

# CANADIAN LITERATURE Nº. 57

PUBLISH CANADIAN

## Articles

BY WYNNE FRANCIS, IAN MONTAGNES, ANNE WOODSWORTH,  
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## Answers on Publishing

BY SHIRLEY JACKSON, MICHAEL MACKLEM, DENNIS LEE,  
DAVID ROBINSON, JAMES LORIMER, VICTOR COLEMAN, MEL HURTIG

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BY MORRIS WOLFE, MARGARET ATWOOD, DOUG FETHERLING, JAMES POLK

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AUGUST 1973

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210 pages approx.; paper cover \$5.50 ISBN 0-7748-0021-6; 1973.

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## PUBLISHING PRESENT

SIX YEARS ago (No. 33, Summer, 1967) we devoted the pages of *Canadian Literature* to a survey of publishing in Canada. There was not then much to choose from. Quebec publishing being considered apart in an article by Naim Kattan, there was in English Canada a landscape of big commercial presses and non-commercial little presses, and it was on this basis that the issue was arranged. Wynne Francis (who appears again in this symposium) wrote on the little presses. Presenting various views on the established houses, John Morgan Gray of Macmillan wrote as publisher, John Robert Colombo — with experience at the University of Toronto Press and McClelland & Stewart — wrote as editor, Bill Duthie — with experience as sales representative of two leading publishers — wrote as bookseller. Finally, a panel of writers, magazine editors and reviewers expressed their views on the current state of publishing; it was mainly a dim view, with most of its scanty light focussed on McClelland & Stewart, who then seemed to offer all that was hopeful in Canadian publishing.

The present collection differs from the past in more respects than it resembles it, and thus reflects the changes that have taken place over such a brief period in the Canadian publishing situation. The little presses are there again, joined in separate articles by the little magazines and the underground or alternative press, so that three times as much space is devoted to counter-cultural publication, which I think faithfully reflects the momentum of a change I already sensed when, in my editorial in 1967, I pointed out a sixfold increase in the production of poetry by little presses between 1959 and 1966. The little press, the little magazine and the alternative press have ceased to be a delicately ephemeral fringe of publishing in general; indeed, not only have such ventures vastly in-

creased in numbers, activity and audacity, but they have also grown in durability, and several of the presses which Wynne Francis mentioned in 1967 — notably Coach House, Weed/Flower, Quarry and Fiddlehead — are even more active today than they were then.

In addition, however, there has appeared a new category of small and on the whole intensely Canadianist publishers who have shifted the whole balance of publication in this country. Their emergence has largely counterbalanced one other crucial development during the past six years — the conversion of important native Canadian houses (Ryerson and Gage) into branch plants of American publishing corporations — and it has run parallel with an unprecedented governmental interest in publishing, exemplified by the Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing and by the activities of the federal government in subsidizing Canadian publishers through the Canada Council and the Department of State.

In the present survey, devoted to publishing in 1973, it was obviously these radical changes that needed most attention, and this will explain what some readers may first regard as a certain imbalance in the contents. Once again, publishing in Quebec is discussed, this time by Max Dorsinville, but in a piece commenting mainly on the changes there in recent years that have paralleled those in anglophone Canada. University press publication, whose contribution to the number of Canadian books in print has rarely been fully acknowledged, is dealt with in a special article by Ian Montagnes. There is the group of three essays on counter-cultural publishing. There is also a group of items dealing with the new small presses which attempt to combine the commercial and the experimental; they include essays by two leading participants in this movement, while the questionnaire — unlike that in *CL* 33 — is based not on the views of critical outsiders, but on the motivations of committed participants in the current expansion of publishing. Finally, there is a critique by the journalist Morris Wolfe, a regular contributor to *Saturday Night*, of the Ontario Royal Commission's report on publishing.

This has left the established larger publishers virtually unexamined, except for my own essay on the reprint phenomenon, which necessarily stresses their contribution to this further phase in the recent expansion of Canadian publishing — in my view one of its most important phases. This is not from any intent to belittle their contribution in recent years. Quite apart from the university presses, McClelland & Stewart and Clarke Irwin among Canadian publishers, and the two leading subsidiaries of British firms (Macmillan over most of this period and

Oxford still), have published during these years many important volumes of Canadian poetry and fiction, history and biography, though it must be added that they have neglected Canadian drama and left the field open for the timely endeavours of New Press and Talonbooks among the small publishers and the University of Toronto Press among the academic houses.

Nevertheless, in planning this survey and referring back to its predecessor in 1967, I cannot help reflecting on the change in the comparative standing of McClelland & Stewart then and in 1973. In 1967 McClelland & Stewart concentrated the hopes of most people who were concerned for the future of writing in Canada; they were more enterprising than other large publishers, more willing to take a gamble, more perceptive — through their editors — of emergent talent, and one appreciated the immense effect Jack McClelland's energy had at that time in opening the horizons of Canadian publishing. Evidently, however, he did not open them far enough, for it was very shortly after the summer of 1967 that the existing little presses, who catered frankly to small minorities, were supplemented by the whole new galaxy of small presses which revealed not only authors and subjects with which the existing presses — even McClelland & Stewart — could not cope adequately, but also substantial readerships who seemed to have been waiting in unconscious eagerness for the books that New Press and Anansi and Jim Lorimer and Mel Hurtig and Talonbooks had to offer them. Obviously Canadian publishing needed an expansion outside either the existing big presses or the existing little presses.

G.W.

# THE EXPANDING SPECTRUM

## *Literary Magazines*

*Wynne Francis*

A FEW YEARS AGO it was still possible to group Canada's literary magazines into loose categories labelled university quarterlies, small independent reviews and little magazines. Since 1967 an explosion of publishing activity has blasted the categories. So many and so various are the literary magazines in Canada today that it is easier now to speak of an expanding spectrum the bands of which blend into each other like the colours of a rainbow.

At the extremes of the spectrum are the academic journals and the alternate press periodicals. In between range many kinds of university-based journals, numerous independents large and small and a great variety of little magazines. Each band of the spectrum has expanded year by year and though many of the magazines are short-lived, new ones appear at an astonishing rate. An exact count at any one time is impossible; but it is safe to say that close to one hundred literary magazines are currently being published in Canada.

For perspective it is worth remembering that in the early Sixties, when literary outlets in Canada numbered under twenty, the founding of a new magazine was regarded as a great risk. Doomsters were quick to say that the reading public was not large enough, not enough talent existed, standards would surely fall. During the mid-Sixties it seemed that the nay-sayers were right. It was a drab period and few magazines survived it. Since 1966, however, the number of new and successful magazine ventures has confounded all the prophets. Before surveying these development, a word about the fortunes of those magazines founded prior to the mid-Sixties.

Notable among the magazines which flourished and died in the Sixties are *Yes* (1956-70), *Delta* (1957-66), *Alphabet* (1960-71), *Evidence* (1960-67),

*Edge* (1963-69). The short unhappy life of *Parallel* (1966-67) should be noted; a successor to *Exchange* (1961-62), it represented the second failure by Montrealers within a decade to establish a national "quality" magazine. The long life of *Culture* — founded in 1931 and for many years the only bilingual scholarly review in Canada — came to an end in 1971. Some magazines died because their work was done; others failed in the competition for grants. A few enjoy a ghostly or phoenix existence: *Tish*, for example, which thrived in the early Sixties, is being reprinted in toto by Talon Books; *Island* (1965-68) gave way to *Is* which has been transformed from a tiny magazine devoted to the "occasional" poem into a handsome serial anthology of new poets. *Open Letter* (1965-) is in its third of a series of incarnations. Begun as an in-group poetry newsletter, it now appears as a sober triquarterly review dedicated to changing the course of criticism in Canada.

Of those magazines which survived the Sixties, the established university quarterlies are the most stable. *The University of Toronto Quarterly* retains its position as the most scholarly and continues to offer its valuable annual review supplement "Letters in Canada". *Queen's Quarterly* and *Dalhousie Review* (which celebrated its fiftieth year in 1970) still keep many pages open to creative work and reviews of Canadian authors. *Canadian Literature*, ten years old in 1969, maintains its exclusive devotion to criticism and review of Canadian letters; but though it has doubled in size during the Sixties it has, regrettably, dropped its annual bibliographical checklist. Among the independents, *The Canadian Forum*, fifty years old in 1970, has adopted glossy covers, a thematic scheme and a more relaxed attitude towards poetry selection and book-reviewing. *Saturday Night*, after many vicissitudes, appears to have achieved a new stability. Celebrating its eighty-fifth year in 1972, *Saturday Night* has recently increased its literary content considerably in both quality and quantity. *The Tamarack Review*, ten years old in 1966 and staple fare for readers throughout the Sixties, began to waver in its quarterly schedule in 1970 and has since temporarily suspended publication. *The Fiddlehead* had its twenty-fifth birthday in 1970. Flirting for a time with a monthly schedule and critical commentary, it has now settled back, though much enlarged, to its original quarterly status and its emphasis on new poetry and fiction. *Quarry*, an independent quarterly since 1965, pursues its electric policy, but has recently announced a triquarterly schedule. *Prism international*, too, now appears three instead of four times a year.

Among the little magazines, *Blew Ointment* (1963-) persists in its prolific, erratic displays of neo-dadaist pyrotechnics. *Imago* (1944-), dedicated to the

long or serial poem, feels that its work is done. Now in its nineteenth number, it will fold shortly or be absorbed by *Iron* (1966-). *Intercourse* (1966-), the only little mag that ever laughed at itself and its readers, has recently been transformed into a Buddhist-oriented magazine which will absorb another short-lived Buddhist poetry magazine, *Sunyata* (1966).

THE PROLIFERATION of little magazines in the Fifties was due in part to what has been called the mimeograph revolution — a cheap and easy method of production which encouraged numerous scruffy, ephemeral mags. The introduction of photo off-set printing in the Sixties has had much wider significance. For example, the physical appearance of magazines in every band of the spectrum has improved. Even a small amount of capital and reasonable care with the original script can now ensure a legible, attractive magazine. Photo off-set allows for much greater freedom, too, in shape and size, typography, graphics and illustrations. Colour, also, though more expensive, has been employed by many journals in recent years. Even many little magazines sport vari-coloured pages and bright covers (*Black Fish*, for example) and many indulge, as does *Is*, in lavish photography and psychedelic effects. The improved appearance of magazines generally has led to more of them being placed, and found, on library shelves and in bookstores where they attract a considerable number of readers who would otherwise never see them. (This doesn't apply to *The Ant's Forefoot*, an elaborate production which is a foot too long to fit any bookshelf. But such exposure is not as important to the little as it is to the small magazines which depend on sales and subscriptions to supplement their grants.) Needless to say, an attractive appearance is no guarantee of quality or stability and many editors, enamoured of the possibilities, rush into publication only to find that they cannot sustain the effort beyond a few issues. Photo off-set is only relatively less expensive than previous methods. Production costs continue to rise and so do those of mailing and distribution which are particularly expensive in Canada.

Apart from university-subsidized or consumer-based magazines, therefore, those with small presses to back them up have the best chance of surviving. It is not surprising that along with increased numbers of new magazines there has been in recent years a proliferation of small press books. Many of these, due again to the advantages of photo off-set printing, are handsomely designed. They have a greater possibility of reaching reviewers' desks than do the magazines themselves.

Furthermore, contributors to the magazines are often attracted by the possibility of having a book produced and will frequently contribute financially to a small press for that purpose. The proceeds from small runs of a successful book can be ploughed back into the production of the magazine. Thus, especially among the independents, the development of the small press is linked with that of magazines.<sup>1</sup>

In the practical realm, then, facility of new means of production has been responsible not only for the improved appearance of established and new magazines but also for the launching of related literary enterprises. Other less tangible factors have contributed to the nature and expansion of magazine activity in recent years. Most obvious is the new nationalism; and though this topic has a snowballing tendency to pick up everything in its path, it does prove useful in explaining the origins, nature and fortunes of many magazines.

Especially in Centennial Year, and since, governments at all levels in Canada have encouraged cultural development by providing financial aid in the form of grants, subsidies, cash awards and prizes to a degree unheard of in the past. Such support of talent and enterprise has enabled many magazines to survive otherwise fatal financial crises and has slowed down the process of attrition which free competition normally ensures. Also, the general reading public, in a wave of intensified national feeling, has become curious about its literary past and interested in its present writers. One magazine in particular is central to this development. *Canadian Literature* (viewed at its inception in 1959 with widespread scepticism) has served throughout the Sixties to reflect and to stimulate the growth of a national literary consciousness without ever capitulating to mere chauvinism.

Other magazines have responded to nationalism in various ways. A few are avowedly anti-American, not only excluding American contributors but also attacking any evidence of American influence in Canadian cultural affairs. Every wave of Canadian nationalism has had an anti-American component; the latest expression of this feeling has been exacerbated by the presence of large numbers of disenchanted emigrés from the United States. Since these recent immigrants tend to be young, often talented and enterprising, they frequently impinge on magazine activity in Canada. A count of contributors to several magazines will yield a surprising percentage of writing by Americans now living in Canada. Furthermore, several successful magazines have been launched by Americans, notably in Ontario and British Columbia. Canadian editors who suspect Americans of being carriers, however unwittingly, of a dread, infectious cultural disease, are



resentful of their presence, especially if, as is often the case, the immigrant regards Canadian literature as a regional expression of North Americanism. When it comes to the competition for Canadian grants and awards, such concerns can become bitterly acute.

Some magazines are aggressively pro-Canadian. Subtitles such as "A magazine for independent Canadian Literature" are common. Editors often flatly state pro-Canadian policies. Some, like *Northern Journey*, indulge in lengthy polemics, signed with maple leaves, on the need to preserve Canadian culture. Others, less blatant, nevertheless focus on some aspect of Canadian experience. *Copperfield*, for example, "an independent Canadian literary magazine of the land and the north" firmly believes that "the Canadian mythos is solidly entrenched in the heart of the land itself" and that the only way to be aware of it is "to live it, to attune oneself to the landscape." *Copperfield*, which derived its name from the rich fields of copper ore in the region of Temagami, feels the more justified in its nationalistic policy whenever Canadian readers assume, as they often do, that the title "must have something to do with Dickens". *White Pelican* is another magazine which emphasizes Canadian culture and recently devoted one whole issue to Canada's North. *Porcépic*'s first issue contained a long essay on the Canadian wilderness and the proper response of writers to "the monster".

Still others are devoted to the bicultural aspect of the new nationalism. Many established magazines have opened their pages in recent years to writers in both French and English. One quarterly, *Ellipse*, was founded specifically to bridge the gap between cultures. It offers interlingual translations of French and English poets along with parallel translations of critical commentary. (Occasionally the poets chosen, French or English, are from outside of Canada). A new bilingual review, *Le Chien d'Or/The Golden Dog*, also hopes to span the two founding cultures, focussing more closely on Quebec and Eastern Canada.

A few magazines have emerged in direct response to the growing need for certain kinds of outlets for Canadian authors. *The Canadian Fiction Magazine* prints the work of "writers residing in Canada and/or Canadians writing in other countries". The *Journal of Canadian Fiction* was founded on the premise that there is a Canadian imagination: "We accept its viability and have chosen to limit our scope to its expression in (prose) fiction". Quite a different need is met by *Jewish Dialog*. This magazine "was started in the belief that Canada needed a high quality magazine devoted to contemporary Jewish arts and letters. . . ."

A totally different reaction is displayed by another group of magazines. Claiming that international exposure is a mark of sophistication and maturity, *The Malahat Review* was founded in 1967 to celebrate Canada's coming of age. Easily the most elegant magazine in Canada today, *The Malahat* publishes a large number of eminent authors from other countries along with some established Canadians. With varying emphases, several other magazines share similar views — notably *Prism international*, *Contemporary Literature in Translation*, *West Coast Review* and, most recently *Exile*.

ANOTHER FACTOR contributing to the increase in magazine activity may be traced to the universities. During the Sixties these institutions multiplied rapidly and spawned numerous colleges from coast to coast. They enjoyed several years of affluence due to swollen enrolments and lavish governmental support. The additional staff required to cope with expansion was perforce recruited largely from the ranks of youthful scholars eager to publish and young enough to share many of their students' enthusiasms. Significant changes in curricula also ensued, which shifted the emphasis from the traditionally academic pole towards the creative — witness the number of drama, fine arts and creative writing programs that have been introduced to campuses across the country in the past few years. During these years also most universities acquired a Writer-in-Residence whose presence tended to generate publishing activity. Furthermore, especially the new universities and colleges were eager to lend their support and often their names to hopefully prestigious magazines of one kind or another. The result of these factors in varying combinations is that the universities in Canada became the patrons of numerous literary magazines ranging from lavish student publications through a variety of periodicals generated by English or Creative Writing departments to a few more or less impressive scholarly reviews. As examples of the latter two categories the following have appeared since 1965: *The University of Windsor Review* (1965); *The West Coast Review* (Simon Fraser, 1966); *Wascana Review* (Saskatchewan, 1966); *The Journal of Canadian Studies* (Trent, 1966); *The Malahat Review* (Victoria, 1967); *Mosaic* (Manitoba, 1967); *Catalyst* (Toronto, 1967); *The Far Point* (Manitoba, 1968); *Pacific Nation* (Simon Fraser, 1969); *Tuatara* (Victoria, 1969); *Ellipse* (Sherbrooke, 1969); *The Antigonish Review* (St. Francis Xavier, 1970); *Ariel* (Calgary, 1970); *Event* (Douglas College, 1971); *Impulse* (Erindale

College, 1971); *White Pelican* (Edmonton, 1971); *Karaki* (Victoria, 1971); *The Capilano Review* (Capilano College, 1972); *The Journal of Canadian Fiction* (New Brunswick, 1972); *Exile* (Atkinson College, 1972); *Aspen Grove* (Brandon, 1972). Of these, only *Mosaic* and *The Journal of Canadian Studies* are wholly scholarly in orientation and do not include creative work.

Of the remainder a few, notably those generated by university staff members as individuals, have subsequently attained independent status with the aid of various granting agencies. On the other hand, some earlier ones, *Prism international* as an example, began as independents and later sought and won the support of a university. As for university student publications, the turnover is too rapid to list titles, but at any given time more than a score of them are extant. Some live beyond the student days of their editors to play a significant role, as did *Tish* and *Quarry*, in the development of literary history. Two new ones, each with nation-wide aspirations, have just come into existence. One, *Bruises* (John Abbott College, Montreal), is "open to all Canadian undergraduates". Another is *Scratch* (Victoria): An Anthology of Canadian Student Poetry.

When we add the university magazines founded prior to 1965 the list becomes formidable. Whatever the degree of dependence, the fact is plain that almost half of the magazines extant in Canada today either originated in or have strong associations with universities. Ten years ago this might have implied a heavy leaning towards the academic and scholarly. In fact, very few of these magazines fit either description. Most of them enjoy considerable freedom in their policies and many are devoted exclusively to creative work. It has been argued, however, that the mere proximity of the university exerts a conservative pressure, a subtle censorship in favour of the established and the traditional. While this may be quite proper to academic and scholarly magazines, it is not as healthy a sign in creative ones. These tend as a rule to be eclectic with ill-defined policies. And while they serve as extra outlets for established writers and show-cases for students' work, they most often lack a sense of unity, commitment or direction. The proof is that many of them could trade their list of contributors without the average reader noticing much of a change. It is this which marks them off from the little magazines in particular. The small independent magazines see them rather as rivals with whom they must compete for subscribers and, increasingly, for grants. For the time has come when the universities have begun to withdraw their support. Many a magazine harbouring in a university has protested that it is really independent because the institution does not supply it with money. However, as hidden subsidies such as phone and mail services, office supplies, secretarial help,

and time to devote to the magazine are gradually withdrawn such magazines must turn increasingly to outside agencies for support. The universities have entered a period of retrenchment and financial stringency; the next few years will tell how drastically this will affect the magazines now enjoying their patronage.

A third factor, accounting mainly for the proliferation of little magazines, is the extension of the network known as the literary underground. This network is elitist in the sense that it attracts not the many but the few; it is intimate in its mode of operation: subscription lists grow by word of mouth, personal letters, small advertisements in fellow little magazines, listings in small directories; and it is international in scope, being linked with similar networks all over the world. Little magazines are not usually found on library shelves or in bookstores. For one thing, they are by nature ephemeral; for another they do not feel bound to appear on a regular schedule, or to maintain the same format from issue to issue. None of them expects to make money; many of them are given away free; most of them are run on a shoestring, out of love, if not sheer altruism. Given such characteristics, the wonder is that little mags exist at all. In fact, they abound. That their survival is of the species rather than of the individual magazines is a sign of their significance. Little magazines are a true index of the vitality of literary culture today. While each is unique and few would care to trade lists of contributors, all little mags worthy of the name share certain attitudes. They are antipathetic to the literary establishment; they resist the pressures of commercial publishing; they are committed to new writing, partial to young writers and open to experiment in form and freedom of subject matter. The approval of the academy, financial success and popularity are not among their aims. Though it is true that many established writers began their careers among them, the little magazines do not function primarily as launching pads. Their function is that of the avantgarde, challenging tradition and convention, promoting new or neglected aesthetics, exploring new modes and genres; testing the potentialities and limitations of language itself. They are thus the source of new blood, the oxygenizing agents without which the literary system would die of hardening of the arteries. It is gratifying, therefore, to note that the increase in establishment journals in Canada has been paralleled by the extension of the underground network of little magazines across the country.

The highest concentration of little magazines is in Toronto and Vancouver, where the variety and rapidity of turnover defy description. The search for catchy names is getting harder all the time. One of Toronto's most recent has settled for *another poetry magazine*, a title which carries some sense of exhaustion.

But almost every region in Canada now boasts at least one little mag. To name a few — Nanaimo, B.C., has just spawned *Island*; Victoria has *Tuatara*; Burnaby, *Black Fish*; Prince George, *54 Forty*; Ganges, *Earthwords*; *Repository* comes from Seven Persons, Alberta; *Vigilante* from Calgary; *Salt* from Moosejaw; *Mainline* and *Black Moss* from Windsor; *Wagtail* from Sarnia; *Other Voices* and *The Stuffed Crocodile* from London; *The Oyster in the Ooze* from Ottawa; *Floboards* from St. John; *Urchin* from Fredericton. Upon examination, many of these prove to be edited by students and/or professors. Their distinction from the usual university magazines stems from their partisan alignments. A full list, including a score each from Toronto and Vancouver would run close to sixty titles all of which existed some time during the past five years and about half of which are extant.

Montreal, a centre of little magazine activities for several decades, is currently rather barren. Since *Yes* and *Delta* died, no magazine of comparable stability has appeared. Of those most clearly committed to underground activity *Ingluvín* appears irregularly; *Jawbreaker* lasted for only three issues; *Intercourse* is undergoing transformation; *Tide* is sporadic. Each of these had some unity and sense of direction, however — qualities which are sadly lacking in a recent venture called *Booster and Blaster*. This magazine is an attempt to foster a poet's cooperative whereby anyone who wishes may submit copy plus the money required to reproduce the pages involved. The copy is then circulated to all contributing members any of whom may then send in critical "boosts" or "blasts" plus the cost of the pages involved. Someone then volunteers or is elected to put the package together. The pages are reproduced, as received, by photo off-set, and stapled together with a cardboard cover and sold, if at all, for fifty cents. As an exercise in democracy the first issue was a thorough debacle. The poets pulled themselves together long enough to put out a slightly improved second issue and a third is envisioned sometime this year. Only poets resident in Montreal may participate. A brave effort to revive the poetry scene in Montreal but a sorry lesson in how not to start a little magazine. Most recent examples of little mags from Montreal are *Anthol*, *Moongoose* and *Bruises*, all originated by students.

AT THE RADICAL FRINGE of the little mags is a group of publications which are best viewed as products of the counter-culture. Here we find the most extreme experimentalism, represented in magazines like *Ganglia*, *Gronk*, *Blew Ointment* and *Elfin Plot*. A more recent example is a phenomenon

called "Intermedia" in Vancouver which since 1968 has been responsible for several short-lived magazines and an ongoing circus of mixed-media happenings. These involve tapes, discs, films, comic strips, postcards, exhibitions, festivals, poetry readings and theatre, and involve artists from many different media. Many such experiments (and they are not limited to Vancouver) are designed to free the creative imagination from traditional modes of expression and from the limitations of one medium.

