, HUGH MACLENNAN, ROBERT WEAVER

Reviews

BY A. W. PURDY, GEORGE WOODCOCK, GEORGE BOWERING, W. H. NEW, DAVID WATMOUGH, E. B. GOSE, SANDRA DJWA, DAVID MACAREE, RONALD SUTHERLAND, ROBIN SKELTON, ALAN R. SHUCARD, FRED COGSWELL, J. A. LAVIN, MARY JANE EDWARDS, H. B. TIMOTHY, S. E. READ

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Canadian poets are playing an important role in helping Canadians to understand their nation and its peoples. It is our hope that this worthwhile work will continue in the years ahead. Among recent Canadian poets we have published are Michael Collie: *The House*; Robert Finch: *Silverthorn Bush*; Richard Outram: *Exsultate Jubilate*; Michael Parr: *The Green Fig Tree*; David Wevill: *A Christ of the Ice Floes*. Should we be considering your work?

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contents

ARTICLES

QUESTIONNAIRE AND ANSWERS

REVIEW ARTICLES

BOOKS IN REVIEW

INDEX

PUBLISHING IN CANADA

Preface to a Symposium

George Woodcock

A SYMPOSIUM on Canadian publishing, which most of this issue of *Canadian Literature* is, needs little in preface. Most of the main articles are by writers connected in some way, as publishers, booksellers or commentators, with the book trade in this country. It was to supplement these essays by a body of opinion from people outside the trade but vitally interested in it, that I also resorted to the old device of the questionnaire — "Opinions on Canadian Publishing" — which has allowed the condensed expression of views on many aspects of the subject. The contributors were chosen to represent various literary interests — and interests are by definition vested. Three are writers primarily — the novelists Hugh MacLennan and Roderick Haig-Brown, and the poet Earle Birney; Robert Fulford of the *Toronto Star* is the most knowledgeable literary journalist in the Canadian newspaper world; Arnold Edinborough is editor of *Saturday Night* and a critic; Robert Weaver is editor of *Tamarack Review* and originator of many important CBC literary programmes; Carl F. Klinck is General Editor of *The Literary History of Canada* and a leading academic critic; Kildare Dobbs is many-faceted — writer, former publisher's editor and now magazine editor.

Deliberately, I asked plain questions. One contributor lamented their generalized tone, but, as all experienced interviewers know, the precise and detailed question can often box in the field of possible answers much too closely. I was concerned to provoke as many and as free opinions on Canadian publishing as possible. In my view, a good deal of detailed and useful comment has emerged

from this approach. Two questions raised generally unilluminating responses, and for the sake of space I have omitted them and their answers. Also, where answers were "Yes" or "No" or so brief as to allow summarization, I have done this in the prefatory notes to the questions. Where the answer, even though brief, was illuminating or individual enough to stand on its own. I have presented it in complete form.

One point insufficiently noted in the answers to the questionnaire is the astonishing expansion of the role of the private presses in the publication of verse. This is largely covered by Wynne Francis in her article on the Little Presses, but it is worth adding — to give some idea of the rapidity and importance of this change — that in 1959 (the first year for which *Canadian Literature* published an annual bibliography), 24 books of verse were published in Canada, of which 8 were from private presses, while only seven years later, in 1966, 67 volumes were published — almost three times as many — and 52 of them came from the small presses. Even then it is doubtful if all the mimeographed pamphlets published in various corners of the country were included.

A final general comment, on a subject also barely covered by the answers to the questionnaire, is perhaps to the point. Many books by Canadians are published abroad, in London, New York or Paris, and only become available here when they are distributed by Canadian publishers or jobbers on an agency basis. This is mainly because there is still an insufficiently large public in Canada for books which do not have a strong Canadian interest. I, for example, lived in Canada for seventeen years, and during that time published eight books in Britain (some of them in the United States as well as in French, Italian, Swedish and Japanese translations) before my first Canadian-published book appeared. Naturally, every writer is pleased to gain a wide international sale for his books, but for one very good reason it is unfortunate, for readers as well as for writers, that in such cases there is not also separate Canadian publication. Books by Canadian writers who publish abroad come back to their native land with a heavy mark-up because of agency sales, so that British and American readers buy them much less expensively than Canadian readers. The next necessary revolution in Canadian publishing is surely the production of separate Canadian editions of all books by writers working in this country, no matter what their subjects. When a Canadian publisher finds it commercially feasible to underwrite a separate edition of a book by a Canadian on Ancient Egypt or the Merovingian kings, one will feel that Canadian publishing and the Canadian reading public have at last come of age.

CANADIAN PUBLISHING

Answers to a Questionnaire

by Earle Birney, Kildare Dobbs,
Arnold Edinborough, Robert Fulford,
Roderick Haig-Brown, Carl F. Klinck,
Hugh MacLennan, Robert Weaver

1. What is worst in Canadian publishing?

Editorial standards. Editorial initiative. Dim-witted old ladies in backrooms instead of bright young talent. KILDARE DOBBS

Editorial weakness. I hear complaints constantly from writers about the passive and often indifferent editorial attitudes of the Toronto publishing houses, and those writers who have dealings with publishers in New York say that they are treated quite differently there. Possibly the economics of publishing in a country with a small population has something to do with the editorial situation. Still, it's noticeable that the Toronto publishers don't employ editors who are personally influential in the literary affairs of the country; the last book editor I can recall with this kind of influence was Kildare Dobbs when he worked for Macmillan a few years ago. The editorial policies of the two most important Canadian publishers, McClelland & Stewart and Macmillan, are dominated by their managers, Jack McClelland and John Gray, and I think that by now it would be very difficult for a strong and independent writer to find a place in either firm. For that matter, the editorial policies of the other houses seem to be dominated by their managers. ROBERT WEAVER

Half-hearted promotion and marketing of books. CARL F. KLINCK

The desire on the part of some publishers to have a list at all costs. This means the inclusion of shoddy works which should never see the light of day.

ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

Lack of enterprise and imagination, though this is not universal with all of them. Generally it stems from the fact that nearly all Canadian publishers are branch plants of English firms, and in the past the home offices regarded them largely as outlets for their overseas trade. It was the policy of at least one to down-grade Canadian work. HUGH MACLENNAN

The fact that it must operate for a limited market and a largely unconcerned public, both of which are still further reduced by the existence of two language groups with, seemingly, little intercommunication. RODERICK HAIG-BROWN

From the author's view, I think it is the near-certainty that whatever is published will not circulate outside Canada. In other words, that less than 3% of the world's English-speaking public will ever be reached. EARLE BIRNEY

What is worst in English-speaking Canadian publishing is a lack of audacity. Example: the most important (in terms of influence) thinking to emerge from Canada in recent years is that of Marshall McLuhan; yet commercial Canadian publishers have had nothing to do with McLuhan. One of his books was published by the University of Toronto Press, the other by McGraw-Hill, a subsidiary of the American firm. This was a difficult area for a commercial publisher a few years ago, and none cared to enter it. It is only now that McLuhan is famous that Canadian publishers are taking an interest in his work. Example: in England and the United States, books on current affairs are now common; in Canada they are still rare. They demand speed, imagination and audacity, qualities Canadian commercial publishers rarely exhibit.

After the lack of audacity, perhaps the worst aspect of most Canadian publishers is their inability to sell (as opposed to merely issuing) books. ROBERT FULFORD

2. What is best in Canadian publishing?

What is best about the best of the English-language publishers is a certain residual idealism. They are businessmen, but they realize that they have a duty to the community as a whole, and they take pride in doing that duty, whatever the costs. This is old-fashioned in the best sense, and is too seldom recognized as the virtue that it is. ROBERT FULFORD

The fact that it exists at all. RODERICK HAIG-BROWN

Again from the author's point of view, the feeling that if one's book is any good, it is likely to find *some* publisher, even though not necessarily an established one.

EARLE BIRNEY

Sales effort. KILDARE DOBBS

A few publishers — Longman's, Oxford, General Publishing, for example — are looking more actively for Canadian books, and hopefully, they will help to make the publishing scene a more lively and varied one. ROBERT WEAVER

Recently, the production of volumes on academic subjects and various arts. CARL F. KLINCK

The determined efforts by Macmillan, University of Toronto Press, Clarke Irwin and one or two others to restrict their list and publish only what they consider a good book. ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

A new willingness on the part of a few to take chances with new Canadian writers. HUGH MACLENNAN

3(a). During the past decade, have Canadian publishers become more adventurous in their choice of books?

The general view was that they had become more adventurous, but the "yes" of those contributors who replied briefly was qualified by terms like "within limits" and "apparently". Those whose views were emphatically affirmative enlarged upon them.

Undoubtedly, and in this respect McClelland & Stewart (a native house) leads the way, most notably with its Canadian Library paperbacks. But these should be available everywhere that paperbacks are sold, and not merely in bookstores. I understand the bookstores enforced this sales practice, but I may be wrong. HUGH MACLENNAN

In the last decade our publishers have become more adventurous in both the form and the content of their books. *Form*: They now produce far more ambitious books than in the past — *No Mean City* (University of Toronto), *Birds of the Northern Forest* (McClelland & Stewart), *French-Canadian Furniture* (Macmillan) are examples of books which are physically ambitious. This change reflects both the influence of the Canada Council (which subsidizes some expensive books) and the growing affluence of book-buyers. *Content*: At the same time, the publishers have taken advantage of weaker censorship laws to publish books which in the 1950's would have seemed impossibly daring — Layton's poems, *Love Where the Nights are Long*, *Beautiful Losers*, perhaps *Place d'Armes*. In this case the change appears mainly in the work of one publisher, McClelland & Stewart. At the same time, it should be pointed out that Canadian publishers have played no significant part in the fight against censorship. The one important case (*Lady Chatterley's Lover*) was carried to the Supreme Court of Canada by New American Library. (In fairness, incidentally, I have to add that Canadian publishers, through their association, offered to assist financially in this fight.) ROBERT FULFORD

No, why should they? Adventurous probably means unsaleable. KILDARE DOBBS

Somewhat. Mostly because McClelland & Stewart has been forcing the pace. ROBERT WEAVER

Yes, though it has taken them a long time. The leader in this regard has been Jack McClelland, though the creation of a Canadian list by people like Doubleday and Longmans has also burst certain barriers. Ten years ago it would have been quite impossible for Cohen's book *Beautiful Losers* to have been published. ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

3(b). Have they become more sophisticated in the design and production of books?

Here the view was more positively affirmative than on 3(a). The five contributors who answered briefly were agreed that on the whole there had been real improvement in this direction.

Yes, particularly the University of Toronto Press, though Oxford and Macmillan deserve favourable mention here. Clarke, Irwin have always produced elegant books and they continue to do so. ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

Yes, and a good number of Canadian books are now good-looking books. From time to time some of the book designers go too far, and like a movie or television director, use the writer as a tool. But generally I'm very much in favour of what is happening in the design and production of Canadian books, and people like Frank Newfeld, William Toye, Allan Fleming, and others deserve the credit for it. ROBERT WEAVER

Certainly Canadian publishers are more sophisticated in the design of their books, but there are still far too many weak spots — the Ryerson books are mostly deplorable, Macmillan's are seldom impressive, and the McClelland & Stewart paperbacks continue to be mediocre or worse. Compared to 1957, however, our books are much closer to a good international standard. A novel, for instance, is likely to be better treated visually in Canada than in Britain. Macmillan's books are often better looking than Doubleday's, though not as good looking as Atheneum's, Knopf's or Little Brown's and not as consistent as Random House's. Our picture books are vastly improved and now can be shown at an international book fair without shame. ROBERT FULFORD

3(c). Have they become more enterprising in their public relations?

Here the name of one publisher came up with astonishing frequency. In addition to the answers we reproduce, three contributors remarked on the achieve-

ments of McClelland & Stewart in developing public relations. The only other publisher commended specifically (once) was the University of Toronto Press.

Not really, so far as I can see. But except for a book so obviously a best-seller even before its publication that it can underwrite radio and television or bus and subway advertising, the publishers' promotion departments seem to be limited in what they can actually accomplish. ROBERT WEAVER

Not really. They still rely too much on launchings and getting their authors on to local TV and radio interview shows. Again, Jack McClelland understands this area much better than anybody else, the classic example being *The Comfortable Pew.* ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

In public relations only one firm has shown any significant change for the better in recent years — McClelland & Stewart, which sells its books with vigour and imagination and whose President is his own best public relations man. In other cases, public relations is still mainly a routine activity, carried on at the lower levels of each company; mostly the publishers depend for publicity on the luck of the draw, which means that they generally lose out to more energetic areas of activity. ROBERT FULFORD

3(d). Have they become less inclined to publish bad books because they are Canadian?

Here there was less agreement than on the previous questions. Carl F. Klinck and Kildare Dobbs thought there had been no improvement, the latter adding that "some bad books are saleable if they have local relevance." Earle Birney saw an improvement among "the leading publishers", Arnold Edinborough thought there was perhaps less inclination to bring out bad books "but some clangers still get published", and Roderick Haig-Brown remarked that "undoubtedly some very bad books are still published solely because they are Canadian in content".

This is a tricky question. Twenty years ago it was my impression that it was policy with some firms to publish really bad books. Their purpose was to indicate that the parent houses were trying their best with no material. The real aim, of course, was an excuse to mark up U.S. imports. But this situation has improved if not disappeared. HUGH MACLENNAN

I don't think Canadian publishers, generally, are any less inclined to publish bad books than they were a decade ago. Certainly there are far too many bad Canadian books. But is it fair to say these are published *because* they are Canadian? New York publishers, who presumably have no parallel nationalistic motives, also

publish many books for which it is hard to imagine any excuse, literary or commercial. Rather, I think publishers in all countries tend to set up publishing "programmes" and little office bureaucracies, and that these require, in effect, a set number of books per year. The books are then found, whether they have value or not. The unfortunate aspect is that good books are crowded out — they don't receive proper bookstore space, or they may be insufficiently promoted.

ROBERT FULFORD

In 1967, probably not: this year is a cross that we all must bear. But the question is at least partly irrelevant. Canadian publishers ought to publish a wide range of Canadian books, and some of them are bound to be inferior. But how else do you serve readers whose tastes in books are at least as impure as my own tastes are? How else do you bring on a writer except, often, by publishing him before he is fully at ease in his craft; or support an established writer except, sometimes, by publishing him in periods when he isn't at his best? In this respect I don't think that Canadian publishers are really so different from publishers in London or New York.

ROBERT WEAVER

4. Have the possibilities of paperback publishing been properly exploited in Canada?

Among the shorter answers there was a general consensus that the possibilities in this direction had not been properly exploited. Roderick Haig-Brown felt that there was "an immense potential" which had not yet been even "properly examined, much less exploited", but Carl F. Klinck pointed out that there had been "considerable improvement of range, nevertheless."

Perhaps not. But the sale of really cheap paperbacks depends everywhere upon the existence of a mass market that this country doesn't really possess. Some years ago Collins and Harlequin tried to service a mass market in Canada, and failed. Their books looked drab and their editorial policies were, to be polite, erratic; I think that the same criticisms can be made of McClelland & Stewart's new Canadian Best-Seller Library. But I'm still not convinced that there's much chance of succeeding with Canadian reprints in this market. I'm sorry, however, that a more selective reprint series like McClelland & Stewart's New Canadian Library had to be left to the initiative of one firm; I think it would have been a better idea to form a subsidiary with access to the back lists of all Canadian publishers.

ROBERT WEAVER

I don't think so, but then I don't know what the possibilities are. McClelland, University of Toronto and Ryerson are moving in the right direction (a direction set by McClelland in the New Canadian Library and the Carleton Library), which is towards university and high school auxiliary reading. The trade possibilities of paperbacks in Canada must be very limited.

ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

The possibilities of paperbacks have not been properly exploited yet. In this we have greatly improved during the last few years — the University of Toronto, Oxford and Clarke, Irwin are all publishing handsome quality paperbacks, and there are the shabby but useful books of McClelland & Stewart's New Canadian Library and Carleton Library. But there has been hardly any serious attempt to penetrate the cheap (under one dollar) news-stand market. This, it seems to me, is more likely due to lethargy than (as the publishers sometimes say) to problems of marketing. The popular Canadian books — including the *very* popular ones, like *Anne of Green Gables* — should be available cheap, as similar American and English books are. ROBERT FULFORD

Probably not, but already too much so far as authors' royalties are concerned. When *Turvey* went into pocketbook, sales doubled, but royalties dropped to one-tenth per book. EARLE BIRNEY

5. Are Canadian publishers too much restricted by their role of distributors for British and American houses?

There may be restriction in this, but if so it is a matter of inclination and laziness rather than compulsion. I am aware that inclination towards growth and independence of Canadian branches has been restricted at times, but it would be hard to show that the restriction has not been economically sound.

RODERICK HAIG-BROWN

Yes, most Canadian Houses (but not all, now) are playing it safe, as glorified agents for foreign books, and taking no risks. But the leading Canadian firms are learning how to make money, or not lose it any way, from Canadian authors.

EARLE BIRNEY

Most of them are nothing but distributors. KILDARE DOBBS

The word isn't "restricted"; it's something like "paranoid". Those firms that do nothing but distribute books in Canada imported from England or the United States have a minimal stake in the publishing community here. Subsidiaries of foreign publishers sometimes make the gesture of publishing some books by Canadian writers (Doubleday, for example); others don't even bother to make the gesture (Random House, for example; Bennet Cerf should come up to Toronto to investigate). Most Canadian houses are burdened by too many books from English and American firms which they must attempt to service. Canadian publishing has been gelded by the agency system — and the best firms wouldn't have existed without the support of the agency system. ROBERT WEAVER

It is possible that profits derived by Canadian publishers in their role as distributors of British and United States books are too high and too tempting for gambling on books of Canadian origin. Perhaps Canadian publishers could not exist without

performing this role as distributors; yet there are now foreign publishers setting up Canadian establishments to skim off the distributing profits. The role of the Canadian publisher may be changing; McClelland & Stewart appears to be a successful Canadian firm engaged largely in the trade of books of Canadian origin.
CARL F. KLINCK

The restrictions are less now than they used to be, and most of the major houses use their connections to promote Canadian authors, which is a liberation rather than a restriction. Many of the larger houses abroad are now handled entirely by firms which are more jobbers than publishers anyway. ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

There was a time when Canadian publishers, because they made so much money out of distributing British and American books, took a rather cool view of their responsibility to sell their Canadian books. Perhaps this accounts for their rather over-gentlemanly approach to promotion. I like to think that dependence on distribution of British and American books is gradually diminishing.
ROBERT FULFORD

6. Has publishing in Canada a future, and, if so, what?

It has a future so long as Canada has, and exactly as much. So long as this country remains a small political satellite of the United States, involved in the American economy of waste and war, our cultural future will be negligible. "Publishing" needs defining. The future is with the disc, tape, film, even more than with the printed book. The publisher who understands this will alone survive into the next century. EARLE BIRNEY

Yes. It will grow rapidly with the educated population, if it learns to diversify its books and appeal to more special groups. KILDARE DOBBS

Of course. It will probably remain as chaotic and illogical as it now is, improve its economic situation, and put more emphasis on Canadian books. Most Toronto publishers are probably not important enough to tempt the English and American publishing cartels. ROBERT WEAVER

Canadian publishers have a future here and abroad, provided that they exercise the ingenuity of, say, the Australian publishers who do very well in selling Australian books in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. CARL F. KLINCK

Reading has a future, and the book has a great future. I can't think that Canada doesn't share in this. How, I am not prepared to say, because it's a matter of economics. In the magazine field I would know what the future is (within the limitations of my crystal ball), but in book publishing the situation is entirely different. ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

Definitely a large future owing to the rapid increase in population and a remarkably growing interest in Canadian books as their merit becomes truly international. Also the Canadian market is a good one, as I know from experience. My novel, *The Watch that Ends the Night* (1959), was 12 weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list (from place 12 to 8) and sold 26,000 in the States. It sold the same number here. HUGH MACLENNAN

Of course. Gradual growth in all lines of publication, tied to population growth and improved education. RODERICK HAIG-BROWN

I believe there is a future for Canadian publishers as publishers to the world, printing books in Toronto or Montreal for distribution in the United States, Britain and elsewhere. The advantage would be that the Canadian writers could be represented internationally by publishers genuinely and permanently interested in them — in this way, for instance, Callaghan would be permanently in print in the United States and Britain, as I think he should be. At the same time this greater business activity would eventually raise the level of editing in Toronto and Montreal and have a generally favourable effect on the Canadian literary community. But this growth will be slow and will depend on the international popularity of certain Canadian writers. It has already started with a non-commercial house, the University of Toronto Press. ROBERT FULFORD

7. Any other comments?

Only that publishers should have greater confidence and understand that an international literature, based on Canada, already exists. HUGH MACLENNAN

In general, the change for the better which has come over Canadian publishing in the twenty years that I have been in Canada is remarkable. When I think of the inexpressibly ugly books that Ryerson used to put out, when I think of the junk that used to be published, I am astonished at the elegance and the richness of Canadian publishing now. On public affairs I think we do remarkably well, both for readers and writers; in poetry we surely are a model for the rest of the world. Fiction alone lags behind. The reason for this latter is, of course, economic risks for the writer, who would prefer to get published abroad where the market is bigger. ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

There is in my opinion no comparison between the state of Canadian publishing 35 years ago, when I began publishing books, and today. At that time one was not aware of any such thing as Canadian publishing in the real sense. To publish, one turned to London or New York or both. This remained pretty much the case until after World War II, and there has been steady improvement ever since. Though I am not thoroughly informed on the point I suspect that U.S. copyright law works against Canadian publishing more than any other single factor, though

I understand there have been some recent improvements. Canadians, French or English, are in an advantageous position in that they have alternatives to native publication. At the same time I believe all publishing is declining in the following respects:

(1) Interest in and concern for the individual writer.

(2) Quality of content, partly due to (1).

(3) Concern for keeping good books in print. This is most marked and reflects, as does (2), a sort of mass-market obsession with turnover, perhaps economically inevitable.

I seriously doubt that Canadian publishers had too much choice in the whole matter. They are limited by economics, competition and their own capabilities (aren't we all?). Textbooks or something of the sort are the backbone of most firms and literary publishing, here or elsewhere, takes its chances among these larger issues.

RODERICK HAIG-BROWN

(1) The gravy is in school and college textbooks. Since they're "recommended" (or not) there's danger of corruption. Whether there *is* in fact corruption I don't know.

(2) Canadian publishers, as mercantilist branches of foreign houses, have made no effort to seek markets in Africa, South America or other emerging countries.

KILDARE DOBBS

Despite everything I may have written above, the Toronto publishing scene would be bleak indeed without Jack McClelland and his firm. I suppose it's a comment of sorts on this symposium that it's common knowledge that McClelland & Stewart is not one of the fat cats on the Toronto publishing scene. I suppose it's also a comment on this symposium that the two firms about which I hear the most criticism from writers are McClelland & Stewart and Macmillan, the houses which have done the most in recent years for Canadian publishing and have still failed to create the editorial climate so necessary to the book business in Canada.

ROBERT WEAVER

It seems to me that the growth of the University of Toronto Press, from a tiny house publishing a dozen or less books per year, to a major university publisher, is one of the two major events of Canadian publishing in this period. The other major event is the change in McClelland & Stewart from a fairly modest and not very distinguished house to an aggressive and expanding corporation.