The literary implications are significant. Visual, concrete and sound poems, for example, are attempts to liberate poetry from the tyranny of the printed page. These artists reject the concept of literature as something in a book — in fact they specialize in non-books. They attack language itself, wrenching its syntax apart, releasing the magic of its separate words, their sight, sound and texture, making their component letters dance, and forcing them into imaginatively fruitful alliances with various other arts. While much of the fractured syntax, phony spelling and typewriting antics is exasperatingly juvenile, the full effect of serious experiments along these lines is profoundly subversive. Language, as it has existed for centuries, has been the prime vehicle of culture. Traditional values are enshrined in its conventional grammar, syntax, idioms. To tamper with these, to unhinge and disarticulate language, therefore, is to commit an act more radical than most political revolutionaries dream of.

Thus while some of these activities are spurious and may be regarded as nonsense games which the young play to bug their elders, it would be folly to dismiss the phenomenon totally. Much of it reveals on the one hand a dadaist judgment on existing values and on the other a serious attempt to find new, redemptive modes of seeing, doing and knowing. Many of these artists are fully conscious that they are engaged in what they call "the language revolution" and they have been at it for some time. Some measure of their success may be noted in the fact that concrete poetry, once considered a freakish aberration confined to little magazines, is currently found on the pages of many "establishment" magazines. Possibilities for the future are indeed bewildering. But insofar as these radical experiments may be called literary it is clear even now that traditional categories and standards are not applicable or relevant. We shall have to learn new measures of judgment if we must cope with this phenomenon. In the meantime the curious may write to Mr. Poem of the Poem Company in Vancouver for copies of the tiniest poetry magazine in the country. It is issued once a week. Or to the *Elfin Plot* whose elves use many kinds of magic in their plot to lift the poem from the page.

It should be noted that the counter-culture is responsible for quite a different kind of magazine activity. What used to be called (in the Sixties in the United States) the "underground" press has surfaced and is now better described as "alternate". (As such it is dealt with elsewhere in this collection).<sup>2</sup> For our purposes here, however, it should be noted that while most alternate periodicals are social or political in emphasis and aim to change their readers' thinking patterns about community affairs, ecology, sexual mores, ethnic problems and so on, many of them do include a literary dimension. This being so, they often serve as regional outlets for local talent; and sometimes, as in the case of *The Georgia Straight* and *The Mysterious East*, they sponsor important "new writing" series and book review supplements. Others, like *Square Deal* in Charlottetown, have spawned small presses devoted to literary expressions of regional experience. Many Montreal poets, for want of other outlets, are appearing in *Logos*. There are also numerous hybrids among the magazines. *Alive*, for example, is deeply concerned about "an independent Canadian literature". *The British Columbia Monthly* is a weird and saucy mixture of social criticism and West Coast literary narcissism. In other words the alternate press overlaps, to a degree, the band of little magazines at one extreme of the literary spectrum.

The counter-culture is also, at least in part, responsible for the new humanism which characterizes many of today's magazines. This accounts on the one hand for a general loosening of categories, a broader range of interests, a relaxing of taboos, an openness to fresh ideas. On the other hand, combined with the new nationalism, the counter-culture has encouraged both regionalism and personalism. Many magazines, once afraid of being thought parochial, now flaunt their regional concerns. Photographs of old buildings, landmarks, scenery, sketches of local "characters", poems, stories and articles about the region or community are often featured. This can be folksy or campish; but more often it adds the warmth and depth of the ordinarily human to a literary enterprise too long marked by dry imperialism and cosmopolitan anonymity. It is not surprising that fiction is being given more attention recently. More than lyric poetry, which is subjective and individualistic, fiction explores inter-personal relationships. And lastly, almost all of the new magazines, short of the purely academic journals, have evinced an increasing curiosity about the lives of their authors. Minimally this may mean only an extension of the biographical data entered in "Notes on Contributors". More characteristically, however, the new magazines devote pages to informal interviews, vignettes of their authors, personal histories and reminiscences, intimate correspondence, and photographs both candid and casual. These



practices, along with the increasing tendency of writers to allude, in their poems and stories, both to things Canadian and to the work of fellow-Canadians, serve to develop a strong sense of literary community heretofore unknown in Canada. Tempting as the prospects are, one wonders at the delightful audacity of *North-ern Journey* which includes two pages of perforated detachable stamps with photographs of contributors on one side and brief biographies on the other. Are we to envision a time when high school students will trade Canadian Authors Cards instead of those of Hockey Players? If that time ever comes, we shall have to insist that the chewing gum, too, be "Made in Canada".

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This relationship is closely discussed by Sarah McCutcheon in "Little Presses of Canada", pp. 88-97.

<sup>2</sup> See "Underground or Alternative" by Anne Woodward, pp. 29-34.

# THE UNIVERSITY PRESSES

*Ian Montagnes*

I N THE MIDST of the crises and passions that have characterized so much of Canadian book publishing in recent years — the branch-plant infestation, the foreign takeovers, the threatened bankruptcies, the jingoism, the innuendoes of muscle and “families” in mass-market paperback distribution — the country’s university presses have proceeded quietly with their work. Almost stodgily, it might seem. There is little to excite the general imagination in the appearance (or, for that matter, the non-appearance) of a plan for a dictionary of Old English or a detailed microphotographic study of the organogenesis of flowers. University publishers do little to change this image: books such as these, despite providing the butt for occasional humour, are their stock in trade and *raison d’être*. Indeed, in their low profile and measured persistence, the university presses smack of an earlier grey Canadianism of the pre-Trudeau era. Yet they are not without a ferment of their own, and strains of their own; and in a period of general industrial malaise they are having a continuing, if not indeed a growing, impact on Canada’s literary and national development that is belied by their small voice and scale of operation (for most are staffed by only a handful of people, and some only by professors and administrators who must fit publishing into an already crowded timetable). Although their share of dollar sales is not large, for most of their books are intended for severely limited markets, the eleven members of the Association of Canadian University Presses show up remarkably well in a more significant index — the relative number of titles that get published. Out of every nine Canadian books currently in print, in French or English, one bears the imprint of a university press. Moreover, this proportion has been growing. Among francophone publishers, the university presses have since 1970 accounted for about nine per cent of new books published each year; but in English-language publishing the university-press share has climbed since 1970 from eight per cent of the total of books in print to ten per cent in 1971 and to twelve last year.

The subject matter of a publisher's output is also important. In addition to the staple esoteric academic topics, the university presses now are publishing a remarkable number of books that probe directly into the Canadian make-up. In its current seasonal catalogue the University of Toronto Press, for example, lists new books on the psychology of charisma, the impact of freer trade on the Canadian economy, the rural Ontario scene as depicted by Thoreau MacDon-ald, the development of Canadian science policy, the influence of the late Douglas Duncan on Canadian art and artists, the growth of Social Credit in Quebec, plus a translation of Fernand Dumant's *La Vigile du Québec* and several new books in three important series of reprints which are making newly available key works in the study of Canadian literature and social history. This same press has published, over the years, such works as Harold Innis's *Fur Trade* and *Bias of Communication*, Marshall McLuhan's *Gutenberg Galaxy*, John Porter's *Vertical Mosaic*, Russell Harper's *Painting in Canada*, Reginald Watters' checklists of Canadian literature, the *Literary History of Canada* edited by Carl F. Klinck, Douglas Jones' *Butterfly on Rock*, and Jack Warwick's *Long Journey*, as well as the monumental Dictionary of Canadian Biography.

Toronto's publishing list has certain advantages as an example. For most of this century Toronto (founded in 1901) was the only English-language university press in Canada (Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa were founded in 1936, Les Presses de l'université Laval in 1950, McGill — now McGill-Queen's — University Press in 1960). Toronto's backlist furthermore comprises about three-quarters of the English-language university press titles in print, and a little over half the total in both languages. (To put Toronto in a national context, it annually publishes more new titles than any other house in the country, and its backlist is slightly larger than those of McClelland and Stewart and Clarke, Irwin combined.) But what is true of Toronto holds for its brethren, whether it is McGill-Queen's series on environmental pollution, or the well-illustrated works on Borduas and de Tonnancour published by Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, or the massive study of Canadian administrative law now in preparation at Laval.

This activity is critical. It is not unique of course to the university press: scholarship also benefits when Donald Creighton is published by Macmillan or Margaret Atwood by the House of Anansi. But commercial houses, which must return their shareholders an eventual profit, are far more likely to make only forays into Canadiana, carrying off the cream for a coffee table book or a library series or a college text. None of them can afford to support — often at consider-

able financial loss — the sustained publication of in-depth academic investigations of Canada's literary heritage, history, economics, labour relations, political science, law, or other fields. That is the university press's function. "In the end most scholarly publishing cannot be profitable, or at least it must be selected and edited and produced with the purpose of maximizing its academic service rather than its profitability." (*Report of the Royal Commission on Book Publishing in Ontario*, p. 229: the Commissioners might have added that such a programme normally requires substantial subsidization, direct and/or indirect, from the parent university, as well as benefiting from the watchful eye of a university-appointed editorial committee of scholars.) Commercial publishers do, however (and this is probably a proper division of labour and of spoils), ensure that much of what is published by a university press reaches a broader market in revised form, either as more popular nonfiction or in a high-school or elementary-grade textbook. Toronto's backlist illustrates this further point — that the influence of a university press book may extend well beyond its covers and the campus. It may directly affect political or economic policy; it may provide the raw material for a paperback best-seller; it may add expressions to the language; it may alter the teaching of Canadian cultural and economic history. It is this seminal and pervasive influence that makes a strong university publishing community an important national resource.

The extensive publication of Canadian material by scholarly publishers results in part from deliberate editorial policy and manuscript procurement, but it has been possible only because of, and ultimately it reflects, the upsurge in Canadian studies among the teaching staffs of our universities. In this respect the university presses have not, and will not, change. Their principal aim is to extend the professional study and the lecture room, to disseminate the fruits of scholarly research so that others may build thereon. The advance of knowledge depends upon this role. Research unpublished is stillborn, but every scholarly book has the potential of stimulating further work in its field. Beyond this, as A.S.P. Woodhouse once wrote, "without the hope of publication, scholarship languishes"; on the other hand, the existence of a lively university press may stimulate authors who would not otherwise write.

The scholarship which is the lifeblood of a university press may be national or even regional in some of its emphasis, yet in its approaches, its standards, and in large measure its subject matter and intended audience, it recognizes no boundaries. Perhaps that is why Canadian scholarly publishers have been less vocal than some of their trade and educational colleagues in demanding nation-

alistic protection. A substantial proportion (over fifty per cent) of a Canadian university press's sales may be outside the country, and the books thus sold may deal with Czech literature, medieval European fiscal policy, higher mathematics, or the microorganisms that infest food. Indeed, for a Canadian scholar working in a non-Canadian field, the university press may offer the only route to publication within his own country. Commercial presses are more dependent upon the domestic market and what it will buy, but for the scholarly publisher it is often only the existence of a foreign market that makes publication of a book economically possible. (It is a rueful joke at Toronto that when the first volumes of its *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* were published in 1965, considerably fewer copies were sold in Canada than in Japan.) It also seems to be true that Canadian scholars are less prone today to treat publication in their own country as second-best only after rejection by Oxford or Cambridge or Harvard or Yale, and that more and more British and American scholars are submitting first-rate manuscripts to Canadian houses that have shown strength in their areas of study. This is probably an indication of the growing maturity of Canadian scholarly publishing; but at the same time one must recognize that the same pressures which shall be discussed later are affecting university presses everywhere, and scholars are having to look further afield these days to get published at all.

Scholarly manuscripts cross borders and oceans every day in search of a publisher or in the process of appraisal; the books that result may be sold in literally any country and may be translated into half a dozen different languages. It is no wonder that the university presses, to an extent unique in Canada, have a sense of belonging to an international publishing community. There is a long tradition of co-operation with colleagues south of the border within the Association of American University Presses. The Canadian houses are quick to recognize that they have learned much through this relation, but they have also (most notably Marsh Jeanneret, Toronto's director, who was AAUP president in 1970-71) contributed to it. It was a Canadian press, Toronto, that founded the first quarterly journal for authors and publishers devoted to this field, *Scholarly Publishing*, which has quickly reached a worldwide readership and attracted an equally polynational list of contributors. And it was no coincidence that Canada was host (with the support of both Ottawa and Unesco) to a meeting in Toronto last October which led to the formation of an International Association of Scholarly Publishers, with its secretariat in Toronto. Nor is it surprising that when the Association Internationale des Presses d'Universités de Langue Française was

formed this spring at Grenoble, another Canadian, Danielle Ros, director of Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, was elected its first president.

The emphasis on scholarship and common problems has encouraged similar co-operation across language lines within Canada. Toronto and Laval have, for example, co-published many works, most notably the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography/Dictionnaire biographique du Canada* which must be the most concrete example of true bilingualism outside government: articles for it may be written in either French or English, are then translated, are edited in both languages, checked again at both centres, and published simultaneously in both languages in companion volumes at the same price. Last October was formed the first bilingual publishing association in Canada, the Association of Canadian University Presses/Association des Presses Universitaires Canadiennes. (Other publishers are divided among the Conseil Supérieur du Livre and, on the English language, the competing Canadian Book Publishers' Council and the Independent Publishers' Association.) The members of the new body range in size from the University of Toronto Press, which includes in its publishing operation seventeen journals and also runs a specialized printing plant and four bookstores, to the University of Windsor Press which has two books in print, supports two journals, and plans expansion on the basis of a financially successful co-publication with McGraw-Hill of Marshall McLuhan's *Interior Landscape*.

The largest of the francophone members is Laval, with 337 books in print last year, a number exceeded within Québec only by Fides and Éditions du Jour. One of the members functions bilingually: Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa publishes in either French or English (mostly the former), or both, depending on author and subject. Five of the members besides Windsor have been founded since the expansion of higher education began in earnest in the late 1950s: McGill-Queen's (1960), Montréal (1962), Manitoba (1967), Québec (1969), and British Columbia (1971). Two are sponsored by specialized institutions that are not universities, the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, both in Toronto. In addition, several other universities and university departments have small publishing programmes of their own.

**Y**ET ALL IS NOT WELL in the ivy-covered publishing houses. Strains and cracks are appearing, not from foreign competition but notably because of government policies — a legacy of past expansion and current austerity.

Parts of the story are well known, although their impact on university presses may still not be fully recognized. The sixties were a heady decade in all university endeavours: money was available, staffs were growing, buildings — indeed whole campuses — were mushrooming to meet the high school students clamouring for admissions; libraries enjoyed budgets such that a large commercial reprint publisher could boast, “I can sell any book I offer,” and mean it; university press sales and establishments swelled as part of the tide, and for many a university without its own imprint a press promised prestige and a channel for its faculty’s publications. That was the picture across North America, on both sides of the border. Then a general disenchantment set in. Public funds were cut. Library budgets in both the United States and Canada were slashed. Research libraries are the bread-and-butter accounts of university press sales, and their declining power to purchase affected not only new books (titles were not bought, or were bought singly instead of in multiple copies as before) but also backlist sales and journal subscriptions (the latter already hard hit by institutional photocopying). Sales volume dropped and inventory mounted as stocks of old titles remained relatively static. The parent universities, fighting across-the-board budget pressures, were unable to increase subsidies to the presses to make up for declining sales revenue, and at the same time the costs of publishing — of salaries, of typesetting, paper, printing, and binding, of promotion (particularly by mail), and of order fulfilment — rose sharply.

Non-economic pressures grew as well. With the output of a growing professoriate and the needs of expanding disciplines such as environmental science and Canadian studies, the number of manuscripts submitted to university presses increased sharply. Not all received or deserved serious consideration, but the number of those that did at Toronto roughly trebled in a little over a decade. This is a rate that paralleled remarkably the growth of teaching staff in Canadian universities over the same period. There is no reason to believe that the quest for publication will decline in the near future. It may be anticipated rather that it will continue to rise as manuscripts now in preparation reach fruition, for today’s scholars seem to be more productive than in the past, possibly because the prospects of publication had until recently been improving so greatly. One might also anticipate that, as academic jobs grow scarce, publish-or-perish will become more intense and would-be authors accordingly more aggressive. The university press is caught between two opposing forces — a growing demand for more publication, and declining ability to carry on subsidized programs even at existing



levels. A year ago university publishers were talking about the "crisis" in their profession. Today they are beginning to talk about a long-term crunch.

How can this gloomy picture be related to the rosy statistics of a few pages back? Part of the answer is, of course, that publishing commitments (and particularly scholarly publishing commitments) are not made and met within a single year; many of the titles brought out in 1972 were promised, if not in actual production, before the financial picture darkened. Also, the increasing proportion of university-press titles in English-language publishing comes in a context of cutbacks by publishers in the trade and educational areas. But the most important reason why university presses have so far successfully weathered the storm has been the prompt and generous reassurance they have received from their principal non-university patrons. When the problem was set out at an unprecedented meeting in January 1972 between the country's university publishers and the Joint Committee on Publication of the Humanities and Social Science Research Councils of Canada, both councils agreed to increase substantially their support for book publication, to make the terms of that support more flexible, and to channel it whenever possible to Canadian houses rather than abroad. Their parent body, the Canada Council, at about the same time substantially increased its support to learned journals. University presses have also been strengthened by other government support to the book publishing industry: they share in block grants under a program instituted by the Canada Council; those in Quebec receive provincial grants for books; those in Ontario may be expected to be eligible for such assistance as may be provided as a result of that province's recent Royal Commission report. Both Toronto and McGill-Queen's also received last year unexpected large grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, intended primarily to support publication of works in the humanities by younger scholars.

With such patronage, the convulsions that have racked presses south of the border have not yet been evident here. In the United States two university presses have been closed down, and a third avoided extinction only after vigorous lobbying by the teaching staff of its university (two of the most vociferous petitioners being professors whose manuscripts it had rejected!); the director of one of the most prestigious of all American university presses has been fired, in part for a superfluity of red ink; and, overall, staffs have been cut, fewer books published, and belts tightened. No presses have been closed in Canada, but budgets have been pared and personnel reduced. There is less talk on two or three Canadian

campuses of starting new presses, and at least one of the smaller existing presses seems to have deferred plans to appoint a full-time director.

There has never been much fat in university publishing, even at the best of times, and government support cannot be expected to grow indefinitely. The conflicting pressures that began with the seventies may be expected to continue through the decade. What then will this mean for authors and readers of university press books?

The scholarly author who offers a fresh, original approach to a significant subject should never have great difficulty in reaching print. In general, however, we might expect that it will become more difficult to be published. The costs of appraising a manuscript are sizable — not only in the time and salaries of editors, but equally in the hours and energy required of outside scholarly readers who must divert efforts from their own writing and research to advise on the publishability of others'. More and more manuscripts of apparently marginal importance thus may have to be summarily dismissed. The doctoral thesis, with few exceptions, will more frequently be rejected without detailed reading, for so few theses are truly books, and the work required to revise most of them into books is so great, that publishers can little afford these days to scour the doctoral desert for seeds and nurture the few they encounter that hold the promise of germination. More and more, also, it may be expected that manuscripts from outside Canada will be given a low priority unless they fit precisely into a press's area of publishing concentration — for example, into an established series. This is a development which gives no cause for satisfaction, but only embarrassment, in view of the liberal support Canadian scholarship has received in the past from U.S. foundations, the importance of the U.S. market for Canadian scholarly books, and the desirability of international recognition for Canadian imprints. But the first priority must be to Canadian scholars. As well, we may expect presses to concentrate their efforts in areas of demonstrated strength where they already have reputations and substantial backlists, and to be more reluctant to publish in fields new to them, no matter how deserving.

As subsidizing funds grow relatively more scarce, standards of acceptance may reluctantly have to be adapted. When subsidization is unavailable, the book that is published may not necessarily be the most significant but the one most likely to find a market to cover costs of publication. University presses will also find it increasingly tempting, if not essential, to publish some books that do more than recover their own costs — that may, in fact, make a substantial contribution to overhead and even generate net revenue that can be turned into subsidizing

funds for other works. A certain number of university press titles have always reached the general bookstore. Such books are for the most part edited and produced to the same standards that govern all university publishing, but to the extent that a press must concentrate its efforts on their development it may vitiate its principal efforts. (This is not to gainsay the fact that a work of impeccably serious research, such as *The Vertical Mosaic*, may start life as a subsidized short-run title and end up selling 72,000 copies.)

We may also anticipate that those scholarly books which do receive serious consideration, and which eventually are judged suitable for publication, will find their passage further slowed by economics. They will have to take their place in line, not only until the funds that may be necessary to subsidize them can be found, but also until the editors, whose numbers are likewise restricted by lack of money, can handle them through copy-editing and proof.

University presses are introducing new techniques into their book production to help reduce some costs. Some are using computer typesetting where applicable, most usefully to date in the publication of complex bibliographies. Some are using computer-assisted phototypesetters, and other forms of "cold type" where possible, instead of the traditional but more expensive hot-metal setting. They are moving away from the codex, into microfilm publication and occasional excursions into multimedia. Along with such innovation, they are providing a continuing example of typographic excellence, as they have for years through the work of Robert Reid at McGill and more recently of Allan Fleming at Toronto. (The only Canadian book ever to win a gold medal at the famous Leipzig competition for the year's "most beautiful book in the world" was published by a university press in 1969.)

In spite of these efforts, books which meet high standards of production will cost considerably more in the future, although comparison of their prices with those of a bottle of good Scotch or burgundy suggests that the book-buyer has little to complain of. In the production of other books, the upward price spiral will be moderated by compromise. More economical paper and binding will be used. Designs will be standardized. More books will be produced by "strike-on" — a euphemism which means typewritten, whether by a sophisticated tape-driven machine whose product cannot be easily distinguished from hot-metal typesetting, or by standard office machines operated by the author or his secretary to the publisher's specifications. More often, tabular material, computer printouts, or appendices may be published in future on microfiches tucked into a package at the back of the book to complement the printed text; there will be

initial inconvenience, but the economics of micropublication will enable authors to present documentation to an extent never before practicable.

The kind of creative compromise that may become more common is exemplified by a process developed in the Printing Department of the University of Toronto Press. With a relatively simple adaptation of present equipment, it is possible to produce reprints of books in quantities of as few as fifty copies, and to sell them at prices acceptable to libraries (six to seven cents a page) if not particularly to individuals. This process has been applied to a number of out-of-print Toronto titles and to selected works of nineteenth-century Canadian literature, none of which could support a normal reprinting. The volumes that result from this development are somewhat less than pleasing aesthetically, but they are fully readable; and with them the term "o/p" may in time be erased from publishing and a corpus of otherwise unavailable early Canadian literature be deposited in university and other reference libraries.

There has been no suggestion that editorial standards should be permitted to suffer a parallel compromise. A scholarly publisher stands or falls on the quality of his editorial judgment and performance. Yet pressures may be expected to be reflected here as well, despite the best intentions, for no increase in staff has been possible that is comparable to the growth in demands upon the presses. Less time may be available to help authors to develop their manuscripts, and in other ways editors may in future appear less accommodating. Presses are less able today to absorb the cost of an author who cannot make up his mind, who depends unduly on the editor to catch errors in spelling or citation, who debates overlong about the use of illustration, who holds up proofs or asks unreasonable changes in them. Increasing sophistication of printing technology is coupled with increasing cost of delay and alteration.

There is a small paradox here, however, for as long as neither author nor publisher wants any revision — in fact no *editing* — new technology does make it possible to disseminate material that could not support a traditional style of publication. The old joke about a journal of unpublished manuscripts is coming true: at least one firm in the United States is prepared to publish works in microform, by photographing typescript provided directly by the author and selling the result to scholars and libraries. There is a parallel industry devoted to issuing documents and out-of-print works in microform in near-epidemic proportions. University presses will have to be wary of entering uncritical parapublishing.

One further development may be expected, although it may be approached with some reluctance. This is greater co-operation between presses on a more

formal and intimate level than in the past. A trend is evident in the United States toward consolidation and the creation of regional presses, such as the University Press of Kentucky which serves nine campuses in its state. In 1969 McGill and Queen's Universities crossed provincial boundaries to pool their resources on a parity basis in a single university press with administrative offices in Montreal and editorial offices on both campuses. (This experiment was described in detail by the director of that press, Robin H. Strachan, in *Scholarly Publishing*, January 1971.) There has been some talk of a press to serve a number of universities in the Atlantic provinces, and it does not seem unreasonable (to an easterner at any rate) that some of the existing Western presses and publication centres might yet join forces in some manner. The form of co-operation can vary considerably, and can ensure that individual universities retain autonomy in the one and only critical area, the decision to publish. This is the nature of a proposal for a new Universities of Ontario Press, which would provide a central shared facility for warehousing, order fulfilment, and (if desired) editorial and production services for presses that are now in operation or may be started at any or all of the fourteen Ontario universities, while leaving the individual presses to decide which books they will sponsor, all of which will bear the individual press's own imprint. There are powerful reasons for such a move. Economies of scale operate in scholarly publishing as in any other business. It has been suggested that maximum efficiency is reached at net billed sales of just over a million dollars, which is not a realistic goal for most Canadian presses.

Some years ago the director of Harvard University Press gave a classic description of the aim of the scholarly publisher and the constraints within which he must operate: "A university press exists to publish as many good scholarly books as possible short of bankruptcy." The edge of financial bankruptcy seems closer today than it has sometimes in the past, but it can be controlled by tight accounting, conservative decisions, and cutbacks as necessary in publication programs. There is an intellectual insolvency, however, that will grow if such financial measures should create a serious gap between what the university presses should be publishing to meet the needs of their community, and what it is possible for them to publish. Canadian scholarly publishers, with support from universities and government, are endeavouring to ensure that every worthwhile manuscript they receive does become a book. Their continuing success is a goal to which the country's scholars and academic administrators, as well as its university publishers, must address themselves.

# UNDERGROUND OR ALTERNATIVE

*Anne Woodsworth*

**T**HOSE “hippie rags”, known commonly as underground papers, were never very far under Canadian ground. To earn the name “underground”, papers should be published out of suitcases and dank basements. They must be secretive as well as in opposition. Perhaps it is because these conditions did not apply that the papers, shortly after they were established, began to call themselves opposition/alternative papers or papers of the counter-culture rather than underground papers.

Although they live short turbulent lives, alternative papers do provide readers with their addresses or box numbers, encouraging feedback, donations and subscriptions. They face libel suits, convictions for pornography and are closely watched, yet officially ignored, by the establishment. Still the papers survive — kept alive by subscriptions from libraries — biting the hand that feeds them.

The papers are most often managed communally. The runs are small, normally four to five thousand. A circulation of 10,000 in Canada bespeaks a well-established alternative paper. In its prime the *Georgia Straight* managed to reach that figure. *The Other Woman*, a relatively new women’s liberation paper, sells perhaps one third of its issues to cover printing costs and uses the rest for promotion.

Many alternative papers live to publish only a few issues. Some disappear altogether after a short time; some merge with one or two others, while others after a year or so will split and become two papers. Often, one or two individuals will start several papers in quick succession. All favour change to varying degrees and by various means; all oppose the political and social status quo, and all question solidly entrenched people, ideas and institutions. For example, Toronto’s *Saturday* called itself “a forum for hip people . . . with one commitment. To

truth." (August, 1968). Vancouver's *Partisan* stated that it "is dedicated to publishing the truth about what is happening in our communities." Being more activist and radical, the latter added "The Partisan Party is dedicated to doing something about it." (June 22, 1971).

IT IS EASIER to state what alternative papers are not, than it is to define what they are. They did not grow out of the socialist papers that flourished at the beginning of the century. Nor are they sprouts of the beat poetry and little magazines of the fifties. The movement from which they grew spread from California and New York in 1964. Underground papers, as they were called, began to appear in most major U.S. and Canadian cities until now papers of the counter-culture are firmly entrenched in most countries of the western world.

By 1966, Canada had its first underground newspaper, *Satyrday*, produced in and for the Yorkville district of Toronto. Other cities quickly followed with flower children, and appropriate districts and newspapers. The papers reflected the psychedelic frenzy of the time, with splashing colours, Alice B. Toklas recipes and price and quality reports on street drugs. By 1972 the papers reached a fluid and fairly stable number of two hundred that were alive and publishing.\* It seems impossible to arrive at an accurate figure since some publish only one issue and then die; others, through amitosis, will become two (viz. — *Georgia Straight* and *Grape*) and several will merge to become one — such as *Bellyful*, *Velvet Fist* and *The Other Woman* joining forces and publishing now as *The Other Woman*.

Over the past six years, Canada's alternative papers, their messages and their audiences have changed a great deal. Love-ins changed to sit-ins. The counter-culture learned the power of controlled violence and forcible demonstrations. During that period the newspapers were catalysts for social change, a part of the change and a rippled mirror reflecting the changes that took place. They also became a unique source of information about events — future, present and past. Today, they are not only the sole recorders of the underground — alternative — counter-culture movement, but also the harbingers of it.

\*For the only listing of Canadian papers attempted to date see *The Alternative Press in Canada; a checklist*. (University of Toronto Press, 1972. 74 p.) compiled by A. Woodsworth. Ed.



**A**LTHOUGH a few papers in the U.S.A. have been become financially lucrative ventures, profit-making is never the aim of an alternative newspaper. They are characterized instead by wanting to change the environment — social, political, physical, etc. Usually they assume a watchdog stance over issues involving deprived segments of their communities. A sampling of headlines will show where they aim their scatterguns:

- “Big business — the real criminal”
- “Compost power”
- “Developers and the Canadian State”
- “Don’t get trapped . . . boycott Kraft products”
- “How to grow psylocybin”
- “Interviews with speed users”
- “Kraft slices Canadians”
- “Organic gardening special”
- “Prison: a mirror of sexist society”
- “Rotten bus service”
- “Sexism in children’s books”
- “Strike busting at Brantford”

In content, alternative newspapers resemble their hated opposition, carrying hard news, editorials, book, music, film and theatre reviews and recipes. Lack of sports and financial sections is compensated for by extensive sections on free things, events — notices and reports on drugs on the market. Decent layout is rare; photographs, comics and other illustrations are largely amateurish, perhaps even deliberately so. Most are produced by cheap offset with the newspaper staff sharing the writing, typing and pasting-up of camera-ready copy. Inclusion of many photos and colour printing bespeaks an established paper with regular advertisers, subscribers or else outside financial backing.

A bare bones 24-page issue with no photographs can be produced at a cost of \$250 for 4,000 issues. It is therefore easy for every mini-movement, co-op house or messiah with a message to spread their alternative messages through the world. With the proliferation of OFY and LIP grants the task of gathering cash for the printer has become still easier.

**A**LTHOUGH not as bland as the yellow press, alternatives conform with one another by having their own biases and jargon-filled rhetoric.

As George Woodcock so aptly put it in writing for *Dreadnaught*, "An underground paper which, like *The Mysterious East*, avoids counter-establishment conformity is rare indeed and to be treasured as evidence that there are people who stand outside the two orthodoxies of our time." (October 1970, p. 5)

Perhaps the adjectives used by the establishment to describe the papers best indicate the variety of their free-wheeling prose. Alternative papers have been labelled amateurish, audacious, blasphemous, boring, colourful, devoid of humor, exciting, humorous, informative, irreverent, libellous, lively, mean-minded, messianic, obscene, psychedelic, refreshing, revolutionary, scatological, satirical, smutty, undisciplined and vindictive. Style within one paper can vary enough to cover all those adjectives and can range from excellent prose and poetry to non-sensical strings of four-letter invectives. Few papers distinguish themselves by been consistently literate.

The rhetoric is usually consistent with the message imparted:

An important thing that brothers and sister who dig Red Morning can be doing is helping us get our paper out. For our people to really serve the people we need to know more about people's struggles around the city. That means rapping with us and writing about what's coming down in your community . . . And it means turning on more people to the revolution by making sure our paper gets out to more brothers and sister. The pigs don't want to see that happen . . . They don't want people picking up on revolutionary ideas because they lead to revolutionary actions. (*Red Morning*, Summer 1971, p. 8)

With slang-ridden, free-wheeling writing they attack — like *Guerrilla*, commenting on the demise of Toronto's *Telegram* and emergence of the *Sun*:

And so the game has been played out, the Telegram is kaput with its subscription list going to the Star, for TEN MILLION? and out of the dust and subterfuge, the dawning of an archaic new day, the right wing rays of a devious SUN. (Nov. 10, 1971, p. 8)

And get attacked:

Guerrilla and the Georgia Straight have come under attack. A man in a small Ontario town was arrested for obscenity after displaying a comic from Guerrilla. Two Toronto lawyers went down and the judge, apparently afraid of another Skopes Monkey Trial, dismissed the case on a preliminary motion.

Meanwhile in Moosomin Saskatchewan a teacher was fired for displaying a Georgia Straight to her students . . . (November 10, 1971, p. 14)

Sometimes the satire is excellent and devastating:

At my school we even grade people on how they read poetry. That's like grading people on how they make love. But we do it. In fact, God help me, I do it. I'm the Adolph Eichman of English 323. Simon Legree of the poetry plantation. Tote that i-amb! Lift that spondee!

(Excerpt from "The Student as a Nigger", originally published in the *L.A. Free Press*, reprinted in many Canadian papers and the cause of censorship in many schools, colleges and universities across the country.)

THE EFFECT of the alternative press on Canadian society is difficult to measure for it is, at once, the recorder and the catalyst of events.

The world, including Canada, has changed much since underground newspapers first appeared and the papers themselves are part of that change. They pounce on the causes and perpetrators of social ills. The members of the small, vocal and often militant groups that the papers represent, practise what they preach. They eat the organic foods they teach people to grow, take the drugs they write about and arrange demonstrations in support of the unemployed, the exiled and the unliberated. Being gadflies, goading naturally everything that moves conservatively and slowly, they elicit strong reactions from the establishment.

Two weeks after Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book* was banned by Canada Customs, Toronto mayor William Dennison attacked the free bi-weekly paper *Antimony* for printing excerpts from the volume's guide to shoplifting.

The *Toronto Star* of August 6 quoted Dennison as saying *Antimony* was either a maoist or communist sheet advising young people on techniques to destroy our whole economic system and step back into a collective jungle. They are funded by the federal government and the silent majority just sits back and does nothing to stop it. (*Tabloid*, August 1971, p. 10)

Whom do the papers reach with their messages? Certainly the converted; probably those they attack; and infrequently those for whom they fight — welfare recipients, lower working classes, strikers, Indians, and repressed women.

In short they provide a small segment of our population with a cheap means of expression and communication, albeit often tediously repetitive. It is the personalities of its staff that shape the content, strength and impact of any given paper. The waves made by the papers are sometimes big — sometimes small. If an alternative idea reaches the mass media and the mainstream of society's conscience, then the papers usually drop the issue.

Are the alternative papers really harbingers, running before the major cultural movements? Do they for a brief time present alternatives to the status quo and then, when society absorbs or is changed by the alternatives, seek new directions? Even that varies. Some papers die once their spewings have been swept up by society. Other papers and editors seek new issues and new frontiers on which to fight.

And what of the future? What direction will the alternative press and the movement take? Perhaps some of the current headlines herald it:

“Beyond free schools to critical schools”

“If the structure doesn’t fit we must change it”

“Politics is a no no”

“Towards an authentic Canadian left”

But perhaps these are not the new directions. Anyone can guess and anyone can be right. The strong pro-drug and anti-war messages are now gone, having been replaced by comments on communities, ecology, and labour problems. Whether these issues represent a future direction or a transition period can be determined only retrospectively and in two or three years.

Although the crystal ball is hazy, one thing is certain — in whatever direction the papers choose to move, it will be contrary to, divergent and distinct from that which is and has been. That is because a thing, to be alternative, must by definition be different.

# LA PROBLEMATIQUE DU LIVRE QUEBÉCOIS

*Max Dorsinville*

**D**ES LITTÉRAIRES jetant leur dévolu sur le Québec contemporain ont voulu reconnaître par le biais du livre l'expression de la culture d'un petit peuple devenu agissant dans l'articulation de sa quête d'identité. L'équation art et société servit d'axiome. L'écrivain, jusqu'alors sujet à des traumatismes et à des crises d'atermoiements dus à l'indifférence du milieu natal pour la vie des lettres, derechef devenait témoin de son temps et porte-parole des siens. L'art reflété dans le miroir de l'acte d'écriture et son produit, le livre, récupérait les tenants et les aboutissants d'une société en pleine révolution, dût-elle n'être que "tranquille".

Avait-on raison d'accorder une telle importance au rôle du livre et à celui de l'écrivain eu égard aux réalités socio-économiques, étonnamment peu connues, auxquelles est soumis le livre québécois? Une analyse reposant sur un historique des centres de production et de diffusion et sur la fortune du livre en tant que produit économique nous permettrait d'apporter des éléments de réponse à une telle question et d'esquisser la congruence de l'écriture dans l'esthétique contemporaine québécoise.

L'histoire du livre, comme celle de nombreuses autres activités dans la société québécoise, ne commence pas avec les années 60, et encore moins avec l'éclatement des premières bombes du F.L.Q. Elle s'inscrit, par contre, dans l'inévitable grand dessein clérical dont l'histoire des idées et des institutions au Québec n'a pas fini de rendre compte tout en l'assumant. C'est un lieu commun d'affirmer que parmi les multiples conséquences de la Conquête le temps d'arrêt imposé pendant un siècle à la vie intellectuelle par la cessation d'échanges culturels entre le Québec et la France s'avérera l'une des plus fâcheuses. La nourriture intellectuelle véhiculée par le livre ne parvenait pas de la France. Ainsi un petit

peuple, conquis selon d'aucuns et abandonné selon d'autres, obligé de se replier sur lui-même, délaisse les villes pour les campagnes, et, fidèle aux prescriptions des seuls dirigeants qui lui restent, abandonne la pensée pour la foi et se donne entièrement avec une exaltation toute mystique — n'arrivant pourtant pas à masquer les tourments de la dépossession — aux humbles travaux de la terre, ample sein devant protéger les siens et assurer la survivance. Du moins tel le veut la mythologie qui résume pour certains l'histoire du Québec d'avant les années 60. Qu'en est-il dans les faits?

S'il est vrai d'une part que faute de renseignements précis sur les mouvements d'opinion des masses populaires de l'époque il est difficile pour le chercheur de démontrer la fausseté d'une telle représentation, il n'en demeure pas moins que les recherches de Claude Galarneau sur les relations franco-québécoises durant la période 1760-1815 permettent d'affirmer que, suite à la Conquête, les élites québécoises ne ressentirent jamais un traumatisme tel qu'elles abdiquèrent toute vie intellectuelle, tout contact avec la France, et cherchèrent refuge dans le bucolisme. Le Séminaire de Québec (1765) et le Collège de Montréal (1767), auxquels s'ajouteront les Collèges de Nicolet (1803) et de Saint-Hyacinthe (1809), assurent l'enseignement au niveau secondaire dans un milieu qui en 1789 compte 140,000 âmes. La bibliothèque du Séminaire de Québec possède 5,000 volumes en 1782, dont 1,000 relèvent des belles-lettres et de l'histoire et ont pour auteurs les Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Montesquieu et autres grands esprits du "siècle des lumières". La Bibliothèque Publique de Québec (1779) a 1,815 volumes sur ses rayons en 1785 regroupant l'éventail des grands courants de pensée de l'époque. L'introduction de l'imprimerie à Québec en 1764 par William Brown (un Américain!) et à Montréal en 1776 par Fleury Mesplet (un Français!) donne naissance à la presse périodique: Brown fonde en 1764 *La Gazette de Québec*, hebdomadaire bilingue, tandis que Mesplet lance dans le même genre en 1778 *La Gazette du Commerce et Littéraire* qui, devant fermer ses portes après un an, reparaitra en 1785 sous un nouveau titre, *La Gazette de Montréal*. Cette presse périodique, autant par le choix des nouvelles et des chroniques que par ses éditoriaux et sa correspondance, témoigne d'un échange continu d'idées entre la France et son ancienne colonie. En plus des ressources des bibliothèques et du lien maintenu par les imprimés, Galarneau souligne l'apport des voyages fréquents entre 1760 et 1793 des Canadiens en France, la correspondance entretenue entre les membres de familles rapatriés en France et la parenté restée au Canada, celle entre les communautés religieuses des deux côtés de l'océan, et, finalement, l'arrivée entre 1793 et 1802 de 150 prêtres émigrés fuyant le Direc-

toire dans les milieux de l'instruction scolaire qu'ils rehausseront à plus d'un titre. Ces manifestations de vigueur intellectuelle resserrent les liens culturels entre les deux pays, et font mentir le mythe de l'isolement du Québec dont l'appétit pour la vie de l'intellect ne commencerait à être satisfait qu'en 1860 lorsque paraît *La Capricieuse*, transportant le premier chargement de livres français à atteindre le Québec depuis 1760.

Entre 1801 et 1810 sept imprimeurs publient 262 ouvrages. Les recherches de Galarneau dans le commerce du livre sont approfondies par Jean-Louis Roy, lequel démontre la continuité historique de l'industrie naissante tant au niveau de l'édition que de la distribution dans une étude consacrée à la maison Fabre. Trente-sept librairies florissent à travers la province entre 1823 et 1854; la maison Fabre, fondée en 1816 à Montréal avec succursales dans les principales villes du Québec, en est la plus importante. Travaillant à l'intérieur de la formule consacrée à l'époque, Fabre se lance dans l'édition financé par le procédé de la souscription. Cautionné contre toute catastrophe par le contrôle absolu de la diffusion de ses ouvrages et par la collaboration étroite maintenue avec l'imprimeur Perreault, Fabre publie 49 ouvrages de 1827 à 1854. Entre 1828 et 1835 cinq titres paraissent annuellement. La nature de ces publications reflète la clientèle scolaire à laquelle elles sont destinées: ouvrages religieux ou pédagogiques rédigés par les clercs par ailleurs pédagogues. En plus du commerce du livre, la maison Fabre s'occupe de la vente de marchandises diverses. Mais le marché religieux semble privilégié puisqu'en 1830 les articles du culte comptent pour 23.9 pour cent de la vente annuelle, alors qu'en 1854 ce pourcentage est plus que doublé et passe à 53.2 pour cent.

L'agencement de l'édition au commerce de librairie sous un même toit structuré dans sa forme classique, sinon inauguré par Fabre, donne les bases à l'industrie autochtone qui ne se renouvellent qu'avec la deuxième moitié du vingtième siècle. Le procédé est repris par les librairies Beauchemin (1842) à Montréal, Garneau (1844) à Québec (cette dernière ayant sa place dans l'histoire littéraire puisqu'elle tient lieu de salon pour les Crémazie, Casgrain et Garneau qui forment la première école littéraire au pays). A ces librairies entre des mains laïques s'ajoutent celles des communautés religieuses. En s'accroissant, ces dernières contrôlent les secteurs clés de l'impression, la diffusion et la création dans un marché essentiellement scolaire dont elles ont le monopole jusqu'à la création du Ministère de l'Éducation en 1964. (Nous verrons plus loin que le cas Fides, maison fondée en 1937, n'est pas le fruit du hasard.) Vers la fin du dix-neuvième siècle naissent les librairies Granger (1885) et Déom (1896).

APRÈS LA PREMIÈRE GUERRE mondiale il se produit des changements provoqués par l'évolution scientifique exigeant des publications spécialisées, l'influence de l'Alliance Française, et par la résurgence du monarchisme prôné dans les écrits de Maurice Barrès, Charles Maurras et autres diffusés par l'Action Française dont le pendant québécois est l'Action Canadienne-Française animée entre autres par le Chanoine Lionel Groulx. Ce dernier participe d'un autre phénomène: les voyages d'études de plus en plus fréquents de Québécois en France qui ramènent avec eux des influences se manifestant comme facteurs de changement agissant sur le commerce du livre. Entre les deux guerres, la librairie Pony ouvre ses portes avec l'exclusivité des livres Hachette; Wilson et Lafleur se spécialise dans le commerce des livres juridiques et médicaux; l'Action Canadienne-Française, rompant avec la tradition, fait uniquement de l'édition et, lorsqu'elle ferme ses portes à la suite d'une faillite en 1937, son innovation est poursuivie par Valiquette.

Mais c'est pendant la période 1939-1945, et grâce à un concours de circonstances, qu'il se fait un déblocage et que le labeur d'un Albert Lévesque et d'un Bernard Valiquette visant l'implantation de maisons d'édition franchement laïques porte fruit. La chute de la France obligeant les maisons françaises d'interrompre leurs activités, les libraires et éditeurs canadiens-français obtiennent en 1941 du gouvernement français les droits d'édition et de ré-impression des oeuvres de Giraudoux, Claudel, Mauriac, Gide, Martin du Gard, Proust, Valéry et autres. Les plus grands noms de la littérature française moderne sont par conséquent publiés au Québec. Une pléiade de maisons sont fondées pour répondre à la demande — les Editions de l'Arbre, Variétés, Parizeau, du Lévrier, Valiquette — tandis que les maisons établies — Beauchemin, Fides — prennent un essor considérable. Cette période marque les années de gloire de l'édition au pays. De 191 à 1945, pas moins de 22 éditeurs produisent 1,725 titres. En 1943, Pierre Tisseyre et ses collègues fondent la "Société des Editeurs Canadiens du Livre Français". Cependant des difficultés qui vont en grossissant commencent déjà à poindre en pleine euphorie: problèmes d'approvisionnement en papier, encre et autres matières premières dus au contrôle strict des prix et des denrées exercé par le gouvernement; problèmes d'exportation vers le marché francophone d'outre-mer. En 1944, le gouvernement gaulliste en exil entreprend des pourparlers visant le rapatriement des droits cédés. A la libération, les éditeurs français s'abordent la concurrence québécoise en reprenant leur marché qui lui est de plus coupé par des mesures protectionnistes. L'une après l'autre, en 1946 et 1947, les



Editions de l'Arbre, Valiquette, Parizeau, Variétés ferment boutique. Seuls Fides, Beauchemin, Granger et autres ayant toujours publié pour la chasse-gardée scolaire et religieuse et, surtout, pouvant s'appuyer sur les revenus sûrs de leur commerce de librairie échappent à la débâcle. Sur 22 maisons d'édition existant en 1945, 14 appartiennent à des communautés religieuses.

La situation de l'édition et du commerce de librairie dans les années d'après-guerre jusqu'à la fin des années 50 est homogène et fixe: les maisons mariant ces deux activités conservent leurs droits acquis dans le marché traditionnel. La publication accrue de romanciers et de poètes tels que Gabrielle Roy, Roger Lemelin, Anne Hébert ne s'inscrit pas dans ce cercle fermé. Mais aussi bien avant 1960 qu'après, aucun éditeur québécois n'a pu survivre dans le métier en publiant principalement des oeuvres littéraires: la littérature étant le secteur le moins rentable de l'industrie.<sup>1</sup> En revanche, une maison comme Fides doit sa prospérité aux faits suivants qui résument très bien le profil du marché de l'époque: elle est libraire et éditrice; propriété de la Communauté des Pères de Sainte-Croix; produit surtout des manuels scolaires et religieux qu'elle écoule dans un système scolaire dont une partie de la clientèle lui est garantie puisque la Communauté est propriétaire d'institutions telles que les Collèges Sainte-Croix, Notre-Dame, Saint-Laurent, le Couvent Basile-Moreau, l'Oratoire Saint-Joseph; ses auteurs sont pour la plupart des pédagogues de la Communauté qui pour l'hagiographie destinée à l'Oratoire Saint-Joseph s'inspirent du thaumaturge de la Communauté, le Frère André; finalement, étant propriété religieuse, elle ne paie pas de taxe.

Une rupture du monopole clérical et une diversification dans la production et dans la vente du livre permettront à l'industrie québécoise de sortir de l'ornière dans laquelle, même après un siècle d'intervalle, les maisons Fabre et Fides se retrouvaient. Lorsque l'on sait que cette diversification coïncidera avec l'éclosion d'une littérature nationale québécoise, pour ce faire il ne fallait rien de moins qu'une révolution culturelle reposant sur une redistribution des rapports entre l'Eglise et l'Etat, l'Eglise et l'Education, et l'Eglise et le Commerce. Cette révolution, "tranquille" au départ, débute en 1960 avec l'avènement au pouvoir du gouvernement Lesage. (Soulignons toutefois que même s'il est certain que certaines mesures adoptées par ce gouvernement se révéleront indispensables pour la naissance d'une franche industrie du livre, il n'en demeure pas moins que la fondation des Editions Hexagone (1953), Leméac (1957), de l'Homme (1957) est un signe de changements qui se produisaient déjà sous l'"Ancien Régime".)