ROBERT FULFORD

Canadians, I think, profit greatly by being exposed to books from abroad as well as to those produced at home. I believe that this condition should be encouraged

and even consolidated if (i) the Canadian mark-up on foreign books were substantially lowered (inviting an increase in number of books sold), and if (ii) Canadian books of quality could be guaranteed publication and extensive sale. In the fluctuations of the market in Canada, Canadian books lead a precarious existence; they should be the staple items come what may. CARL F. KLINCK

L'EDITION AU CANADA FRANCAIS

Naim Kattan

Les difficultés qu'éprouvent aujourd'hui les éditeurs du Québec ne sont pas nouvelles. Leurs racines plongent dans l'histoire de l'édition au Canada, voire dans l'histoire tout court. On n'imprimait pas de livres au Canada sous l'ancien régime, et après la Conquête il fut interdit d'importer des livres de France. Ce n'est qu'en 1830 que cette interdiction fut levée. Les premiers imprimeurs de Montréal et de Québec offraient leurs services aux anglophones et aux francophones en même temps. Le Gouvernement, l'Eglise et les journaux étaient leurs premiers clients. Longtemps, ils furent leurs seuls clients. Les libraires, qui cumulaient les fonctions d'éditeurs préféraient importer des livres plutôt que d'assumer le risque d'en publier eux-mêmes. Certes, les produits des auteurs canadiens figuraient sur les rayons des libraires-éditeurs. Ils constituaient, on l'imagine, une infime minorité.

Un événement a modifié radicalement le visage de l'édition au Canada français: la deuxième guerre mondiale. L'occupation de la France coupa subitement les libraires canadiens français de leur source d'approvisionnement. Les besoins du public ne diminuèrent pas pour autant. Il fallait trouver d'autres sources. Du jour au lendemain, Montréal devint un grand centre d'édition. Des écrivains français illustres, réfugiés en Amérique, faisaient paraître leurs ouvrages au Canada et les éditeurs canadiens français rééditaient les chefs d'œuvre de la littérature française. Montée fulgurante qui ne fut que de courte durée. Ces maisons d'édition n'ont pas survécu. La guerre finie, elles disparurent les unes après les autres. Au cours des dix années qui suivirent la libération de la France,

l'édition au Canada français fut aux prises avec la plus grave crise de son histoire. Elle ne s'en est relevée qu'avec l'entrée en scène, dans le monde de l'édition, du Conseil des Arts du Canada et du Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec. Il ne serait pas exagéré de dire que, sans l'intervention des instances gouvernementales, l'édition au Canada français pourrait difficilement survivre.

Où en est l'édition aujourd'hui?

Voici quelques chiffres fournis par le Service des Lettres et du Livre du Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec:

Année:	*1963*	*1964*	*1965*
1. Nombre d'auteurs qui ont publié	276	226	248
2. Nombre d'ouvrages publiés	360	325	304
3. Nombre de maisons d'édition	47	39	35
4. Total des volumes imprimés	1,422,998	1,328,222	1,190,696
5. Tirage moyen	3,744	3,906	3,917
6. Valeur au prix de détail des ouvrages imprimés	2,366,473	2,464,118	2,386,598
7. Prix moyen d'un ouvrage	1.66	1.85	2.02

Le livre scolaire représente plus de la moitié de l'édition en langue française au Canada. Il compte, d'après le rapport Bouchard (page 148) pour la moitié de toutes les ventes des libraires de la Province. Les problèmes qui se posent aux éditeurs de manuels scolaires diffèrent de ceux auxquels les autres éditeurs ont à faire face. Du reste, chacun des deux groupes d'éditeurs dispose d'une association distincte: L'Association des Editeurs Canadiens et la Société des Editeurs Canadiens de Manuels Scolaires. Il existe, par ailleurs, une Société des Libraires Canadiens et une Société des Libraires Grossistes Canadiens. Les quatre organismes se sont groupés en une fédération: Le Conseil Supérieur du Livre. Ce Conseil publie une revue: *Vient de paraître* (qui est un bulletin du livre au Canada français) ainsi qu'un Catalogue de l'Edition au Canada français. Cependant, la principale activité du Conseil est d'organiser chaque année Le Salon du Livre de Montréal auquel prennent part non seulement les éditeurs canadiens mais ceux de tous les pays francophones et notamment ceux de la France, de la Belgique et de la Suisse.

Pour comprendre le fonctionnement et la géographie de l'édition au Canada français, prenons le cas d'un écrivain qui vient de terminer son manuscrit. S'il est romancier, il a le choix entre plusieurs éditeurs. Il peut présenter son roman au Cercle du Livre de France. Il sait que cet éditeur donne un prix annuel de $1,000 et qu'il publie non seulement le roman du lauréat mais ceux de la plupart des finalistes. Il sait aussi que les descriptions les plus audacieuses et les opinions les

plus provoquantes ne rebuteront pas cet éditeur qui, quantitativement, est le plus important éditeur de romans au Canada français.

L'auteur du manuscrit pourra se présenter aussi chez HMH (Hatier, Mame, Hurtubise). Cette maison publie depuis plusieurs années des ouvrages de qualité: essais, romans, nouvelles. Elle groupe les succursales de deux grands éditeurs français: Hatier, qui se spécialise dans l'édition scolaire et universitaire, et Mame dont la spécialité est le livre de caractère religieux. Le directeur et l'associé canadien de la maison est Claude Hurtubise. Cette maison est l'une des rares qui s'intéresse à la traduction des livres canadiens anglais. Elle a offert au public francophone des ouvrages d'auteurs aussi différents que Hugh MacLennan, Walter Gordon et Thomas Sloane. Elle vient même de marquer un point sur le plan international: elle a obtenu les droits pour l'édition française des ouvrages de Marshall McLuhan. La traduction en sera faite au Canada et l'édition parisienne suivra celle de Montréal et c'est Mame, l'un des propriétaires de la maison HMH, qui en assumera la responsabilité.

D'autres éditeurs publient également des romans: Beauchemin, qui se spécialise cependant dans la publication et la diffusion des livres scolaires. L'auteur sera également bien accueilli par Jacques Hébert, propriétaire et fondateur des Editions du Jour. Ce n'est pas la première maison d'édition que fonde Jacques Hébert. Journaliste de combat, grand voyageur, M. Hébert créa, il y a une dizaine d'années, une maison d'édition d'un genre tout à fait nouveau et inusité: Les Editions de l'Homme. Il faisait paraître, à des prix populaires, des ouvrages d'une grande actualité. Un jour, il eut l'idée de réunir des lettres adressées au Devoir par un instituteur anonyme du Lac Saint-Jean. Publiées sous le titre *Les Insolences du Frère Untel*, ces lettres obtinrent le plus grand succès dans l'histoire de l'édition française au Canada. En quelques mois, il s'en est vendu plus de cent mille exemplaires. Quelques années plus tard, Jacques Hébert quittait cette maison en raison de certaines divergences avec son associé et fondait Les Editions du Jour dont il demeure aujourd'hui le seul propriétaire. Cette maison connut des fortunes diverses mais semble surmonter les difficultés qu'elle a éprouvées au cours de ces dernières années. Jacques Hébert a diversifié ses éditions. Il continue à publier des ouvrages d'actualité mais fait paraître aussi des romans, des recueils de poésie, des essais. Il vient d'obtenir un grand succès international. En effet, c'est lui qui a publié *Une Saison dans la Vie d'Emmanuel*, de Marie-Claire Blais. On sait que ce roman obtint le Prix Médicis, à Paris, et qu'il a déjà une grande carrière aux Etats-Unis, en France et bientôt dans d'autres pays. C'est la maison d'édition canadienne qui possède les droits internationaux.

Jacques Hébert adopte, pour lancer ses livres, une technique qui bouleverse toutes les habitudes de l'édition. Chaque titre est une surprise. Le nom de l'auteur et le thème de l'ouvrage ne sont révélés que la semaine de sa mise en vente. Autrement dit, cet ancien journaliste crée autour de chacun de ses livres un "événement".

Les Editions de l'Homme poursuivent la publication de livres d'actualité mais se spécialisent de plus en plus dans la réédition des romans (notamment ceux d'Yves Thériault) et dans les ouvrages qui s'adressent à des publics des plus divers (astrologie, gymnastique, éducation, sexuel, contrôle des naissances, etc.).

Si l'auteur du manuscrit est un poète, il peut s'adresser à plusieurs maisons qui se spécialisent dans cette activité peu rentable. La maison la plus prestigieuse dans ce domaine c'est l'Hexagone. Fondée par un groupe de jeunes poètes dont plusieurs, par ailleurs, sont membres du comité de rédaction de la revue Liberté, cette maison est très exigeante. Elle accorde autant d'importance à la qualité du texte qu'à sa présentation. Son animateur, Gaston Miron, est d'ailleurs l'un des poètes les plus remarquables du Canada français. Est-il besoin de dire que les Editions de l'Hexagone n'ont aucune assise financière et qu'elles survivent depuis des années grâce à l'acharnement et à la volonté de ses animateurs dont: Jean-Guy Pilon, Paul-Marie Lapointe, Gilles Hénault et Michel van Schendel?

Mentionnons parmi les autres éditeurs de poésie les Editions Esterel et les Editions Déom qui, par ailleurs, publient aussi des romans et des essais, ainsi que la Librairie Garneau de Québec.

Si l'auteur du manuscrit est un universitaire, il peut s'adresser aux éditions de son université. Depuis quelques années, les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, les Presses de l'Université Laval et les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa ont considérablement augmenté le nombre des ouvrages qu'elles publient. On trouve dans leurs catalogues des titres de livres très spécialisés mais on y découvre aussi des ouvrages de critique littéraire susceptibles d'intéresser le grand public.

Si l'auteur a des préoccupations religieuses, il peut proposer son manuscrit à plusieurs maisons dont la principale est Fides. Celle-ci est l'une des maisons d'édition les plus importantes du Canada français puisqu'elle publie, depuis de nombreuses années, des livres de caractère général, bien que les ouvrages qui portent son nom présentent un certain aspect chrétien.

Les Pères Jésuites disposent de leur propre maison: les Editions Bellarmin. L'auteur peut également frapper à la porte d'autres maisons religieuses: Les Editions Pélican et les Editions Levrier. L'auteur d'avant-garde, surtout s'il est de tendance séparatiste, peut diriger ses pas vers une nouvelle maison qui, ces dernières années, a publié, en plus d'une revue, des ouvrages d'un grand intérêt littéraire: les Editions Parti Pris.

L'aide à l'édition

En 1958, L'Association des Editeurs Canadiens s'adressait au Conseil des Arts pour obtenir une aide à l'édition. Il est devenu évident que l'édition des œuvres littéraires n'est pas rentable au Canada français. Plusieurs facteurs rendent la vie de l'éditeur canadien français extrêmement précaire. D'abord, le marché est restreint. Il se limite à six millions de personnes. Mais là n'est pas le plus grave problème. Certes, le Canadien français est un bon client de librairie mais c'est un client choyé. Rares sont les pays où l'édition subit la concurrence des plus grandes maisons de l'Occident. Ainsi, le lecteur canadien français trouve sur la devanture de sa librairie toutes les nouveautés parisiennes. On achète pour près de $10,000,000 de livres français par an au Canada. De plus, le public lecteur se recrute au Canada français dans les classes cultivées, autrement dit, parmi des personnes qui peuvent lire non seulement le français mais aussi l'anglais. Rarement ce lecteur attend-il la traduction française d'un grand succès américain. Il l'achète dès sa parution dans sa langue originelle, parfois en livre de poche. A la concurrence américaine s'ajoute celles du Canada anglais et de la Grande Bretagne. Par conséquent, la marge est mince qui est laissée à l'èditeur canadien français.

Le Directeur du Cercle du Livre de France, M. Pierre Tisseyre, a répondu, dans un article publié dans la revue "Vient de paraître" à la question: Où va l'argent du lecteur au Canada français? Voici le tableau qu'il dresse:

Auteur	10 p.c.
Libraire	40 p.c.
Distributeur	15 p.c.
Imprimeur	30 p.c.
	95 p.c.
Editeur	5 p.c.

Pour qu'un livre puisse se vendre à un prix abordable au grand public, il est absolument nécessaire de répartir les frais de composition, de mise en page, de correction d'épreuves, etc., sur trois mille exemplaires. Cette loi de l'édition s'impose aux éditeurs de New York, de Paris et de Londres. Leur marché leur permet d'y faire face. Pour l'éditeur canadien français, dont le marché est vingt à cinquante fois plus petit que celui de New York ou de Paris, la même loi s'impose. Il est évident que sans l'aide du Gouvernement, il ne parviendra pas à s'en sortir. Le Conseil des Arts du Canada et le Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec sont au fait des exigences de la réalité canadienne. La culture canadienne ne pourrait survivre si les éditeurs canadiens ne pouvaient mener normale-

ment leur travail. Or, il ne le peuvent pas sans aide et sous subventions. Le Conseil des Arts donne une aide directe à l'éditeur. En 1965-66, les éditeurs canadiens français ont reçu de ce fonds le montant de $19,000 (comparé à $14,000 au Canada anglais). Les subventions sont données sur présentation d'un manuscrit. Un jury du Conseil des Arts décide si le manuscrit mérite d'être publié. Dans ce cas-là, le Conseil des Arts accorde une subvention qui couvre en gros les frais d'imprimerie.

Les éditeurs canadiens français, dans un mémoire que leur Association a présenté au Conseil des Arts, trouvent paradoxal que le jury qui se préoccupe de la valeur du livre examiné recommande plus facilement un ouvrage de grande qualité à peu près rentable plutôt qu'un ouvrage de qualité moindre mais d'une rentabilité douteuse. Ils demandent de plus que le montant des subventions soit augmenté afin que le livre puisse être vendu à un prix abordable.

Il est très difficile de juger de la justesse du point de vue des éditeurs. Sur quoi le Conseil des Arts devrait-il se baser pour octroyer une subvention à l'éditeur? Sur la rentabilité de l'ouvrage ou sur sa valeur littéraire? Il semble que la valeur littéraire soit une valeur plus sûre et, qu'à la longue, plus apte à favoriser le développement culturel au Canada. La prime donnée à la qualité aboutira sûrement à assainir le marché de l'édition. Sans doute la rentabilité peut-elle être un facteur qui déterminerait le montant de la subvention mais non point la subvention elle-même.

Le Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec, créé en 1961, poursuit une politique d'aide soutenue au livre, de sa création à sa diffusion. Les écrivains reçoivent des subventions dont le montant, en 1965-66, était $87,500. De plus, le Ministère aide les auteurs par des achats directs de leurs ouvrages. Une somme de $35,000 était réservée à cette fin en 1965-66. Le Ministère donne aussi une subvention spéciale aux éditeurs, connue comme l'assurance-édition. Cette subvention se traduit par l'achat d'un certain nombre d'exemplaires des livres publiés. Les éditeurs voudraient que le Ministère des Affaires culturelles donne ses subventions aux éditeurs sur la présentation d'un manuscrit plutôt que de leur offrir une assurance-édition une fois le manuscrit publié. Si l'éditeur sait que ses risques sont amoindris, il peut plus facilement faire paraître un nombre plus considérable d'œuvres littéraires.

Editeurs français et éditeurs canadiens

Etre publié en France est pour l'auteur canadien une sorte de consécration. C'est aussi une ouverture sur le marché mondial. Nombre de romanciers, de

poètes et d'essayistes canadiens ont vu leurs œuvres paraître en France. Par conséquent, ce phénomène n'est pas nouveau. La question se pose aujourd'hui avec plus d'acuité. Depuis quelques années, les éditeurs français ont essayé de lancer qui un romancier qui un poète canadiens. Les Editions Robert Laffont ont même créé une collection d'auteurs canadiens. Ces tentatives n'ont pas donné le résultat voulu et les jeunes romanciers et poètes furent engloutis dans la masse des auteurs lancés sur le marché chaque année. Dans cette perspective, l'automne de 1966 fut en tout point exceptionnel pour la littérature canadienne. Plusieurs grandes maisons françaises: Gallimard, Grasset, Laffont avaient un poulain canadien. On a parlé de Réjean Ducharme pour le Prix Goncourt et Marie-Claire Blais obtint le Prix Médicis.

L'intérêt des éditeurs et des lecteurs français pour la littérature canadienne est réel. On n'y décèle plus le paternalisme complaisant d'antan. Les auteurs canadiens ne sont plus aux yeux des Français ces lointains cousins quelque peu anachroniques, perdus dans leurs steppes glacées. On les retrouve sous le visage de jeunes gens en colère qui vont jusqu'à lancer des bombes pour affirmer leur attachement à la culture française. Ce sont surtout des écrivains qui ont une voix, un ton peu familiers aux oreilles françaises. Il est trop tôt pour dire si cet engouement est passager et n'aura point de lendemain. Son implication sur l'édition n'en est pas moins réelle. Si l'auteur canadien prenait l'habitude de s'adresser directement aux éditeurs français, le rôle de l'éditeur canadien serait considérablement amoindri. Il y eut certaines tentatives de co-édition, mais on ne peut pas dire qu'elles aient abouti à des résultats tangibles. Sur ce plan, il est loin d'être évident que les intérêts de l'éditeur et de l'auteur coïncident.

Pour un jeune romancier canadien français, l'édition en France peut mener à une audience internationale, à des traductions en diverses langues. Par contre, l'auteur perdrait la possibilité de gagner les divers prix littéraires canadiens que les Gouvernements fédéral, provincial et municipal offrent chaque année. Sans doute, l'éditeur canadien pourra, dans les années qui viennent, assurer pour ces auteurs les traductions et l'audience mondiale. D'ailleurs, la participation, chaque année plus importante, des éditeurs canadiens à la Foire du Livre de Francfort, atteste de leur volonté d'entrer de plain pied sur le marché mondial de l'édition. Il y a cependant des habitudes et une expérience qui ne peuvent s'acquérir qu'avec le temps et l'auteur canadien peut manifester une préférence pour les maisons françaises qui possèdent une grande tradition. Celles-ci acceptent parfois que l'auteur soit publié d'abord au Canada. Paradoxalement, plus un auteur canadien a de chance de réussir sur le plan mondial et moins les éditeurs français voudraient

céder les premiers droits à des éditeurs canadiens car, comme on le sait, l'éditeur obtient ses plus grands revenus des droits de traduction et d'adaptation.

C'est dans le domaine des manuels scolaires que les rapports entre les éditeurs canadiens et les éditeurs étrangers posent, à l'heure actuelle, les plus graves problèmes. Dans le cadre de l'entente France-Québec, conclu récemment, le Ministère des Affaires culturelles est intervenu d'une façon déterminante dans un arrangement qui favorise l'utilisation de manuels français dans l'enseignement supérieur au Québec. Cet accord prévoit une subvention de trente pour-cent aux étudiants sur des ouvrages scientifiques et techniques édités par des maisons françaises. Or, ces maisons, notamment les membres du groupe Sodexport, produisent beaucoup de traductions d'ouvrages américains. Dans un mémoire présenté le 16 décembre 1966, au Ministère de l'Education, la Société des Editeurs Canadiens de Manuels scolaires exprime ses craintes que cet accord n'aboutisse à défavoriser les éditeurs canadiens. Elle demande que l'accord France-Québec concernant l'aide aux manuels scientifiques et techniques soit dénoncée. D'autre part, les éditeurs canadiens redoutent encore davantage l'implantation au Québec de grands éditeurs américains de manuels scolaires. Pour plusieurs maisons d'édition c'est déjà fait. La Maison Holt, Rinehart & Winston a maintenant pignon sur rue à Montréal. Son programme d'édition débute par des œuvres littéraires d'avant-garde: une revue "Théâtre vivant", des recueils de poèmes, un roman . . . Les milieux d'édition de Montréal redoutent ce qu'ils appellent une invasion. Pour eux, la publication d'œuvres littéraires n'est qu'une façade. Le but ultime et véritable de cette maison c'est de vendre les manuels scolaires qu'elle publie en anglais et dont elle pourrait offrir des traductions françaises. Déjà cette maison s'est engagée dans une polémique avec les défenseurs de l'édition québecoise.

Il serait trop facile d'imputer le malaise dans l'édition des manuels scolaires à l'invasion de l'étranger. Les difficultés auxquelles les éditeurs canadiens des manuels scolaires font face tient surtout à la profonde modification dans les structures et dans l'esprite de l'enseignement. Le Ministère de l'Education doit approuver les manuels scolaires utilisés dans les écoles de la Province. Il est en train d'examiner tous les manuels qui furent approuvés avant le 1er juillet, 1962. Pour les éditeurs, la modification profonde de l'esprit et de la politique de l'enseignement se traduit par une obligation de modifier leurs manuels. Dans leur mémoire, ils se déclarent conscients des déficiences de certaines de leurs éditions et ils sont prêts à moderniser le contenu pédagogiques des ouvrages. Mais ils souhaitent que les approbations soient faites rapidement et que les normes en

soient précises. On peut dire que même l'édition des manuels scolaires ne garantit plus aux éditeurs des revenus importants. Et le malaise qui sévit dans l'édition scolaire ne manquera pas d'avoir des répercussions sur l'édition en général.

L'édition au Canada français traverse une période de transition. Si les éditeurs résistent aux difficultés auxquelles ils font face, ils pourront affirmer leur autonomie. Autrement, ils seront absorbés par l'édition étrangère et ne joueront dans la promotion de la littérature canadienne qu'un rôle secondaire, et ceci nonobstant l'aide du Conseil des Arts et du Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec.

CANADIAN BOOKS

A Publisher's View

John Morgan Gray

THE PROBLEMS THAT WRITERS and publishers talk about together have usually to do with money and the publishing situation. Writers are always searching for the means to make a living from writing, or to find an occupation that will leave them time and energy to write. This is as true in England and the United States as in Canada, but the smaller Canadian market sharpens all aspects of the problem. This is not a return to the charge that Canadians do not buy books; Canadian books, at least, they support quite well. But the Canadian market for books in either English or French is not a large market and will not be so for many years. In our circumstances, the emergence of a cadre of professional writers, and of a publishing trade equipped to serve them, was bound to be slow. There are some who believe that it hasn't happened yet.

Of professional writers who live chiefly by the writing of books there are certainly few in Canada, and few enough anywhere else. In older and more sophisticated societies there were always some writers who lived on private means, but the majority in all societies have had to struggle and contrive in order to live while practising their chosen art. So generally was this the case of the more important writers that it is not difficult to believe the struggle has been itself an essential element in the writer's experience.

To talk of "professionals" is not simply to define a means of earning a livelihood; by that definition the writers of radio scripts and of jingles for advertising commercials are alike entitled to call themselves professional writers. "Professional"

implies qualifications, a finished skill in a trade or craft or art that exists apart from its earning power. In that sense we have scores of writers in English in Canada who, if not in all respects professional, are also neither hacks nor merely gifted amateurs.

Teaching and the communication media have always provided a base from which would-be writers have sought to move toward the work of their choice. University teaching or other campus-based occupations now serve this purpose for some of our most important writers, among whom obvious examples are Hugh MacLennan, Earle Birney, Robertson Davies, James Reaney, Frank Scott, George Woodcock, and Irving Layton, though there are many others. Journalism and writing for broadcasting or films are major occupations for a large and vital group that includes Bruce Hutchison, Pierre Berton, Joseph Schull, Mordecai Richler, W. O. Mitchell, and Charles Israel.

A number of important writers who have little enough in common fall outside these two obvious groupings. They appear to have fewer external supports for their book writing, or at least no other major commitment. Chief of these must be Morley Callaghan, a great influence, and almost a legend in Canada from his youth onward. Various in their writing directions, but sharing what must at times be a perilous singleness of devotion to the writing of books are Farley Mowat, Thomas Raddall, and Margaret Laurence.

Unsatisfactory as the listing of names must be, there still remain two important groups to recognize. There are first those who as yet defy classification but who have done at least one book of great promise and might at any time do more: Adele Wiseman, Sinclair Ross, Colin MacDougall, Phyllis Grosskurth, Kildare Dobbs, and possibly Leonard Cohen. A very important group is that of the academic writers in Canadian history who have chosen to stay within their field, but in terms of a national literature are making a major contribution which could come from nowhere else. And finally there are a few highly gifted writers who fall into no clearly defined group, among them Ethel Wilson and Roderick Haig-Brown.