Quels sont les facteurs directs de changement provoqués par le gouvernement Libéral? Premièrement, l'élection elle-même du gouvernement Lesage dans un

contexte politico-religieux où feu le fondateur et chef de l'Union Nationale, Maurice Duplessis, put se vanter un jour de "faire manger les évêques dans ses mains", et à l'issue d'une campagne électorale où des curés n'avaient cessé de répéter à leurs ouailles que l'enfer était rouge (couleur traditionnelle du parti Libéral) et le ciel bleu (couleur de l'Union Nationale) signale au départ la séparation des pouvoirs de l'Etat et de l'Eglise qui par la suite ne pouvait que suivre l'ordre logique d'une telle prémisse. Deuxièmement, le Bill 60 codifiant les recommandations de la Commission Parent et créant le Ministère de l'Education en 1964 devait par la refonte en profondeur du système scolaire dégager celui-ci de la tutelle religieuse, le moderniser sinon l'améliorer et, tout en élargissant les cadres de l'enseignement supérieur, y permettre une accessibilité plus générale. Troisièmement, suite au rapport de la Commission Bouchard sur le commerce du livre, en 1963, le gouvernement émet les ordonnances suivantes: (1) les écoles, collèges, bibliothèques et autres institutions subventionnées par l'Etat s'approvisionneront dorénavant auprès de librairies accréditées par le gouvernement; (2) le gouvernement exercera un pouvoir de régularisation sur la vente du livre par l'accréditation des librairies; (3) le gouvernement créera une Régie du livre du Québec pour veiller à l'application de ces règlements. (Une autre recommandation principale de la Commission, soit la création d'une société de la Couronne devant s'appeler "Maison du livre" et ayant pour fonction d'approvisionner en exclusivité à titre de grossiste les librairies accréditées restera lettre morte face à l'opposition des libraires.) Quatrièmement, la Commission re-affirmera de plus l'esprit et la lettre du Bill 29 adopté en avril 1962 visant l'aide à l'édition dispensée par le Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, fondé en 1961, qui poursuivait ainsi l'initiative du Conseil des Arts du Canada lancée quelques années auparavant. Finalement, le gouvernement révoque, en 1965, le privilège d'exemption fiscale des librairies et des maisons d'édition religieuses.

C'est ainsi que dès 1965, sur un total de 38 maisons d'édition, on ne compte plus que 13 qui soient aux mains des religieux, soit 34.2 pour cent (en 1945, le pourcentage était de 63.6). Six ans plus tard, en 1971, il ne reste plus que 8 maisons d'appartenance religieuse sur un total de 42 (soit 19 pour cent). Il y a donc lieu de croire que de 1945 à 1971 il y eut non seulement croissance de 100 pour cent dans le nombre d'éditeurs, mais également décroissance de plus de 300 pour cent dans la présence des clercs dans l'industrie du livre. Pendant ce quart de siècle, on observe parallèlement une nette diminution dans la formule traditionnelle libraire-éditeur. En 1945, 86.4 pour cent des éditeurs étaient également libraires (19 maisons sur 22); en 1971, seulement 26.2 pour cent (11

maisons sur 42) adhèrent au modèle. Un fait troublant qui n'existait pas en 1945 et en 1965 est par ailleurs mis à jour en 1971 : 12 pour cent des maisons d'édition appartiennent à des intérêts étrangers. Nous y reviendrons.

**N**OUS POUVONS donc constater de nets changements dans le panorama de l'édition et de la vente du livre depuis 1760 jusqu'à 1960. Il conviendrait maintenant de cerner schématiquement la carte de l'édition, d'abord en faisant un relevé des maisons d'édition fondées avant 1960 et encore actives (Tableau I) pour mieux faire ressortir le contraste avec celles fondées depuis 1960 (Tableau II). Ces tableaux reposent sur des données officielles recueillies auprès du Conseil Supérieur du Livre (qui remonte à 1961) et reflètent les composantes de cette fédération d'organismes professionnels du livre groupant entre autres l'Association des Editeurs Canadiens et l'Association des Libraires du Québec. (Quelques maisons non-affiliées au C.S.L. sont absentes des tableaux.)

TABLEAU I

Maison d'Édition	Date de Fondation	Lieu	Propriété	Autres Activités
Action Nationale	1933	Montréal	Laïque	
Beauchemin	1842	Montréal	Laïque	Librairie
Bellarmin	1920	Montréal	Religieuse	Librairie
Cercle du Livre de France	1946	Montréal	Laïque	
Déom	1896	Montréal	Laïque	Librairie
Écrits du Canada français	1950	Montréal	Laïque	
Edit. Officiel du Qué.	1867	Québec	Laïque	
Fides	1937	Montréal	Religieuse	Librairies (8)
Hexagone	1953	Montréal	Laïque	
Edit. de l'Homme	1957	Montréal	Laïque	Librairies (2)
Inst. de Rech. Psycho.	1958	Montréal	Laïque	
Leméac	1957	Montréal	Laïque	Librairies (3)
Palm	1948	Montréal	Laïque	Librairie
Paulines	1947	Sherbrooke	Relig.	Librairie
Pélican	1956	Québec	Laïque	
Presses H.E.C.	1957	Montréal	Laïque	
P.U.L.	1950	Québec	Laïque	Librairie
Richelieu	1940	St-Jean	Relig.	Librairie

Sur un total de dix-huit maisons, douze sont situées à Montréal (66.7 pour cent); quatre appartiennent à des ordres religieux (22.2 pour cent); dix possèdent des librairies (55.5 pour cent). Comparons maintenant avec le tableau suivant.

TABLEAU II

Maison d'Édition	Date de Fondation	Lieu	Propriété	Autres Activités
Actuelle	1970	Montréal	Laïque	
Aquila	1970	Montréal	Laïque	
Boréal	1968	Montréal	Laïque	
Cosmos	1969	Sherbrooke	Laïque	
Ecole Active	1968	Montréal	Relig.	Librairie
Education Nouvelle	1964	Montréal	Laïque	
Edit. du Renouveau Pédagogique	1965	Montréal	Laïque	
Etincelle	1972	Montréal	Laïque	
Ferron	1961	Montréal	Laïque	
F.I.C.	1964	Laprairie	Relig.	
FM	1969	Laval	Laïque	
Format	1972	Montréal	Laïque	
Frégate	1967	Montréal	Laïque	
Guérin	1967	Montréal	Laïque	Librairie
Harvest	1960	Montréal	Laïque	
Héritage	1968	St-Lambert	Laïque	
Hurtubise/HMH	1960	Montréal	Laïque	
Jeunesse	1962	Montréal	Laïque	
Edit. du Jour	1961	Montréal	Laïque	
Julienne	1965	Longueuil	Laïque	
Edit. La Presse	1971	Montréal	Laïque	
Lidec	1965	Montréal	Laïque	Libraries (3)
Noroit	1971	St-Lambert	Laïque	
Parti Pris	1963	Montréal	Laïque	
Phare	1966	Desbiens	Relig.	
P.U.M.	1962	Montréal	Laïque	
P.U.Q.	1969	Montréal	Laïque	
Re-Edition Québec	1968	Montréal	Laïque	
Sablier	1968	Boucherville	Laïque	
Songe	1969	Ste-Adèle	Laïque	

Sur un total de trente maisons, vingt-et-une sont situées à Montréal (70 pour cent); trois appartiennent à des ordres religieux (10 pour cent); trois possèdent des librairies (10 pour cent).

Le décalage entre les périodes pré- et post-soixante nous permet de constater qu'il y a : (1) baisse accrue de la propriété religieuse (22.2 pour cent vs. 10 pour cent); (2) nette diminution dans le nombre des libraires-éditeurs (55.5 pour cent vs. 10 pour cent); (3) légère augmentation dans la localisation montréalaise (66.7 pour cent vs. 70 pour cent). Mais une globalisation de la carte de l'édition par la conjonction des deux tableaux démontre un rythme de croissance très marqué depuis 1960, alors que presque deux fois plus de maisons sont fondées par comparaison avec la période antérieure. Cette quantification dans les raisons sociales peut s'avérer trompeuse néanmoins si l'on s' imagine qu'elle correspond nécessairement au rythme de la production. Nul doute qu'à l'exception des Editions du Jour, Hurtubise et La Presse, les grands producteurs se retrouvent parmi les maisons fondées avant 1960 (Leméac, Cercle du Livre de France, Fides, Beauchemin, les Editions de l'Homme). Les Editions de l'Homme, pierre angulaire du groupe SOGIDES (Société Générale d'Impression, de Distribution et d'Editions), arrivent bons premiers avec une production annuelle de 100 nouveaux titres et un tirage global de 2 million de volumes. Ajoutons que leur catalogue énumère 400 titres de plus de 250 auteurs.

Sur un total de quarante-huit maisons existant à l'heure actuelle (1973), treize ont des librairies (27.1 pour cent); sept appartiennent à des religieux (14.6 pour cent); trente-trois sont situées à Montréal (68.8 pour cent); et trente existent depuis 1960 (62.5 pour cent).

**A** LA LUMIÈRE de la croissance quantitative des maisons d'édition retracée plus haut, le livre québécois, surtout depuis 1960, semblerait témoigner effectivement du dynamisme de la société dont elle refléterait la vitalité culturelle. Poursuivons la réflexion en s'interrogeant sur l'adéquation de cette croissance et de certaines réalités économiques contrôlant la production et la vente du livre au Québec.

Nul autre que Pierre Tisseyre, un pilier de l'édition au Québec aussi bien par son rôle au sein de l'Association des Editeurs Canadiens qu'en tant que président du Cercle du Livre de France, nous rappelle la conclusion de Robert Escarpit à la fin d'une enquête menée pour le compte de l'UNESCO: un marché du livre viable doit reposer sur un public de cinq millions de lecteurs. Or le Québec serait loin d'atteindre ce chiffre. Mais si les tentatives d'élargissement du marché de SOGIDES, des Editions du Jour et de La Presse (qui viennent de signer des

accords de co-diffusion et de co-édition avec des maisons européennes) réussissent, il y a lieu de croire que le tirage moyen d'une oeuvre littéraire (jusqu'à présent de 2,000 à 3,000 exemplaires) se déclupera en fonction du marché francophone international. Du même coup, il serait possible pour l'édition québécoise de s'affranchir de la tutelle gouvernementale de l'aide à l'édition qui, tout en étant nécessaire et d'un apport certain pour l'essor de l'industrie durant les années 60, ne constitue pas moins une forme de dépendance paralysante, empêchant les initiatives qui fondent le progrès et la croissance économiques dans le monde de la libre entreprise.

Bien que l'avenir de l'industrie dépende d'une ouverture sur le marché international, et de l'acceptation de composer avec les lois du marché, on voit mal à l'heure actuelle comment cet avenir échappe à une problématique fondamentale. Selon des chiffres fournis par le C.S.L., le marché du livre québécois rapportait en 1971 des revenus s'élevant à 40 millions de dollars. Au secteur de l'édition des manuels scolaires on attribue 15 millions, à celui de la littérature générale, 2 millions 600,000; tandis que la vente de volumes étrangers atteint 22 millions 400,000 dollars. Les grossistes, par ailleurs, se partagent 9 millions 135,000 dollars. Dans les trois domaines principaux de l'industrie, la propriété étrangère s'établit à 40 pour cent dans l'édition des manuels scolaires, 65 pour cent dans la distribution et le commerce de librairie en gros, et 15 pour cent dans la vente au détail de librairie. Cette présence étrangère se résume en définitive à la prépondérance de la maison Hachette de France, la plus grande entreprise du livre au monde (600 millions de dollars de revenus en 1970 vs. 300 millions chez McGraw-Hill et 357 millions chez Macmillan, ses deux plus proches rivaux).<sup>2</sup> Depuis 1968, et surtout depuis l'acquisition des librairies C.E.C. (en 1970) et Garneau (1971), qui lui est permise grâce à un arrêté ministériel d'avril 1971 fixant à 50 pour cent le maximum de capital-actions pouvant être détenu par des intérêts étrangers dans une entreprise du livre au Québec bénéficiant de l'accréditation et de l'aide à l'édition, Hachette, selon certains, viserait à monopoliser le marché. Toujours d'après les chiffres du C.S.L., Hachette aurait, en 1971, le contrôle effectif de 20 pour cent de l'édition scolaire (par l'entremise du C.E.C., le plus important éditeur de manuel scolaire dans la province), de 20 pour cent également de la distribution en gros (par ses Messageries Internationales du Livre), de 15 pour cent du commerce de librairie, et de 22 pour cent de la vente des volumes français vendus au Québec.

L'opinion publique fut alertée en 1972 par des libraires et des éditeurs dirigés par Jacques Hébert, président des Editions du Jour, lequel relançant le débat

qui en 1962 incita le gouvernement à créer la Commission Bouchard réclama la mise en application d'un arrêté ministériel fixant les limites de la propriété étrangère dans le commerce du livre à 20 pour cent du capital-actions, tout en faisant planer la menace certaine d'étouffement du livre québécois en tant que bien culturel une fois que celui-ci serait soumis au monopole d'Hachette dans la distribution en gros aussi bien que dans le commerce de librairie. On affirma que la maison Hachette n'étant préoccupée que par les gros sous préférerait mousser la vente de ses propres produits. En achetant le C.E.C., elle démontrait du reste que seule la production scolaire, financièrement rentable, l'intéressait; tandis qu'elle manifestait une indifférence totale à l'égard de la production littéraire, l'enfant pauvre de l'industrie.

Peu importe d'entrer dans les détails de toute cette affaire. L'histoire d'Hachette, un cas d'espèce, n'est pas différente de celle de McGraw-Hill en Ontario, et elle ira en se répétant selon la logique de la concurrence économique. Tandis qu'au Québec comme en Ontario les professionnels du livre agitent le spectre du patrimoine-culturel-menacé, de l'existence-d'un-peuple-mise-en-péril, afin de sensibiliser l'opinion publique à la question, les hommes d'affaires que sont après tout les éditeurs et les libraires négligent de s'appesantir sur les réels fondements de leur ressentiment: la concurrence des grandes maisons internationales contre laquelle celles du Québec semblent difficilement pouvoir tenir le coup. Que cette situation ne soit pas négligeable justifie les demandes d'assistance logées auprès du gouvernement aussi bien en Ontario qu'au Québec, mais non pas le recours à un genre d'arguments qui démontrent une foi plutôt faible dans la libre entreprise souvent accompagnée, par un retour ironique des choses, par la préconisation d'une forme de socialisme invitant le gouvernement à placer le marché du livre national en régime autarcique relevant non pas des lois du commerce mais de l'intégrité culturelle nationale. Mais l'on voit mal ce qui empêcherait le gouvernement français, ou n'importe quel autre gouvernement, d'arguer d'une même ligne de pensée et d'interdire par conséquent une pénétration plus que symbolique du livre québécois dans son marché. Même si des mesures protectionnistes étaient adoptées au Québec (comme elles l'ont été en Ontario, jusqu'à un certain point), le dilemme principal découlant du déséquilibre entre la croissance nécessaire de l'industrie et l'étroitesse du marché demeure entier.

A la rigueur, on peut rétorquer que les rapports de forces n'étant pas égaux — en 1962, le Québec publiait 3,600 titres, alors que la France lançait 13,282 titres sur le marché — il y a lieu de soutenir le bien-fondé d'un certain protectionnisme pour l'industrie québécoise qui ne se justifierait pas pour sa contre-

partie française.<sup>3</sup> Il est même juste de dire qu'il y a vice de procédure lorsque le consortium Hachette, dont les influences s'exercent, paraît-il, jusque dans les cabinets ministériels aussi bien en France qu'au Québec, est financé pour ses opérations au Québec sur le même pied que les petites entreprises locales, par des subventions gouvernementales.

L'on se met à songer, cependant, qu'à l'intérieur des lois du marché du livre international telles qu'existantes le livre québécois a peut-être déjà atteint le degré de croissance zéro<sup>4</sup> et confronté l'alternative suivante: ou bien s'étendre en allant au-delà de ses frontières naturelles quitte à tomber sous la coupe de la fusion selon le principe des corporations multinationales, ou bien se résigner à la stagnation à l'intérieur d'un système autarcique. Les accords de co-diffusion et de co-édition récemment signés entre SOGIDES, les Editions La Presse et Hachette, et ceux signés entre les Editions du Jour et Robert Laffont laissent croire qu'il y a eu option à long terme pour le premier des deux choix. Le livre québécois en se découvrant une vocation internationale a choisi de composer avec les lois de la concurrence économique telles que revues et corrigées par John Kenneth Galbraith, qui délimitent le patrimoine culturel de l'homme d'affaires à l'intérieur non pas de l'Etat-Nation mais de l'Etat-Industriel.

Quel rôle attribuer à l'écriture littéraire dans l'esthétique nouvelle qui se fait depuis 1960, dans un contexte aussi problématique que celui retracé plus haut? Nous savons par Lucien Goldmann, Ian Watt et Géorg Lukàcs, entre autres, que l'écrivain européen du dix-huitième siècle, participant à l'avènement de l'économie de marché, délaisse les traditions littéraires issues d'une économie à base domestique ou féodale et crée le genre romanesque, bourgeois et réaliste axé sur les problèmes du citoyen vivant dans une société soumise aux fluctuations du capital. L'écrivain québécois reflète une semblable démarche en étant situé et par son oeuvre et par sa fonction d'écrivain dans une problématique ressortissant du nouvel ordre socio-économique de sa société dont il ne saurait se distancer comme témoin, et encore moins comme porte-parole, puisque son oeuvre est moins un reflet des apparences de sa société qu'un signe renvoyant au signifiant et signifié socio-économique.

Cet écrivain ayant ses racines dans le milieu natal dont il tire son inspiration et témoigne tant par les thèmes que par les images dans son oeuvre naît effectivement en 1944-45 — Roger Lemelin, Gabrielle Roy — à une époque où l'économie rurale, domestique, cède devant l'économie de marché. Le roman de facture réaliste avec pour cadre la ville, et thème la situation de l'homme d'ici aux prises avec le quotidien prosaïque régi par les lois du marché contre lesquelles il



se trouve sans défense, fait son apparition. Cet écrivain participe d'un courant historique au sein duquel l'éclosion d'une littérature modelée par le pays, donc nationale, sera parallèlement accompagnée par l'avènement d'une industrie du livre autochtone. Ce qui suggère l'hypothèse que créature et progéniteur de la fortune du livre, l'écrivain doit être envisagé dans le miroir direct de ce qui le signifie en tant qu'écrivain, c'est-à-dire son produit, le livre. L'écrivain semble être dès lors un type "en situation" vis-à-vis son oeuvre voulue essentielle (reflet de l'âme profonde, etc.), mais sujette à réification, à n'être entrevue qu'en tant qu'objet à valeur d'échange minimale dans la société de consommation. Tel est par conséquent le malaise fondamental de tout écrivain, de dire Goldmann, mais un malaise qui en se précisant autour de quelques points clés devrait nous renseigner sur le caractère spécifique de l'homme de lettres d'ici.

L'étroitesse du marché, la faiblesse quantitative du public lecteur, l'impossibilité de vivre de sa plume et l'absence de droit de cité à la profession cernent en général le malaise. Mais l'histoire du rôle de l'écrivain, qui traditionnellement appartient soit aux professions libérales et aux "grandes familles", soit aux ordres, précise une ambiguïté qui en s'accroissant autour des pôles élite-peuple situe l'irréconciliable de l'écrivain et de la société. De Crémazie à Nelligan, de St-Denis Garneau à François Hertel, le culte de l'isolement dans les manoirs seigneuriaux ne cède que devant des désirs d'évasion exacerbés par l'onirisme ou par des pérégrinations sans fin n'arrivant pas à faire taire le mal métaphysique. Il est de bon ton d'affirmer que depuis les Automatistes et leurs fils spirituels (Hexagonistes et Partipristes), la vie en serre-chaude a été détruite pour faire place au pays. Mais le constat d'échec dans la thématique et la symbolique d'auteurs tels que Godbout, Aquin, Miron et autres — ne serait-ce que pour mieux affirmer l'urgence de choisir — ne demeure pas moins éloquent. L'exil qui ne cesse d'être préféré au pays natal (Blais, Hébert), le silence des afficheurs, la mise au rancart de l'exigence du pays ces dernières années, témoignent d'un malaise qui dure et qui ne relève en dernière analyse que de l'essentielle problématique de l'écriture au pays de Québec.

L'écrivain lu dans les Cégeps est déphasé dans une contre-culture qui caractérise son art comme élitiste, sinon défaitiste ("Trop noir; nous autres on veut vivre, on veut pas être pogné"), mais privilégie les arts de nature populiste. L'éclosion du livre québécois dans une décennie marquée par la floraison correspondante de l'audio-visuel en Occident, et au Québec en particulier, dans les institutions d'enseignement jusqu'alors modelées par la rhétorique ancienne n'explique pas que depuis 1968 le genre littéraire à la fine pointe de la nouvelle

esthétique ne soit ni le roman et ni la poésie, mais le théâtre, la forme orale, visuelle et collective correspondant aux goûts de l'audience nouvelle. Une audience qui souhaitait que sa langue quotidienne fût valorisée par ses créateurs. Bien que les écrivains de *Parti Pris* eussent théorisé *in-extenso* sur les vertus du joutil dans des essais dont Boileau n'aurait pas rougi, il appartiendra à des spectacles populaires maniant la parole et l'image (plutôt que la langue et l'écriture) — l'Ossitidcho de Deschamps et de Charlebois; le cinéma de Perrault, Jutra et Carle; la chanson — de créer une esthétique nouvelle fondée simplement dans la reconnaissance de la voix et de l'image du pays tel que vécu.

C'est à se demander si le plus engagé des écrivains québécois ne se voit pas forcé de constater son *insignifiance* (dans son sens littéral: l'acte de ne pas signifier, absence de correspondance entre l' "émetteur" [l'écrivain] et le "récepteur" [le public recherché], dichotomie et rupture au niveau de la communication) dans un contexte culturel où le rôle que lui a attribué une certaine tradition littéraire du siècle dernier, même re-définie dans un contexte existentiel précis (artiste révolutionnaire ou maudit) n'est qu'illusion quichottiste. L'héritage de Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Hugo, Huysmans, Lautréamont et autres que l'on retrouve sans effort chez les écrivains d'ici les plus farouchement nationalistes ne semble pas faire le poids dans une jeune culture où la vision s'obtient démocratiquement pour le prix d'un "joint", et pour qui l'artiste visionnaire (et révolutionnaire) est celui qui manie les sons, les couleurs et les parfums par la chanson, le cinéma, le théâtre ou qui s'incarne dans le délire d'un Luoar Yaugud, d'un Pierrot-le-Fou, des Infoniaques et autres insolites du Quebec Underground.

Dans un pays où la problématique de la relation entre l'écrivain et le milieu natal a de tous temps été doublée par le traumatisme de l'aliénation linguistique primant la langue plutôt que la parole, certains auteurs qui ont toujours chevauché les arts de communications et de l'écriture, tels que Godbout, Languirand, Perrault, Carle, ont opté pour l' "oralité", selon l'expression de Languirand. *D'Amour, P.Q.*, par exemple, le dernier roman de Godbout, se termine par la destruction de l'écriture et l'éloge du langage québécois dans un discours radiophonique se voulant symbolique de la fin du discours romanesque sans cesse court-circuité dans la structure de l'oeuvre elle-même par le dialogue entre Thomas d'Amour (calembour sur Thomas d'Aquin, "docteur angélique" de la pensée philosophique officielle enseignée dans les collèges classiques), l'écrivain, et ses *amanuenses* de l'Université de Montréal. Languirand s'en tient aux ondes de Radio-Canada, quand il ne publie pas ses dernières découvertes sur l' "oralité" de McLuhan à Pythagore. Roch Carrier travaille des textes pour le théâtre et le

cinéma. Pierre Maheu, ex-grand essayiste de *Parti Pris*, fait du cinéma. Paul Chamberland rejoint la démarche d'un Jean Basile dans l'articulation de la contre-culture dégagée de toute mainmise. Tous, des "drop-outs" de l'écriture.

Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, nouveau preux du joual littéraire, et récupérant la plus belle tradition des préfets de discipline d'antan, tombe à bras raccourcis sur les infidèles, fût-ce un André Langevin. Mais le problème est mal posé: il ne s'agit pas d'écriture joual et non-joual, mais bien de savoir si l'écriture littéraire en tant que système codifié de signes verbaux saurait être considérée comme véhicule de culture signifiant le Québec qui se fait, puisque l'écrivain n'est pas au diapason d'une esthétique où priment le collectif, la parole, l'audio-visuel, et le rejet de tout système quel qu'il soit? L'écrivain québécois sait néanmoins qu'il est à la remorque d'une longue tradition d'art mimétique lui renvoyant sans cesse l'image de son ambiguïté extrême dans un marché où sa valeur d'échange s'avère très minime.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Rappelons qu'en 1966 le pourcentage de livres consacrés à la littérature s'élevait à 23.2 pour cent dans la production mondiale du livre (Robert Escarpit, *Le Littéraire et le Social*, p. 251). En 1962, le pourcentage pour le même secteur dans la production du livre canadien se chiffre à 18 pour cent (Robert Escarpit, *The Book Revolution*, p. 71).
- <sup>2</sup> Pourtant la production en langue française ne représente, en 1962, que 4.3 pour cent de la production mondiale du livre, alors que les productions en langues anglaise et allemande se situent respectivement à 15.7 pour cent et 10 pour cent (Escarpit, *The Book Revolution*, p. 61).
- <sup>3</sup> En 1967, la production canadienne (dans les deux langues) n'atteint pas 1 pour cent de la production mondiale (elle est de 0.79 pour cent). Quant à la production québécoise, elle représente 3.34 pour cent de la production (mondiale) en langue française qui, comme on l'a vu plus haut, se limitait, en 1962, à 4.3 pour cent des effectifs mondiaux (Jean-Claude Beau, "La Production du Livre Canadien de 1952 à 1970", *Mélanges*, pp. 218-219).
- <sup>4</sup> Les chiffres sont assez éloquentes. En 1966, il se publie 3820 titres, un volume inégalé depuis, puisque la production en 1967 est de 3782; en 1968 elle baisse à 3527; en 1969 elle augmente légèrement par comparaison avec l'année précédente et s'élève à 3659; pour dégringoler à nouveau, en 1970, à 3457 (Statistiques de l'UNESCO citées par Jean-Claude Beau, *Ibid.*, p. 216).

# NEW WAVE IN PUBLISHING

## ORIGINS

*What do you consider the principal reason (or reasons) for the rise of so many new publishing houses in Canada during the past five years?*

WRITERS couldn't get published. Houses like Anansi have filled a need, first by proving that there are Canadian writers (by putting their books into print); this was newsworthy enough that a market for them began to develop; the emphasis on the Canadian Identity bolstered the public's awareness (to say nothing of Royal Commission, attention from the Federal Gov. etc.) It's been a snowballing effect — but I think the idea behind most new houses was simply to fill the need for publishing houses who would publish new Canadian writers. I think they all assumed there was a readership out there.

SHIRLEY GIBSON

A NEW SENSE of the differences involved in being Canadian. The centennial was the occasion.

MICHAEL MACKLEM

REGIONALISM, nationalism, cheaper zaz-zier printing methods . . . but perhaps the most consistent element was one or more

talented younger writers who had either been turned down at the established houses, or felt totally alienated from their apparent aims and sensibility, or both. So they started new ones. It was their impatience, energy and naïveté that brought all but a handful of the new houses into existence.

Because most of those writer/founders were literary types, their houses publish a far higher proportion of literature than do the mainline houses.

Another note in literary sociology: older conventions of publishing your own work with another press have gone by the boards. Instead, the little-magazine groundrules apply.

DENNIS LEE

THE DISCOVERY, among ourselves, that *we* have the writers — poets, playwrights, novelists, short story writers, even artists and film makers, *and* that they need books — as a service to *their* community and to the community at large.

DAVID ROBINSON

*Questions by*

GEORGE WOODCOCK

*Answers by*

SHIRLEY GIBSON (Anansi)

MICHAEL MACKLEM (Oberon)

DENNIS LEE (formerly Anansi)

DAVID ROBINSON (Talonbooks)

JAMES LORIMER (James, Lewis & Samuel)

VICTOR COLEMAN (Coach House)

MEL HURTIG (M. G. Hurtig)

THOUGH I AM SURE people close to publishing will think it a bit silly to say so, I think that the first point to be made about why publishing houses have been established in the last few years is that it has not been done as a way of making money. I am constantly amazed by the assumption which is common, among a few writers, many academics, and most of the cultural policy-makers in the country, that book publishing is really pizza manufacturing or oil refining in disguise — somebody's bright idea about how they can make a lot of money and build a colonial empire. Perhaps this is yet another expression of cultural colonialism, an automatic refusal to give cultural value and importance to an activity when it happens in Canada, even though it is taken for granted when it happens elsewhere. How often is Allen Lane described by his many Canadian admirers as somebody who wanted to get rich quick and did it in book publishing?

My impression is that the main reason why people have turned to starting publishing operations recently has been an awareness, implicit if not explicit, of the

way that the medium of publishing has been impoverished, warped, and restricted to make it a very serious bottleneck between writers and readers. Not only was the total number of original books by Canadian writers being published very small, but the kinds of readers being catered to was also very restricted. That of course is still true, except in the restricted areas which the new houses have added. People interested in Liberal and Tory political history, for instance, were well served by the established publishers; but it is only since the new houses got going that there has been much available from Canadian publishers for people interested in history seen from a more radical viewpoint.

I think that all the media, both the cultural media and the mass media, are impoverished and restricted in the way that publishing was and mostly still is. The main reason why something happened in publishing before, say, anything of note happened in the mass magazine or pop music recording is that publishing is an easier medium than most for people to get into. It takes relatively little spec-

ialized knowledge and relatively little capital, at least for a small operation. If it took, say, \$500,000 to start a book publishing operation as it would to start a decent mass magazine or to finance a modest feature film, there would be no new book publishers.

JAMES LORIMER

THE REASONS for the rise are still pretty vague; I mean, *it wasn't* WWII, so we're not actually examining them that rigidly; I see them as being mainly economic. Inflation came to us as a kind of rakeoff from a Boom; and the Government Arts Agencies were responsive and sympathetic. The five year marker suggests you're using the Anansi calendar. Coach House started in 1965, Contact Press published its last book (much to the chagrin of two-thirds of its editorial board) in 1966. The book was *New Wave Canada*.

VICTOR COLEMAN

CANADA is maturing as a nation, and the evolution of the new publishing houses was only inevitable. Too many Canadians keep thinking of us as a country of ten million people or fifteen million, but of course we're going on twenty-three million and we're developing better writers and better readers and a public much more interested in their own country than they used to be. The day is long past when most Canadians would look across the ocean or across the border for what was necessarily best or necessarily right in the world. More and more Canadians are recognizing how lucky we have been to live in a country that is still very much in the process of just becoming, and so all of this is chicken-and-egg and all of it made the new publishing houses inevitable. Some of the older Canadian firms were very, very conservative and far too many good books and good writers were going unpublished.

MEL HURTIG

## CONSTITUENCY

*How far have writers in fact been responsible for creating these new presses? What support have they since given them?*

THERE'S no question that they founded a number of them — Godfrey, Lee, Lorimer, Coleman, Bacque, MacSkimming — others are currently involved (Atwood, Graeme Gibson, Newlove, Helwig, Matt Cohen, etc — mostly in editorial capacities, but also in management). I think too that the new presses have created some writers from within; my first book of poetry has just been released.

SHIRLEY GIBSON

IN MANY CASES they have been directly involved and even where they have not they have given decisive support. This is where the situation in Canada differs from that in the States. Here the new houses are at the *centre* of the movement, not on the fringe.

MICHAEL MACKLEM

MOST of the new houses I know were started by a writer or writers. Hurtig

wasn't, nor Peter Martin Associates, nor Oberon (though Michael Macklem has written and translated); otherwise, they were.

In my experience, writers supported Anansi very honourably: they pressed for things that mattered to them, and were almost always able to see the decisions that affected their book in the context of the whole press. When they were well reviewed, many were wooed by the established houses that had originally turned them down. By far the most common thing was for them to stay with a house that had first shown confidence in them.

DENNIS LEE

WRITERS, I think, have been completely responsible for the creation of the new presses, but their rise does not rest with them alone. Writers could just as soon sink any one of the new presses as aid them. Solidarity, dedication, and careful management have, I think, built the new presses. As for writer-contributor/subscribers, there seem to be a hardcore number of writers who are supporting the movement as it is afoot, aligning themselves by working for *or* with the various presses, but there are those too who play publishers off against one another, establishing literary and other more commercial reputations; then again, there are those who sadly enough have previously aligned themselves, *before* the rush, and

who are a bit lost, still somehow colonial-ly tied; or, too, there are those who are only out for their own aggrandizement and would use any publisher to gain a reputation.

DAVID ROBINSON

CERTAINLY writers have been involved in a lot of the new houses, though it is important to remember the exceptions like Hurtig and Peter Martin Associates. Where they have been involved, like Dennis Lee and now Margaret Atwood in Anansi or the three original New Press partners, they have stayed at least for some time while things got going, or went so badly wrong that they felt it was time to get out.

JAMES LORIMER

WHAT the editors at Contact believed was that *only* the writers read the books. I argued many times long and hard with Ray Souster about their silly limited edition policy and general lack of purpose as soon as the precious object-book appeared. They seldom followed through. But they were writers. I think all the writers who were hassled about publication were screaming, and their screams were heard; but so far only partially answered or satisfied.

The writers support us by writing for something other than profit and promises.

VICTOR COLEMAN

## VIABILITY

*Have the new publishing houses established themselves (a) in terms of financial viability and (b) in terms of literary viability?*

SOME HAVE . . . some haven't, and I think we'll see, within the next couple of years, a consolidation of some houses, a falling

by the wayside for others, as part of a natural process. Financial viability depends on many things (including help

from governments at the moment) but it also relates heavily to your publishing policy. If it's relevant, and fills a need (and thank God these needs are being acknowledged in Canada, finally) financial viability is possible — not easy, until we get some control over our distribution problems, but possible. Literary viability — or editorial viability — is, I think, much the same. If you can carve out an editorial space for yourself (or usurp somebody else's by doing it better?) then the chances are fairly good — e.g. James Lewis & Samuel with their books directed to the post-secondary school market. Anansi seems to have done it by means of a relentless (but hopefully somewhat imaginative) editorial policy, with emphasis on certain kinds of books which we do best. Often we're tempted to slop (and that's a good word for it) over into areas which we know little about. Fortunately a kind of ingrained sloth and intuition usually brings us back into line — while permitting us to diversify and expand our boundaries little by little.

I think the houses least likely to succeed are those which go publishing off in all directions — that destroy their literary viability which of course means the end of financial viability too.

Must qualify this; it refers of course only to smaller houses. Big ones have enough time, money, staff, etc. to produce the kind of promotion that sells almost any kind of book... no editorial viability = financial viability. But Canada doesn't own too many of them.

SHIRLEY GIBSON

(a) No — most of the new houses are concerned centrally with books that

aren't commercially viable without public subsidy.

(b) Certainly — these houses are where the action is.

MICHAEL MACKLEM

I DON'T KNOW the answer to this question.

I'm not up to date with most of the new houses, since I left Anansi. I wouldn't be surprised to see a number of the new houses either close down or go much more commercial, over the next five years. Part of the pressure towards that is money (and there has been so much ink about that that I won't add to it). Part of it is what seems to be a natural life cycle in new enterprises (publishing or other): you seem able to do things in the first 3-5 years, on the strength of energy, ignorance and imagination, that you have trouble doing later even with far more dollars flowing through the office. And a third reason would be the tendency of writer/founders to withdraw to their own work. (To some extent, I'm a case in point.)

The literary question is interesting. Quantitatively, there is more literary mediocrity published in Canada now than before (say) 1967. That's because there is more literature being published. Proportionately, my impression is that things are about the same.

By comparison with other countries, you know, there is far less crap published in Canada than in most other western nations. In both relative and absolute terms. The main reason is that we don't have access to our own paperback racks (or didn't; a few changes have begun), so hack writers have very little outlet here. We probably have a higher propor-



tion of arty, pretentious crap than elsewhere (there is almost no such thing as a Canadian "popular novelist"); certainly we have a far lower proportion of purely cynical crap. Needless to say, it's a function of economic control, not virtue.

A lot of people who felt comfortable with the scale of Canadian writing/publishing over the last decades — in which, for example, it was possible to read every new poetry book or chapbook that appeared, as a leisure-time pursuit — feel jostled, even angered by the proliferation. I can't get very excited about it either way, myself. Good work is good work, bad work isn't, and quality doesn't change that. I do hope, as a reader, that the convention of doing new-writer anthologies will continue; otherwise interesting younger writers will certainly take longer to surface.

Incidentally, the new houses are vastly more open to non-commercial and/or freaky kinds of writing than most of the established ones have been. Which is a good thing. But once that is acknowledged, I can't see that the average level of editorial judgment and skill in the new houses, with their particular tastes, is notably higher than at the old houses, with theirs; i.e., no hell.

DENNIS LEE

I DON'T THINK any Canadian press as it now stands can claim financial viability. At this point, given the concerns, I just don't think it's possible. Literary viability, however, is a different story and most new Canadian presses can claim this in some form or another simply because of the authors they represent. I don't think until Canadian publishers are able to move into educational publishing instead of its being ripped-off by the American

branch plants will they stand a chance of becoming financially viable. For now, most Canadian publishers are too busy building basic lists to be exploring the educational market. Perhaps too, some will never feed this market. That wouldn't be so bad either. I think the big rush to be educated is perhaps over. I, for one, sometimes wish I had learned more of a trade, but only if it were taught with some imagination. Publishers, if they're deprived of educational markets, will have to re-examine what they're publishing, perhaps publish the tarot and the zodiac — what the masses are interested in — or back to nature, whole earth, rather than what the system has been feeding them. It should be interesting.

DAVID ROBINSON

FINANCIALLY, only the most commercial houses are in anything close to reasonable shape. The fact that most of the new houses are still around, and many are expanding their activities quite rapidly, is solely a result of recent governmental financial assistance measures, including the prospect (if not the receipt) of working capital loans from the Ontario government for Ontario houses and the various federal programmes financed (but miserably) by the Secretary of State. But with the demand for Canadian books increasing, and with many of us looking very carefully and closely at the commercial ends of our operation in order to improve our financial state, I think it is possible that some of the new houses will prove financially viable.

In terms of literary viability, I think there is no question. I also think it is very interesting that there are some people in the book world who are complaining that

"too many" Canadian books are being published these days, so many I suspect that the bookstores are having trouble finding room for all the American and British books they have stocked for so long, and the reviewers are finding to their dismay that they have to spend so much time reading the Canadian books that come out that they don't have enough time for the books they think are really worth reading. Anywhere else in the non-colonized world, people would boast if the number of books being written and published were increasing, particularly people in the book trade. One of the complainers is, of course, the man whose bookstore has the best general stock of Canadian books in Vancouver.

JAMES LORIMER

(a) THE ones who have gone astray of original ideals;

(b) The ones who've stuck to their original ideals are bound to have continuous trouble economically because their prod-

uct doesn't make a 'profit' in terms of ready cash.

As far as literary viability goes, a book like *Survival* makes the literature stop. I think I'm more interested in letting it continue, even if it doesn't get recognized by the media as a revolutionary exercise.

VICTOR COLEMAN

THE answer is (a) *to a degree* and (b) *emphatically*. Most of the new publishing houses, to my knowledge, are having a tough time financially. Working capital is their major problem. In some cases the administrative or financial management is weak. But in terms of their product... the books that they publish... I think the new houses have made a very substantial contribution from almost every conceivable point of view and certainly including "literary viability". Almost without exception, the foremost new houses have done some very imaginative publishing and some very successful publishing in terms of sales.

MEL HURTIG

## NATIONALISM

*Some of the new presses have taken on a distinctively "Canadian" tone. How far did nationalist motives lead to their creation?*

IF YOU FORM a company or work with a company which was founded primarily to get Canadian writers into the hands of Canadian readers, I guess that makes you at least nationalistic. Once into it, the feeling tends to grow. I have on the wall in front of me a quote by the president of McGraw Hill International; "The prime objective of a foreign subsidiary is not its own publishing but the sale of the U.S. product." The president

of another branch-plant told me to my face that Canada could never have a literature of its own — yes, other countries (any other countries) could, but not Canada. I know innumerable writers whose books were turned down by subsidiaries because "our funds for experimental writers must be used on the writers in our own country." If you get much of that, and you do, there's not much alternative.

SHIRLEY GIBSON

NATIONALIST motives were of cardinal importance from the start in most cases. This has latterly become important also at Oberon. This is partly a matter of marketability, partly a matter of conviction.

MICHAEL MACKLEM

DAVE GODFREY and I started Anansi in 1967, and I think these things were more sharply defined for Dave at that time than for me.

At the beginning, my publishing nationalism was largely a positive thing: I wanted to read more good stuff by people rooted where I was. As time went on, it started to include a lot more negative things to boot. I began to see just how badly Canadian writers and readers are fucked by most publishers who operate in the country, and the notion that appeals to their ideals would change anything came to seem pretty laughable.

I had known nothing about the policies of book clubs; nor about paperback distribution; nor about the kind of books educational houses are selling to schools. I shared the impression that the visible bad-guys — the Longmans or Doubledays, which only did a small handful of Canadian trade books a year — were the villains of the piece. It only gradually dawned on me that there are scores of corporations flogging books in the country — some Canadian-owned, though more foreign-owned — that don't even bother to maintain editorial offices here; that treat us unequivocally as a marketing colony. I began to hear the rumours about paperback distributors and organized crime. And after awhile the polite tokenist publishers, while they didn't look any less shabby than before, were clearly not the worst offenders by any means. That

made my nationalism a lot more aggressive.

DENNIS LEE

TALONBOOKS' impetus to begin publishing was local, which is where I think it should be. Canada is such a fucking huge country, you can't possibly really know who's writing in the Maritimes or, if they speak the same language, if they have made it into the 20th century, yet there are certain figures, certain writers, who stand above others and that's, I guess, where the nationalism comes in. Too, the whole nationalist issue confounds me. Some of our more ardent nationalists (Dave Godfrey, for example) will buy over-runs of sheets from American publishers, thus feeding the American corporations, President Nixon's friends, who own all but three of the New York publishers; and there are others who have reputable firms (Clarke Irwin, General Publishing), and who make a large portion of their money on importing lines and who only publish Canadian books on the side, for prestige (?) and to lay claim to the word "nationalist". To me, it's simple. You print Canadian books by Canadian authors on Canadian paper (if that's the paper you want to use), in Canada, and you put a beaver or some symbol like Coach House does on the book to prove it. Of course, you can publish American or British authors if you like — if they're good and you get the chance, but you publish them here, give them a home. Repatriate what's been lost and add to what you've already got. Don't fall victim in any way.

DAVID ROBINSON

IT SEEMS TO me that the book publishing medium is organized so that publishing

is either a local or a national activity. There are no real international publishers, who regularly publish and distribute books for international audiences. Even the U.S. multi-nationals, before they can regularly do international trade publishing, are going to have to do much more to create an international market. Now, markets and readers and writers (with a few notable exceptions) seem to me to work on a national basis. So I think anyone getting involved in publishing automatically directs his attention to the local or the national market in which he is operating, and gears his activities primarily to that.

But if you were to look at the publishing programmes of large firms in countries like Britain and France, certainly you would see many books which could be expected to be of interest only to British or French readers, and many others which would be of interest primarily to British or French readers, but also to others if they were published in other countries. Operating in a branch-plant economy, with tremendous penetration from the U.S. and to a lesser extent Britain, it is hardly surprising that Canadian publishers find themselves concentrating on producing the kind of books that U.S. and U.K. publishers are not publishing, which is to say books only of interest to Canadian readers because of the character of their subject-matter. The few established firms for which this is not completely the case, it seems to me, are locked into a peculiar continentalist approach which doesn't really work because they are so far out on the fringes of the empire.

But of course it is true, of me and of a

number of the others involved in the new houses, that part of the reason for becoming involved in this activity was an explicit concern with freeing up and expanding one of the media essential for an independent Canadian cultural and intellectual life.

JAMES LORIMER

ONE OF OUR BIGGEST sellers this year will be Allen Ginsberg's *Iron Horse*. Ginsberg was here, stopped for a while, gave us the ms., and we produced what sympathetic folk are calling a beautiful book.

National Culture is as important as its content wants to be. More self-promotion otherwise.

The difficulty of the "regional" ethic is more to the point I think.

Most of my influence came from south of the border or from the region I grew up in. It was men and women, not books. I never asked anybody his Nationality and don't intend to start.

VICTOR COLEMAN

HERE IS ONE of the most important questions and one of the most difficult for me to answer. In our case, our evolution from booksellers to publishers occurred at the same time as our increasing concern for the survival of our country. But I'm certain that there weren't "motives" involved, but rather that it "happened" at the same time. I would hardly think that it was an accident that our first major success was *The New Romans*. But somehow it seems to me that the word "nationalist" has a slightly negative connotation in your questionnaire. I may be wrong.

MEL HURTIG

## WHEN A MAN IS TIRED OF TORONTO . . .

*Why do you think there has been so little effective decentralization in this new wave of publishing? Why is most publishing still done in Ontario?*

THERE IS NO GETTING around the geographical fact that the centre of English language publishing is in Ontario. Many of us would like to move out to the mountains and the sea but here we are. Unquestionably this gives us a basic strength, but we also work our asses off — allowing that it's easier to do that in Ontario than in the Maritimes. But you have to begin somewhere.

For instance, we've been very successful in the past couple of years with the Ontario Council of the Arts. They started out by giving us charitable little grants, and we've poked and prodded them into what is really quite decent action. A Vancouver writer/publisher, who shall remain nameless, talked to me in my office and wanted to know if I would get him money from the Ontario government — if not, why not — he was prepared to take up temporary residence here to get it. I suggested that, inasmuch as B.C. is not exactly starving, he might go back home, form a tough lobbying group with the west coast publishers, and put the screws on the B.C. government. To date, I have not heard a progress report.

Of course we have advantages here in Ontario, but many of them we've created, or at least helped to create, ourselves. I'm not so insensitive that I can't imagine the bile that rises in many throats — both East and West — when they think of us, but certainly the IPA, in spite of accusations to the contrary, is making great

efforts to help the regional publishers. But the initiative has to come from the people primarily concerned. Another publisher (East) asked me how I could find time for all the meetings, trips, letters, phone-calls which lobbying entails. A good question. Nobody can afford it, so you spread it around — allowing that there will always be workers and non-workers in any group.

SHIRLEY GIBSON

VANCOUVER is well represented. The new houses tend to develop where the writers are. Oberon is an exception. How many good writers do you think there are in Saskatoon?

MICHAEL MACKLEM

THE GEOGRAPHICAL distribution of the new presses is much more proportionate to the distribution of people in the country than the old presses. Aren't the established houses purely Toronto?

Toronto presses are bound to reflect Toronto and all it implies, even if they try not to be callowly or shallowly Toronto. But I can't get too worked up about that. I was extended to the limit for six years, helping make a press happen in Toronto. We did a lot of southern Ontario writers, a fair number of others. If I'd been working at a new house in Vancouver or Charlottetown, I can't imagine that it could have been any more draining; and the relative proportions of

where our authors came from would have been reversed. Isn't that normal?

God knows, most of the Toronto people knew bugger-all about publishing before they got into it. They were working on the assumption that publishing was important, and if nobody else would do certain things, then they would themselves. People who have put their own asses on the line in other places understand what's going on in the process, I think, and know that you work within the limitations of who you are. Which includes where you are. Anybody in Flin Flon who doesn't like a whole lot of new publishers in Toronto should start a new house in Flin Flon.