Whatever is to come, a great deal has happened to Canadian writing during the past fifteen years. It has been stimulated by our post-war nationalism and by our growing prosperity. It must seem that better publishing is also a product of these factors, and in part it unquestionably is. Yet it is at least proper to record that the houses that have led the way in the movement — McClelland & Stewart, Macmillan of Canada, the University of Toronto Press, the Ryerson Press, and Longmans — were trying, less successfully but no less hard, in the 1920's, and

through the frustrating years of the depression, to further Canadian writing; this at a time when it had no possible economic justification.

Even now the publishing trade suffers from the same basic disability that hampers most writers in Canada. A brilliantly successful book, within our borders, will not set a writer free from financial pressure for long; nor will it offset many of the promising but unsuccessful books in a publisher's list. Ten years ago at a Writers' Conference in Kingston, I said publicly that the relationship of author and publisher in Canada lacked a rational economic basis; that the Canadian author who depended on his books for money did not make it from sales in Canada; that the Canadian publisher made none of the net profit of his business from the overall result of his Canadian general publishing.

I revert to this now, because the statement has been rather widely quoted and discussed. Ten years ago I found only one Canadian publisher to challenge the opinion, and he was better known for his generous intentions than for his arithmetic. It was properly recognized that even if publishers issued Canadian books as loss-leaders, as props to their egos or from better motives, they could hardly be counted on for major and sustained adventures. They could not, for instance, continue for long to subsidize a young writer who showed no measurable sign of arriving, of achieving major critical acclaim, if not financial independence. Even the Canada Council, far above the market place, is not prepared to do that.

Though the situation in Canada has not changed beyond recognition in ten years, I would not now make the same statement without qualification. The publisher's "no net profit" has at least become "a possible profit". And if Canadian authors still do not look to Canada for any important part of their income, a successful book may now make them a surprisingly good return from this market — though it will still be far below what a comparable success in the American market would yield an American author.

The economic problems of the established writer have lessened substantially in ten years, though not chiefly from the sales of books. The increase in academic salaries, and in the returns from free-lance writing, have left him free to write only the books of his own choice. Such changes help the writer's situation, but they do not much simplify the publisher's task. Increased sales in Canada, as elsewhere, have almost all gone to non-fiction: biography, popular history, and current events. Fiction, which was in trouble ten years ago, is in worse trouble now, and the publication of poetry has become almost an empty act of defiance. Too many novelists and poets seem to be lookouts who have little of general interest to report. There are notable exceptions, but notably few.

PUBLISHERS MAY FEEL they have contributed something to the improved climate for some Canadian writing, but it is not easy to see what they can do for the areas that have worsened. Publishing can support a generation's vision or view of the world it lives in, but it cannot provide a new insight. There are some who consider that support in the form of much more publishing of poetry and fiction at the apprentice stage would help; the assumption is that this would help writers to learn their craft and presumably to sharpen and clear their vision. Both parts of this proposition may be true, but the second at least is in doubt. Against such doubt the publishers must set the cost of well-intentioned proposals of this kind. This is first of all a cost in dollars, and secondly in the health of the book industry. In the second, at least, all writers of books are involved. Merely to issue more volumes of poetry and more first novels through commercial publishers to booksellers would probably incur losses at the rate of something like $500 per volume of poetry, and $1,500 or more per unsuccessful novel. An industry which is still gathering strength cannot contemplate such losses on any large scale for long. Just as much of an obstacle is that no publisher wishes to win a reputation for publishing unsaleable books. If the public doesn't want his books and the bookseller can't sell them, such a publisher can look for a diminishing welcome. Such a programme, if prolonged, would actually work against publisher, bookseller — and author. That it stimulates and teaches to see one's work in print there is no doubt, but normal commercial publication and distribution by commercial houses is not the way to increase greatly what is being done. Other ways — such as a Poetry Book Club — are being thought about, but it is questionable how far over-taxed publishers can, or should be expected to involve themselves in such concerns.

If it is reasonable to wonder whether Canadian publishers should be expected to act beyond their commercial interests, it is realistic to ask how far they are likely to do so. At present there are about forty genuine publishing houses in English Canada, of which ten appear to be Canadian-owned. Together, the forty sell and stock the books of almost eight hundred British and American houses. Apart from the Canadian-owned houses, perhaps ten of those owned abroad have long had some record of support for Canadian writing. Though it is part of world publishing tradition that the industry has always published many books at an anticipated loss, that tradition is everywhere being put to the test in a world of mounting costs, and to specially severe tests in Canada. Publishing has to be recognized as a business accountable to shareholders. Formerly, the shareholders were owner-managers, but increasingly, as houses "go public", management must

face shareholders more interested in money than in books. This trend is not likely to be reversed in Canada, where foreign ownership of public companies is so widespread. Though our publishing resources have greatly increased theoretically in recent years, they may not in practice have done more for Canadian purposes than keep pace with the growing number of manuscripts.

Within the next five years there will be about twenty publishers in Canada equipped to publish Canadian books in English; that is, to take a manuscript, arrange for and finance its printing and binding in appropriate form, publicize it and offer it for sale. Though that may seem (and in many ways is) a simple series of steps, each calls for immense care, skill, and experience. Of those twenty publishers, about half will be chiefly interested in publishing "general books"; that is the trade term for books that reach the public through bookstores and libraries. Since textbook writing is chiefly the work of teachers, it will be to the publishers of general books that Canadian writers will tend to look for publication.

There is, of course, nothing to prevent an author who writes in English from sending his book to a publisher in London or New York; but for the majority of books written in Canada, the logical publishing centre is Toronto. Toronto did not become the centre of English language publishing in this country as the result of any discernible plan, and it is pointless to regret or resent it. At the time British publishers began to set up branch offices in Canada, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Toronto was the capital of the most densely populated English-speaking area in Canada, seat of an already distinguished university and of the largest provincial school system. Canadian school book houses were already in being there, the Methodist Book and Publishing House, Copp-Clark, Morang, and W. J. Gage, and it was logical for Thomas Nelson, Macmillan, the Oxford Press, and Dent to settle near them. In the next few years several young Canadians who had learned their trade under William Briggs of the Methodist Book Room started businesses of their own, among them J. G. McClelland, Fred Goodchild, Thomas Allen, George McLeod, and S. B. Gundy. The cluster was formed and by 1914 Toronto was unalterably the English-language publishing centre for Canada.

These rather primitive publishing organisms did not at once develop maturity of editorial judgment or much interest in the craft of bookmaking. They existed chiefly to sell imported books and were chronically short of skilled manpower and of capital, but they did from the first publish their more important books in Canada. The first war checked this promising development and the industry had no time to regain momentum before the depression, followed by the second great war, froze the situation for another twenty-five years.

Toward the end of that time there were indications of a new vitality in both writing and publishing. It was little enough, perhaps, but books like Hugh MacLennan's *Barometer Rising* (1941), Sinclair Ross's *As for Me and My House* (1941), Earle Birney's *David* (1942), and Bruce Hutchison's *Unknown Country* (1942), carried more concentrated excitement and promise for Canadian readers than they had ever experienced or had seen any reason to expect. They were the more ready to welcome a group of books that spoke to them urgently and directly as the war ended: Gwethalyn Graham's *Earth and High Heaven* (1944), Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* (1944), Ross Munro's *Gauntlet to Overlord* (1945), Edward Meade's *Remember Me* (1946), Gabrielle Roy's *The Tin Flute*, and, first of a long list of fine books in Canadian history, Donald Creighton's *Dominion of the North* (1944) and A. R. M. Lower's *From Colony to Nation* (1946). It appeared that a new day had been announced; on these early showings, the critics could not be certain of the probabilities, but to the Canadian reader, who had waited too long, it shone brightly and seemed infinitely promising. For about three years, Canada bought Canadian books as it had never done — and wasn't to do again for a dozen years.

Canadian publishers shared in the excitement and basked in the bright day though their role had been a modest one. Much of the initiative that had found and launched these books had come from American publishers. In the main, the Canadian houses performed their historic role of selling the books. It was not that Canadian publishers would have been incapable of recognizing talent, but they had limited resources and experience for its exploitation. More serious, the writers lacked confidence in them and tended to look first for American publication. But when the flurry of excitement died down it had done its work: it had awakened an appetite for Canadian books; it had given authors confidence and made them aware of their problems; it had given the publishers some increased confidence in the market, and a new notion of what they might become.

It is an indication of the comparative sophistication of several "Canadian" houses (i.e. companies that had been functioning in Canada for many years, whatever their origins) that the next step in their development could be taken in so short a time. The recognition of what was called for and the knowledge of how to set about finding the right people, could not have been

done quickly or well by those interested only or chiefly in the selling of other publishers' books. The personality and the ethos of a publishing house are complex as a result of the trade's mixed, and sometimes muddled purposes. Many houses swing unevenly between the clear-cut demands of business and the temptation to behave like a prestigious literary foundation. A Canadian publishing house's personality is at once the cause and the effect of its publishing policy (or perhaps that of a parent house in London or New York); changed by the inter-action of its own traditions and the attitudes of the senior executives and of the people they have gathered around them.

A house's character appears in its dealings with authors, its promotional policy, its relationship with its customers, and in many lesser ways; but it will be best known for its editorial policy in the publishing of general books. In Canada this has meant above all whether it looks for and publishes Canadian books. Again, no one person shapes editorial policy, except in broad terms. The chief editor may come to do so after many years, if he has won some special standing (as in the case of the late Dr. Lorne Pierce of the Ryerson Press), but usually editors work within a policy, which in any case is always subject to financial circumstances. This has been the more true in Canada until very recent years, because publishing houses were weak financially and had very limited funds to devote to highly speculative ventures.

The reaching out for experience and qualifications was the publishing trade's response to the literary explosion of the late 1940's. The sound of the explosion did not reach far beyond our borders, but some publishers and agents in New York were mildly aware of it, and interested, and a few of our books achieved the big prizes in the United States: book club selections, movie sales, and paperback editions. Canadian publishers' awareness of their own deficiencies were reinforced by their dealings with authors who had been published elsewhere. The resulting growth in editorial range and of interest in more sophisticated bookmaking was probably greater between 1945 and 1960 than in the previous fifty years. If this is to the credit of today's publishers, it is to be shared with those who had gone before, who understood the task but were continually frustrated by small markets and a quality of writing that waited on some stimulating and liberating impulse.

It was not to be expected that the new energy and excitement would at once produce a literary outpouring of consistently high quality, nor has it done so. But there had been a substantial increase of both quantity and quality, and from the publishing side a strengthening of editorial resources to make the most of

whatever is offered. The number of book manuscripts offered to Canadian publishers has doubled in the past twenty years, but the number of published books has almost quadrupled. Of the published books, a large number fall within the general term "commissioned", that is books that have been planned in advance with the publisher. The balance, books that have been accepted after unsolicited submission is, always and everywhere, very small. Ten years ago Philip Unwin, writing for the National Book League in England, put the figure at less than 1% for his own house and implied a similar figure for the publishing industry there. The same figure would certainly be valid in Canada.

The unsolicited manuscript may be defined as a manuscript sent in by an author for whom a firm has not previously published, and with whom the book has not been discussed. It will always be the view of the unsuccessful writer that publishers don't really welcome manuscripts, that "they" have had their taste blunted by sex or best sellers, and can't appreciate his work. A like conviction is the certainty that a meeting with a publisher or an editor is the necessary key to success. The poor showing of unsolicited manuscripts from unknown authors tends to give substance to this view, and always has done so. But the arrival of a good manuscript from an unknown author is eagerly looked for and greeted with great satisfaction in any publishing office. Even if a talk with a wise and experienced editor can sometimes point an author towards a better use of his gifts, such talk can best follow the submission and consideration of a manuscript; this will tell an editor much more about an author's potential than can the author himself.

THE GREAT BULK of all publishers' lists is made up of books that have been previously discussed with authors. An important section is of books from authors whom the house has formerly published, and with whom it is more or less constantly in touch. Another section is composed of books that have been discussed and the writing of which has been commissioned. Commissioning may grow from an idea for a book suggested by either author or publisher, and the publisher's support may range all the way from a mere expression of interest in the project to the provision of a sum of money, as a grant, or more often an advance against royalty earnings.

A commission may result from a talk with the author of an unsolicited manuscript, if his manuscript has shown talent and perhaps knowledge of a particular field. The book he has submitted may be unpublishable but his next submission,

under these conditions, will not be unsolicited. It must still make its way, but he has earned the right to such guidance as the publisher can give, and he is reinforced by the knowledge that he is writing a specific book for which the publisher has been looking.

This makes both the writing and the commissioning of books sound simple, which they are not. Every publisher and editor has ideas for scores of books for which he may never find the right author. This is both because commissioned books are frequently by their nature more useful than exciting, and because writers can seldom respond to ideas that are not their own. Moreover, commissioned books will frequently require research as well as writing time, and in the still small Canadian market the book may be a long time returning to the author his investment of hours and energy. If he has another means of livelihood the project will interest him only if the topic does, or if the book offers prestige; if he lives by his income from writing, the majority of proposals of the kind will not be sufficiently attractive. There are times when an industry with enough money to spend can bribe an author to write for them, but the ordinary book for general sale cannot provide this kind of bait.

There will always be many would-be writers whose longing to be published outruns all other needs; they are most often the very young or the writer manqué, the writer who lacks some essential ingredient. It is an editor's responsibility — and a grave one — to decide who is worth helping and, sadly enough, who is not. Authors often complain that in rejecting their book an editor has not given them a detailed comment. This usually happens when the required revision seems to be beyond the author's powers. Traditionally in Britain, editorial direction (or interference) is much less than is assumed to be needed in North America. The British start from the assumption that authors worthy of publication don't need a lot of "messing about" with their manuscripts. The American attitude seems to have grown from the early realization in a vigorous and developing society that many people with important stories to tell have never learned to write, and can only manage with substantial help. The editor thus becomes the successor to the ghost writer of an earlier day. Canadian publishers, in recent years, have moved much nearer the American position; they are now much better equipped to work with writers, or at least with writers of non-fiction.

We shall leave to others the debate on whether non-fiction writing is creative writing. It is at least the area in which editors may most properly and most usefully offer suggestions. And many of the non-fiction works written in Canada will find publication here or not at all. This will hold for most of the work in

Canadian history, politics, and regional studies; of immeasurable value to us and an essential part of the bed-rock of a national literature, but frequently of limited interest outside our borders. It could be argued that the publishing trade's first responsibility is to this material, and that the first priority for limited resources should be to help the doing of those things that no one else will do for us. It is not a business argument, but then publishing has never looked to business arguments alone for its justification.

In the non-fiction field the writer is applying a technique, or at most a craft, to an ascertained body of reasonably established fact. What he is trying to do is usually clear enough and the editor's task is simply to comment on the degree of his success in the form: "Can you clarify?", "In this you assume more knowledge than is to be looked for in your reader", "here the emphasis or the proportion seems to be wrong". The author's purpose is declared and the editor merely contributes his experience of writing, his knowledge of the audience, and above all a fresh reading, to the result. If his comments are offered tactfully they are usually welcomed and often acted upon. In cases where a writer is working to an editor's blueprint for a commissioned book, the editor, theoretically at least, has a sort of right to suggest revision and reworking of the material that is normally exercised only by magazine editors.

Though the margin between fiction and non-fiction has narrowed and become less clear, there is at least a body of writing that is in its essence creative. This will be better handled for a knowledge of the writer's craft, but it will not be accomplished by craft alone. It is altogether more subtle of purpose, and its source is mysterious. This is true of "serious" fiction, of poetry, and of what is vaguely called belles-lettres. Ideally it is also true of biography. In this area the editor's task is far less clear and his responsibility correspondingly great. This is accentuated as fiction tends increasingly to follow poetry in the casting off of familiar forms. The more inward and deeply personal the author's vision, the more difficult will it be for an editor to be helpful.

The best editors (in Canada or anywhere else) are not by temperament or training chiefly interested in the higher criticism; nor are they merely frustrated writers, as some authors contend. To be either would create a too great temptation to impose ideas or technique or form on the author. It might lead to attempts to change a writer's view of the book he intended. Granted some or all of these things may sometimes be needed, it should not be a conclusion the editor comes to lightly. These are desperate remedies and may more often kill than cure. In the creative area, above all, the editor's first job is that of a midwife, helping the

author to set free his book, as it has been conceived — to realize his full potential. To do this, he must try to understand completely the author's purpose. And much of the time he will be only a sympathetic bystander; available, but not too ready to offer his help.

If an editor is not an advanced critic, he is at least a man of letters. He should have a broad background of reading and an intense interest in books and in current trends in writing. This should extend to as many fields as possible, though it will not be equally valuable in all. He may be asked for an opinion on any type of book, but his response will be conditioned by the policy of his house and a knowledge of the market.

Just as there are certain types of book that should look to Canadian houses for publication, others are better launched elsewhere. With this kind of decision Canadian publishers are familiar and can be helpful. Generally speaking, books with a pronounced Canadian content will find their major market in Canada; some of them will find no market outside (though they may be first-rate). For those that can have a modest sale in other countries, the Canadian publisher will normally be able to make appropriate export arrangements which may not produce much sale or royalty but will, at least, help to get the author known. In the case of books that have larger sales potential outside Canada than in, he will either send the manuscript to a publisher in the States or Britain, or may send the book to a literary agent who will act for the author. This kind of helpful activity has often been misunderstood. It is frequently interpreted as meaning that the Canadian publisher "won't take a chance" unless somebody makes up his mind for him; but with many books it is the way he can serve the author best. Light fiction, for instance (detective, spy, or what used to be called "romance"), unless it is outstanding, will usually sell 250 to 500 copies in Canada in cloth or hardcover, and not enough in paper to justify its publication in that form here. If it is good of its kind, even though not outstanding, certain British or American houses will take it for its larger sale in their market in cloth, for the possibility of a paperback sale, and in the hope of other and better books by the same author.

In the field of children's books, especially those heavily illustrated in full colour, the Canadian publisher can also be helpful but he can seldom offer to publish. Again, if the content is wholly Canadian, he will try. If not, it is best published in the United States; even the British market supports comparatively few of the expensive read-aloud type of picture book. The reason is simply a question of economics. Books of this kind, if they are to be reasonably priced, have to be

printed in an edition of 15,000 copies or more at an investment of perhaps $20,000. Even if successful such a book will usually not sell 15,000 copies in Canada in several years; and it may not be successful, no matter how enthusiastic the author and the publisher. And if such a sum is put into a book of this kind (which if good enough will be published anywhere else) it is probable in an allocation of limited resources that some other books must go unpublished. The same factors apply to heavily illustrated books for adults, *unless their content is peculiarly Canadian.* It is a mistake to interpret this as deplorable caution; it is the kind of decision people of limited means must make continually in deciding what is important to them.

Authors in Canada who are just beginning to write, and to be published, take the publishing trade as it exists for granted; they like it or they don't, but except for differences in size they find it much the same as publishing elsewhere. Those who began to write fifteen or twenty years ago know how much has been changed and is changing. They can look more confidently for experienced comment on their manuscript, for good design of their pages, for careful editing and reading of proofs and, at the end, for a well-made book. If it doesn't always happen in just that way, it does so increasingly.

Most important of all is the knowledge that within Canadian houses there exists a group that is growing in numbers and experience, of people who understand what the author is trying to do. This does not refer to editors who suffer from the Max Perkins syndrome — a compulsive need to discover and inspire and remake authors — but rather to editors willing to do what the late Maxwell Perkins of Scribner's did, as opposed to what legend says he did. At their best, they are more ready with encouragement than advice, for they know they are among the privileged few to whom an author can talk about his lonely work. And like their authors, if not in all respects professional, they are a great deal more than gifted amateurs.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CASH REGISTER

A Bookseller's View

W. J. Duthie

PUBLISHERS AND BOOKSELLERS have never been really friendly, although they have many common interests. One reason is that booksellers always owe publishers money. But apart from that, publishers lament — usually publicly — that with a few exceptions booksellers in Canada are not doing their job properly. And booksellers complain just as publicly that the publishers have only themselves to blame, or thank, for this situation. Over the decades the publishers in Canada have taken away from the booksellers many of their traditional markets: the textbook business; the library and school library business; to a large extent the technical book business; certainly the medical and legal book business. Not satisfied with that gentle attrition, they have recently launched into the book club and direct mail bookselling business; this without mentioning the wooing of the academic customer through discounts and free reading copies. In Great Britain, Europe, and the Far East, unlike in North America, it is the volume of this institutional business, plus the university text business, that allows booksellers in those countries to carry large stocks of current and standard books, and to operate as showrooms for the latest publications from the publishers.

In spite of this unfavourable situation, perhaps in defiance of it, there are now in Canada more and better bookstores than there have ever been before, though not every city in the country is as well served as, ideally, it should be. The reason for this is that the educated public is increasing in numbers, and, perhaps more

important, the public that is in the process of being educated, or wants to be educated, is growing proportionately at a startling rate! Hence the market for books on an almost limitless range of subjects has grown remarkably, with the result that booksellers, while operating in sometimes savage competition with their own suppliers, are doing a better job than would have seemed probable a decade or so ago.

Among various reasons for this improvement has been the increase in demand by the Canadian public, as well as the institutional buyers, for Canadian books. It is likely that by now the selling of Canadian books provides at least thirty per cent of a bookseller's volume, and perhaps more. Fifteen years ago the figure was closer to ten per cent.

Reliable statistics on the Canadian book trade are, however, hard to isolate. Some time in the fall of 1967 there will appear for the first time a catalogue of Canadian books in print, i.e. available from the bookstores. The preliminary work on this catalogue has shown that there are over 10,000 Canadian books in print, over 6,000 of these in English and 4,500 in French (there is some duplication here of course). This quantity has startled most of those involved in our business — publishers, booksellers and librarians — and makes it obvious that such a catalogue is long overdue. It should be mentioned also that this catalogue does not include publications of the federal and provincial Queen's Printers, who publish more titles than all the other publishers combined. It should also be noted that many of the titles included are texts for elementary and secondary schools.

What this catalogue proves is that there is an appreciable body of available Canadian literature, more than was suspected, which is the result of decades of work by authors, of course, and by Canadian publishers who have worked diligently to present native writing to an often ungrateful public. The cumulative effect of all this writing and publishing is that more Canadian books are being published and sold and read than ever before. The rate of increase of this activity is impressive. Twenty years ago a Canadian publisher who put out more than ten trade (fiction, non-fiction or juvenile) books a year was outstanding. This year one Canadian publisher (McClelland & Stewart) will publish about one hundred trade titles, another (the University of Toronto Press, which occupies a special and somewhat privileged position) will probably bring out even more, and half-a-dozen Canadian firms will publish from 25 to 50 new trade titles, while several others will issue a dozen or so books each, and smaller publishers all over the country will produce a remarkable number of regional books, which are important to booksellers of their particular localities, if not nationally. There

may well be, too, 100 new books or pamphlets of poetry published this year. Not every title is profitable, naturally, but all this activity does mean that bilingually some 1,500 to 2,000 new Canadian books are being published this year (compared to some 25,000 in England) and are being absorbed into bookstores and schools and libraries across the country.

It is not my purpose to give a history of publishing in Canada. It is sufficient to say that it started with religion, and was enlarged by the requirements of popular education. At the beginning of the century some famous British publishers opened branch offices in Canada, and in the ensuing years these — where operated efficiently — have become independent in everything but name. Some of them are essentially Canadian as (or even more Canadian than) the Canadian publishing firms that originated at the same time. After World War II, American publishers (obviously recognizing a good thing), started opening branches in Canada, and some of these branches too have achieved a considerable degree of independence. All these firms try to show their Canadianization by publishing more and more Canadian trade and textbooks, which is good for us (the Canadian reading public) and, if profitable, good for them. Every branch firm, and almost every indigenous Canadian publisher earns a considerable part of his income from importing and selling United Kingdom and United States books (the so-called "agency" system). The volume of business that this provides subsidizes to some extent the Canadian publishing programme. The printing of a book is a technical skill, but the choosing and editing of manuscripts, the promotion and selling and distribution of finished books in the Canadian market, are both difficult and expensive, and, without the volume of business provided by imported books, would be economically difficult, if not impossible.