DENNIS LEE

GOOD QUESTION. It's because 63% of the money the federal government is putting into publishing in English Canada is going to Ontario and 56.5% is going to Toronto. It's the old Eastern Axis syndrome, where the budgets and the decision-making power is kept in the East. It works that way for the CBC, for NFB, and now too, for publishing. Power centralizes, Godfrey tells me, and it stagnates. I don't know how to change it, except to offer to do things over and over again, to bring new blood in, but also, to move things out. I try, in letters I don't think anybody reads or cares about, and I go back, if even to confront them with my presence, as often as I can. It's difficult, and they never come to you. People are afraid; paranoid, suspicious. More trust is what's needed; more working together rather than in isolated pockets.

DAVID ROBINSON

AT THE LEVEL of the small poetry presses, there is of course tremendous decentralization in what has been happening, with new presses starting up right across the country. One of the difficulties about their situation is, of course, that in the absence of supporting media which are intensive enough to provide detailed coverage of what the small houses are doing, they are not widely known outside their localities, and they do not have a distribution network which operates effectively across the country.

At the level of the larger new houses, the new presses are about as centralized as the established Canadian publishers. This must be partly because, though it is extremely difficult to establish a successful new firm anywhere in Canada, it is likely to be easier in Toronto than elsewhere, because the local market is larger than anywhere else except for the Quebec publishers in Montreal.

JAMES LORIMER

I THINK the reasons here rest largely on technology; since most publishing technology is located here the natural place for the publishing to happen is here; by the same token it's always best to have all the garbage in the dump and not spread out through the neighbourhood.

VICTOR COLEMAN

I'M NOT CERTAIN I agree. Sure, most publishing is still done in Ontario, but the trend had been a good one in the sense that many of the new houses that have become active over recent years have not been located in Toronto.

MEL HURTIG

## SUCCESS OR SURVIVAL?

*Have the new presses been a success as you define success? How have they helped writers . . . and readers?*

SOME HAVE been more successful than others certainly, but we have created an awareness of Canadian literature (both past and present); we have brought a lot of Canadian writers to a lot of Canadian readers; and, as a spin-off, we've gotten many of the branch-plants off their tails and into the publication of Canadian writers. I don't question their motivation—they're doing it. There's lots more room for lots more success—but to date I think the new presses have done a better job than most of them would ever have thought possible a few years ago.

Many writers would never have been published without the new houses. They are finally beginning to acquire an identity and a role within their own country—no longer any need to go pounding off to Europe or Mexico. Funding agencies are recognizing them and increasing grants. Course adoptions are bringing their work to young readers. And, in line with the Great Canadian Irony, foreign houses are now wooing them. I think the new presses and the Canadian writers are defining the Canadian identity—whatever it is. And readers are learning that they/we have one—just like everybody else.

SHIRLEY GIBSON

THEY HAVE CREATED possibilities nobody dreamed of seven or eight years ago. They have added completely new dimensions to the Canadian literary scene. Many of the writers would never otherwise have been heard of. As for helping

readers, if you think reading Canadian books is good for you, then yes.

MICHAEL MACKLEM

ANANSI'S aim was to publish good writers. I think we succeeded.

DENNIS LEE

AS I THINK I've tried to explain, the new presses are a mixed lot. Success in this day and age is very suspect and, of course, hard to come by. That the presses exist is a feat in itself; that they have grown, is still more of a feat. I think everybody is struggling to give them a recognizable name and an imprint. Beyond that, when you get into motive and structure, I don't know. It's still early. Things as yet, I don't think, have sorted themselves out. For me, however, Coach House is the model.

The small houses have most definitely helped writers. Think of all the reputations that have been established. And think of the books themselves. Canada produces mighty attractive-looking books, you know. What the new presses have given readers is a new pride and a new consciousness. George Ryga talks about waiting for the first Canadian and Pierre Vallières writes that "relations between men must be radically transformed and imperialism definitely overthrown. . . ." Too, Vallières says, "We must wrest the vast resources and gigantic possibilities of this century from the grasp of businessmen." God, I know it seems small, but I believe both these men and I think it just might happen here, soon. I know

of no other country that is so close; *feel* it so. Too, I am working for it, every day. My life on the line.

DAVID ROBINSON

HERE IS WHAT I think they have done: They have increased the space available for writers in Canada, both in kinds of writing where there was already some publishing going on and in areas where there was virtually no publishing going on before they got going. This is to the benefit of writers and readers both. They are one more example of how it is possible to start independent Canadian media in some fields, free both of foreign links and of control by Canadian corporate business. They have made the issue of book publishing a political issue, by becoming involved in the fight over Ryerson and using that as a means of organizing the Canadian-owned publishers into a political pressure group which remains concerned with publishing. So they help encourage people in other fields to do the same thing, to raise cultural issues to the level of political discussion.

But I also think that what they have done is pathetically little in comparison to how much there is to do, if writing and publishing in Canada are to achieve the level necessary for independent cultural life. And book publishing is only one of many cultural and mass media where similar enormous effort will be required if we are going to work our way out of our current branch plant status.

JAMES LORIMER

TREMENDOUSLY SUCCESSFUL, with all its appurtenant broken lives. The relative

cultural ebb in Canada is over and a little of what gets published is even being read seriously. It's a whole new ballgame, culturally, and I for one think it's too soon to define it. Quantity-wise we're on the way to bigger pools of information, almost none of it, happily, on the mass-cult level — yet.

The more presses with responsible editors, the happier the writers; though writers who have no sense at all of what publishing entails are still hurt by the idea of such a small audience and no possible financial gain. The risk of publication is great and the writer has a chance therein to trim his vision or let it grow wild; he can see, or sense, a response and go on.

As for the reader, in many cases no. I think all the promotional activity that some of the presses concerned have created has fogged up the glass through which most readers find themselves discovering their own culture.

At Coach House we're helping the reader by giving him an object containing writing which reflects the writing and is therefore worthy of respect on both these levels.

VICTOR COLEMAN

OH, SURE, they have been a success. I think they have been a great success. And I think they've helped all kinds of writers and if the number of copies of all of the books sold is your criterion for "have they helped readers?" then obviously there's no doubt about the answer.

MEL HURTIG



## AFTERTHOUGHTS

*I prelude this last section with a statement rather than a question, since I feel some explanation of the way this collection of opinions was gathered and finally selected is necessary. Whenever even an informed outsider (as a professional writer obviously is in relation to publishing) puts questions about a field in which he is not directly involved, some of his questions will inevitably seem to the answerers less relevant to their problems than others, or, to say the least, will prove unproductive. I originally asked thirteen questions; it was obvious from the answers that three proved too insubstantial or too tangential. In dealing with them I decided that it would be most fair to the answerers, and in the end most enlightening to the reader to leave — in the case of material I did use — all the answers to any question. This meant that when a question seemed to have failed, I dropped it with all its answers. Thus three groups were immediately jettisoned. Since most answerers expressed their views at length, space became another problem; two more questions with all their answers were dropped mainly for this reason, though they were also the weakest survivors. The last three of the remaining eight were then condensed into a single question, since they were closely related, and this left the six groups of opinions on what seem to me the important facets of the new publishing that reached the printing post, and now appear. I also invited participants to express any further views they had, and of the few opinions submitted I have chosen the following by James Lorimer and Mel Hurtig because I think each adds notably to our understanding of what has been going on in publishing during the past few years.*

GEORGE WOODCOCK

IT USED to be possible for creative people in Canada to get away from the fact that they were Canadians, to avoid the fact or to extinguish it by becoming British or American. There are many people around who have succeeded at one time or another in doing this, and their ranks have recently been reinforced by the arrival in the country of many who are not in fact Canadians and who have no intention of becoming so. But my impression is that it is now difficult for most people involved in artistic and intellectual work to avoid their Canadianness, and that their consciousness of that fact

leads to the difficult question of what to do about it.

Artists and intellectuals in a country like this one where many of the serious media of communication and most of the mass media are dominated by material originating from abroad or imitating foreign material have to act differently from similar people in other situations where the media already exist. An essential part of being a Canadian artist, at the present moment, is working to create the media by which the work of Canadian artists can reach a Canadian audience, and can be publicly discussed and

evaluated. Of course some of these media do already exist, but they are so thin and weak that they make possible only a very thin and weak cultural life.

For writers, that means concern about publishing. It also means concern about periodicals, since periodicals are so important for the discussion and evaluation of writers' work. For painters, it means concern about the private and public art galleries, art magazines and so on. For film-makers, it means concern about distribution companies, ownership and control of movie theatres, and the media both popular and serious as sources of movie criticism.

Of course all of us have a stake in the existence of all kinds of cultural and intellectual activity in Canada, and we should all be concerned about these matters and work at changing the present situation. But artists and intellectuals have the biggest, most immediate and direct stake. They must have these media if they are going to be able to practise their art. When these media do not exist, they are permanently crippled. We can't afford to wait, as writers, for publishers to come along and do something about publishing. This is especially true when most publishers have abdicated most or all of their cultural responsibility and function in Canada in favour of making easy money as junior "agency" partners of foreign publishers. That is why journalists can't wait for magazine publishers to start new Canadian magazines; they must start their own, create their own medium. Artists can't wait for public art gallery trustees to improve the state of the art galleries; they have to get themselves organized and try to take over

those art galleries, or at least get themselves into a position of being a force which has to be reckoned with.

It is in the light of these facts about our situation, and of the need for this kind of strategy from Canadian artists and intellectuals, that what has happened in Canadian publishing in the last few years has to be evaluated.

JAMES LORIMER

THE MOST INTERESTING thing about book publishing and the "intellectual community" that I've come across is the failure of most academics and book reviewers and book columnists and editorial writers to understand the role of the publisher. Particularly what I'm thinking about is the way in which a good publisher with a good editorial staff helps the author. And further I find the lack of understanding about how the publisher *originates* books (marries an idea to a writer) is quite astonishing. The really good publisher who is doing a proper job is always looking for the right person to do the kind of book the publisher wants to publish. The image of the publisher sitting back and waiting for manuscripts to cross his desk is prevalent and grossly distorted in most cases. Much of the problem in Canadian publishing lies in inability to have proper access to working capital. The federal and provincial governments could play an effective role in assisting the Canadian book publishing industry best of all not through grants and loans and giveaways or handouts but simply by providing guarantees for some moderate chartered bank capital. This would cost the governments very, very little.

MEL HURTIG

# THE CANADIAN PUBLISHERS

*All 217 of them*

*Dave Godfrey*

**I**N THE SPRING when I was reading some of my recent fiction to a Conference at the University of Calgary, I met a student, Sonja, born in Alberta, who was finishing an M.A. in philosophy and yet had not only never studied any Quebec philosophers, or any work of George Grant, she had indeed never *heard* of George Grant; and this lack did not upset her. Nor did she know anything about recent French philosophy. What she knew was Chomsky and his disciples. What she believed, and felt the rest of the world did too, was that the Americans were better philosophers than anyone else — they alone were discussing what was important. “Better” was her key word. She would not accept my peace-offering that the space between American philosophers and our own was better termed a difference than made part of a competitive hierarchy.

When I first presented some of the material which follows, to a group of Canadian Studies students at Victoria College, the first question which followed was this: “Why don’t you writers and artists and everybody who can’t get your stuff sold just hire a manager to do it for you?” Presumably Sam Slick’s great grandson, with an M.B.A. from Harvard, would settle it all in a few whirlwind weeks.

Atypical you might say, and far from the world of publishing. But then in the opening lecture of the series in which this paper was formalized, at the prestigious Royal Ontario Museum, a member of the Ontario Cabinet, Robert Welch, charged specifically with overseeing the Ministry of Social Development Policy Field, spoke for almost an hour about the relationships between Government and Culture, and not once did he mention a single Canadian thinker, a single Canadian writer, a single specific Canadian situation, or a single Canadian book.

We are still far too far away from possessing our own world, from inhabiting a space at least part of whose complexities are made up of our own traditions, our own conflicts, our own perceptions, our own definitions and redefinitions, and our own attempts at struggling with these realities. Hiring American managers, or American-trained systems analysts or system-conceivers, is the last thing we ought to be considering. Only within the crucible of our own problems can we hope to move closer to our natural sense of being and learn to look outward with some confidence and dignity.

Now I have never pretended that a progressive, indigenous publishing industry is going to turn the heads of our Sonjas and Robert Welchs around overnight. But having put the best part of the last five or six years into an attempt to make philosophy work, to be creatively nationalistic, to be innovative within a traditional framework, and having seen some successful results along with many setbacks, it's perhaps a good time for me to look at the situation, in the early summer of 1973, and estimate how far we've come — remembering that the Royal Commission, after a good deal of expensive, high-quality research, recently concluded:

It should be clear by now that all the evidence which we have examined leads, directly or indirectly, to the conclusion that the Canadian book publishing industry is facing almost insuperable economic pressures. They threaten either to force it under, or so to attenuate it that it could only survive as an enfeebled regional cultural activity. (*Canadian Publishers and Canadian Publishing*, p. 251.)

It is not wolf, wolf, that we have been crying. Our mistake, if any, has been to attempt to keep the revolt civilized, to work within groundrules established by groups who look forward with pleasure to the inevitable results of those economic pressures.

But what is publishing that it should loom so large in the minds of certain intellectuals and activists? In an ideal world, it is nothing more than a mechanism, one mechanism among many for ensuring that the best, the most interesting and the most popular of the ideas, fantasies, facts and hypotheses of a community's intellectuals and poets, its innovators and teachers, its story-makers and its holymen, are distributed freely and cheaply to the other members of that community. A simple mechanism acting within a complex cultural environment which hopefully ensures that the individual outsider is not discriminated against, nor any group of outsiders allowed to destroy the actuality or the potential of the community's culture.

What is culture? To me it is no more than the sum of the activities of the

given community, not limited to the theories of the intellectual, or the craftsmanship of the worker, or the laws of the possessors. And one of the main reasons why publishing in Canada is in such a diseased state is that we suffer here from two very false definitions of culture, definitions which many publishers themselves not only help propagate but live out their lives within.

The first, which is essentially European, implies always that culture is something to be added to a community from above, as a lord might add fine wine to a peasant's meal. To me, once you are a member of a community, you enjoy, and are enlarged by, and limited by, its culture. You can enjoy individual exotic artifacts, but you cannot add culture to yourself alone, you cannot rise above your birthright culture without raising it up with you or participating in its enrichment, you cannot borrow improvements from outside unless your own community is willing to make that borrowing with you or you can so persuade them.

A great deal of the sterility and mis-direction of our culture and criticism stems from that "fine-wine" false definition, as well as many of the oddities of our "high-culture" elitists, but it is not basically dangerous. Even when the Southams and Dwyers let one more Factory Lab Theatre die so we can have, for example, more ballet in Ottawa, they are still more irritating than dangerous.

It is the definition, or anti-definition, of culture, which I denote as Ben Franklinism, which is the overwhelming threat. This definition sees function, mere materialistic functioning, the single-minded performance of wealth and power-garnering activities by the individual and essentially on his sole behalf, as the guiding principle of behaviour.

Ben Franklinism thus denies so many areas of complexity to culture, that, although as a set of ideas it cannot totally destroy any group's culture so long as the members remain as participants despite these harsh limitations, it can so root out and cauterize the elements of the culture as to leave the group's potential for successful evolution almost minimal. And America, of course, is the home of Ben Franklinism: our good neighbour to the south, the United States, united in their search for military power and consumptive consumption and efficient wastefulness and self-destruction.

I see that Ben Franklin anti-culture as one of those dark void stars which some say lie at the heart of the Milky Way, so concentrated in density that even light is bent as it enters the gravitational field. If you live near such a star, you obviously spend a good deal of time trying to discover what it is up to; you obviously fear its emissaries and servants — especially those who speak in Texan drawls of the "dangers" of nationalism; and battle-words obviously enter the

vocabulary of your own culture, no matter what its inner propensities, as they entered the vocabulary of Mexico when faced with the joys of Texan "internationalism" in the previous century.

And I aver that the forces set loose by a Ben Franklin cauterization of culture have a triple potential for disruption in neighbouring cultures such as our own: a) in imposing upon us the same strictly materialistic standards of America, b) in enticing us towards a General Motors/I.B.M./Maclean-Hunter culture, a new form of feudalism based on vast accumulations of power within fewer and fewer hands but sanctified in the dogma of individualism and efficiency and free-markets, c) in enforcing an internal split between what Scott Symons has called the Roundheads and the Cavaliers, between those who now control the production aspects of our culture and wish to see it further Ben Franklinized and those who seek reform and innovation within tradition.

It is possible, I believe, to define much of what our culture is, to describe precisely what is being lost within the dark star's field of force, but let us rather examine these cultural propensities within one component of the culture, book publishing, an important component not only because so much of its vitality comes from its adherence to the best of these propensities but also because it constantly demands, by its very nature, connections between those aspects of our life which some would keep separate, between art and politics, between management and radicalism, between selling and teaching, between accounting and artistry, between production and personality.

**B**OOKS, our books and their books, have an especially important role in any culture which is besieged by a stronger yet inferior culture. Practically as well as symbolically. In an age of increasing centralization of power, when even a bankrupt city newspaper is worth \$12,000,000, and a single television show can cost its corporate sponsors a million dollars, a small book, such as Grant's *Technology and Empire*, or Bergeron's *Petite Manuel*, or Drache's *Close the Forty-Ninth Parallel*, or Ryga's *Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, or Atwood's *Survival*, can be produced for less than a year's salary of an assistant professor. The book remains then an outlet of freedom for the disaffected and the disenfranchised, and if spoken truly and if in touch with the true propensities and beliefs of the culture, can have a far wider and more deep-reaching effect than any Kraft TV spectacular or ad campaign in *Chatelaine*.

That such books are produced under conditions of great difficulty and are al-

ways likely to simply disappear from our cultural life, however, even the Royal Commission with all its blinkers is willing to admit. The prime spur to Canadian publishing in recent years has been the vast number of circulating manuscripts of high quality with an angry creator, not too far back, somewhere behind them. Although the "internationalists" claim always that the opposite is true, the real stumbling block has been foreign control of distribution and the imposing of foreign standards of quality and relevance (and of course, although never defended, profitability). Thus, the many Canadian author/publishers of the past decade.

Now that my own infatuation with publishing is almost over, I can see that it went through seven stages and while not normative, is to some degree representative. It is first of all, difficult for me to believe that any of us became publishers in full rationality. If we had known the problems, all the problems, we might well never have started. It grew out of a gut reaction, a kind of buried anger in the mid-sixties at the constant humiliation, the sense of foreignness when you entered a bookstore or read a review, while, at the same time — to some degree — you believed the anger was justified *given your own inadequacies as well as your country's*. One thing I had learned, from Africa, was to distrust that sense of inadequacy, to look back to the remnants of one's own culture for inspiration, to the needs of the people about you for purpose, and within yourself and your friends and family for the necessary imagination and will to create new structures and new modes of action.

Given that knowledge, there are seven steps to the process as I see it.

The Egg Stage: where you finally ignore the existing structures and institutions and their frustrations to communicate your own undistorted thoughts directly to a few listener-readers, no more than can hear the sound of your voice in a room or read your manuscript.

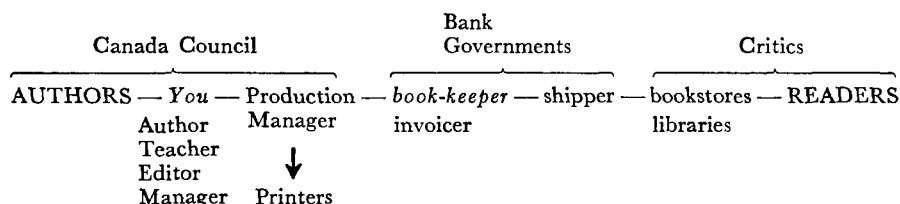
The Ego Stage: where you look at the end-result of the publishing structure, books on a store shelf, and say, quietly, I can do that. And do it. Even though that first book on the shelf cost you \$3.00 to produce and it's selling off the shelf at \$2.50, and it's only on ten shelves in the whole country.

The Joy and Happiness Stage: when you find out about Stan Bevington and the other people who've been doing it for some time without dying of smallpox; when the Canada Council finds out about you and gets you some encouragement, however minor; when your breakthrough seems somewhat miraculous and therefore repeatable and you take on other authors besides yourself and your good friends.

The fourth stage I call, Mammon Enters: Now the handouts and loans, which appeared munificent at first, are suddenly seen to be a little smaller than your needs. You enter, very confused and reluctantly, the world of regular bookstores and national distribution. You find out there are fewer than six hundred bookstores in the country that can even attempt to justify the name, while their association, the C.B.A., has only a few more than two hundred members. And you learn about invoicing, and discounts, and accounts receivable, and aged trial balances and credit lines and straight line depreciation. And bang, you're into Department X.

For into the inevitable chaos that has been building about you comes the voice of the Government, stating officially, **YOU ARE A BUSINESS, YOU MUST OBEY RULES.** They kick you out of your basement, because it's part of a residence; they question your tax-records and suggest strongly you hire an accountant whose salary would only take 120% of your annual gross, and insist you start using a six-part invoice form, filed by number and customer. And what they don't demand, the banks do. Because by now you can't pay for everything just by giving up beer and movies and new clothes. Your friendly bank has agreed you're commercial and they'll be glad to loan you three thousand dollars — if you don't have a Government of Canada Bond they'll gladly take a second or third mortgage on your house — after all, what is their purpose if not to aid struggling young capitalists?

You swallow, sign, and enter Stage Six: Fledgling Entrepreneur: by now a structure has grown up between author and reader that is really quite immense; you look something like this



But you don't really have time to look at yourself; you're too involved in creating and juggling the structure to even read a book about business, because of course you're not really in business, you're just trying to do what you set out to do — get yourself and Dennis Lee and Margaret Atwood some of the readers you deserve. And pressure from the establishment institutions which keep you on the run is matched by pressures from authors; everybody, at that stage, seems to have a friend who has a great idea: about reforming the universities, or helping



new draft-dodgers, or reforming City Hall, or stopping the Spadina Expressway, or revealing the energy sell-out. And many of them are very good ideas.

OK. So why weren't we all successful? Stage Seven ought to have been a Mercedes and retirement to the Bahamas. All we had to do was stop fooling around and take a course in Accounting for Managers at the Park Plaza. All across the country from the mid-sixties on, similar structures were evolving at a rapid rate to bridge the gaps between Canadian authors and readers that have been imposed by economic colonialism. Why were they not fully successful; why is aid and support still required?

A mature culture requires constant examination and redefinition and elaboration, in minor as well as major areas. The mass-media is hopelessly inadequate for this purpose; it cannot present detail and it cannot sustain an examination for much longer than two or three months.

What would an American manager do? Suppose he came from an American house with a lingering conscience, one which had not sold out to Litton or Xerox. His average print run might have been as low as 8,000 copies. He would have been used to a budget in the following range for a 200 page book.

<i>Retail price</i>	<i>\$7.00</i>	<i>Unit cost</i>	
Sales	8,000 copies	Design	\$ 400.00
Retail income	\$56,000.00	Typeset	2,000.00
Minus royalties	5,600.00	Plates/paper	
Minus bookstore		print @ .35	2,800.00
discount @ 40%	22,400.00	Bind @ .40	3,200.00
Gross income	28,000.00	Total	8,400.00
Cost of sales	8,400.00	Unit cost \$1.05	

Out of the \$28,000 gross approximately 18% goes for selling and fulfilment costs, leaving almost \$15,000.00 per title for other costs such as editorial, promotion, space, salaries, interest, etc.

The first thing such a manager would obviously do is to look at a average budget for a similar type book in Canada. Because of market pressure from America, he could not sell the book at a higher retail price. But his sales expectation would be optimistic at 2,000 copies. So the budget would look like this.

<i>Retail price</i>	<i>\$7.00</i>	<i>Unit cost professional presses</i>	
Sales	2,000 copies	Design	\$ 400.00
Retail income	\$14,000.00	Typeset	
Minus royalties	1,400.00	@ \$10.00 per page	\$2,000.00

Minus bookstore		plate/paper/print	
discount @ 40%	5,600.00	@ 80¢	\$1,600.00
Gross income	\$ 7,000.00	Bind @ 80¢	\$1,600.00
Cost of sales	5,600.00	Total cost of sales	5,600.00
Net revenue	\$ 1,400.00	Unit cost — \$2.80	

Out of which the same 18% of gross income, or \$1,260.00, must be allocated as a firm expense for selling and fulfilment, leaving \$140.00 to pay for editorial, salaries, promotion, space, interest, etc.

What can he do? There might be an attempt to lower the unit cost, by using I.B.M. typesetting, back-street printers, one colour jackets, etc., but very quickly one of two decisions would be made: a) Do only those kinds of books which have a possibility of getting back up to the U.S. minimum press run of 8,000 copies: i.e. some kinds of textbooks, the odd popular novel, books about politics, hockey and Indians: b) Push sales of imported books, which can be brought in at a reasonable unit cost, and out of the "profits" from such sales publish the occasional important cultural book. That is, the Doubleday versus the Oxford alternative.

Between the implications of this economic contrast however, and the philosophic environment I described earlier, you have a specific social situation, a poverty cycle, which is influenced both economically and philosophically.

If publishing can be seen as symbolic in its recent innovative breakthroughs, it is also more clearly symbolic in its state of disease during the 1960's. Some would term it only disrepair, but it is difficult to prove that the patient was not very, very close to terminal.

In general, the industry simply reflected, and still reflects in economic terms, the Canadian industrial pattern: branch-plant replications based on the current mode of struggle for market-control in the U.S.A.: operating philosophies based far more on Sam Slick and Kraft Incorporated than on George Grant and Sir Adam Beck; expectations, in terms of salaries, prices, content and packaging, based on American practices rather than on our own realities, utilization of consumer-media overspill to ensure market-control for foreigners; philosophic attacks — backed by cash donations to political parties — upon nationalism and socialism; a closing of export markets by head office directives or planning strategies; fragmentation and the encouragement of destructive forms of competition with the native-owned industry; imposition of American law extra-territorially; a net non-importation of capital as the foreign-controlled segment of the industry increases, through the use of retained earnings, artificial, tax-encouraged depreci-

ation, and the willingness of Canadian banks to encourage monopoly control by directing their lending policies to favour already large accumulations of capital; and a redesigning of distribution methods — both through mass market outlets and via the idea of chain-stores — in a manner which reflects American habits and pressures far more than Canadian traditions or needs.

AGAINST THESE PRESSURES, Canadian publishing has fared little better than our drug, oil, auto or chemical industries. It does have one advantage the others lack in that each product is distinctive. A refrigerator is a refrigerator, but no matter how Philip Roth is packaged and merchandised, he still cannot have as much to say to Newfoundlanders as Harold Horwood or David French. The greater the remaining cultural integrity of the hinterland, the easier for its writers to be distinctive and to find an audience. But, as Robert Welch and Sonja indicate, in Calgary and Toronto we do not have all the advantages of Newfoundland. In terms of an urban, complex society, one attempting to come to terms in its own way with technology, rapid change and multiple moralities, we are in a very sorry state. There is a real danger of allowing America's experiments and postulated solutions to swamp our own.

Speaking statistically, by 1970 all publishers made a contribution of 0.06% to the Canadian G.N.P., significantly lower than the U.S.A. where the value added by publishing accounted for 0.26% of the G.N.P. We shaft ourselves doubly, by depriving ourselves of the contents of our own books and by giving up the chance to make almost four times as many jobs available for editors, printers, authors, salesmen, designers, etc. as are now available.

And those figures are from the 1970 Ernst and Ernst report, the first and only Federal study of publishing as an industry. The sale of Gage and Ryerson cut the sale of Canadian author books by Canadian owned firms down to a mere 2.5 percent of the total dollar market. It's as though we were in a race with the oil industry for the most shameful showing.

But all the problems are not external. It was our churches and our old families who made these two symbolic sales. The branch-plants benefit, although this is changing quite rapidly, from three other factors which should not be under their control. They benefit from a sleeping citizenry, a populace which is only slowly beginning to see connections between business and culture, which is only slowly beginning to realize that allowing McGraw-Hill to buy Ryerson means

fewer jobs for Canadians, unless they, the people, insist on certain safeguards, such as exist in the Ontario educational system's insistence on Canadian-authored textbooks.

The branch plants also benefit from the colonial mentality of many of our critics. A Kildare Dobbs represents the "fine-wine" variety. An occasional book might match his made-in-UK standards, but he is not interested in, nor capable of, the effort required to see Canadian culture as a complex entity and to view specific books at least partially within their own framework, as do the newer, younger, better critics such as Reg Vickers, Bill New, Eldon Garnet, Margaret Atwood and Sandra Djwa.

The "branch-plant" or Ben Franklin variety of critic is best represented by William French, who constantly worries himself sick — one imagines him biting his nails to the quick with worry — about the potential dangers of government interference if all these socialistic fiddlers are allowed to disrupt the beautiful free play of market forces, yet who sat, as the senior literary critic of Toronto, for years and years while the Mafia extended its control of paperback distribution from Toronto to cover most of Ontario, and yet never let out a single peep, was indeed blissfully ignorant of the entire situation, until long after the Royal Commission, in true R.C.M.P. fashion, had laid down the law to those St. Louis whiskey-runners who were working outside the established modes of exploiting the natives. Only now, in 1973, is he deigning, on C.B.C. money, to examine the publishing situation; yet when he started out on his tour he was unaware of even the names of many important new houses, let alone their members or mode of operation.

But more important, as an aid in the withering of indigenous publishing, was, and is, the "good servant" variety of colonial mentality. And this, in a sense, is the most difficult to attack. Because we do dislike rebelliousness and excess, that is one of the givens of our culture. The War Measures Act would never have been accepted in America or France or Britain or Nigeria exactly as it was in Canada. Nor forgotten so quickly. We long for order and safety, so that our children might grow up in peace and joy, and we fear the crunch, we fear even discussion of the crunch. We are primarily the offspring of servant classes, landless Normans, younger son Englishmen, crofter Scots, dispossessed Hungarians, draft-dodging Americans, West Indians exploited first by slavery or indentury and then by neo-colonialism. We specialize in insurance not inventions. It is not very difficult for the Americans to find good servants among us — Wally Mathesons and Paul Irwins and Bill Frenches: to sell their books, to buy their books, to defend

their rights to control the market — for that is “natural” according to our philosophy, our borrowed philosophy — and to manage these branch-plants.

They are good people, these Paul Boltons and Ivon Owens, many of them the nicest people in publishing, people whom you would be glad to have live down the street from you, without an evil stick in their bodies, and impossible to hate, and yet, and yet, and yet, we must rage against them for they do have a failing in that they cannot, or will not, because of deep-rooted fear, see where their actions lead. Good servants can perpetuate a pleasant society as long as they have an absentee or benevolent landlord, but they cannot create a self-reliant and independent culture, because their very role as servant denies that possibility. And when the landlord turns nasty the impossibility of their role will become apparent even to them. Or when their fellow tenants suddenly awake to the possibilities of a fuller life. Now, when Paul Bolton quits managing a branch-plant to start his own company, he first looks for an import line of books as a “base of operations.” When Ivon Owen and Oxford part company, it’s unlikely he will tear down the wall *Tamarack* has erected between art and society.

The writers should be more aware of economic realities, but there are numerous branch-planters and good servants there too, sweet Mary Jane Edwardses and hard-pressed John Metcalfes. People who would love to sell “their” book to an American book-club for example. Yet those same book clubs must be seen as an omen of the disastrous future if we do not take strong action. Of the \$225,000,000 worth of books purchased by Canadians in 1970, more than \$50,000,000 worth are purchased directly from America through book clubs. We don’t even obtain the dribble benefits of an agency system in this instance. No wonder we rage.

The seventh stage then, in most instances, was not marked by “mature entrepreneurship”. Most of us remained fledglings to some degree. Rather, through the problematic evolution of the Independent Association, we sought solutions to the problems which were larger than any given firm. Again, since we were seeking solutions rather than imitating foreign models, the process is still somewhat hazy and open to various interpretations. And, since the membership includes older houses as well as new houses, community presses and commercial firms, Marxists, anarchists, capitalists and the inevitable neurotics of any remnant industry, everything I am about to say will offend at least one member.

Canadian social philosophy is still basically inarticulate. When Abe Rotstein and Robert Fulford and I were editing *Read Canadian* we wanted to do a chapter on Canadian social philosophy, for we all felt that it would be possible to

know whether a certain way of acting or organizing, especially as a group, was basically within or without an acknowledged Canadian framework, but we couldn't find enough books to make a chapter. Still, Toronto is not Chicago, C.U.S.O. is not the Peace Corps, C.B.C. is not C.B.S., Ontario Hydro is not I.T.T., Calgary is not quite Houston, R.M.C. is not West Point, the C.L.C. is not a mirror image of the A.F.L.C.I.O. There is, I believe, a similarity to the way in which such Canadian organizations differ from their American counterpart. Suffice it to say at this point that they are characterized more by order than by competition, more by a habit of bumbling humanity than by a required necessity of greatness, more by a sense of purpose than by an adherence to materialistic practicality. I think that neither Haliburton nor the Blackfoot Indians, two of my touchstones for a sense of our traditions, would be too unhappy with the I.P.A. Nor would Sir Adam Beck, nor our farming ancestors gathered together for communal barn-raising, or stump-pullings, or church-buildings.

The official organization for Canadian book publishers was something called the Canadian Book Publishers Council, ridden with Ben Franklinism. In typical fashion within Canada's weird industrial structures, more than two-thirds of the members of this national trade association were branch-plants. They would not, could not, and did not agree with the basic premises of our struggle. They offered us, if we joined, a special new committee to deal with, yes, Canadian books.

If the I.P.A. can be seen as the seventh stage of an individual's involvement in the art/industry of publishing, then, it is worth examining briefly, for it represents in many ways something more fruitful *in kind* than any of the individual publishing houses which have sprung up in the last few years. If it works, and no one can guarantee that it will even survive, its example would be useful for other industrial components of our culture.

Like all trade organizations, we spend a good deal of time lobbying the government and other segments of the industry. But membership is limited to Canadian-owned firms, which is not typical. Annual fees are only seventy-five dollars and associate membership is available for firms who don't yet have the requisite ten books in print yet. Within the I.P.A., the individual publisher is able to face some of the larger problems that he was barely even aware of while locked in the chaos of the fledgling entrepreneur, problems which in many cases are as much cultural as industrial. For our environment is not American, of course, and neither should be our solutions or goals.

The I.P.A., to some extent, is worker democracy at the ownership level. The membership outlines major areas of concern and sets general policy. Then indi-

vidual publishers head committees to deal with specific problems and are given relative autonomy to solve detailed problems as they see fit, with the proviso that any member is free to sit on any committee if he so desires, and the practicality that in general people work on committees in which they have some self-interest. The executive committee comprises all such chair persons plus officers elected so as to represent the various regions of the country and the different interest groups within the I.P.A. It contains then, since it is essentially co-operative, the seeds of being something more than the average trade association, something creative and yet within our traditions.

I have described to some extent the negative aspects of being "good servants", including the inability to respond to the new shapes of accumulated power, to IBMism, that is to the social structures resulting from that desire to become a New World King or Duke or Lord which is a major factor in Ben Franklinism.

One way which our current form of corporate, hierarchial industrial structure perpetuates itself, despite its essential wastefulness and unhappiness, is by problem-solving on a corporately individual basis, so that, as each problem is solved, whether in the technical, management financing, marketing or interaction spheres, that solution remains a secret of the individual corporation, part of its growth and strength. We are so conditioned to this that we look upon it as natural. But, especially for people in the condition of Canadians, is it necessarily the best answer?

To some extent the problems which large corporations have solved are real problems, especially in a country with the ethnic and geographic diversity of Canada. We know that the small firm, although perhaps in a psychological and philosophic way representing the ideal size for a unit of production cannot hope to act satisfactorially if it acts always on its own. We have constantly before us, among many examples, the death of most of Ontario's small dairies and cheese-makers, whether co-operative or capitalistic, when Kraft really turned on the muscle it had developed in the competition-rewarding environment of America.

The question is how to remain a good servant, which is part of our ethos, without becoming a good servant of a destructive master. One theoretical way out is worker control, but most of Canada's workers are excellent servants; the awakening of national consciousness which must foreshadow innovation is only beginning there. The battle for full worker participation is one which must eventually be fought and won, but at least in English-speaking Canada few workers are in the forefront of the current struggle.

The possibility remains of using the I.P.A., as a forum, if not as the total

framework, for a new process, one whereby the owner-publisher would retain control over her basic production unit, finding manuscripts, making editorial decisions, convincing reviewers to review and buyers to buy, and, above all, working with her chosen authors, while vesting in a larger co-operative body those aspects of industrial operation which demand magnitude of scale and the resultant dangers of wasteful competition and accumulation of power.

You do not, of course, break a poverty cycle merely with theory. The individual publisher breaks it with books which do sell more than the average, books like Anansi's *Survival* and James, Lewis & Samuel's *Corporate Welfare Bums* and New Press's *Shrug* which sell from twenty to fifty thousand copies. Such best-sellers further increase our consciousness of ourselves, provide a decent return to author, and, simply by being successes, revitalize the climate for other Canadian books.

Group pressure on governments for a wider and fairer distribution of funds has helped make available important books which don't fit this best-seller category and yet which, once published, help in similar ways to revitalize the climate. Librarians suddenly realize, often on demands from their customers, that Canadian books are playing a more important role in their borrowings. Even the branch-plants, faced with this changing climate, are forced to increase their token Canadian publishing, at least for the moment.

In terms of a broader view of what we have been up to it is possible to say we have basically been engaged in a survival battle for the Canadian off-shoot of Anglo-Saxonism. But we have found very compatible allies in the French-Canadian publishers, who are organized very similarly, but started much easier; they loaned us much of our constitution, many of our principles, and a great deal of our inspiration.

**O**N THE OTHER HAND, there are many problems we have not yet even begun to face.

It is supposedly a national goal to create a mosaic culture within Canada, but then where are the books in our unofficial languages? What is to be the relationship of the German-Canadian book to the Anglo-Canadian book? The recent Ontario Royal Commission, in its admittedly minimal budget, set aside \$25,000.00 for books about native peoples, which wouldn't be enough to establish even one good Indian or Eskimo-controlled house; it set aside no funds



whatsoever for books not published in English. We have never seriously questioned the premises of our "national mosaic" myth, and this is not the time to do so, but isn't one of the reasons for such a myth the fact that we don't see our own culture as viable? The centralist, liberal, mercantilist, "non-culture" represented by a Lester Pearson or Bud Drury, views culture as somehow concerned with Italian opera and Ukrainian Easter eggs and Nova Scotian folk songs and can therefore perpetuate a myth of many cultures knowing that none of these "cultures" (except for the problem children such as Hutterites and Doukhobors) posed a threat to Canada's C. D. Howe and Donald MacDonald version of Ben Franklinism. Once our own culture breaks free of Ben Franklinism however, the problems of real sub-cultures and unmelted cultures will become clarified. In the next decade this is one of the major difficulties we will face.

The geographic diversity of Canada is a condition we are more used to confronting. Here is an area where the I.P.A. has waited almost too long to press for a formal, socially-supported, east-west axis to countervail the north-south one imposed by American economic forces. Upper Canada is closed off almost totally to books from the coasts. Quebec is, in many ways, another country. A proposal we have submitted to the Secretary of State would enable us, after a detailed preliminary study, to set up a co-operatively owned national distributor, which would act as a middleman with the wholesalers who control distribution in the various cities and regions and also professionalize the attempts of the publishers to enter the mass market.

The average bookseller too is in many ways a victim of the poverty cycle, happy selling foreign books for so long that now he is unprepared for the surge of competition from American-style chains, from the book-clubs, and from direct mail selling. Hopefully ways can be found to increase the self-sufficiency of the independent Canadian bookseller, but a necessary first step for many of them will have to be a realization of their common plight and of their potential for common action. If, for example, they exerted common leverage against publishers who sold directly to libraries and library jobbers, or if they formed their own book club and mailed promotional material to their own customers and potential customers, or if they formed a co-operative to do joint-purchasing of major titles, they could gain some of the advantages of the chains without sacrificing individuality and independence. Together with the new co-operative national distributor and the I.P.A., they could set up a system to greatly simplify the distribution chain, including, for example, single payment

of invoices, common order forms, on-line processing of order, and regional warehousing.

Another important area of policy rethinking must concern education. Here we have a terrifying example of Canadian non-co-operation. Until the provinces can learn to develop learning materials jointly, we are wide-open victims for overspill from large runs of American textbooks; we will be inevitably provided with freedom of (American) choice.

One of the tied-in problems here, of course, is the unfortunate centralization of book publishing in Toronto and Montreal. The other provinces use rather simplistic, almost primitive methods of retaliation; each province, as with resources, opens itself up to the quickest and least productive raping, in order not to lose out to a sister province. By co-operation, each province could long ago have established at least one indigenous publishing firm with sales over a million dollars, instead of accepting the crazy situation now where twenty branch-plants have a salesman in each of the ten provinces, providing an absolutely minimal amount of employment for authors, printers and management.

This distortion caused by educational authorities fosters another distortion, where U.S. and U.K. companies, with their vaster sales forces and sales income, act as parasites on the more gentlemanly small publishers. A Coach House takes many chances on young poets and fiction writers, and then, when the good has been sifted from the bad, the branch-plants hire a Canadian editor like Mary Jane Edwards and slap together an anthology for sale to the educational market. The small publisher is too exhausted by his losses on original publishing to be able to afford the large capital investment required for such an anthology.

Here the failure is partly ours, for we should long ago have organized boycotts of such firms, refusing jointly to sell them rights and seeking author support to establish the boycott and to broaden it out from an obvious base in Canadian literature and political writing.

Another of our failures has been to accept the subsidiaries' pattern of ignoring export markets. It is true that our first responsibility is to distribute our own authors to our own people, and we should not rush into exporting solely for the sake of exporting as the Liberals would have us do. But, in my more confident moods, I see some value for the rest of the colonized world in what we are struggling to achieve in Canada. In many cases, of course, we have to learn from them. East Africa has a publishing company sponsored by three governments and India was far ahead of us in insisting on the nationalization of foreign firms.

We have been relatively successful in unrusting the governmental pump, but neither the Pelletier policy nor the Report of the Royal Commissioners presents anything more than crisis support. Both present a case for "immaculate consumption"; that is, they are unwilling to attack openly the facts of American domination of this segment of our life and they give in to nationalistic demands only to the extent of agreeing with the obvious, that there must be an opening up of channels for Canadian writers. They would like, somehow, to see more Canadian books consumed, but not at the expense of McGraw-Hill's multi-million dollar sales. They present no policies aimed at the necessary withering away of the branch plants. The Royal Commission is more learned in its approach, more innovative in seeking crafty ameliorations without attacking the distortions, but except for the field of guaranteed loans, the Federal Government has been far more advanced in its practices.

The philosophy I have outlined as a counter-response to the problem is by no means adhered to by all Canadian publishers, although it is in many ways a product of compromise. A few rampantly mercantilistic individualists such as Jack McClelland and the various Maclean-Hunter dukedoms refuse to accept its premises, although so far none of them have turned down any of the cash benefits of government support. Even for the established firms, life is such a constant struggle that there is a great tendency to ignore new solutions and refinements.

I have mentioned the vacuum in "multi-cultural" publishing, but there has been a similar inattention to the problems of regional publishing which will require even higher levels of social support if it is to be viable, and about which the society will also have to make value judgements as to the necessity of, and nature of, its being. We are also far from devising a "freedom for servants" strategy, which would assist those Canadians who are too fixed in their ways to break free from their branch-plants without encouragement. The resale of Gage back to its employees and private investors offers an important opening for radical and innovative action. Special attention should be paid to the possibility of instant assistance for experienced bands of ex-branch-plant employees who wish to start their own firms.

On the other hand there are encouraging signs that the remnant Canadian magazines, who stand roughly where we did five years ago in terms of communal action, are beginning to band together and look for their own solutions.

And finally, we must be on guard against a substitution of Canadian for American monopoly. If power and wealth are to be distributed equitably and

equally, government policies must be set and funds distributed in consultation with the various segments of the industry, real consultation. Limits must be set on the size or the extent of any individual or corporation's control within the industry. Coles, Maclean-Hunter, Classics and the concept of a publishing czar represent as much of a potential threat to our culture as McGraw-Hill. One interesting precedent, set by the Royal Commission, would limit any given wholesaler of books to a market of 1.4 million people. The Ontario government approved this, as a barrier to the expansion plans of the Mafia, but then quietly reneged on it when Maclean-Hunter became the controlling partner in Metro News. But we are not fighting the battle for Canadian independence in order to see the old American replaced by a new Canadian version. Other similar precedents must be firmly established and adhered to.

Nonetheless, with all these sins of omission and commission and potentiality, few could deny that the situation has improved in the past five years. The survival raft is still a raft, but there's a little more fresh water per day, and more and more friends floating around on similar rafts. Perhaps some day soon we'll begin to hook up even more and start heading towards land. Perhaps we'll even reinvent the paddle.

# QUESTIONS OF CASH

Roy MacSkimming

THERE ISN'T a single one of the more productive new houses which hasn't published some very good books in the past few years, whether poetry, drama, fiction or non-fiction. The poems of Coleman, Lee, On-da-atje, Nichol, Beissel, Jonas; the plays of Ryga, French, Reaney, Davies; the novels of Carrier, Gibson, Helwig, Engel, Godfrey, Kroetsch; and important political, social or philosophical books like *Technology and Empire*, *Shrug: Trudeau in Power*, *Working People*, *The Unjust Society*, *The Only Good Indian*, *Greenpeace and her Enemies*, *Bleeding Hearts*, *Bleeding Country*, *The Real Poverty Report*, *The Death of Hockey*, and *The Real World of City Politics* — among numerous others — have issued variously from seven houses established since centennial year (Anansi, Coach House, Hurtig, New Press, Oberon, Talonbooks, James Lewis & Samuel).

It's a safe bet that many of these titles wouldn't have been touched — or, in some cases, created through solicitation — by the long-established firms, least of all the branch plants, who would have mistrusted their political or literary radicalness, or their apparent lack of commercial potential. The new houses haven't restricted themselves to publishing along strictly ideological or literary lines, but have seen the satisfaction (not just monetary either) in producing books that are simply useful, even fun — *LawLawLaw* and *V.D.* (Anansi), *Where to Eat in Canada* (Oberon), *A Natural History of Alberta* (Hurtig), *The Gourmet's Canada*, *Champagne Is for Breakfast*, *The Parent as Teacher*, *The Guide to Family Law* (New Press). I understand that even the radical's radical, James Lorimer, has quietly put out a book on the art of preserving flowers, presumably Canadian flowers (James, Lewis & Samuel).

At the same time, I've no doubt that all of these houses, like publishers anywhere, have reason to regret some of the books they've published. I'm equally sure that they'd stand by their decision to publish many books that have lost money, on the grounds that those books deserved to be published — they were

the kinds of books the publishers had gone into business to produce in the first place.

Which leads us to the more painful question of financial viability or, in other words, survival.

Because the new houses have made a strong contribution to the literature and self-knowledge of Canadian, it's important that they survive. Not that Canadian publishing would disappear if the new houses disappeared; there would still be McClelland & Stewart, Macmillan, University of Toronto Press, General Publishing and Clarke, Irwin; the odd branch plant, notably Oxford and Doubleday, manages a few honest Canadian titles a year. But nearly a half of the best Canadian trade (i.e. non-textbook) publishing would go if the new houses went, and it's a plain fact that financial problems constantly bedevil the life of these houses. Why? Are they just mismanaged by the writers and intellectuals who, in most cases, have founded them?

Possibly, to a degree, although it's been an extraordinary, almost unholy experience to see such men and women come to grips with the occult mysteries of capitalization, cashflow, payables and receivables, unit-costing and inventory control. And still publish good poetry!

The heart of the problem is more immediately found in numbers: the country has a mere 16 million English-speaking people, but it's 4,000 miles wide. Contrast that with a country of comparable size publishing in the same language, the U.S., with about 220 million people, or the U.K., a much smaller country, with about 60 million people. Our market for books, therefore, is tiny, while the difficulty and expense of distributing and promoting to that market are huge, especially when the competition from American and British books is considered. (Imagine, from the publisher's miserably self-interested point of view, if there were only such a language as "Canadian", and the world's great literature had to be translated into it and published right here!) These mundane facts are commonplace to anyone involved in Canadian book publishing, but they are nevertheless a frequent cause for despair — how can you fight limits like that, except by imposing a ban on birth control?