PERHAPS IT IS TIME to move on from generalities to the books themselves.

The publishing of original fiction in Canada is a risky business, and made more risky here because the subsidiary profits — film and TV rights, paperback rights, book club revenues — which figure prominently in the publishing of fiction in the United Kingdom and United States, seldom make any contribution to the Canadian publisher's profits. This is perhaps a reason why only four Canadian publishers, McClelland & Stewart, Macmillan, Ryerson and Doubleday, seem willing to take these risks, and all four will probably admit that they take a loss

on twice as many novels as those on which they show a profit and that quite a few others may not lose money for them, but do not make any either. It is our good fortune that these publishers are trying to publish for us the work of Canadian novelists. It is their problem to make it profitable, and they have a variety of ways of doing it. All of them will try to arrange for the publication of these books in the other English-speaking markets, thus hoping to attract international publicity for the books and their authors and by means of a joint publishing programme to supply the number of copies of a book which they can reasonably hope to sell. If this is not possible, they will grit their teeth and print the 3,500 or 4,000 copies that the economics of publishing dictate, and hope like hell that they will sell all or most of these, while admitting to themselves that they will be lucky to sell 1,500 copies though there is always at least the possibility that they will sell 10,000.

An interesting, daring, and unassessable experiment in fiction publishing is being tried by McClelland & Stewart. In the two most recent seasons they have issued about fifteen new novels, in simultaneous paperback and hardcover editions, hoping thereby to widen the public for their authors, and sell more copies of their books. In this experiment they appear not to have differentiated between established novelists — Gabrielle Roy and Margaret Laurence for example — and the many young and experimental novelists they are introducing. In order to keep their printing costs within reason they have used paper that is not the best, and adopted a stereotyped format, thus forcing a uniformity of appearance on some individual and widely varying novels. By using this very formula they have published several books this year that otherwise would never have appeared in print, and some, but not all, of these first novels deserved to be published.

One recent development, which makes prospects look a little more cheerful for publishers of Canadian novels, is that the universities (even Toronto) have started offering courses in Canadian literature. Students are now directed to read *The Master of the Mill* as well as *Middlemarch*. In response to this demand *Wacousta* has just reappeared as a paperback. As an example of what this development can mean to publishers, W. O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind* sold 10,000 copies slowly between 1947 and 1960; since then it has been reprinted three times as a $1.95 paperback.

The publishing of poetry is probably no more difficult in Canada than in other countries, except perhaps Russia. More of the large Canadian publishers issue books of poetry than issue novels. And the number of small publishers whose whole output is poetry shows that the market must be improving a great deal.

Here again McClelland & Stewart, while having nothing like a monopoly on the good poetry being published in Canada, have been very successful at promoting the poets they do publish, using the same hardcover-paperback formula as with their fiction, and selling their poetry in quantities that a few years ago would have been considered fantastic.

Every Canadian publisher is willing to publish humorous books, though they seem to rely almost completely on authors whose reputations have already been made in newspapers or on radio or TV. This may well be good commercial publishing, since most of these authors have continuing exposure in these media, and they can help to promote their own books. It is unfair to complain about this, since British and American publishers have the same habits, and all publishers, regardless of race, creed or colour, know that a good funny book will outsell a good serious one, certainly in the short haul.

The publishing of Canadian history is the most important single function of our publishers. The amount of historical material produced, and bought and read, has done as much towards establishing our sense of national identity, such as it is, as anything achieved by the C.B.C., and certainly a great deal more than anything attempted by our newspapers and magazines. Perhaps it is because, as A. R. M. Lower wrote recently, "History in Canada is a profession in a sense that, with one or two exceptions, other disciplines have not yet attained. The Canadian historian is a member of a distinctive school with its own standards and traditions, developed and tested over many years in a large body of writing."

It is probably fair to say that Canadian historical writing came to maturity with the publication of Donald Creighton's biography of John A. MacDonald and of Lower's *Colony to Nation*. Since then there have been hundreds of books, some popular and some academic, on early exploration, on political development, on personalities, on the debates during the various periods of our history, and many of these have been very successful. There are multi-volume series now being published, as well as very useful paperbacks making available historical material that has been out of print for decades. The situation with such books is similar to that with Canadian fiction; there are so many courses in Canadian history and Canadian politics being offered, that the sales of some of these books are often much better now than at the time of their original publication.

As befits a country with so much space, and so much wild land, books of adventure and books about our animal and plant life have often been very successful in Canada. Most of the first material published about Canada was contained in the journals of the early explorers and the reports of fur traders. The wolf

and the grizzly and the caribou are prime subjects now as then, as is the struggle for survival against the elements. Many of the regional books published fall into this category — those stories of nursing in the far north, trekking through the arctic wastes, surviving in the rugged mountains or on the equally rugged sea coasts. Such books are widely read by Canadian city dwellers who have bookstores and libraries handy.

To turn aside briefly from the output of the major Toronto publishers and to the books issued by smaller regional publishers, it is safe to say that there are many more of these than most people imagine. A few years ago it was easy to recognize them for their bad design, typography and printing, but all these are gradually improving, and some of the regional publications are now very handsome, probably because more and more of the art schools across the country are teaching typography, and teaching it to good effect. In Saskatoon there is a local publisher who issues important books, all in colour, on the wild flowers of the Rockies and of the Pacific Coast. In British Columbia there are several publishers who specialize in regional material and seem to do so successfully. And everywhere in Canada there are publishers of poetry and of literary magazines. Some of the best printing in Canada is done by these small concerns. And some of the sales figures they achieve are extraordinary. A locally published book about British Columbia, which appeared in late 1966, has already sold well over 60,000 copies. This type of publishing, while not nationally important, is very important to booksellers in the regions concerned. The sale of the books it produces contributes substantially to the thirty per cent of a bookseller's volume that now comes from Canadian books.

The paperback revolution had little immediate impact on Canadian publishers, although its effect on the bookstores here was quick and considerable. However, after a slow start our publishers have now provided a respectable list of paperbacks, some from their backlists, some original publications. Here again McClelland & Stewart, with their New Canadian Library (which now offers among other titles almost the complete works of Stephen Leacock), and their Carleton Library (which concentrates on books for history students), have published most titles, but other publishers like Oxford, University of Toronto, Clarke Irwin and Macmillan have helped to ensure that booksellers have to provide a respectable shelf space for Canadian paperbacks.

In conclusion, Canadian publishers are now beginning to benefit from the missionary work they did for so many years on behalf of Canadian writers. So, obviously, are the booksellers. There is a growing element of professionalism in

the industry which is long overdue and for which the public as well as booksellers ought to be sincerely grateful. The publishers are becoming more sophisticated in their choice of manuscripts; their editors seem, sometimes, to be more effective; their designers have shown remarkable improvement. Perhaps the writers are better. Certainly the prices are higher.

INSIDE THE TRADE

An Editor's Notes

John Robert Colombo

FROM MY EARLIEST YEARS I wanted to be an editor. If an anxious aunt had asked me, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" the last thing in the world I would have answered was, "An editor." At the time I didn't know what the editorial function was, or even that there was a profession called editing. But what I did know was that I loved books; I was curious about their format, smell, heft, manufacture, appearance; I liked collecting them, even if I never actually got around to reading the books I had bought.

When I was eight years old, I remember cutting out two or three dozen cartoons that had made me laugh from the pages of *Esquire* (it was not the sophisticated publication in those days that it is now). I prepared a dummy booklet, stapled the pages together, and I even recall the words I pencilled on the cover and title page: "Favourite Cartoons by John Colombo." My mother took an interest in my first collection, and I can hear her today as she said, "But you didn't draw them. How can you say the cartoons are 'by' you?" I was puzzled by this for some time, but I was unshakeable in my belief that the collection *was* mine in some curious way, and that only the labelling of my selection was at fault.

That was my first introduction to the editorial function. My second came through a part-time job, not through running high school yearbooks, editing a college newspaper, setting type and running a handpress in my spare time, or even being invited on to the editorial board of a Toronto literary magazine — that is another story entirely. More through a fluke than anything else, I found

work on the campus of the University of Toronto while an undergraduate. The University's publishing company had just moved into spanking new editorial offices just a few yards west of University College, where I was enrolled, and a few steps south of Sir Daniel Wilson Residence, where I was living. Nothing could have been more convenient, or awe-inspiring.

THEN AS NOW, the University of Toronto Press was a tight ship. My summer job was with the Editorial Reading Department which I soon learned was euphemistic for the Proof-Reading Department. It turned out that the books and academic quarterlies published by the Press were typeset and proof-read in the unionized printing department which was located a block south of the editorial offices. But the books and academic publications of the Press were so incredibly complicated and specialized that in many cases at least two sets of proof-readers were required to oversee them. Two sets of unionized readers would be too expensive, so the second stage of reading was performed by non-union help, some permanent and some, like myself, part-time.

I was more delighted than dismayed when I learned this because, in the back of my mind, I had always wondered about the secret language educated editors used when they wanted to communicate with seemingly illiterate printers. Clues were given in the introductory pages to mammoth dictionaries which sometimes featured a page of proof-reading marks, but that was "pure" information and what I needed was "applied" instruction. So for two summers and a few hours each week running through two academic years, I learned the business of reading proof and production procedure. We read in tandem, the copy-holder reading to the copy-marker, and then back again. We learnt to watch out for errors of fact, which we automatically question-marked, but more to the point we learnt to mark those errors which were not really errors at all because they were only divergences from the copy which occasionally looked incorrect. Through long hot summer months, back and forth, we croaked our verbal equivalents of four-line mathematical equations, and with bleary eyes we confused all manner of algebraic unknowns, superscripts, subscripts, German and Greek letters when the English upper and lower case alphabets had been exhausted. I was gradually learning a science, and today the most complicated of mathematical or statistical tables do not faze me in the least.

The University of Toronto Press was being transformed from "practically nothing to one of the major university presses on this continent." These are only roughly the words Northrop Frye used to describe what its Director, Marsh Jeanneret, was doing. I wish I could boast I had a hand in this transformation, but in fact I only glimpsed Mr. Jeanneret striding through the halls with (to me) famous people like Jack Pickersgill and Mason Wade and Robert Finch in tow. I was on the outer fringes of the publishing world, but at least I had one foot in an editorial office!

While at the Press, I was never given a title, but in retrospect I would call myself an editorial assistant. I quickly introduced myself to the half-dozen full-time editors who were lucky enough to actually correspond with the authors whose work I was proof-reading. The editors were able to mark up their copy with pencilled characters and meet their authors when they came to town. Peeking into their offices, I enjoyed watching them at work. They were a delight to behold — all girl graduates, young, attractive, nubile (only later would the Press begin hiring male graduates as editors). They checked spellings in their Concise Oxfords and resorted to chapter and verse of that publisher's Bible, *The Chicago Manual of Style*. I wondered how these young lady editors were able to keep everything consistent and correct until one day I asked one of the prettiest ones her secret. As it turned out, while she laboured through a three-hundred page manuscript on ophthalmology, she jotted down all the variables on a piece of foolscap which she kept beside her. This sheet of paper was ruled into twenty-four sections, each for a letter of the alphabet, and in this way she could remember whether she had earlier spelt "judgment" with an extra "e," and whether "regime" had appeared a hundred pages ago with an acute accent or not. Purely typographical variables, like the use of the hyphen, the "en" dash, or the "em" dash, were noted there too. This simplified things immensely.

Although I didn't realize its importance at the time, today I like to boast that I was one of the first to work on the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, a monumental series and the greatest single publishing venture to date in Canada. I asked myself where Professor George Brown would even begin his task of compiling a multi-volumed encyclopaedia of great Canadians. I learned soon enough the nature of the first step: Buy two sets of all previous encyclopaedias published in this country — even if they are collectors' items — and have editorial assistants like myself clip the entries and paste them on to large filing cards. Then divide the cards into specific periods and shuffle them into alphabetical order — that's as good a beginning as any.

I can't imagine a better introduction to the intricacies of the mechanical aspects of publishing than the one I had at the University of Toronto Press. Over the two-year period, I had absolutely nothing to do with its publication policy, but I automatically began to identify with the books the Press had elected to publish. Gossip reached my ears on the use of readers' reports, editorial conferences, indexing procedures, the importance of scheduling, and even the odd bit of information on contractual stipulations. I had not the luck to share in expense account lunches, nor was I privy to important discussions on movie rights. I met no important authors or publishers, although I did manage to shake hands once with Yusuf Karsh at the launching of his *Portraits of Greatness* in the Press' new bookstore immediately below the editorial offices.

At the same time, I had learned something about myself too. I realized that I didn't want a career of editing such books as *Late Archaic Chinese*, which was one of the most important books published by the Press during my period with the house. I understand it supplanted all previous Sinological grammars, but the system the proof-readers devised of voicing all kinds of diacritical marks simply broke down when faced with the Chinese characters that Professor W. A. C. Dobson was introducing into the manuscript at the rate of half a dozen a page. Academic publishing was not for me. Every year the Press published a few books of general rather than specialist appeal, but the house existed to take on books no trade publisher could hope to produce at a profit. To my mind, academic publishing was a specialized branch of educational publishing — producing textbooks for scholars rather than for students. What I wanted was a job in trade publishing, producing books for the "lay" reader.

As it happened, the Dean of Canadian Editors — the Alfred A. Knopf of Canada who had spent more than thirty years behind the editorial desk at The Ryerson Press — had just retired and left a vacuum in his wake. Dr. Lorne Pierce's successor was not a publisher at all, not even an editor, but an author and — in his own right — a man-of-the-letters. John Webster Grant was an ordained minister who had resigned his teaching position at the University of British Columbia to help the Ryerson people along. Dr. Grant saw his move, curiously enough, as shifting from one sector of the United Church to another, since The Ryerson Press was really one of a number of operations under the banner of the United Church Publishing House of Canada.

A few years after hiring me, Dr. Grant moved out of publishing entirely and took to the Chair of Church History at Emmanuel College in the University of Toronto. But while he held the editorship, the house thrived. He had the impossible task of tackling the hydra-headed problems that Dr. Pierce had managed to stave off with his own combination of seniority, authority, and outright bluff. In retrospect, I cannot but admire Dr. Grant's level-headedness. Working under him each day was an eight-hour lesson in tact and diplomacy as much as it was an introduction to publishing procedure itself.

At Ryerson, I was known as Assistant Editor of Trade Publications. This involved being responsible for (but not actually reading, if I could help it) the approximately thirty-five unsolicited manuscripts that arrived on my desk each week. I checked through the dog-eared MSS, wrote brief reports on them for our weekly conferences, and then filed them away. (Only the exceptional books get published; to my knowledge, no one has ever done a study of *unpublished* book-length manuscripts. Such a study — by an anthropologist rather than a literary critic — would lay bare much about Canadian educational and mental-health standards). More important to me was the task of pioneering new publications. This involved watching the newspapers and reading the popular and little magazines for new names and new book ideas. But by far the greatest part of each day was spent (in Dr. Pierce's inimitable phrase) "lining up the copy for the machines." By this he meant checking the author's copy for consistency and correctness, seeing the proofs through production, putting the book to bed. In between, there were discussions about rights, contracts, design, illustration, proper jacket copy, promotion, and all this merged one long meeting into another. As well, I talked with salesmen, had conferences with authors if they lived in Toronto or were passing through, and got involved in endless correspondence with authors who resided elsewhere.

Scouring the country for manuscripts by mail, with the occasional trip to Montreal or Ottawa, was exciting but generally unproductive. About this time Marsh Jeanneret was quoted by *The Globe and Mail* as saying, in effect, "'There are no good manuscripts going unpublished in Canadian attics." I began to realize that he was right, but that what Jeanneret had not said was equally important. There were no completed manuscripts begging for publishers, but there were plenty of good ideas that would never be turned into good books because, first, the publishers were working to capacity already and, second, the market was too small to warrant too much enthusiasm over projects that might take a considerable period of time or money to get off the ground.

This was all happening while the Quebec separatists were blowing up buildings. French Canada was slowly coming into focus, and it occurred to me that French-Canadian literature offered a ready-made source of already written books which Ryerson could publish with great benefit all around. Mostly because Toronto publishers are monolingual, excellent books published in Paris and Montreal go untranslated and even unnoted in English Canada. I am not talking now about limited-appeal books, but popular novels and popular studies. Potboilers like Yves Thériault's *Agaguk* were unjustly neglected, and topical titles like Marcel Chaput's *Pourquois je suis séparatiste*, it seemed to me, should immediately be made available in English. Both of these appeared on Ryerson's list. As often as not the Canada Council came up with the necessary subsidy to pay the translator and even aid the publisher to budget the book.

One day, to satisfy my own curiosity about Quebec writing, I tried to buy an English-language introduction to French-Canadian literature, the equivalent of Desmond Pacey's *Creative Writing in Canada*, an unjustly criticized volume. I was astonished to find that there was not then and had never been a survey of French-Canadian literature either written in English or translated into English! Gérard Tougas' excellent *Histoire de la Littérature Canadienne-Française* presented itself and was duly subsidized, translated, and published. Another major book, but with less appeal, was Jean Le Moyne's collection of essays *Convergences*. A conservative thinker not unlike George Grant, Le Moyne's ideas deserved a wider audience; he too was translated and published.

All editorial decisions are group decisions; this is a particularly useful formula when the decision is a negative one. I take pride in the fact that, during the three years I spent at Ryerson, the organization again began to publish books that were judged worthy of Governor-General's Awards. There were three of these, in fact, for books by James Reaney, Hugh Garner, and Raymond Souster.

About nine o'clock one morning (I was an early riser when I was salaried), the secretary of the editorial department said there was someone on the line for me. I knew it was too early for any of my friends or writers to be calling, but it turned out that the call wasn't really for me but was being directed to me. It was Ryerson policy — and probably still is — to direct all those who telephone in blind to the newest member of the editorial department. I lifted the receiver and said, "May I help you?"

"Yes," a woman replied, obviously elderly. "I would like to know something about the book business."

"What specifically would you like to know?"

"Well, I have a book I want published, and I want to know how one goes about it."

This was a usual request so I made the usual reply. "Why don't you send the manuscript to us for a starter. We will read it, and if we like it we will make you an offer to publish."

"You will 'make me an offer'? What does that mean?"

"What I mean is, we would manufacture and sell the book for you and pay you royalties on the sale of your book."

"Royalties?" She sounded suspicious. "How much would they amount to?"

"Most contracts begin at ten per cent of the list price of the book."

"You mean I would get ten per cent of what the book sells for at the store?"

"That's right. There is a sliding scale, so that if the book sells more than a few thousand copies you automatically receive an even higher royalty."

"Only ten per cent!" She was getting cranky. "Why do I get only ten per cent? Who gets the other ninety per cent?"

I DECIDED TO leave The Ryerson Press about the time the next publisher in my life entered the office. He was a fiery Hungarian named Stephen Vizinczey, and his one-man publishing house corresponded in an uncanny way to my own one-man editorial service. Stephen came into my office with a bulky manuscript under his arm. "Would you look this over, John," he asked, "not as an editor here but as a friend?" I agreed and was delighted with what I read. I mentally decided that I would like to edit for the company that would be pioneering enough to publish a book like this. As it turned out, no company published Vizinczey's book, but *In Praise of Older Women* became a bestseller nonetheless.

So I struck out as a freelance editor. Actually I dislike the word "freelance" because it invariably means "between positions." I was not between positions because I had turned down two full-time appointments in order to try my hand at being self-employed. After three years of being in an office, I wanted to sleep in the mornings, work hard when the mood hit me, and avoid as much as possible inter-office friction. I've been successful in this ever since. I accepted manuscripts to read from any number of publishers, did substantial editorial work for three of them, lectured, conducted writing courses, wrote reviews, articles, and scripts for newspapers, magazines, and radio, and on the side even wrote a shady market letter for a stock promoter (a story in itself). I was delighted to discover

that there are no limits to your earnings if you are self-employed, fairly versatile, and willing to work a twelve-hour day and enjoy it. It is an exhilarating experience, after being office- and salary-pent, because you never know on Monday what Tuesday will bring. It turns one from a civil servant into a small-time capitalist, but the main difficulty is that you spend the latter part of the morning and the earlier part of the afternoon rounding up work and the evening actually doing it. It was Jock Carroll, the Toronto journalist for *Weekend Magazine*, who said, "The trouble with freelancing is that if you take an extra half-hour over lunch, you think you are starving to death."

In between assignments, I edited Stephen Vizinczey's manuscripts through three drafts and into production. I felt as if all along I was working strictly for Vizinczey because he was always on the phone or at the door (he never resorted to the mails) with revisions, proofs, suggestions, questions, jacket copy, illustrations, or what-have-you. After the manuscript was whipped into shape, he published it himself with his own capitalization under the imprint of Contemporary Canada Press. In Canada alone, the hardbound edition sold approximately ten thousand copies, and it is currently doing excellent business as a Ballantine paperback. At last count, Vizinczey made $65,000 out of the venture and is now in London dickering over translation rights.

MY NEXT VENTURE in publishing corresponded to the phenomenal success of *The Comfortable Pew*, which was, surprisingly, the first book I edited for McClelland & Stewart. It was a small editorial task, and it consisted of checking the punctuation, the quotes, and seeing through speed publication "a manuscript about the church." After three years at the United Church Publishing House, I was becoming a religious editor! When I learned that the manuscript was by Pierre Berton, and after I had read it, I knew instinctively (perhaps even more than the publisher — certainly *not* more than the author) that this was a big-time operation. It went on to become the outstanding trade bestseller in Canadian history.

The trouble with money, John Kenneth Galbraith once said, is that it exerts "pre-emptive tendencies." The same thing could be said about good books which are destined to become big books. The publisher of big books in Canada today is obviously Jack McClelland. This has only been so since 1959, the year the firm he directs, McClelland & Stewart, published paperback and hardbound edi-

tions of Sheila Watson's *The Double Hook* and Irving Layton's *A Red Carpet for the Sun*. Since then his truly contemporary list has grown impressively, and part and parcel of his concept of publishing is the need for promotion and striking packaging. Jack McClelland is the Barney Rosset or John Calder of Canadian publishing. Forty years ago he would have been the Alfred A. Knopf or Sir Stanley Unwin of the business. How times change. . . .

It is a pleasure to work with McClelland & Stewart, first as an outside editor or stringer and then, comparatively recently, as an editorial consultant. It is an astonishing experience to handle a book like *This Game of Politics*, rework it against an impossible deadline, and see it through publication, all the while reading about its author, Pierre Sévigny, in the newspapers and seeing him interviewed on television telling everyone that he is going to "tell all" about John Diefenbaker and his Cabinet days. It makes an editor feel that he is in his own small and anonymous way helping to make history. A delusion perhaps, but Samuel Goldwin used to call the sweet sensation "being immortal for a day."

I could continue and discuss other books, like George Grant's *Lament for a Nation* and Walter L. Gordon's *A Choice for Canada*, and dozens which no one expected would make the headlines and which didn't, but this phase of my operations is not by any means over. In fact, I hope it will never be over, because the supply of excellent books seems never-ending and appears to increase from list to list. Working half inside a house and half outside has turned out to be my ideal way of both writing and editing. It takes a fair amount of organization, a lot of nervous energy, some moving about, and vast quantities of midnight oil. But I always did like sleeping in in the mornings.

RATHER THAN STOP *in medias res*, let me round out this personal account of the publishers in my life with a few observations based solely on my own experience. I am numbering my points, not because it is fashionable to do so today *à la* Susan Sontag, but because the points are really unrelated and taken at random.

1. Raymond Mortimer once said that publishing was "at once an art, a craft, and a business." In Canada it is only becoming all three. The Yellow Pages of the Toronto Telephone Directory lists 19 ½ column inches under the heading "Publishers — Book," but only by the wildest stretch of the imagination could more

than half a dozen be said to be serious publishers. The rest are dabblers or strictly distributors of foreign titles (one bookseller in Toronto refers to them as "jobbers"). Only a few Toronto companies give one the impression that they could exploit the possibilities of a *Gone With the Wind*. The best of the worst would probably turn the literary property over to their U.S. or U.K. principals and be content to handle the title on an agency basis in the country of its origin.

2. Sir Stanley Unwin made elementary distinction between an editor and a publisher. "An editor," he said, "selects manuscripts; a publisher selects editors." In my experience, very few editors in Canada ever select manuscripts; they are too busy second-guessing the publisher. No one really knows what will sell. The odds are against anything selling, but when you are a gambler by profession it is foolish not to go for broke now and then. The editor has to be a perpetual optimist; the publisher a grim (and game) realist.

3. The continued existence of Canadian publishing often seems to me very much an open question. It is possible publishing in Toronto will simply vanish like a mirage one day — with the Americanization of the country, the gradual easing out of British books, and the "free-flow" copyright and tariff acts which seem to be looming on the American horizon. The classic debate is between Marsh Jeanneret and Jack McClelland. The Director of the University of Toronto Press feels that "Canadians should be publishers to the world," and the President of McClelland & Stewart feels that Canadian books should not be exported but should be republished in foreign countries by resident companies. But between the two positions — between books like *Late Archaic Chinese* and *The Comfortable Pew* — there are perhaps a hundred books published each year in Canada that could automatically be exported. Obviously the most commercial titles will be contracted for by foreign publishers before publication, but what about the remainder which have a limited but legitimate market outside Canada which no company except the University of Toronto Press is attempting to service? What is needed is a decision by the Book Publishers' Association of Canada to invest in a joint outlet for Canadian titles in New York and London. Doubleday-style bookstores should be merchandising points for English-language books manufactured in Canada when the American or British rights have not been previously placed. One book I worked on comes to mind. It was a prairie pioneer's reminiscences, one of the first Canadian titles of its kind. I suspect similar books have appeared in the United States, but still there are midwestern areas south of the border where possibly two or three hundred copies of the Canadian book could be absorbed at only a nominal cost to the publisher.

4. If you are an unpublished author, permit me a word of advice when submitting to a Canadian publisher. Establish conditions with your submission. Too many houses are still in the horse-and-buggy days of office organization and think nothing of keeping an author waiting nine months to a year for a yes or no answer. One United States company, Simon & Schuster, boasts that it will report back to the author within two weeks of submission, and I am certain this policy, which is not an unreasonable one, nets them the first look at a number of promising manuscripts. So when submitting, I recommend imposing a polite time limit in the covering letter. "If I don't hear from you within two months, aside from a routine acknowledgment of receipt of the manuscript, I will assume the manuscript has been rejected by your company, and I will submit my carbon elsewhere." That should get action. To be politic, a letter two weeks before the impending deadline, drawing attention to the condition of submission, is a gentle reminder to the publisher how long you have been waiting. The truth of the matter is publishers and editors feel as guilty about their bad organization and lethargy as authors feel irritated.

5. Let me conclude with some advice to the young graduate wary of an academic career, bookish, and curious about publishing. I meet half a dozen such young people a year. I find myself lending them a pamphlet called *So You Want to Get into Book Publishing* by Daniel Melcher, published by *Publisher's Weekly*, 62 West 45th St., New York 26. It discusses opportunities, salaries, ways and means of breaking in. Besides Sir Stanley Unwin's classic introduction to the field, *The Truth About Publishing*, two paperback collections of essays are excellent. These are edited by Gerald Gross and are called *Editors on Editing* and *Publishers on Publishing*. Unfortunately, opportunities are limited in Canada, especially in trade editorial work, and advancement as often as not comes from leaving one firm and joining another. There is no problem here except that there just aren't that many firms to go around. And the main barrier remains getting started, since there are no training programmes. The great myths about the business also stand in the way. One of these is that every editor "needs experience on the road." Any normal person can pick up all he has to know listening to bookstore managers at their annual meetings and talking to travellers after they return from their trips. My advice to publishers is leave the editors to their editing and the travellers to their selling. Once you are working as a junior or senior editor, meeting book-buyers is an exciting experience, but the actual selling (euphemistically called "representing") is best left to the experts. If I had had to start out as a salesman, I don't think I would have lasted long enough to become an

editor. Another of the great myths is that trade editors are — well — parasites and that educational editors are the Real McCoy. Fundamentally the only difference between educational editing and trade editing is that educational editing is easier. Textbooks are obviously more profitable than trade books, but the latter are often profitable too, and even if they aren't they are an attractive "loss leader" to an educational department. There are more openings on the educational side, but the worst thing that can happen is for a young editor, who has his eye focussed on trade work, to be categorized as an educational man. If you are good at it, you will be doing it for the rest of your life. But if you are a trade editor, doing the odd educational title on the side can be a refreshing change. There's nothing to it!

THE LITTLE PRESSES

Wynne Francis

THE ACTIVITY of the little press is an index to the vitality of the literary underground. Most typically the instrument of the little magazine, the little press takes many forms. It may be distinguished, however, from the average private press by its preoccupation with new and experimental writing, by its idealism and amateurism and by its ephemeral and capricious nature. The weakness of the typical little press is its compulsion to publish whatever is new and different, regardless of merit; its virtue, on the other hand, is to act as a sensitive seismograph recording subtle changes in literary sensibility. Little press publications, for reasons both æsthetic and financial, are not aimed at the general public. Most of them serve, more or less intentionally, to strengthen that mysterious international network of readers and writers which comprises the little magazine world.

In Canada the first significant little press was established in Montreal in the early Forties by John Sutherland and his associates. As editors of *First Statement* magazine these young writers managed to purchase a second-hand press, taught themselves to set type and laboriously but lovingly performed all the other tasks connected with the printing and publishing of a magazine. The importance, for modern literature in Canada, of *First Statement* magazine and its successor *Northern Review* is well-known. But John Sutherland made further significant use of First Statement Press. At a time when commercial houses were decidedly reluctant to publish young Canadian poets, Sutherland established the First Statement New Writers Series. Irving Layton's first book *Here and Now* (1945) was No. 1 of the series; succeeding titles included work by Patrick Anderson, Miriam Waddington, and Anne Wilkinson. Designed and illustrated by artist Betty Sutherland, First Statement books were more attractive than the occasional

chapbooks put out by commercial publishers and more professional in appearance than the publications of many more recent little presses.

One other important publication by First Statement Press was the anthology *Other Canadians* (1947). With its challenging introduction by Sutherland and its generous representation of *Preview* and *First Statement* poets, *Other Canadians* serves historically as a salutary corrective to the impression made by the first edition of A. J. M. Smith's prestigious *The Book of Canadian Poetry.*

As the power of First Statement Press declined its role was taken over in the early fifties by Contact Press. Louis Dudek, who had learned much from Sutherland and more later from his New York sojourn and his correspondence with Ezra Pound, provided the initiative and zeal for the founding of the new press. Established as a poets' co-operative, Contact was more prolific and more ambitious than First Statement. This time the poets did not set their own type; they sent their manuscripts to a job-printer. There remained, however, all the other important chores of publishing, from the selection and editing of manuscripts to the designing and distribution of the books. Contact Press began by publishing *Cerberus* (1952) which comprised poems and prefaces by the three poet-editors (Dudek, Layton and Souster) and continued throughout the fifties and sixties to publish the work of deserving and neglected Canadian poets of their choice. Contact Press kept in close touch with the literary underground through Little Magazines such as *Contact, Civ/n* and *Delta* with which the poet-publishers were variously connected. But as the years wore on, the Press displayed less urgent commitment to new and experimental writers. By the late fifties Contact Press had become a prestige symbol; it could afford to wait until a writer had proved himself elsewhere before offering him the advantages of the Contact imprint. In this sense, Contact has lost some of the character of the little press although it has given recent evidence of a continuing interest in experimental writing. The publication of *New Wave Canada* has redeemed the Press somewhat in the eyes of new young writers, though this anthology may reflect simply the predilections of editor Raymond Souster. In general Contact seems content to function as a private press serving the liberal fringe of the general poetry reading public rather than as an intimate gauge and instrument of the avant-garde.

This latter function has been in some small measure served by two other publishing ventures in which Dudek is engaged. The McGill Poetry Series (which in fairness should be named the Dudek Poetry Series) has been devoted to talented students whose work came to the attention of Professor Dudek. Beginning with Leonard Cohen's *Let Us Compare Mythologies* (1956) the series has included

such titles as Daryl Hine's *The Carnal and the Crane*, D. G. Jones' *Frost on the Sun* and Pierre Coupey's *Bring Forth the Cowards*. Recently Dudek has launched Delta Canada which so far has four titles to its credit, including R. G. Everson's *Wrestle With an Angel* and Michael Gnarowski's *Postscript for St. James Street*. Delta's most recent publication is *Picture on the Skin*, an exceptionally attractive volume of poems by Eldon Grier with full-colour reproductions of paintings by Sylvia Tait.

Other little presses active in the fifties proved of varying duration and importance. Some were short-lived but made valuable contributions, such as Emblem Books, an imprint under which Jay Macpherson published her own early work and that of Daryl Hine, Alfred Purdy and others. The Fiddlehead Press under the editorship of Fred Cogswell is still extant. It has served the Maritime poets well and includes titles by Alfred Purdy and Alden Nowlan, as well as the regional anthology *Five New Brunswick Poets*. Alphabet Press is used mainly to print *Alphabet* magazine but James Reaney has plans to make of it a "regional publishing centre" for writers in Western Ontario. Reaney does his own printing. Some insight into the motivation of the little presses as well as a sense of Reaney's fascination with the visual form of letters can be gained from his remarks about his press: "I learnt typesetting, acquired type and got a press because it was the only way to get out a little mag that looked right and didn't cost the moon. Paul Arthur's *Here and Now* is the force behind the idea of it looking right. John Sutherland gave me the notion that you could do it this way . . . All sorts of [experiments] are possible because you have this trusty giant with the old squeeze power . . . you can initiate things that no commercial publisher would dare to think of . . . There is something utterly glamorous about type and a press . . . I've learnt the feel of books since I started doing all this. Actually it all goes back to a rubber printing set I was given (or earned at 5¢ a week) as a kid in return for watching our flock of geese — that it didn't get into the wheat. By that print set I was hooked!" Reaney's publishing ventures, apart from *Alphabet*, include his own *Dance of Death* and Colleen Thibideau's *Lozenges* (Poems in the shape of things). Among other little presses in the early sixties John Robert Colombo's Hawkshead was particularly active, publishing a half-dozen titles by Colombo himself as well as the work of Jay Macpherson, Mike Strong, Milton Acorn Phyllis Gotlieb and others.

In the mid-sixties several new little presses have been established. Nelson Ball, who edits the magazine *Weed*, also supervises the Weed/Flower Press which publishes both American and Canadian poets. The Quarry Press, which publishes

Quarry Magazine, has also issued *The Beast with Three Backs* (poems by Tom Eadie, Tom Marshall and Colin Norman). *Prism/international* has announced plans to publish a series of foreign-language poets.

The role of the strictly avant-garde press, however, has clearly been taken over by three new little presses. In Vancouver The Very Stone House Press, run by Seymour Mayne and Patrick Lane, has recently published a book by that wizard of typography and graphics, Bill Bissett. *Fires in the Temple* displays not only the wildest distribution of type on paper but also an astonishing array of montages, foldouts and pop-art gimmickry among its pages. Bissett, as editor of the magazine *Blew Ointment*, is already noted for his neo-Dadaist shenanigans. *Fires in the Temple* is less of a book than a happening.

Ganglia Press in Toronto is another source of audacious experiment. Currently it is offering the Singing Hand Series which includes a pamphlet called *Asps and Other Wourneys* by David Aylward. It has also published *The Universal Pome* (described as a small poem-sculpture in cellophane and cardboard) by bp nichol and is planning "a postcard series of concrete poems." Recently Ganglia published a selection of Bissett's work called *We Sleep Inside Each Other All.* Appended to this is a helpful note on "The typography of Bill Bissett" by bp nichol.

The most ambitious of the new avant-garde presses is run by Victor Coleman. In addition to the magazines *Island* and *Is* (pronounced "Eyes"), Island Press has published books by Fred Wah, Stephen Rodefer and Coleman himself. Its most recent title is an experimental work by Gerry Gilbert called *Phone Book.* Coleman has also undertaken to reproduce, in their original mimeography form, the important defunct little magazines *Combustion*, *Contact* and *Measure.*

Island Press has recently joined forces with Stan Bevington's Coach House Press. Bevington has his printing shop literally in an old coach house on Bathhurst Street in Toronto. He has previously published, among other titles, the *LSD Leacock* by Joe Rosenblatt and *New Wings for Icarus* by Henry Beissel. All Coach House books so far have been marked by their colourful design and attractive typography. Coach House is now printing *Is* magazine in a much improved format.

Coach House plans to publish this fall a "book" by bp nichol called *Journeying and Returns.* The advance notice calls it "more than a book . . . this three part package dissolves arbitrary boundaries between mediums to present the totality of one man's existence. The first part . . . is a forty-eight page long poem sequence . . . the second part is a recording of two long sound poems . . . the third part is a selection of 15 visual concrete poems and objects . . ."

Obviously the work of new avant-garde little presses is only partially literary. With them we enter a McLuhanish universe which exploits several media simultaneously and engages the audience in a kinetic communion. One does not "read" artists like Bissett and Nichol — one "connects" in an audio-visual-tactile mode of response. Traditional literary criteria are no longer adequate to describe or measure this new form of multi-dimensional communication.

Readers for whom modern poetry is still primarily a literary experience are well-served by several private presses notable for the artistic excellence of their publications. Private presses often exhibit qualities conspicuously lacking in the average little press. They are marked by a concern for the book as a physical object of artistic potentialities, by their professional competence in design, typography and printing, and by their relative stability and business sense. When these qualities are combined with an interest in good modern writing, the result is likely to be a fine book whose appearance and contents form an artistic whole. Such a press is Klanak of Vancouver. *Klanak* is a Salish Indian work meaning "a gathering of the tribes for serious discussion". It suggests the way publisher William McConnell thinks about books. He brings together the talents of writers and the professional craft of designers and printers to produce such attractive volumes as Marya Fiamengo's *The Quality of Halves*, F. R. Scott's *Signature*, Ralph Gustafson's *Rocky Mountain Poems*, and *Klanak Islands*, an anthology of short stories. Klanak books are so successful artistically that they have won prizes at book fairs and typography shows here and abroad.

The concern for the physical appearance of a book also distinguishes the productions of Periwinkle Press, another Vancouver venture. Publisher Takao Tanabe, primarily a painter, does his own printing, illustration and design. He publishes only the poetry that interests him and only when he can take time off from his painting. Titles bearing the Periwinkle imprint are Roy Kiyooka's *Kyoto Airs*, Gerry Gilbert's *White Lunch*, Phyllis Webb's *Naked Poems* and John Newlove's *Elephants Mothers and Others*.

Another more ambitious private press which combines the talents of artists is the Heinrich Heine in Toronto which last year advertised an unusual portfolio called *Miraculous Montages* featuring the poems of John Robert Colombo, drawings by Don Jean-louis and typographic design by Peter Dorni, "each page will be printed by hand," runs the advertisement — "the numerous drawings will be reproduced in a unique way — by blind embossing . . . The entire portfolio will be housed in an unusual case." Publisher Peter Dorn has already won awards for his editions of the *Selected Poems of Heinrich Heine* and of *Voyage of the Mood*

by Joseph Rosenblatt. Still another press founded by a designer-typographer (William Reuter) specializes in the artistic union of text and format; Reuter's Aliquondo Press has published four titles, the latest being Barry McKinnon's *The Golden Daybreak Hair.*

At the other end of the scale from such elaborate production is the work of Upbank Press in Morin Heights, P.Q. Upbank is not primarily literary but it deserves to be known for its unique devotion to humour. Cartoonist Peter Whalley has for several years issued a series called *Hyperbole* under the imprint of Upbank. In various formats, the numbers of *Hyperbole* have graphically satirized Canadian public figures and institutions. Notable are the "Diefenbaker Record Album," "Some New Canadian Stamps" (gummed and perforated), "A Dominion Day Salute" with its startling fold-in (like *Mad* magazine) version of the famous Fathers of Confederation portrait, and a riotous satire of the craze for Eskimo Art. Of more literary interest is the hilarious parody of Layton and Town's *Love Where the Nights are Long. Hyperbole*'s version is "Lust Where the Summer's Short" by "Ivy Persis Peyton" and "Henrietta Nowt." It deserves to be much better known than it is.

As active as little presses and private presses are in Canada, however, they still do not account for all the interesting work published by experimental modern writers. Frequently modern Canadians are published by little presses in other countries. Creeley's Divers Press and Jonathan Williams' Jargon Press have both published Irving Layton. George Bowering's *The Man in Yellow Boots* was brought out by El Corno Emplumado, Mexico. Ron Everson's *Incident on Côte Des Neiges* bears the imprint of the Green Knight Press, Amherst, Mass.

Furthermore, a poet often brings out his early books by the simple device of hiring a job-printer and taking care, himself, of the remaining chores of publishing, in which case he sometimes invents a "press" for the occasion. Thus *Two Longer Poems* by Howith and Hawkins was published by "Patrician Press" and an early book of Layton's by "Laokoon Press." Scores of poetry titles in recent years have appeared under similar "ghost" imprints. Many of these are so ephemeral and so poorly produced that they serve little purpose beyond announcing a poet's presence and gaining (hopefully) the attention of a reviewer. Others prove of lasting interest because of their design as well as their poetic content, as in the case of John Newlove's *Grave Sirs* produced by "The Private Press of Robert Reid and Takao Tanabe." Such titles are soon out of print and extant copies eventually become the pride of jealous collectors.

Most of the books privately printed or published by the little or private press

are not reviewed in newspapers and magazines. This is due partly to failures in distribution and partly to the indifference of book page editors who have in mind, naturally, the general reading public. Frequently, too, the writers themselves are content with a small group of readers with avant-garde tastes.

For the general reader who may be interested in the activities of the little press, one way to gain information is to subscribe to one or more little magazines. Even the most ephemeral Canadian little mag is likely to contain advertisements and notices, and sometimes reviews, of recently published experimental work. A more systematic approach may be made through *Trace*, a quarterly which specializes in "an evolving directory" of little magazines; or *The Small Press Review*, a new quarterly by Dust Books (California) which also promises international coverage.

The reader who follows such clues will find that he has embarked on a stimulating adventure: he will be threading his way through the mysterious and fascinating labyrinths of the literary underground.

review articles

LANDFALL IN VINLAND

A. W. Purdy

FARLEY MOWAT, *Westviking*. McClelland & Stewart. $10.00.
HELGE INGSTAD, *Land Under the Pole Star*. Macmillan. $10.90.

IN GREY EARLY MORNING, with fog hanging over the sea, a broad-beamed high-bowed ship some 70-80 feet long dropped anchor in a small bay whose shores humped above the mist to form a vague country of green spruce and marshy bog land. Cattle bawled on the ship, hungry for fresh forage not far away. Armed men peered through the mist, wondering if the forest concealed savage human or super-human enemies. Women crouched behind the men — also wondering. And then the Settlers splashed ashore with weapons ready, and stood for the first time on the outside rim of the New Country.

The time of all this was a few years less than a thousand years ago. The place was Epaves Bay (L'Anse au Meadows), at the tip of the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland — Canada. Combined archaeological, cartographic and written evidence has confirmed this Viking landing to the point where no unprejudiced person would now doubt its validity — confirmed it to the absurd modern culmination of Italo-American supporters of C. Columbus parading public loyalty to the "firstness" of their own undoubted hero.

In Farley Mowat's book the whole business has been reduced to a further absurdity — Did Leif Eriksson turn left or right at the first stop sign? — while the Vikings cogitate over wind and ocean currents like a bunch of company directors deciding on a corporate merger.

Probably I'm being unfair to Mowat. That the Vikings discovered America first seems indisputable. What their mental processes were while doing so is thus bound to be important, though not necessarily interesting (depending on the writer), and certainly speculative at this late date. But Mowat's "author-hubris" in this book (a disease some of us are familiar with in poets) interferes with and spoils the story for me, at least to some extent.

The stated object of *Westviking* is to resolve "the degree of Celtic participation in the westward thrust; the real scope of Erik the Red's explorations . . . the identities of the several native peoples encountered; the detailed tracks followed by all the voyagers; the identity and location of the landfalls, havens and settlements; the major factors which prompted, shaped, and sometimes doomed the efforts of westward venturers; and many lesser matters."

For its factual structure and basis

Westviking draws on three sagas: Erik the Red's Saga, the Karlsefni Saga and the Short Saga, these being Icelandic literary sources written in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The book also draws on several historical (as apart from "literary") sources, such as the "Islendingabok" by Ari the Learned, written in Iceland during the twelfth century; and only mentions Adam of Bremen's writings which date less than a century after the actual westward voyages of Leif Eriksson and Karlsefni.

Mowat excerpts and arranges his quotations from both sagas and historical sources, jerking many quotes out of their original context in order to compile a single coherent story which, naturally enough, agrees with and supports his own conclusions. After quoting his composite story, Mowat goes ahead to elaborate and explain how, why, and in what way things actually happened. Thus we have the sagas plus quotes from Icelandic histories mixed together, followed by modern commentary. This for 300 pages. At the end of the book there is a series of long appendices, on everything from Norse sailing vessels (they were exceptionally seaworthy) to the recent excavations by Helge Ingstad at L'Anse au Meadows (Mowat thinks the Ingstad site was a Basque whale fishery, then reverses himself to declare it a Norse site — in all probability).

In a long introduction to their Penguin translation of the Vinland Sagas, Magnus Magnussen and Herman Palsson comment on the free and easy treatment other writers besides Mowat have given the sagas: "Too often they have been served up to the public in filleted versions, with their texts emended or cut or adapted or even conflated into a single uneasy narrative in an attempt to gloss over their inconsistencies. The sagas themselves have become obscured rather than illuminated by editors who arbitrarily selected textual variants to suit their own theories." I'd go along with Magnussen and Palsson in this, for it scares me to think what Mowat might do to Elder Edda, not to mention the Dead Sea Scrolls.

But there are several good things about *Westviking*. In the first place it's a commendable thing that a popular writer like Mowat should examine the sagas (however wildly), and thus draw them to the attention of the general public. For there is a whole fascinating range of Icelandic literature, quite apart from the Vinland sagas themselves. The Floamanna Saga, for instance, was quite new to me. It tells of Thorgisl Orrabeinfostri, a friend of Erik the Red, whose ship was wrecked on the way to Greenland to join his friend. Thorgisl had just been converted to Christianity, and his dreams were troubled by visits from a red-headed pagan god called Thor. Indeed, when one considers the factual Skraelings (Dorset Eskimos) and human giants like Thorgisl Orrabeinfostri, one need only jog over a slight mental bump, and there we are back at the Elder Edda with the Fenris Wolf and Midgard Serpent.

One passage in the sagas makes long-dead Erik the Red similar to a modern hen-pecked husband and very human. When his wife, Thorhild, was converted to Christianity, she refused to sleep with Erik because he was still a heathen. That was certainly one reason why Erik decided to go along with his son on another voyage to Vinland. He fell off his horse on the way to the ship. Erik went any way, aching shoulder and all, but stormy

weather drove him back to Greenland. He died a year later, still unrepentent and presumably unconverted.

But does Mowat accomplish his stated goals in writing this book? Re the degree of Celtic participation in the Viking westward thrust (he believes the Celts were in Greenland before the Norse): the only possible evidence for this is that Norse house foundations in Greenland were underlaid by ruins of a slightly different nature. Of course it is pretty well established now that Celtic anchorites were in Iceland before the Norse, which is not very good ground for assuming they were also in Greenland.

Re the identities of native peoples encountered in the area, there were only Beothuck Indians and Dorset Eskimos. Mowat mentions no others. And the possibility that Thule Eskimos (the Dorsets' successors), who moved eastward from Alaska around 900 A.D., might have arrived on the eastern Atlantic seaboard a hundred years later is somewhat remote. In Newfoundland itself only Dorset and Beothuck remains have been found.

Mowat also identifies, at least to his own satisfaction, " — the detailed tracks, identity and location of landfalls etc." The general area of Norse exploration (the east coast of Canada and the United States, including Newfoundland) can be taken for granted, since it is documented and fairly well substantiated. That Cape Porcupine on the Labrador coast is the Norse "Marvel-Strands" and L'Anse au Meadows (Epaves Bay) an early settlement seems to me beyond question. But that Vinland is Tickle Cove on Trinity Bay, Nfld. (as Mowat maintains) is de-

cidedly unproven. However, it's an interesting speculation.

No doubt Mowat does possess more types of specialized knowledge, such as navigation and familiarity with ocean currents, etc., than any ordinary person. I respect this knowledge, but doubt if it enables its possessor to do more than probe and prod this 1,000-year-old detective story, raise the puzzling questions themselves. And this is much. Mowat may certainly have stumbled on to some of the correct answers, but how are we to know this? His case is decidedly unproven.

In his Epaves Bay appendix Mowat discusses Helge Ingstad's discovery of an early Norse settlement at L'Anse au Meadows (which I visited this summer). Ingstad has unearthed the remains of several buildings, a smithy where bog iron had been smelted, a spindle whorl of early Norse design. Carbon-14 tests on charcoal found at the site established the dates of 860 A.D. plus or minus 90 years to 1600 A.D. plus or minus 70 years. These dates are to be found in Ingstad's *National Geographic* article for Nov. 1964; the dates in Mowat's appendix run from 680 A.D. to 1060 A.D. (It would seem that Mowat's first date is a mistake, and that he simply turned Ingstad's figure backwards.) All of this adds up to fairly satisfactory proof of a Norse settlement at the time in question. Mowat admits this reluctantly. Despite the scarcity of artifacts (only a Norse spindle whorl), the authenticity of the site seems beyond doubt. But is it also the original Vinland of Leif Eriksson? That's something else altogether.

For some unknown reason Mowat seems to have formed a dislike for Ingstad, and suggests the Norse writer and his archaeologist-wife found the site under false pretenses. Mowat says that George Decker, on whose farm the site was located, thought Ingstad an associate of Danish archaeologist Jorgen Meldgaard, and guided him to the spot under that impression. In his *National Geographic* article Ingstad says a fisherman told him there were ruins on Decker's farm. There seems no reason to doubt Ingstad's word in this matter. And Decker, a friend of Ingstad, is now dead. As a mere reviewer here I would venture the opinion that Mowat is less than generous to a man who has made an important discovery: the only early Norse settlement in North America. The discovery has been authenticated by Canadian, American and British archaeologists who helped unearth the site, which is now a Newfoundland museum.

To put forward all the questions Mowat has raised in *Westviking* is a fine and wonderful accomplishment. That he has not answered the questions satisfactorily detracts little from the book. (Only Ingstad has made a single step towards their solution.) The Floamanna Saga alone is sufficient reason for reading the whole book. And the Viking ships coming into Epaves Bay 1,000 years ago, on a grey morning with cattle bawling and women crouching behind armed men — all this now seems a little more real to me. Those early Norse discoverers were fascinating literary characters: I'm pleased they were also real, though they lived and died 1,000 years ago.

Land Under the Pole Star, Ingstad's own book, deals with the Norse in Greenland — the jumping-off point for Leif the Lucky and Thorfinn Karlsefni to the New World. It does little more than

mention the discoveries at L'Anse au Meadows, which are reserved for another book. But this one amounts to a companion volume for *Westviking*, in that it deals intensively with Greenland circumstances, with exploration, settlement, and the 500-year-old question: why did the Norse in Greenland disappear so completely, with only ruins and graves left behind? Ingstad presents his own answer, as well as portraying a people somewhat different from the conventional view of hard-drinking, quarrelsome Norse sea-raiders who were the world's scourge for a period of more than 200 years.

But again the claims made on the dust jacket for the book seem a little excessive, though not as exuberant as those for *Westviking*. Many sagas are quoted, most of them unknown to me, that of the "Foster-Brothers" being especially interesting. It is a guided tour of the ancient Eastern and Western Settlements of Greenland, and occasionally becomes much too discursive. Detail is piled on detail, as if Ingstad had bodily removed all the intervening years, one by one, from Viking graves in the permafrost. Even some of their clothing has been preserved by cold. And magical runes of the period, carved on wood and stone, persist into the twentieth century.

As for Vinland, I would like to think Ingstad's site at Epaves Bay near the village of L'Anse au Meadows in Newfoundland was the land of grapes and wheat. But I doubt if any modern achaeologist can establish that. The ancient Norse language is relatively as remote as Greek Linear B, and subject to many interpretations. The Atlantic coastal area where the Vikings ranged is vast, and while there are Norse church ruins in Greenland, none have been found in the New World. And it is interesting to speculate that Vinland was discovered by pagans, and that the last leap across the sea from Greenland was too much for a Christian god to accomplish before the square-pooped sailing ships of Columbus.

CENTENNIAL TIDE

George Woodcock and
W. H. New

As CENTENNIAL YEAR gathers momentum, the output of historical Canadiana, both original publications and reprints, grows into a flood rather than a flow. To review everything that arrives these days is impossible; to miss noticing all the new and reprinted books an exceptional year is making available would mean withholding attention from many useful and some distinguished volumes. As a special expedient, not often to be repeated, we can only resort to a brief summarizing of those that have come to our attention.

Among the original volumes one of the most ambitiously compendious is *The Canadians, 1867-1967*, edited by J. M. S. Careless and R. Craig Brown (Mac-

millan, $9.95). In more than 800 pages, eleven historians begin by providing a co-operative history of Canada's first century, and, in a second half which shifts our viewpoint to the present, nineteen other experts study aspects of our social, political and cultural life, from religion to foreign affairs, from sports to painting. A good centennial bargain.

Another compendium, more ambitious in its production — it contains some first-rate Swiss colour printing — is a volume of the same type, *Canada*, edited by Earle Toppings (Ryerson Press, $19.95). The photographs, by many hands, are well-chosen to give a sense of the variety of modern Canadian life; *Canada*, in fact, concentrates on the country today, and its seventeen essays, including one by the editor of *Canadian Literature*, embrace not merely studies of the land in general, its people and its plant and animal life, but also specific surveys of the provinces and regions.

The Prime Ministers of Canada 1867-1967 (Canyon Press) consists of brief biographies of each of the fourteen national leaders since Confederation, by Christopher Ondaatje and Robert Catherwood. The book is an introductory one, quite readable to those with little familiarity with the country's history. Though constrained by space, it is most illuminating on the least known men — Abbott, Thompson, Bowell and Tupper — but its oversimplifications become obvious when it contends with the complexities of Laurier and John Diefenbaker.

Quebec, the Revolutionary Age, 1760-91 by Hilda Neatby (McClelland & Stewart, $8.50), describes the troubled Canadian years after the British conquest. It is Volume 6 of the excellent Canadian Centenary History of Canada, and well up to the general standard of the series.

The Old Stones of Kingston: Its Buildings before 1867, by Margaret Angus (University of Toronto, $7.50) consists mainly of pleasant photographs with brief introduction and terse explanatory notes; architectural historians will probably form its most appreciative public, and there are few of them.

A Mountain and a City by Marjorie Freeman Campbell (McClelland & Stewart, $8.50) is a history of Hamilton, a dense chronicle so packed with detail and so devoid of perspective that deep local loyalties are probably needed to read it with comfort.

Patterns of Canada, edited by William J. Megill (Ryerson Press) anthologizes the best articles from the *Canadian Geographical Journal* over the past 35 years, and brings to light a wealth of forgotten and interesting material; the bias, curiously, is historical rather than geographical.

In *La Salle* (Longmans Canada, $9.50), E. B. Osler tells us all that is known, and most that is likely to be known of that arrogant, mercenary and yet strangely visionary man, René-Robert Cavelier, who called himself La Salle and who first explored the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. It is an admirable piece of biographical reconstruction, greatly superior to Osler's excessively popularized biography of Louis Riel.

The good background guide to any part of Canada is hard to find; there are lists of hotels and motels, but there is little that prepares one for the feel of a place. In brief form this is what Derek Patmore and Marjorie Whitelaw provide in *Canada* (General Publishing,

$1.95), a brightly written paperback which deliberately avoids giving mere facts available elsewhere and concentrates on providing enough basic history for each province to give the visitor a sufficient perspective to realize that in 1967 he is arriving in a land that has long ceased to be either new or raw.

Most welcome of the many reprints which the year brings is F. H. Armstrong's abridgement of Henry Scadding's *Toronto of Old* (Oxford University Press, $7.50), the highly anecdotal history of Toronto, published in 1873, which Scadding wrote in the form of a series of walks along the streets of the city and along its lake and river banks. It is a fine source book, deeply mined by later historians, and also a charming narrative projecting a personality which Professor Armstrong justly compares with that of Gilbert White.

Macdonald to Pearson: The Prime Ministers of Canada by Bruce Hutchison (Longmans, $6.50), might be taken for a new book; in fact it is a condensed reprint of his *Mr. Prime Minister*, tailored to fit into Longman's Canadian Pageant Series. The criticisms made of *Mr. Prime Minister* in this journal on its first appearance apply equally to the new version.

Donald Creighton's inimitable *John A. Macdonald* is now available, both volumes, in paperback at $2.95 each (Macmillan). Other recent paperback reprints of valuable books in the field of Canadian history include W. L. Morton's *The Progressive Party in Canada* (University of Toronto, $2.95), Peter Fruechen's *Book of the Eskimos*, the best of all accounts of actual long-term living among the Canadian and Greenland Eskimo (Fawcett, 95¢), Donald MacKay's history of the Hudson's Bay Company — *The Honourable Company* (McClelland & Stewart, 95¢), Eileen Jenness's *The Indian Tribes of Canada* (mainly a condensation of Diamond Jenness's *The Indians of Canada*) (Ryerson, $1.95), Helen Creighton's pioneering volume, *Songs and Ballads of Nova Scotia* (General Publishing Company, $2.95), and Bern Anderson's *The Life and Voyages of Captain George Vancouver* (University of Toronto, $2.95), told with expert knowledge by an American naval hydrographer.

McClelland & Stewart's paperback New Canadian Library has also added four titles in celebration: Gabrielle Roy's minor but welcome *Street of Riches* ($1.50), appreciatively introduced by

Brandon Conron; Stephen Leacock's *Short Circuits* ($1.65) (for reading on transcontinental railways); and two affirmations of all the glory and grandeur that was the War of 1812: John Richardson's *Wacousta* ($2.50) and William Dunlop's *Tiger Dunlop's Upper Canada* ($1.75), both edited by Carl Klinck. The Leacock volume is one of the more interesting of his minor works — tonally quite different from *Literary Lapses,* a fact which D. J. Dooley sympathetically examines in his introduction. Professor Klinck is another sympathetic critic — whose enthusiasm is so infectious that we almost overlook what he himself calls "the emotional ordeal of Charles De Haldimar and of the fainting heroines whom he resembles." Most twentieth century readers must still approach *Wacousta* with tongue lodged in cheek, however, so that Richardson will seem to have used his clichés more cleverly than he probably intended.

McClelland & Stewart's other quality paperback series, the Carleton Library, seems to be veering away from reprints. Of the six titles with which it celebrated centennial mid-year, only one is a previously published book, Fred Landon's *Western Ontario and the American Frontier* ($3.95). Two are original works, W. H. Kesterton's timely and extremely useful *History of Journalism in Canada* ($3.65), and John Porter's *Canadian Social Structure, a Statistical Outline* ($2.95), strictly a non-book, but full of essential data for those who intend to study the basic framework of Canadian society. Finally, there are three compilations of documents and essays, collected with an obvious eye to the trapped academic public, *Church and State in Canada, 1627-1867,* edited by John S. Moir ($2.95), *Approaches to Canadian Economic History,* edited by W. T. Easterbrook and M. H. Watkins ($2.95), and *Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces,* edited by G. A. Rawlyk ($3.55).

More ambitious than the paperbacks are the handsome facsimile volumes published by the Johnson Reprint Corporation in their series, Canadiana Before 1867, planned in co-operation with the Toronto Public Library. Some of these volumes have already been reviewed at length in our columns. Others which have since come to hand are John West's *The Substance of a Journal during a Residence at the Red River Colony* ($9.00), a clergyman's account of Hudson's Bay Company life between 1820 and 1823, and *A Concise Account of North America* ($9.00) by Robert Rogers, one of the rare books to give an on-the-spot account of both European and Indian life in British North America during the interregnum between the conquest of Canada and the rebellion of the older colonies.

Among the less classifiable but still highly readable reprints of Canadiana are Mary Hiemstra's *Gully Farm* (McClelland & Stewart, 95¢), a vivid and sometimes moving account of British tenderfeet pioneering on the Saskatchewan prairies in 1903, and Emily Carr's last book, *Growing Pains,* in which she tells of her development and her final acceptance as a painter (Clarke, Irwin, $1.90).

INSIDE LEONARD COHEN

George Bowering

LEONARD COHEN, *Parasites of Heaven*. McClelland & Stewart. Cloth $4.50, paper $2.50.

NOBODY WHO IS INTERESTED in Canadian books can be unaware of the Leonard Cohen boom. McClelland & Stewart has printed or reprinted five of his six books in the last year, and now a more or less matched set of his poetry books sits in book stores, Leonard's face seen in different moods on their covers. Obviously the Canadian Publishers believe two things: Cohen has something to say; Cohen will sell. Apparently Cohen has both things in mind too, and people are worried that the selling might intrude upon the saying. Leonard Cohen could become the Jewish Kahlil Gibran. That's the danger when a poet has as much myth hung on himself as in his poetry.

Cohen is good enough and smart enough to proceed despite the photographs and magazine articles. He is, after all (or before all), a serious writer with a vision of himself that is more enduring than kodak. His work as a whole shows that. The newest book, *Parasites of Heaven*, is his least important, but in it one may find his greatest strengths as surely as his most obvious tricks and shortcuts.

I think that the reason for any confusion and blurring lies in the kind of thing Cohen is trying to do. He is ultimate lyric man. That means that he shows any range of his discoveries, mundane to metaphysical, always through his consciousness of singular self. In that way he is the epitome of Western man, formed by post-Hellenic European modes of perception and thinking. The difficulty comes in confusing the discovery through self with the apprehension of identity, that awful put-on. Cohen is aware of that lure:

> Leonard hasn't been the same
> since he wandered from his name

Some people don't realize the problem the poet has here, or how he is facing it. (Hence TV journalists, Beryl Fox and Pierre Berton, are utterly nonplussed by Cohen's words in interviews.) A reviewer in Toronto complained that the first person singular appears too often in Cohen's book. But that is not a valid objection concerning lyric poetry, whether Shakespeare's sonnets or Cohen's songs. One might as well object that there is too much of the past in an epic. The first person *is* singular — each is — and hence worth singing of. The 23rd Psalm is written that way, but it is surely as universal as any poem may be.

In fact it is when Cohen is too much aware of the gallery outside the self that the poetry goes sour. The poetry goes sour often enough in this book to give the impression that we hold here a gathering of loose ends and leftovers to pad out the core of really good poetry written since *Flowers for Hitler*. Cohen leftovers, especially for fans, are of course more palatable than some large meals served

up by other Canadian poets. I list some of the faults I see/hear:

Terrible adolescent effects and/or clichés. "True, the mind bleeds a little, but if you don't part your hair too deep nobody will mention it." (p. 12)

Dependence on similes for making startling images. The simile is the easiest way to write, being a reason-oriented and self-indulgent practice more than a responsive one. This trick is probably one reason why kids of all ages pick up on Cohen's poetry so easily.

Letting the will spin off surreal images, rather than finding surreal images by putting the will to sleep. (p. 13)

Cutting prose lines into sandwiches with recurrent sentences to make the semblance of lyric order. (p. 14)

Mock-profundity. (p. 24)

Using the tricks of rhetoric (politician's repeated syntax, e.g.) rather than the magic of the cantor.

BUT. There are some poems here that will always be among Cohen's best, and thus will be around for a long time. One of these is "Two went to sleep." (p. 35) It is composed beautifully (by) for the voice of incantation — literal sense ends and the spirits of the age are liberated by its images, till

> One carried matches
> one climbed a beehive
> one sold an earphone
> one shot a German

and one better hears the whole poem and its resonances. Not to see whether Cohen has his facts straight — that is irrelevant, finally — but to know whether he has been at all transported where words, properly served, may go. James Reid, in *The Open Letter 5*, has the feeling, and says of poetry-making words: "They are approximations of a true state of affairs in some hidden place of the imagination, and do not represent at all that involving world of blunt and irreducible fact that we in the past have aimed at revealing."

So Cohen is usually at his best when he plays with the main old magic-calling form, the ballad. In the ballad he is impelled by his self's dance to a measure, not his intellect's groping with the looser forms where the content, i.e. the whole verbal experience, has not proven to be that interesting to the second person, i.e. the reader. This is also why Cohen's guitar songs are good — they accept help from authentic muses, and don't give his intellect time to show off its own creations.

Keep looking at that belly-button, Leonard Cohen. It got angel dust in it.

QUITE A GIRL

David Watmough

EMILY CARR, *Hundreds and Thousands. The Journal of Emily Carr.* Clarke, Irwin. $10.00.

As a painter Emily Carr can be neatly niched: lyric representationalism touched to surrealism under the influence of Lawren Harris. Sturdy work, one might say, with a persistent vision of local landscape and regional matter

such as Indian totem poles and the pervasive presence of the coniferous forest. Above all, there is consistency. Rarely do the paintings and drawings tail off into mediocrity, rarely do they break through a final restriction of imaginative limitation to speak cosmically or beyond the touchstones of a familiar local context.

But her writing? It is a long time since I have experienced such a rushing, breathless exploration of the entire gamut of prose — from a tough and wiry quality that neatly nails reality, to a gushy naïveté that recalls the very worst kind of amateur lady writer who is all itchy ardour to evoke the grand solemnities of life.

Yet when all is said and done, when the last protest against the arch phrase, coy stance and self-conscious attitudinizing in anthropomorphic terms before the beauties of nature has been duly registered, there remains a down-to-earthness, a so-eminent humanity and an intimate tearing away of the veils that conceal any artist's true anguish, that there is finally only room for admiration.

In several respects *Hundreds and Thousands* recalls for me the journals of Denton Welch that appeared shortly after the Second World War. To be sure the custodian of a white rat, a monkey and a batch of little Griffon Bruxellois terriers does not for one moment display the rounded perfection of the wholly natural writer that Denton Welch does. Yet given the restrictions of this nature — the blatant anthropomorphisms, the inability or refusal to probe the depth of introspection — *Hundreds and Thousands* yet manages to yield a great deal that is fascinating and pleasurable while largely irrelevant to the fact its author was also a painter. Denton Welch, too, of course, was a painter. But whereas, for the young and crippled Anglo-American, writing was the primary activity, with this Canadian Spinster, a diarist here in her riper years, the word-business took very much second place to her pursuit of a visual aesthetic.

What emerges, however, is that both of them *unconsciously* offer the reader a marvellous sense of period. With Welch it was wartime Britain, blackout, gasoline rationing and the problems of a sweet-tooth confronting an economic austerity.

For Victoria's Emily, the world of 1927-1941 was largely an absentee affair. Maybe there are more references to international sheenanigans than Jane Austen ever permitted to cast shadows over her œuvre. But all the same the provincial capital that lurches in and out of focus through the pages of this diary is cosy, smug, familiar, and altogether reassuring.

So for that matter are the contours of the author's life as she sets them down — whether in breathless hyperbole, bitchiness or, just occasionally, in that real strength of language that certainly betrays an exceptional imagination if not a skilled literary practitioner.

I have the impression that *Hundreds and Thousands* might well find greater favour in the United Kingdom than in Canada. For amateurism is still a fragrance in Britain whereas in North America it is observed as merely a stench. Too, Emily Carr's thoughts and arguments, whether religious, æsthetic or purely social, are essentially Anglo-Saxon in their matter. This means something parochial rather than racial, but it does necessitate, I think, a basic empathy for her between-wars kind of environment

in a tucked away corner of the British Empire to feel the nuances of her anguish and to appreciate the fierce flame of determination to sustain a high doctrine of artistic pursuit in a mundane world of non-comprehension and basic uninterest in the affairs of the imagination.

Hundreds and Thousands is not a notebook of Emily Carr: artist. And because it is arbitrary in the selection of its entries, devoid of an index and bereft of any kind of accompanying essay "setting" her in her proper context, it will be of no avail to the grimmer kind of scholarship that demands such *a priori* factors in order that the machinery of criticism might run smoothly.

I do not mean to be unnecessarily perverse, however, when I suggest that because it patently cannot serve the Emily Carr Industry, it has a more honest position as a piece of literary creation. For better or for worse it has to stand on its own two feet as an evocation of person, place and period — for those of us for whom the ancillary data is lacking.

As it is, I think these journals, lopsided in style, lopsided in focus, and lopsided in chronological presentation though they may be, do in fact stand up as a fascinating literary chronicle. The woman who emerges through this literary portrait is nonetheless remarkable even though her feet were of clay, her surroundings mundane, and her vision sometimes commonplace.

Indeed, because of these things, her *sui generis* features stand out yet more badly. There is something to chuckle over legitimately in her snippety comments followed so swiftly by her *mea culpa* guilt-offerings. There is pathos, too, in her struggle to grasp the inner core of reality, after flirting with theosophy and

dallying with what seems a pretty tepid and Erastian-tinged Anglicanism.

Emily Carr, this record reveals, knew herself better than most of us know ourselves, and torn between affront at her period for its (relative) modernity and an equal determination to paint herself free of straightjackets wrought from demoded idioms, she experienced a loneliness that can surely find current echo.

The ingredients are a frustrated female, surrounded by her pets, living out the artist's life in a stuffy provincial capital between the wars. The finished article is a compelling journal that manages to push sophistication to the wings and wrings genuine if containable emotions in steady succession from the reader. Emily was all kinds of painter, but as rough and ready diarist her vivid portrait declares she was also quite a girl.

POLITICS AND BEDFELLOWS

W. H. New

MICHAEL SHELDON, *The Personnel Man.* McClelland & Stewart. $4.95.
PETER TAYLOR, *Watcha Gonna Do Boy... Watcha Gonna Be?* McClelland & Stewart. $2.50.
DAVID LEWIS STEIN, *Scratch One Dreamer.* McClelland & Stewart. $2.50.
PHILIP DEANE, *A Time for Treason.* Longmans.

POLITICS EXISTS at different levels in society — from government affairs to private ones — and several recent Canadian novels have a "political" entanglement as their focus. The respective treatments, as one would expect, vary widely. Philip Deane's *A Time for Treason,* for example, is a cross between Ian Fleming and Father Knows Best, with neither strain benefitting noticeably from the match. The story is set in Washington, D.C., at a time when a peace mission from Red China is visiting; a murder occurs; a Cuban subplot is revealed; rightwing tempers flare. Then Mayne, the hero, goes visiting; sex occurs; the hero's innocent daughter is kidnapped; and divine justice, with the assistance of the C.I.A., closes the book. The trouble is that, in spite of some nice touches of irony in both the dialogue and the plot, we are never involved in the characters or particularly caught up in the situation. Another book which deals with kidnappings and communism, Charles Israel's *The Hostages,* is with all its weaknesses of characterization still much more arresting than this one — it captures the mind by its chilling credibility. On the other hand, an Ian Fleming book has the power to suspend one's disbelief by its very incredibility — the imaginative extravagance that it reveals is enough to take a reader willingly on a vicarious iconoclastic adventure. *A Time for Treason,* unfortunately, does neither, but it will fill a couple of hours with easy reading.

Rather more dependant on irony for its effect is Michael Sheldon's *The Per-*

sonnel Man, which has as its central figure Al Strutt, the personnel man of a ubiquitous Quebec communications company. When Earle Blackwood, an employee, dies under sordid circumstances, Strutt is sent out as widow-visitor with official company condolences. The chief worry, however, is not the widow's feelings but the company's reputation. When Audrey Blackwood ("Earle said you were a phoney") turns out to be conscious of this and somewhat of a tartar to boot, the character study deepens and what there is of a plot thickens almost imperceptibly. Strutt takes the rebuff as the threat of a personal/personnel defeat, and his subsequent sexual conquest of the woman is part of his attempt to refurbish himself as an executive and as a private individual. He is married, of course, and there is also a rival for the attentions of the tart Audrey. But conquest and ego turn into love, and the conflict between Reputation and Individuality is on.

The possibilities for irony here seem endless, and Sheldon, as he does in his earlier works *The Gilded Rule* and *The Unmelting Pot* — perhaps he could call his next book *The Unwavering Title?* — capitalizes on many of them. His language is deliberately controlled, so that the overall tenor of the book is one of understatement. Al Strutt always tries "to sound casual" even in situations that jeopardize his company image. When he at one point discovers Audrey taking part in a placard-carrying demonstration in front of an anonymous consulate, for example, one part of him is horrified; the other simply responds "Good evening, Audrey." This contrast between personal and personnel, or between internal response and external reaction, is the central reason, apparently, for the book's existence. At its best, certainly, the work has the power to delight its readers; it should also have the power to move them, but unfortunately the characters remain on the page, unvivified and artificial.

It is difficult to say why the book seems ultimately so unsuccessful. Part of the reason is possibly in the wit itself. The dialogue seems not stilted so much as staged — as though the whole thing would make a nice scenario, in which the verbal interchanges would entertain while the audience visually perceived the background. Sheldon tries to make it a novel, however, by adding an exposé of Big Business and the French-English conflict in Quebec. In theory these are related to the whole question of being true to one's identity and not worrying about a thing like reputation, and as a theory this may be sound. But the background is either too full to let us concentrate on Strutt alone or not full enough to let us see him mirrored by his society and to see them both as politically related units. In a sense Sheldon should have rewritten *Middlemarch* or condensed it for MGM, but he has done neither, and we have, instead, yet another slim volume.

The two paperback books by Peter Taylor and David Lewis Stein are also published by McClelland & Stewart, those whimsical Canadian publishers of the very good and the extraordinarily bad, who seem to rely on word-of-mouth for the distribution of their wares. The first thing to be noticed is that the publishers have at last designed the book covers in a lively, attractive (and saleable) way, for which they are to be congratulated. Unfortunately they have upped the price of the volumes to a ridiculous $2.50 which will surely do nothing but limit their sales again. What

they need to do is publish works that are of a little more consistent quality, spend a little more on advertising to let people know regularly what they're bringing out (what blindness has directed that they refuse to send such information to Canadian university teachers, for example?), and arrange for their works to be distributed regularly in England and the United States. Sales and quality should go up, and prices should soon come down. They used to be *The* Canadian publisher, but they're rapidly being superseded by both Oxford and Macmillan. From the outside at least, that competition seems a welcome thing. But where did all the dynamism go?

The title of Peter Taylor's book, then, *Watcha Gonna Do Boy... Watcha Gonna Be?*, can be an ironically reflexive question asked of the publishers themselves, but it is also, in the book, implicitly asked of everyone. In particular it's asked of the seventeen-year-old narrator, who leaves his home after high school and, uncertain of committing himself to university (or whatever) and filled with his grandfather's stories of railroading, heads off to work on a railroad gang in New Brunswick. What he finds out is that he's naïve, but he acquires V.D., friends, experience, and knowledge, and learns that "That railroad sure ain't what it used to be." Nor, of course, is he. The novel is a *Bildungsroman*, written almost as a diary, detailing moments in the life of the young Peter William — not so much a retelling of events as it is an attempt to make concrete the stages in the boy-man's growth. What we see is a series of responses, some of them funny, others a little pathetic, and we come to understand something of the conflict between his inclination to rebel and his brooding conscience. Pervading all is a distinct liveliness of style that is welcome in Canadian fiction, but somehow vaguely incongruous in a book this slight.

It does not even come close, that is, to the quality of David Lewis Stein's *Scratch One Dreamer*, which is unquestionably the finest novel published here so far this year. This is a story about conflict, conscience, rebellion, and politics which actually recreates and contends with the contemporary scene. The characters are alive, the prose is handled well, the ideas develop rapidly but are probed in some depth, and the narrative conflict is wholly absorbing. The story

concerns Joe Fried, middle-class Jewish liberal individualist, whose family and friends are committed to political activity — in the form of unionism in one generation and peace marches in the next. Joe wants simply to be free of his ties to them, but he soon discovers that freedom means something other than the avoidance of commitment. He has been antagonistic to his uncle, the union hero, and impatient too with his cousin, who is leading a peace march against an Ontario missile base. In thinking that he is faithful to himself, he says:

> the code of a private individual . . . [is] the exact opposite of the kind of thing that Leo's always stood for. Leo's a public man and everything's on the surface, everything's for show. What matters most is what people think and how much you can influence them. What you do in private, whether or not you keep your word, doesn't really matter as long as you look good to the people out front. Inside the party, Leo was a hatchet man, did you know that? . . . I'm saying it doesn't matter what happens out front, as long as I hold true to my own personal code.

Boag, his mistress, promptly gives him a C– and orders more booze. And Stein manages to maintain this balance between the sentimental and the comic, with the result that he has written a fine novel.

Only the immediate conflict, however, is tentatively resolved. Joe finds that he is influenced both by his environment and his personal responses to it, which leads him in turn to commit himself to a political action that, done, seems pointless, but, not done, would rack his private conscience and deny him the kind of maturity he thinks he's already found. It's a much more credible investigation of a political event than Deane's book, a much more sensitive study of growth and even more warmly human than *Watcha Gonna Do* (though the central question is the same one), and as a presentation of a moment of crisis in the life of an individual, it is much more tense and alive than *The Personnel Man.* Stein's book, too, has a level beyond that of the individual characters, but here the conflict is not resolved, it is simply presented. What happens if you scratch a dreamer? Do you find an ability to act . . . or words . . . or vision . . . or nothing? And who is the dreamer anyway? Is it the individualist who thinks he can exist apart from others — or the group leader who equally erroneously thinks that his group is acting as a single unit? David Lewis Stein has created a book that explores these ideas and that speaks directly to his generation; what makes it doubly good is that it also speaks *about* his generation and, in a sympathetic, involving, and concrete way, about some of the problems that any person today will meet if he is — in the broadest sense — politically alive.

books in review

UNIVERSE BEFORE CREATION

DIANE GIGUERE, *Whirlpool.* Trans. by Charles Fullman. McClelland & Stewart. $2.50.

THIS IMPRESSIVE NOVELLA is not really about a young woman who has an idyllic affair with a married man while on holiday in the Caribbean, an affair which goes dead when they attempt to transplant it to their native Montreal. The book is not *about* that outline of its plot, nor even about the guilt which helps to ruin the year's prolongation of the affair. Miss Giguère writes with authentic insight about the psychology of adultery, but not even that is her true subject. The man, for instance, is hardly a felt presence in the book. Rather it is about the psychic situation of Nathalie, the young woman of the triangle, the self-absorbed narrator of her desperate situation.

In other words, this book is subjective or visionary fiction, as evidenced by terms such as *dream, fairy tale, enchantment, transformation, occult,* and *magic* sprinkled throughout. *Whirlpool* is, then, an embodiment of archetypal experience, of possession by and conflict with the unconscious and suprahuman forces within. But, through liberal use of natural imagery, the author is able to render both the physical and the spiritual sides of her heroine's struggle. On the island of St. Croix, for instance, Nathalie becomes sensual under the sun, but moves in a different direction under the moon at night.

> Bats . . . tiny magicians, sowing disorder in my soul, driving my imagination to distraction, and turning my eyes towards the sea, a sea which, stripped of its daytime euphoria, now seemed aloof and mysterious. I had a strange premonition that it enclosed a vast realm peopled by statues and the figure-heads of ships; that somewhere back of those waters lay the other side of the world; and that in their dark depths, inhabited by formless, whale-like mammals, there reigned the great hush of the universe before creation.

The threat and attraction of this world become acute when she returns to Montreal to find herself almost out of touch with reality. "In my dreams, I visualized ancient cities on the banks of the Nile, and I followed the river until I came upon tall pyramids. I questioned sphinxes. They informed me that I was of Sumerian origin and a spinner by trade. Others, again, told me I was the daughter of a galley slave." The crux of the tale is Nathalie's inability to find an identity.

On one level the fault lies with her mother, who had encouraged her when young to write fairy tales. The heroines of these tales became the strongest source of identity for a daughter whose mother lacked contact with reality and afterwards went temporarily mad. So Nathalie grows up able to imagine herself as Rapunzel, waiting to be rescued, or as several other enchanted heroines of western culture. Finally she realizes, "Any character was free to find a home in me, since I had no identity of my own."

Her lover, Yves, for instance, holds his wife up as virginal and feels driven to insist that Nathalie is promiscuous. She takes on this identity too, but only as a pretense until one day, suddenly freed of inertia, she runs to a park where she accepts the advances of a stranger. Their love-making over, he offers her money

which she does not refuse, realizing the impossibility of appearing to him in any other role. But this accepted mis-identity paradoxically frees her; she is able to tell her lover of the episode. As "proof" of her depraved nature, the incident causes a break with Yves, further freeing her from a deadening enchantment.

Although this break is hopeful, Nathalie still has not solved her deeper problem of identity. She remains caught in a disorienting polarization similar to the one Yves forced on her. We have seen one pole in the mother's seductively irrational dreaminess. The other pole is less discussed but perhaps equally strong, the father's reductively analytic realism. The mother divorces the father after her bout of insanity; an aging mistress finally moves out when the father starts leaving her alone with Nathalie. By the end, the reader has begun to suspect that Nathalie's only chance for rebirth will be to move out like the others. In any case, Miss Giguère has rendered in rich images and scenes an important crisis in the life of the psyche.

E. B. GOSE

CANADIAN COD

JOHN PETER, *Take Hands at Winter*. Doubleday. $5.95.

Take Hands at Winter, like Mr. Peter's first novel (*Along That Coast*, 1964), presents two very sharply defined groups of characters set within the structure of an emerging nationalism and against the background of a larger humanism. In his first book, this division of character into the whites and blacks (with the further sub-division of white into humanist and exploiter) together with the fatalistic development which complements the failure of the larger humanism is effective because the terms of reference of *Along That Coast* are those of the primitive vision:

> Right down that coast, from the Tugela to Algoa Bay and beyond, the rhythm of human awareness adapts itself to the thud and thunder and hissing of the surf, the lift and flash of the breakers, the raw smell of the sea.

But this second novel is a different kettle of fish entirely, and Canadian cod at that. In brief, it is the account of a young British immigrant, David Gilpin, his relationship with another immigrant, Andrew Dacre, and the growing strain between the two accentuated by Gilpin's affection for Dacre's neglected wife Margaret and child Jenny, further complicated by the allures of Dacre's mistress, a leggy blonde co-ed, Kirsten Thorgeirson. Should this be considered inadequate complication for a new immigrant on his first year in Canada, the jacket blurb adds that this account of Gilpin's entry into adult life parallels "the growing pains of Canada, a young and vigorous nation just now entering upon its centennial year."

Reading through this novel, the general impression is that of a rousing good story complete with sex scene, pathetic death, some straightforward structural symbolism and the unexpected bonus of a rather tender love story, reassuring enough for even the coldest of winters. But I don't think that this book will be read primarily for its decription of Canadian issues or for its thoughtful presentation of character. The major characters of *Take Hands at Winter* can be divided right down the middle into the good guys and the bad ones; only the terms that Mr. Peter prefers are those of the givers

and the takers. Gilpin tells us that he and Margaret are "givers" who can only hope for "happiness". Dacre, in opposition, is a "taker" who "gets his enjoyment from taking". Using this schemata, we can see that the industrialist Courtland is also a taker and that Kirsten Thorgeirson and Tom Lavern (an ex-TV personality) have definite functions within the novel to elaborate the nature of what it is to take and to be taken.

This schematic division of character, effective within the primitive vision of *Along That Coast*, is not nearly so convincing for the more variegated world of community in-fighting in prairie Canada. The objection is not so much that people of this general type don't exist, but that Peter's whites are too white and his blacks too black. Margaret's major sin is that she doesn't clean up the second bathroom, and Gilpin's that he can't hold his liquor. Dacre, on the other hand, is an unqualified monster; even cosily abed with his mistress he is not allowed to be anything but nasty. There are all sorts of thematic and psychological justifications that might be put forward for this last scene, but such objections don't alter the general case that unmitigated character consistency is as unconvincing as it is unnatural. At best, this is a simplistic structure. At worst, some of the novel's action and dialogue seem to be contrived to fit; even the status of immigrants in Canada is brought into play. The several clashes between immigrants Gilpin and Dacre point out rather too clearly the difference between the fine, upstanding Gilpin and the selfish, egocentric Dacre. The inevitable bridge to Canadiana is provided by Jeff Loder, Gilpin's friend from Alberta: "Andrew isn't only Andrew. He's every Englishman who ever put a Canadian back up. This overbearing stuff. Insentience".

This last word is also a reminder that Peter's descriptions of Canadian issues don't always ring true in the sense that those of MacLennan do. It's sometimes as simple a matter as syntax and diction; "insentience", for example, is an English word that hasn't been naturalized in Canada. As such, it's not the sort of word that an Albertan would use for coffee talk before a hockey game — even supposing he had once taught at university. Something very similar occurs later in this same chapter when Gilpin sees at the game "a clock assuring him that PLAYER'S PLEASE". But this isn't, of course, the plain statement that immigrant Gilpin assumes, but also an implicit request for a pack of cigarettes as would be recognized by any advertising-conscious North American. It may be unfair to assign the perceptions of a character to those of his creator, but this passage catches the eye as a clear example of that slight angling-off in perspective which undercuts a full acceptance of *Take Hands at Winter*'s discussion of Canadian problems.

Then too, Mr. Peter is running up against the fact that ever since MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* it may no longer be possible simply to insert passages of talk about Canadian issues into a novel and expect for them to be accepted. If such material doesn't grow naturally out of character and action or isn't given imaginative treatment as is, say, the Montreal of Brian Moore's *Ginger Coffey*, the undigested Canadiana sticks out suspiciously like a Centennial concession. Even if we could accept this material at face value, there is still the further problem that a serious discussion of Canadian

problems is incongruous when it is presented together with events that topple over into melodrama. Many of the chapters in this book, like soap-opera, end with a resounding climax. To take a few examples at random, chapter five ends in a car smash, chapter six in a family quarrel and chapter seven in a sex scene. At the conclusion of chapter eight, Gilpin (in Dacre's absence) has brought Margaret to the hospital for the birth of her second child. After a long, apprehensive wait, Gilpin is approached by her doctor: "There's something we have to talk about".

It is at this point that we might logically expect a fade-in of the theme song and a request to tune in tomorrow for the next instalment of this thrilling story. Not that there's anything wrong with this approach if both reader and writer agree that the end of the book is entertainment, pure and simple, but such an approach is disconcerting in a novel that suggests a more pretentious aim. Like Mr. Peter's first novel, *Take Hands At Winter* seems to suggest that the only hope of genuine happiness in a wintry world crowded with people who exploit each other is that larger love which gives of self. The metaphor is that of the spontaneous giving and taking of hands. Within this larger humanist structure, the sexuality of Kirsten and Dacre is introduced only to be rejected ("Not that fair field . . .") and the ego-centric concern with self which characterizes both Dacre and Courtland is left behind in the discovery of Tom Lavern. In his extremity, like *Lear*'s "poor Tom", he affirms the bond of common humanity: "humanity was waiting, stretching out its hand to him, waiting for him to take it." But again, just as the novel seems to be coming through there is a last-ditch attempt at life, closed melodramatically by a slamming door, and we are back to the thriller again.

More than anything else, to me this novel seems to lack that sense of human complexity and indirection which Forster and Lawrence present so well: fatalism may be appropriate for the primitive vision, coincidence the mainstay of soap-opera, but a series of climaxes catapulting towards a neatly modified happy ending is an inadequate vehicle for a novel that attempts a serious representation of life.

SANDRA DJWA

CHILCOTIN TALE

PAUL ST. PIERRE, *Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse*. Ryerson. $3.95.

FOR THE SECOND TIME Paul St. Pierre has turned one of the popular half-time programmes of his 1965 Cariboo Country television series into what must be called a short novel for want of an alternative classification — even in face of the author's comment in a prefatory note that it should be considered as "just one more story out of Chilcotin, where so many have been told beside the fires of so many camps." The difficulty in the way of judging *Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse* as merely a yarn to pass the time is that it has the conflict, plot, and fully developed characters to meet some of the demands of the more sophisticated form even if, so considered, its apparent artlessness exposes a few narrative shortcomings.

As a tale of St. Pierre's mythic Namko Country, that land west of the Fraser and separated by it from the section of

the Cariboo whose chief town is Williams Lake, *Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse* possesses the integrity and the haunting strangeness of its surroundings. In that setting we can accept the man who "was known as Smith," a man whose aloofness forbids the greater intimacy of a first name even in the mouth of Norah, his wife. We can accept, too, the struggle of the pair to make a living on a poor ranch with many horses but with only 78 head of breeding cows at a time when the cold economic laws of the world outside indicate that at least 100 cattle are needed for survival. We can accept, likewise, the Indians of the region who drift in and out of the story as casually as they drift in and out of the lives of settlers like Smith, contributing their own set of values that conflict disconcertingly with those of the white man: Ol Antoine, whose memory embraces the final surrender of his people and for whom present and past merge, especially when Smith reminds him of his contract to break, in Indian fashion, a quarter horse which seems to have possibilities; Gabriel Jimmyboy, himself a victim of the white man's greed but guilty, none the less, of killing a neighbour in a senseless drunken rage; and Walter Charlie who has come to terms with white society and is interested solely in his own welfare to the extent that he draws from Smith the rebuke, "Who is going to help Indians in this world if Indians don't help one another?"

All this is well so long as the action unfolds in and around Smith's ranch in one or other of the two seasons of the Namko year: Winter and August. The tale falls off into slapstick, however, as St. Pierre's touch seems to desert him with the transfer of its locale to the outside world represented by Williams Lake with its symbols of social authority: bank, Government Agency, courthouse, and police station. In failing thus, St. Pierre is not alone. Following Ralph Connor, other Canadian writers have created self-contained communities only to have them broken into by pressure from "The Front," to use the Glengarry man's own term for the outside. It is noteworthy that St. Pierre avoided this pitfall in his first adaptation, *Boss of the Namko Drive*, for here the tale ends with the cattle crossing the Fraser and entering the holding grounds so that the external world is barely felt except in the presence of that minor figure, the cattle buyer.

Smith's contacts with everyday life in Williams Lake, then, are presented in terms of farce and, as a result, the representatives of society are reduced almost to the level of buffoons. This is the most serious weakness in St. Pierre's work but a lesser failing falls to be noted likewise: the amount of authorial comment that breaks into the narrative from time to time, perhaps for the purpose of stretching it to novel length. If this is the reason, it is a pity for it weakens the flow of the tale, as for instance when the description of Ol Antoine is held up for two pages by a kind of text-book disquisition on the native peoples of the Chilcotin. Perhaps the answer might be to put two such tales together if the exigencies of publishing demand a volume of certain length so that the constituent items would be *novelle*, similar to Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea.*

One final word. The adverse criticism mentioned here is not to be taken as condemnation. Readers will surely enjoy *Breaking Smith's Quarter Horse*, for it has the power to engage the feelings and

to move them; the weaknesses mentioned, however, prevent a good work from being a great one. DAVID MACAREE

BRANDY AND SELF-ABASEMENT

SCOTT SYMONS, *Place d'Armes.* McClelland & Stewart. $2.50.

AMONG THE ITEMS which the protagonist of *Place d'Armes* cannot suffer are Montreal Westmount types, Toronto Rosedale types, college fraternity types, La Place des Arts, the Rapido, professors of English Literature, middle-class French Canadians, lower-class French Canadians, banks, Ph.D.'s, career women, Musak, Methodists, Presbyterians, girls, Anglicans, businessmen, politicians, patates frites, Americans, the new Canadian flag, and himself. On the positive side there is Marc de Bourgogne brandy, which he adores, and three French-Canadian male prostitutes, who are necessary props for the ritual of self-abasement which is theme and substance of the novel.

Concerning a man from Toronto who wanders around Montreal's Place d'Armes for twenty-one days, visiting restaurants, shops and the Notre Dame Church and dining with various acquaintances, the story is told by interspersing three methods: a third-person narrative, the protagonist's notes for a novel, and a first-person narrative from the protagonist's point of view. Whatever might have been the author's purpose in using these three methods, certainly the technique does not provide stylistic or thematic variety, except for the different kinds of printer's type. The book is in fact distinguished by four different kinds of type, as well as by photographs, maps, reproductions of handwritten comments and a number of other devices.

Description of the area of Montreal around Place d'Armes occupies a good deal of the author's attention. Like most English-Canadian novelists who have dealt with French Canada, however, Symons fails to capture an atmosphere and provides no more than a superficial glimpse at a small segment of the French-Canadian people. But then his main purpose, apparently, is to provide an analysis of the partial, complete and imminent castration of various segments of the English-speaking Canadian population. Promoted by traditions, the Establishment and English-Canadian Cubes (4D, or is it 3D?) in general, castration is the novel's basic thematic idea, the most fascinating aspect of which is a hint on the part of the hero that the affliction may sometimes be cured, or at least alleviated.

The book contains stated or thinly disguised references to a number of Canadian figures, including Douglas Le Pan, Hubert Aquin, Jean Drapeau and Pierre Berton. The author develops his own system of measuring such figures in terms of quantity of testicle — "Hees has one, Roblin 1¼, Robarts 1½ — but never uses them."

Stylistically *Place d'Armes* is experimental. The author appears to have sought the kind of freshness and frankness of expression which characterizes Leonard Cohen's excellent novel *Beautiful Losers.* But while Cohen's book dazzles and hypnotizes the reader, rising often to Faulknerian heights, *Place d'Armes* jars and bores. Coinages such as "fleshment, cripplement, thunderment,

fundament, gigglement, buttockry, hot-doggeral, homosexation" appear to subtract rather than add to linguistic vitality.

By far the most effective passages in Symons' novel are the satirical descriptions of English Canadians in operation — the law student on the Rapido, the fraternity buck (blondbeeste) in the restaurant, the two well-heeled couples in a French-Canadian antique shop. These are the people with whom the author seems most at home, and yet he obviously gets a kick out of detesting them. In effect, the impression one gets from this novel is that the narrator is patterned after the sick white liberal described by James Baldwin and others — a person whose exaggerated guilt complex and sense of the sins of his fathers hopelessly distorts his vision and translates into the psychological need to see himself degraded.

One wishes that Scott Symons had given more space to his Marc de Bourgogne, which is indeed an excellent brandy.

RONALD SUTHERLAND

POSSESSED BY DEATH

RALPH GUSTAFSON, *Sift in an Hourglass.* McClelland & Stewart. Cloth $4.50, paper $2.50.

RALPH GUSTAFSON is, like Webster, "much possessed by death", and when he sees the "skull beneath the skin" he expresses the vision with Jacobean density and Browningesque gusto. Thus his work has, from time to time, a deliberately idiosyncratic anti-modernity.

Stand
Among deathbeds as though among heroes,
Pausing in winter along windy corridors
With the knowledge ahead of us, to wrap
our throats.

It is not only the odd diction, the inclusion of such obsolete or near-obsolete words as "pelf", "fesses" "Bubs" "clomb" and such contractions as "I'the coffin" but also the combination of staccato effects and rhetorical questions which give the verse its character. In a poem of farewell to Ned Pratt we get

Dashedly caught
Up with you, have they, Ned, that tide,
Those monuments of ocean? complied,
Have you? Gone, eh? By God. . . .

In *Dirge for a Penny Whistle* we have:

Edith, and he of the clerical cut,
Stiff, laid out, are they,
Dead,
In a box?
O monstrous monstrous!
Frost and e.e.?
They too, they too?
Laid in a row,
Corruption!
Dost 'ou smell it?
Fug.
Stuff nostrils.
Usury. Usury.
Only Pound to go?

Here the quotations and near quotations turn the poem at times almost into collage. In other places, too, Gustafson employs pastiche, puns, parody, with a dexterity that is often breathtaking.

This does sometimes result in works which amount to literary games, but the games Gustafson plays have the urgency and point of ritual, and enable him, in a voice magnified by the masks he wears, to express certainties and paradoxes which overarch the centuries. Thus in *THE EXHORTATION* he, recognizing his own adopted disguise, cries

Oh I would be less hortative
As my critics ask, but less
The man. . . .

The poem ends by suggesting that pressure of awareness of mortality results in joy.

By grief I mean joy. I talk
To you flippantly in paradox.
Understanding is lack of death.

The understanding of mortality, of grief, is joy in the way that Yeats's makers in *Lapis Lazuli* were gay. This gaiety is forced upon us by that

long wait for the
trump with nothing else
to do but rot. The best
nilly must put a false
face on the matter, think
of heaven. . . .

The joy here expressed is exuberant and at times grotesque. The judgement day is comical

Poked from their coffins,
Risen at the trump
Of the topmost angels blue-faced
Goggle-eyed blowing their bum-splitting
brass,
The coughed-up dead,
Stitchless, poor danglers, driven,
Huddle their tiers of doom.

The criticism was made of Milton, as it could also have been made of Browning and Dylan Thomas, that he "writ no language", and Gustafson could be similarly accused. Frequently one feels as if the whole grotesque, exuberant, dramatic, vivid, cluttered, poetic world belongs to some nowhere land. Nevertheless, this news from nowhere is always entertaining and sometimes disturbingly relevant. We have few whole-hogging rhetoricians these days, and, of recent years, only Djuna Barnes in her somewhat tiresome *The Antiphon* has attempted the Jacobean mode. *Sift in an Hourglass* is better than *The Antiphon,* though just as tricksy. It does, in its outlook, share some of the bizarre and vigorous quality of a number of younger British poets, and reminds me, in its wit and texture, of early Lowell and Berryman. However one tries to place it, however, it refuses to be killed by qualification. Exuberance, vigour, passion remain. This could be, in its violent opposition to current fashion, an influential and valuable collection.

ROBIN SKELTON

RIGHT WORDS IN THE VACUUM

RAYMOND FRASER, *Poems for the Mirimichi.* Poverty Press. Unpriced.
JOHN GRUBE, *Sunday Afternoon at the Toronto Art Gallery.* Fiddlehead. 50 cents.
CYRIL MCCOLGAN, *A Spoonful of Ashes.* Pandora's Box, Victoria. $1.50.
RENALD SHOOFLER, *Small Change.* Delta. $1.50.

WHEN ONE READS in Raymond Fraser's "The Birds"

It must be nice to be a bird
From some of their speech that I have heard

one wishes that Fraser had listened more closely to the "musical words" of the birds, so that he might have informed his work more frequently with the musicality of poetry. Of course, there is a place at which the line between poetry and prose becomes indistinct in the area of poetic prose and free verse, but even taking this into account it would be difficult sensibly to defend the prosy and prosaic pieces in this collection, like "Baptism", as poetry. And *Poems for the Mirimichi* suffers not only from this technical defect, but also

THE OXFORD COMPANION
TO CANADIAN HISTORY
AND LITERATURE
by Norah Story

MODERN CANADIAN VERSE
edited by A. J. M. Smith

THE MODERN CENTURY
by Northrop Frye

POEMS: NEW AND COLLECTED
by A. J. M. Smith

PHRASES FROM ORPHEUS
by D. G. Jones

AS IS
by Raymond Souster

WORD FROM NEW FRANCE
The Selected Letters of Marie de l'Incarnation,
Translated and edited by Joyce Marshall

THE WAY IN AND OUT
Science and Religion Reconciled,
by F. W. Waters

SALVATION! O THE JOYFUL SOUND
The Selected Writings of John Carroll,
edited by John Webster Grant

THE REPUBLIC OF CHILDHOOD
A Critical Guide to Canadian Children's Literature in English,
by Sheila Egoff

Oxford University Press

from the apparent failure to come to terms with a basic tenet of poetry: a poet must search for himself in a public way, as Whitman does, or his work becomes tedious, embarrassing. In "Baptism"; "On My Balcony at Belleisle"; "June 13"; "Montreal Morning"; and "An Army of One", in which the brave speaker carries the standard of himself against the "numerous / and fierce" enemy (which turns out to be "the devouring stomach / of social amorphosity"), Fraser searches for himself in such a personal, immature way that one hesitates to share the experience with him. He so far shows little of the genius he has seen "humbled by half-wits" in "Poem at Twenty-one", although occasionally, as in "Withdrawal" and "Dialogue", he finds the imagery with which to reach the reader. At his best he does not speak through the grill of the confessional, and makes a poem sufficiently good to cause the reader to wish the rest were better.

John Grube fares notably better in his *Sunday Afternoon at the Art Gallery.* There is dross in the volume, as in the second stanza of the two-stanza "Purged" and the final "Haiku," which in its entirety falls flat: "The Emperor of Japan writes poetry for his own pleasure." But there are little gems, as well, such as "A French Canadian Girl" and "Assimilation"; Grube is notably good in the passages of understated deadliness, as in "A Portrait" and the first stanza of "Purged", which later loses its way:

> A portly gentleman in gold-rimmed
> spectacles,
> trickling blood,
> stooping with difficulty to pick up his
> morning paper
> and tucking his napkin in at the neck
> gently bashes in the skull of his egg
> and contemplates the buttered toast like
> a baby.

More gems, please, Mr. Grube.

The difficulty with Cyril McColgan's *A Spoonful of Ashes,* promising as it is (how any poet must despise having his work called "promising"), is that it seems disappointingly derivative; one feels one must wait impatiently for the poet to develop more of his own idiom. Present are ee cummings's lower-case "i" and the unmistakable voice of Dylan Thomas in such lines as:

> my hairy adam-sin unshorn
> was scraped by baptismal blades
> from my soul; with wild tirades
> the bishop of birth shook me from the womb
> and wiped me clean to hear the book
> of doom.

McColgan speaks of:

> The bones caught in the clock
> cross at the end of the final hour:
> nothing escapes the symbol.
> the crack in the skull
> issues slender lengths of light
> sounding fathoms deep. . . .

"Burning the roses in the field . . . " and "Intangible moodiness after the storm . . ." reflect the strong Imagistic influence upon the work, an influence generally so well treated that it becomes a strength of the volume. If McColgan is Imagistic, so be it, but one wants more McColgan and fewer echoes of others in the poems.

Renald Shoofler's *Small Change* is a collection of poems over which the poet retains excellent control of whatever imagery is appropriate to the subjects with which he deals, from the well-structured "Torpedo" poem, which achieves a deliberate insensitivity ("O, I am not Prufrock, . . . I have wheels!"), to the delicate "Anonymous Legacy" piece, which touches the sense of tradition. There is little that needs to be said about *Small Change* because it speaks so eloquently

for itself; it ought to be widely read, and Messrs. Fraser, Grube, and McColgan might take seriously Shoofler's "Nature Abhors a Vacuum":

> You have a thought
> And you're struck dumb;
> put words into that
> and it's a poem.

The thing is, of course, to put the *right* words into that vacuum.

ALAN R. SHUCARD

A HEAVEN OF CONTROVERSY

DONALD STEPHENS, *Bliss Carman*. Burns & MacEachern. $4.75.

DONALD STEPHENS' monograph propounds the following thesis to account for the nature of Bliss Carman's poetry: (1) because of his loyalist heritage and New Brunswick background, Carman was a conservative in outlook, a traditionalist whose essential techniques, ideas, and attitudes never changed after the publication of *Low Tide on Grand Pré* in 1893; (2) because of Carman's almost pathological dependence on other people, he borrowed his habits and his ideas from those around him wherever he might happen to be; (3) Carman had no true self with which to confront the world, either as man or writer; he had rather a series of sometimes contradictory masks which he had fortuitously assumed as a result of his background, reading, and the events of his life.

Such a thesis, if lucidly set forth and applied rigorously, might do much to explain the apparent inconsistencies in thought and mood and the unevennesses in style that occur in Carman's work. Donald Stephens is to be congratulated for having thought of it and for having investigated its possibilities. The result of his investigation, however, as it appears in *Bliss Carman*, appears to me to be at times contradictory and confusing. The work abounds in statements on various aspects of Carman's personality and work that are difficult to reconcile.

For example, Stephens writes of Carman's personality as follows:

> The myth and the mask have to stand strong and alone because there is no man behind them. (p. 37)
> Behind them all [the marks] is a man who is part and parcel of them. (p. 39)

When Stephens turns to a consideration of Carman's craftsmanship, he is equally contradictory:

> Unfortunately his [Morris'] main fault is too much fluency and the intensity of his poetry is watered down with excessive words. Much can be said about Carman in the same way. (p. 119)
> From Christina Rossetti Carman borrowed the careful workmanship and exquisite melody so evident in some of his short lyrics; he learned from her the rule of compression. (p. 118)

When Stephens deals with the question of Carman's borrowing from others and with that of artistic integrity, the same kind of inconsistency occurs. The contradictions, however, become most pronounced in Chapter III, where Donald Stephens' honest, and often acute, examination of the development and characteristics of each of Carman's volumes brings him into direct conflict with one of the cardinal assumptions of his hypothesis, namely, that there should be no growth or development after *Low Tide on Grand Pré*. Grudgingly, he admits change and development and then in a subsequent statement denies them.

For example, he is forced to admit that Carman's contributions to the *Vagabondia* volumes "tend to be tinged with his deeper philosophy and melancholy", but on the very next page he contradicts this statement, "His poetry becomes more a picture of the landscape than a statement of philosophy." He finds an attempt, only partially successful, in the five-volume series of *The Pipes of Pan* to integrate various aspects of modern life into a mythopoeic structure — something certainly that had not occurred in the earlier *Grand Pré* volume. At the conclusion of his account of the second volume of this series, *The Green Book of the Bards*, Donald Stephens writes:

> Any chances of breaking out of the mold were now gone. He could now only reiterate the concepts that he had received in the past. (p. 67)

He then immediately turns to a new development in Carman's work, his treatment of love in *Songs of the Sea Children*, which shows "an individuality that is refreshing . . . a maturity . . . a keener vision."

Following a cursory description of *Songs from a Northern Garden*, Stephens remarks, "But it is with this volume that familiarity sets in with the reader of Carman. From now on there would always be echoes of an earlier Carman; with *Songs of the Sea Children* the bolt had been shot."

Three pages later, Stephens is faithfully grappling with the originality of Carman's treatment of the Sappho fragments.

From the above, it becomes apparent that Stephens' main general hypotheses with respect to Carman are not established in this book. On one point alone is Stephens consistent and firm, and that is that Carman never changed because he was a traditionalist and from Fredericton. He seems completely unaware that this hypothesis is in direct contradiction to his third hypothesis, that of Carman's being necessarily affected by his surroundings and his friends. Through the greater part of his poetic life, these surroundings and friends were not of Fredericton, but of places quite unlike — Boston, Philadelphia, and New York.

Had Stephens applied the logic of "Occam's razor" to his thesis and discarded it after investigation, had he contented himself with a descriptive analysis of the publications of Carman and a summary of his life — both areas in which his insights are often sharp and valuable — he would have produced a more convincing and consistent book. He would not, however, have produced so stimulating a one to read, or to write. In the words of Browning's "Andrea del Sarto", "A man's reach should exceed his grasp,/ Or what's a heaven for?" I predict for *Bliss Carman* a heaven of controversy.

FRED COGSWELL

ORWELL'S WORLD

GEORGE WOODCOCK, *The Crystal Spirit: a study of George Orwell.* Clarke, Irwin. $10.00.

MR. WOODCOCK met Orwell in 1942, after a heated debate which they carried on in the *Partisan Review* concerning the English pacifists. They became and remained friends during the last seven years of Orwell's life, a period which provides the material for Part One of

this book, which the Preface warns us is not a biography, but a "critical study". Selected passages from Orwell's letters to Woodcock, and reminiscences of their conversations are used to outline Orwell's political attitudes, which were often apparently contradictory. In the second and longest section of the book these attitudes are traced through the novels, which are shown to share a single major theme — the evils of a class-divided society.

What Woodcock means by warning us that his book may be called a "critical study" only "if one interprets that term in the free way Orwell himself would have sanctioned" gradually become apparent. The approach to the novels is essentially thematic, with an emphasis on the political beliefs which the themes demonstrate. The alienated hero (who reappears in various forms) attempting to escape from the class to which he belongs and always failing, and recurrent motifs such as the boot in the face, are shown to be central to Orwell's world view. There are some sensitive comments on particular scenes, and positive judgements about the relative merits of the novels, all of which, including *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four,* are seen as demonstrations of the self-destructive nature of caste systems. Woodcock is particularly good on *Animal Farm,* a notoriously difficult work about which to say anything sensible, and he is surely right in disagreeing with those critics who see *Nineteen Eighty-Four* as "a statement of pessimism carried to perversity". He argues that the novel is a warning rather than a prophecy, and that even though Orwell's techniques at times appear realistic, the verisimilitude of detail and the tone of the writing should not mislead the reader, since Orwell was a writer within the moralist tradition, and like all moralists tended to write fables and parables rather than novels. But Woodcock says little about structure or style, and "contemporary critical warnings against the personal heresy and the intentional fallacy" are dismissed as irrelevant.

The last two sections of this study are mainly concerned with Orwell's non-fiction, but continue the discussion of his ambivalent attitudes towards such matters as progress (he was basically conservative); nationalism (he was a patriot); population (he was strongly anti-birth-control); imperialism (the Empire produced some benefits and he admired Kipling); education and the intellectuals. Woodcock defines Orwell finally as a moralist rather than a politician, as an unorthodox socialist who saw the nineteenth century as the golden age, as a revolutionary who was really a middle-class liberal.

The short fourth section does make some comments on Orwell's style and structure, points to his failings in characterization, and remarks on the lucidity of his prose (Woodcock's own is a welcome relief from the turgidity of much academic writing), but the volume as a whole focusses on ideas rather than on literary techniques, an emphasis which will please some and no doubt infuriate others.

J. A. LAVIN

O GOD!
O MONTREAL!

KATHLEEN JENKINS, *Montreal Island City of the St. Lawrence.* Doubleday. $6.75.

KATHLEEN JENKINS, born in Montreal and educated at McGill, is a former librarian at the Westmount Public Library. Her book, *Montreal Island City of the St. Lawrence,* the second in Doubleday's "The Romance of Canadian City Series", chronicles the history of Montreal from 1535 to 1965 with scrupulous detail and an unfailing respect for facts. Unfortunately though, despite the care with which the subject is treated, and despite some interesting passages, *Montreal Island City of the St. Lawrence* is dull, trite, and pedantic.

There are several reasons why the history fails. One of these is the style. A discussion of the progress of education in Montreal between 1821 and 1831 opens:

> This same decade witnessed some modest progress in education. Ever since 1760, it had been a thorny subject, as between the French Roman Catholics and the English Protestants, and a settlement pleasing to both, was not easy to come by. Much of the friction stemmed from the official desire to anglicize the province, which however unsuccessful in fact, stirred up bad feelings on both sides.

Trite diction, illogical punctuation, misplaced modifiers, ambiguous references, and awkward sentence structures: all create difficulties both of reading and of comprehension.

Not only do individual paragraphs jump jerkily along, but the whole book suffers from St. Vitus' Dance. This is partly due to the history's chronological organization. Chapter 9, for example, is titled "1689-1698" and covers such diverse events as the reappointment of Frontenac as Governor of New France, the succession of William and Mary to the English throne, the war between France and England in Europe, the Iroquois hostilities in North America, the welcome of Frontenac to Montreal, the French attack on Schenectady, the defense of Verchères by Madeleine, and the *prie-dieu* affair in Montreal.

Such sudden switches of theme indicate another weakness in *Montreal Island City of the St. Lawrence*; this is the concept of history which allows the historian to chronicle events without interpretation and without regard for their thematic significance. The material points clearly to an interpretation of Montreal's history as the centre of, and symbol for, Canadian life from 1535 to 1965. The material also suggests a thematic organization around such concerns as politics, education, economics, religion, and society.

A thematic organization might have allowed Miss Jenkins to map out more satisfactorily the development of the body, mind, and soul of the "Royal Mountain". Certainly, it should have made her take more note of some facets of Montreal life which she almost ignores. The cultural life of Montreal is chiefly relegated to a brief section in the last chapter. The non-French, non-Anglo-Saxon Montrealers are similarly treated in a brief section in the last chapter. And even though French-speaking Montrealers appear throughout the history, the general impression given by *Montreal Island City of the St. Lawrence* is that Montreal is basically an Anglo-Saxon city after all.

Finally, one finishes *Montreal Island City of the St. Lawrence* with chagrin. Miss Jenkins' failure to climb the moun-

tain, to look at the island, to watch the St. Lawrence, and to imaginatively recreate the history of Montreal is annoying, especially when the book is part of Doubleday's "The Romance of Canadian Cities Series". The failure is also sad, for Montreal's story is a romance, one of the most challenging and significant romances in Canadian history.

MARY JANE EDWARDS

GALT RECONSIDERED

W. M. PARKER, *Susan Ferrier and John Galt.* Longmans, Green. 2/6.

MR. PARKER'S refreshing reappraisal of John Galt (who alone among the two satirists he discusses, concerns us here), is written with incisiveness, in a clear, comprehensive style, and focuses attention on Galt's best works, clear proof that he cannot be relegated to second class. There are concise summaries, judiciously selected passages and a useful bibliography.

"It was", we read, "in Canada . . . that he (Galt) expended most energy in practical affairs, but to little purpose as transpired." Correspondence with the author has confirmed that "to little purpose" should be understood as meaning "so far as Galt's personal advantage was concerned."

Again: "He began by writing worthless poetry and plays that have gone to deserved oblivion." Few would disagree so far as Galt's plays are concerned. As regards his poetry, the bulk of which remains unpublished, it does not, admittedly, rank high as *belles-lettres,* yet, as a self-analysis, its worth is not inconsiderable.

A last point arises out of the author's viewpoint, derived from Sir Walter Scott, that Galt indulged in "a too free use of the Scottish dialect." Against this must be set the weighty, contrary opinions of David Macbeth Moir, Galt's first biographer, and S. R. Crockett (Introduction to the *Annals of the Parish,* published by John Grant, Edinburgh, 1936).

An otherwise masterly treatment of the subject is concluded with a warning against the possible error of regarding Galt as a spent force in literature.

H. B. TIMOTHY

NOTE FOR BIBLIOPHILES

James Douglas in California: 1841. Ed. Dorothy Blakey Smith. Vancouver Public Library. Hard cover $15.00, leather $20.00.

ON THE 3RD OF December, 1840, James Douglas left Fort Vancouver on the Columbia with orders from his superior, Dr. John McLoughlin, to "proceed with an adventure of goods to California, with the view jointly of purchasing the produce of that country and forwarding a large herd of livestock by the overland route to the Columbia." He also had "other objects of a political nature in view."

On the 23rd of January, 1841, he records laconically: "Passed the Puebla de Santa Clara in the evening; This though the largest village in Calefornia." The rest of his journal, which must have recorded his slow return to Fort Vancouver, has disappeared, perhaps for ever.

The existence of the journal has long been known. H. H. Bancroft made reference to it in his *History of California* (1886), and the Bancroft Library transcript of it was published in the *California Historical Society Quarterly* for June 1929. This new edition, however, is from the original journal in the Provincial Archives of British Columbia. The introduction and notes have been beautifully handled by Dorothy Blakey Smith, a fine scholar and bibliographer, who hopes that the general reader will "find much to interest and amuse him in James Douglas's frank and lively comments on the men and manners in California in 1841."

Actually, the primary importance of the work is historical, but Douglas, who had a keenly observant eye, an obvious and a deep appreciation of nature, and a sense of humour, does make entries that will please anyone interested in the literature of travel.

Finally, any bibliophile will find this book attractive. It was composed in the types of Frederick W. Goudy and the composition was begun on the 8th of March, 1965, the hundredth anniversary of Goudy's birth. The design, the hand setting, and the printing was done by Wil Hudson, for the press of the Vancouver Public Library. The edition is limited to 500 copies and each copy is numbered. The work is already a much desired collector's item.

S. E. R.

PROCHAIN EPISODE

HUBERT AQUIN'S novel, *Prochain Episode*, has just appeared in an English translation by Penny Williams, published by McClelland & Stewart ($5.00). Our readers are referred to the exhaustive review of the original French version of the novel by C. H. Moore which was published in *Canadian Literature* No. 29.

NEW WAVE: A CORRECTION

WE APOLOGIZE for a typographical error which at one point seriously changed the sense of Ralph Gustafson's article, "New Wave in Canadian Poetry", *Canadian Literature* No. 32. In the third paragraph on page 10, the 7th sentence reads: "The new formalities have as their correct objective the achievement of greater interference with the instant of cognition." The sentence *should* read: "The new formalities have as their correct objective the achievement of greater and swifter immediacy in presenting experience; of minimal interference with the instant of cognition."

In Memoriam

In loving memory of

SARAH BINKS

dear departed Sweet Songstress
of Saskatchewan,
who passed away of mercury poisoning
while taking her own temperature
with a horse thermometer April 15, 1931.

Weeping Willows, Willows weeping,
Here within your timeless keeping,
Lies a gentle maiden, sleeping—
Maiden take your rest . . .

WRAITHA DOVECOTE

Sadly missed by JOHN SWIVEL, The Great Dean, MRS. MARTHA WAFFLE (Bessie Udderton, The Poet of Innerness), PROFESSOR BAALAM BEDFELLOW, Ph.D., JORDON MIDDLEDUCK, OSIRIS JONES-JONES (Poet Laureate), and WRAITHA DOVECOTE, members of the Saskatchewan School of Seven and a Half.

A memorial service was planned during which these celebrated poets consigned sacrificial odes, roundels, and triolets to a ceremonial pyre. These august events were recorded by Paul Hiebert in his new book Willows Revisited, available at all bookstores for $5.95.