Some publishers have responded by confining their publishing to a strict minority or regional base, and if they stay small enough they can make it. But that doesn't answer the need for nationally based houses helping to build a national culture, without which most Canadians will be reading only books published in New York or London.

Who's trying to build such a culture? In part, and perhaps regrettably, writers

who've had to become publishers. "Regrettably", because you can't count on writers — the trouble with them is that their job is to write, and if they're any good they'll eventually go off and do that, instead of trying to be editors, entrepreneurs, cultural middlemen. Most of these writer-publishers have by now gone through the initial stage of joyfully ignorant enthusiasm, when they coined an imprint, published a dozen or twenty books, and discovered that they hadn't gone bankrupt after all — there really were readers out there who cared. Then the problems began. There's nothing more troublesome than success. With a growing inventory, a growing bank line of credit, a growing indebtedness to all-too indulgent printers, the writer-publisher realized he was in a death-struggle, not only against the imported book and the vagaries of public taste, but against the sour realities of economics in a capitalist society.

WE ARE NOT of course so devoted to free enterprise in this country that we tell publishers (or writers) to sink or swim. There's the Canada Council; there are various types of provincial-government aid, notably in Ontario and Quebec. But these aid programmes, popularly called "handouts" and presumed to make the recipients fat and contented, are in fact inadequate to cover the shortfall between revenues and expenses for most publishers. The Canada Council's heralded operating grants, though welcome, cover on the average only ten per cent of the publisher's overheads, quite apart from his investment in book production. The Ontario government's system of bank guarantees, based on the value of inventories and receivables, is more realistic; but it's still too early to tell if this programme will guarantee the survival of *any* of the Ontario-based houses, since it may become available only to those that meet an as-yet undefined standard of financial performance. And in any case it is not available to publishers in other provinces.

Government cultural bodies are going to have to accept the fact that Canadian trade publishing is not a business like the others, but essentially a non-profit activity comparable to theatre, opera or dance. If they want to ensure stability in our industry, if we as a society want to, then the federal and provincial "handouts" will have to be much bigger — comparable, say, to the heavy subsidies that ensure the continuation of the Stratford Festival, the Canadian Opera Company, or the National Ballet, none of which displays the works of Canadian artists nearly as much as the publishers do.

There are other measures that publishers themselves can and must take to ensure financial viability. Needless to say, they must constantly reassess their operations in order to tailor expenses to revenues, to make the best possible use of their limited capital; this is an obvious consideration for any business, but worth pointing out to literary people who expect publishers to do wonders, since it may involve cutting back on the number of titles published, cutting back on staff (who are chronically overworked, underpaid and nevertheless devoted), or re-allocating funds from title output to sales and promotion. Some new publishers have designed their operations and controlled their growth shrewdly; those who haven't soon learn to operate within the narrow limits of their environment, or else face bankruptcy.

Another measure is to pay more attention to the educational market which, given the right products, can provide a bigger return than the trade market, although educational publishing also requires much more capital and expertise than most of the new publishers possess. The field is dominated by the American-based giants, but there are opportunities in the growing area of Canadian studies which the new publishers are in a unique position to grasp. This would be an especially appropriate use to which to put increased government grants, if they were forthcoming.

A third measure is to act as agent for a profitable British or American line of books, an idea that is reviled by some publishers who refuse to facilitate the entry of non-Canadian books. First, this attitude is xenophobic, and second, if those books are going to be sold here any way, why shouldn't they provide a profit base for the Canadian-owned house? This is a ripe area for government legislation, which could require, as the Quebec government has, that publicly financed institutions like schools and libraries buy their books from Canadian sources.

Finally, Canadian publishing activities need to be rationalized. Such rationalization need not take the form of corporate mergers; better that it shouldn't, because editorial diversity is an outstanding feature of the current publishing scene. But almost every publishing function except editorial decision-making can be accomplished (at least theoretically) on a co-operative basis. Sharing with other publishers the costs of office space, warehousing, shipping, invoicing, accounting and sales, even typing and typesetting, would go a long way towards rationalizing the marginal Canadian industry by cutting publishers' overheads. Production and promotion might be trickier services to share, since they are so intimately tied to editorial planning; most publishers may have to continue to afford their own personnel in these jobs, if they are to retain sufficient control



over their own programmes. But the other business functions are much less sensitive, and there are precedents for this type of cost-sharing, in the Belford Book Company (named after a nineteenth-century Canadian entrepreneur who pirated U.S. editions), which provides customer servicing for Anansi, James Lewis & Samuel, and Peter Martin Associates, and in the presence of several regional sales representatives who act jointly on behalf of many houses.

These measures are, I admit, not very startling or glamorous, but they constitute the kind of canny, practical decision that Canadian publishers, new or old, will probably have to take if we are to continue to have Canadian publishers, and therefore the dissemination of Canadian writing.

If financial viability can be attained through these or other means, we may yet witness the happy state where writer-publishers can give their best energies back to writing, and where a new breed of editor-publisher arises, possessing both literary and entrepreneurial imagination, even moving from house to secure house during his/her career. But don't count on it. The current struggle-phase could easily end in two or three years with fewer Canadian houses than when it began. At that point it may become necessary for even more writers, especially fiction writers whose books are more costly to produce than poets', to found publishing co-operatives that are avowedly non-profit, for the sake of getting published at all.

# LITTLE PRESSES IN CANADA

*Sarah McCutcheon*

**L**ITTLE PRESSES in Canada are rapidly expanding and becoming noticeably more productive. As underground alternatives to the larger publishing houses, they represent a retreat into a more intimate circle of production. They are characterized by their co-operative nature and their dedication both to the literature itself and to the forms in which it is published. The work of the little press — publishing, editing and often designing, printing and binding books — is done in close working relationships. The people involved range from academics to writers, artists and radicals. However, most little presses are predominantly the creations of poets. The reasons for forming a press and the processes of development are as varied as the presses are numerous. What does seem to distinguish the little press in general is a concern for a literature which is ignored or subverted by the existing publishing situation (in many cases a reflection of the dominant culture.)

Little presses in the past were usually part-time endeavours, but now federal and provincial government aid (Local Initiative Projects and Opportunities for Youth as well as federal block publishing grants) have allowed many presses to develop as full-time ventures. But even these presses operate mainly on shoestring budgets with little financial security.

The impact of the little presses, both on literary activity and on the reading public, has escalated over the past six years and during the past three has — like publishing in general — developed in a rapid crescendo. The little presses of Canada can no longer be counted on one hand, nor are they all to be found in Montreal or Ontario. Moreover, while little presses in the past tended to remain in literary reclusion, nowadays, since the changes in publishing patterns signalled by the formation of the Independent Publishers' Association, they are entering into the politics of publication. For example, David Robinson, editor of Talon-

books in Vancouver, is an active member of I.P.A.'s executive, while his press, together with other little presses such as Delta Canada, Fiddlehead Books, Ingluvin Publications, Ladysmith Press and Weed/Flower, are chartered members of IPA on the same basis as more commercially oriented Canadian-owned publishers. Other newly formed presses, such as Tree Frog in Edmonton, have been admitted to affiliated membership until they have published enough titles to qualify for full membership.

Another politicizing aspect of the present situation of the new presses is of course the fact that nine of them, including Fiddlehead Books which for the first time in its long history has accepted government aid, received block publishing grants ranging from \$1,500 to \$6,000. (The others assisted were Alive, Inter-media, Coach House, Vancouver Community Press [now New Star Books], Delta Canada, Ingluvin, Talonbooks and Weed/Flower.) The infusion of federal money has, indeed, recognized the national importance of the little presses and has had the practical effect of keeping the collector temporarily from the door. But the benefits of this new aid, together with that provided by the Canada Council, LIP and OFY, can be overestimated, while questions arise, on the governmental side of avoiding paternalistic attitudes and on the side of the presses of maintaining independence of editorial control.

THE PROFUSION of new presses and the size of their operations is in marked contrast to such celebrated but largely isolated predecessors as *First Statement* in 1945, and the presses of the seventies are even different from those of the sixties; they have more stability, a wider readership, and receive more publicity.

Of the little presses that did flourish in the sixties, some of the more notable are still in existence: the three new presses into which Delta Canada has now split, Sono Nis, Coach House, Weed/Flower and Quarry Press. These presses have retained much the same policies over the years, and their editors have not changed, but even they, in their established patterns, have expanded and grown, and there is good reason to believe that they will continue to flourish well into the seventies. They have been joined by many newer little presses — of whom some of the most interesting will find mention later in this article; it is hard yet to judge whether individually these will be ephemeral endeavours or will persevere. But it seems clear that as a phenomenon the little press is established.

Little presses can now be found widely scattered over Canada. The highest concentration is on the West Coast, mainly in Vancouver, where the roots of the tradition go back to the 1960s, the growth of the presses being closely linked with the literary underground which first found its voice in a succession of little magazines, several of which developed into presses; *Talon*, for example, was started in 1963 and in 1967 grew into Talonbooks, while Bill Bissett's *Up the Tube* eventually developed into Blew Ointment Press. Other active West Coast presses include Blackfish, Pulp Press, Sono Nis, Intermedia, B.C. Monthly and New Star Books (formerly the Vancouver Community Press affiliated with the Georgia Straight). Both Blackfish and Pulp Press have produced magazines and poetry broadsheets as well as books.

There are few little presses, moving eastward geographically, between British Columbia and Ontario, though an interesting example is Tree Frog which recently began in Edmonton, where a great deal of the more ambitious publishing has been undertaken by M. G. Hurtig, a small rather than a little press.

Ontario — and especially Toronto — has become an even more active centre of book production over the past six years than in the past. Apart from the small presses like Anansi and new press, both of which arose largely through the initiative of Dave Godfrey, a more traditionally little press — press porcépik — was started last year by Godfrey and a number of associates as an outlet for young and experimental writers. It now operates out of an old farmhouse in Erin, Ontario. Some of the little presses which began in Toronto during the sixties, notably Coach House and Weed/Flower, continue in strengthened form. After four years, Alive Press is still publishing actively out of Guelph, and Quarry continues operations in Kingston under the poet and critic Tom Marshall and a community of rotating editors.

Montreal, which has always been a strong centre of small-scale publishing activity, has emerged in recent years with several important new little presses. Ingluv Publications is edited by K. V. Hertz and Seymour Mayne, while Delta Canada has recently split, with its three editors — Louis Dudek, Michael Gnarowski and Glen Siebrasse — parting ways to continue their publishing activities independently. Their new presses are, respectively, D.C., Le Chien d'Or/The Golden Dog and Delta Books.

In the Maritimes several new presses have recently appeared, while Fiddlehead Books, edited by Fred Cogswell, is continuing with renewed strength. At the Purple Wednesday Society, also in New Brunswick, William Prouty has produced several books of poetry. Sand Patterns Press and the Square Deal have

both started recently in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. In Halifax, Rick Rofihe has produced some highly imaginative books of writing by children and for children.

In eastern Canada, as on the West Coast, many little presses either grew out of small reviews or have since published their own magazines along with books, poetry broadsheets and folios. The histories of Delta Canada and Fiddlehead Books are instructively variant in this respect.

Louis Dudek edited his journal, *Delta*, from 1957 to 1966. In 1967 he joined Michael Gnarowski and Glen Siebrasse to publish books under the imprint of Delta Canada. The joint editorship continued for five years and resulted in the publication of more than thirty books, mainly of verse. The decision to divide activities was mutually agreed in 1971 because, as Dudek explained, "It is difficult to have a clear editorial policy when three points of view are involved." Gnarowski now publishes a little magazine which bears the same name as his press — Le Chien d'Or/The Golden Dog — but neither Dudek nor Siebrasse has returned to magazine publishing.

The first book which Dudek published under the imprint of his new press, D.C., in 1972 was Avi Boxer's book of verse, *No Address*. As well as many books of poetry, Dudek is also planning to publish more conventionally scholarly books, including an edition of the letters of Ezra Pound and a book on painting by Henry Miller. Gnarowski has been led by his historical interests into publishing at his Golden Dog Press such literature from Canada's past as Heavyside's *Jezebel* and Lampman's original text of *The City of the End of Things*, as well as the first cumulative index of *Canadian Literature*, and small introductory volumes by the Montreal poets Peter Lord and Nancy Stegmayer. The third former editor of Delta Canada, Glen Siebrasse, has continued to publish young poets and is at present compiling an anthology — the first to come out of Montreal in many years — of 25 to 30 contemporary Canadian poets.

The origins of Fiddlehead Books were linked only indirectly with a little magazine. While Fred Cogswell was editor of *The Fiddlehead* he published four poetry pamphlets, and out of this venture developed Fiddlehead Books, a publishing enterprise quite separate from the magazine, and more prolific in its production of small books of poetry than any other Canadian press, little or large.

Several other presses — Alive, Quarry, Square Deal and (as we have seen) Talonbooks grew out of magazines bearing the same name. New Star books grew out of *Georgia Straight*, an underground newspaper. Other little presses began with books and soon after produced magazines. On the West Coast *Black-*

*fish* is published by Blackfish Press and *3¢ Pulp*, a funky bimonthly, comes from Pulp Press. Sand Patterns Press in Charlottetown produces *Sand Patterns* magazine. Between 1966 and 1967 Weed/Flower in Toronto produced *Weed*, while Coach House Press, founded jointly by Victor Coleman and Stan Bevington, published *Island* until 1968, has published *The Ant's Forefoot* (which comes to an end this summer with No. 10), and currently publishes *IS* and *Open Letter*.

AS WELL AS editing and publishing, the operations of the little press often include printing and book design. For simplicity, financial reasons or lack of interest in printing, some presses farm out their books to jobbers. Others print them cheaply and inartistically by offset or mimeography. However, there are many who painstakingly do their own printing. They possess or have access to equipment for quality reproduction, and often work with artists. There is an increasing return to the once apparently dying art of book-making, and a strong new emphasis on the visual and aesthetic aspects of publishing. In this field the work of Stan Bevington at Coach House Press has given other houses an excellent example in design and creative printing set.

While many books have been produced with hand-set print and a careful choice of papers, bindings and illustrations, in the tradition of artistic small presses, Coach House has paid particular attention to photo-offset lithography and appropriate book design. This summer (1973) its founders plan a two-week workshop for other small presses, dealing with photography, colour, graphic techniques, book design, distribution and pricing; this is being organized in response to the fact that many small publishers have approached Coach House for information about its mode of operation.

Coach House is still operated after seven years by Victor Coleman and Stan Bevington, working with a loose association of poets in their coach house just behind Rochdale College. They have expanded and diversified considerably. Originally they published mainly poetry, but recently they have been producing prose and engaging in printing with a more directly visual appeal. Last year they published a catalogue for the Image Bank exhibition of old postcards, sponsored by the National Gallery, and M. Vaughn-James' *The Projector*; more recently they have brought out *A History of the Toronto Islands*. At the same time, they have continued to publish poetry, both Canadian and American. Coach House

is aiming towards a "post-literate" society with books that tend more and more to be as visual as they are verbal. Frank Davey's *Arcana* — a tarot book of lyric document — is printed on pages under-printed with pale green symbols from the occult. The trains printed on the pages of Ginsberg's *Iron House* create a moving train effect when the book is leafed through quickly. Coach House books have appeared in all shapes and sizes, including one shaped like a baseball pennant. The images are taken from graphics, wallpapers, colour-screen photographs and photo-stills, etc.

Among other presses producing books of experimental design, Talonbooks, Tree Frog, Pulp Press, an-der-bo and especially press porcépic have some interesting work.

Press porcépic started in 1972 with a small magazine — also entitled *porcépic*, which was exceptional in both format and content. Printed with the help of Coach House Press, it included an essay by Eldon Garnet, a short story by Gilles Vigneault, and poems by known poets (Birney, Gustafson, Colombo), younger experimentalists (Joe Rosenblatt and bill bissett) and by total newcomers, including Tim Inkster. This "magazine of writing" marked the emergence of what may well be one of the most exciting and important little presses in recent years. Porcépic has gone on to produce a series of books which have maintained a remarkable standard of aesthetic and — in most cases — of literary excellence. All the production goes on at the Erin farm, where the design and making of books — presided over by Tim Inkster — is treated as if it were as much a creative act as the writing of them. The papers, bindings and visual logos are chosen meticulously to harmonize with hand-set print in unusual typefaces. In 1972 porcépic published four hardcover books, and more recently it has produced Joe Rosenblatt's *The Blind Photographer*, a book to delight bibliophiles, containing poems and drawing by the poet relating to the organic underworld.

Another small press run by a typographer was Bob Burdett's Roundstone Press in Toronto, which published an unusual book of poems and graphics by Vera Frenkel, entitled *Image Spaces*. The type was set entirely by hand and printed by artist Bob Marsh; many of Vera Frenkel's graphics, executed in subtle shades of grey, were printed directly from her plates on to the page, so that the book actually contained original prints. *Image Spaces*, printed in a limited edition of 1,000, was Roundstone Press's sole venture as a little press; it has since been incorporated as a non-profit council for the arts, under Bob Burdett, which is at present compiling a catalogue of the works of Canadian artists on exhibition.

OUTSIDE ONTARIO many little presses act as regional publishers producing the works of local writers and serving a geographically immediate reading audience. Tree Frog, in Edmonton, which has a full-time printshop, is a good example of development on these lines. Its origins go back to 1968 when its editor Allan Shute began to print his own poetry and that of his friends and to circulate it privately. As printing equipment was acquired, volunteer labour became available, and manuscripts were submitted, Tree Frog developed until finally in 1972 it became a full-fledged little press. It has published books by such local poets as Stephen Scobie (*The Birken Tree*) and Jan Lander (*Space Baby*), and an anthology of Edmonton poetry, *39 Below*, including work by Douglas Barbour, Dorothy Livesay, Elizabeth Brewster, Richard Hornsey and many others. Tree Frog does not plan to restrict itself to local writers only; it plans to produce *One Quart of Canadian Poetry*, "an anthology of new Canadian writing packaged in a sealed quart container." Other little presses in Edmonton are *The White Pelican* and *The Merry Devil of Edmonton*, which publishes poetry broadsheets.

On the West Coast the little presses are predominantly regional in orientation, publishing local writers mainly for local consumption, through enterprises that are largely co-operative in organization and that concentrate mainly on poetry. A few presses, however, like Talonbooks and Sono Nis, do publish books by writers working outside British Columbia.

From modest and experimental beginnings in 1967, Talonbooks has become a dominant force in British Columbian publishing. It produces a wide range of books, from poetry and a series of plays to art and film. It is one of the presses that describe themselves as co-operative societies. Talonbooks does its own printing, and its books are designed carefully in collaboration with their authors. Though often original, the resulting format does at times have overtones of Coach House style.

The series of Talonbook plays, which began in 1969, includes works by James Reaney and George Ryga as well as by younger playwrights like Jackie Crossland (*Rinse Cycle*) and Beverley Simons (*Crabdance*). The press's poetry publishing programme has cut across the whole spectrum of British Columbian poets, both well and little known, including poets who were prominent in the experimental writing movement of the West Coast during the Sixties, such as bill bissett, Frank Davey and Jim Brown, but also established poets like Phyllis Webb, who is represented by a definitive *Selected Poems*. Poets from outside the region are also



represented on Talonbooks' lists; they include Victor Coleman and bp nichol.

Pulp Press and New Star Books, both of which have emerged recently in Vancouver, can be classed as alternate presses. New Star has affiliations with earlier underground publications, for its origins can be found in a tabloid writing supplement to the *Georgia Straight* which developed into the *Georgia Straight W.S. Series*. This series published works by well and little known West Coast writers, including George Bowering, Daphne Marlatt, Fred Wah, Judith Copithorne and Chuck Carlson. In 1972 a group broke away to form themselves into the Grape Collection, to establish New Star Books, and to publish their own newspaper — "a political analysis of society." From this point they began to turn away from the kind of literary works they had published before, such as George Bowering's *Autobiology*, and now they are producing such books as labour organizer Jack Scott's *Class Struggles in Canada*.

Pulp Press began in 1972 with a group of eight members "mainly interested in publishing"; it has already published six books and its little magazine, *3¢ Pulp*, which is worth at least the price of its title for its interesting rambles and trouvailles. Pulp Press, whose attitude of creative anarchism is expressed in its slogan "Independence without gov't", publishes poetry and "conversational" novels by young writers who are not well-known.

Blackfish, another recent and lively Vancouver press, was started by two poets (Brian Brett and Allan Safarik) to provide an alternate to the existing publishing facilities on the West Coast. They seem to have attracted the best of current local poetry, which they publish in a little magazine (*Blackfish*) and in small edition books, folios and broadsides. The writers they have so far published include Earle Birney, Seymour Mayne, Milton Acorn, Pat Lowther, Pat Lane and Dorothy Livesay, and they plan shortly to produce a thirty-page illustrated poem by Al Purdy, *The Bear Paw Sea*.

Very Stone House began in Vancouver in 1966, with Seymour Mayne as one of its four poet-editors. Since the demise of VSH, Mayne — with K. V. Hertz — is publishing again in Montreal. Hertz and Mayne had worked together in the past to produce the militantly experimental magazine *Cataract* in Montreal, which in the sixties was a close rival to *Tish* in Vancouver. They founded *Ingluvín* in 1970 as a "magazine of Canadian writing". Out of it emerged Ingluvín Press, whose books were printed by Hertz and for the first year edited by Mayne from Vancouver. The early volumes were all of poetry, including *40 Women Poets*, edited by Dorothy Livesay. This year (1973) *Ingluvín* has veered towards

prose, publishing Raymond Fraser's short stories, *The Black Horse Tavern*, and K. V. Hertz's imaginary and satirical world history, *Eurethrea*.

Although most of the little presses in the Maritimes are strongly regional, Fiddlehead Books stands out with its concern for poetry across the country. Recently Fred Cogswell, who for many years edited and printed Fiddlehead Books and gave a hundred or so poets a first chance to expose their works to the public eye, announced that he had decided to suspend the press, owing to financial and personal pressures. If this happens, Canada will lose a press that has served poets well, in accordance with the eclectic editorial policy Cogswell established when he began publishing ten years ago and determined: "insofar as time and effort permitted not only to publish as many poets as I could, but to publish poets of all kinds — whoever showed a particular kind of promise or finished achievement." In Fredericton, as well as Fiddlehead Books, a more regionally oriented series, New Brunswick Chapbooks, is published and edited by Nancy Bauer. Up to now it has published some fifteen brochures by local poets.

Of the remaining little presses in the Maritimes, Square Deal Publications in Charlottetown is regional in the best sense of the word. It began in 1972 by publishing *The Square Deal*, a little magazine revolving around editor Réshard Gool and a group of local poets. *Square Deal* has received assistance from the University of Prince Edward Island, where Gool teaches, and from an OFY grant; it is not a university publication. Gool, a much-travelled political scientist, is also a notable poet. He has published six handsome volumes, including verse (*In Medusa's Eye* by Réshard Gool, *Winter in Paradise* by John Smith, *Pomes de Terre* by Jim Hornby), a play (*Amadée Doucette & Son* by Tom Gallant) and *Portraits & Gastrosopes*, a book on island people by Gool and Frank Ledwell. Sand Patterns Press in Charlottetown also publishes, apart from its little magazine, small books of poetry.

Generally speaking little press publication is in a healthier condition than it has ever enjoyed in the past. Though many of the books published by these presses do not find their way into bookstores, particularly outside their own area, there is a growing market for them. Distribution is the problem, and many of the little publishers are concerned over the difficulty of making their books available to a geographically wider public. Some of the presses, and especially those who are members of IPA, have considered pooling booklists, since many bookstores do not like to order small quantities. This proposal was discussed at the February 1973 IPA Conference on Book Publishing in Toronto, where the idea of a small press readers' club was also suggested. Some arrangement of this kind

is needed to bring together the large group of little presses — on the one hand — which are publishing so many excellent books of poetry, short stories and plays, and — on the other hand — the growing number of students and others who are interested in the developing literature of our country. At present it needs an alert eye to know what is going on among the little presses, though useful leads can be found in such booktrade publications as *Quill & Quire* and *Books in Canada*, in the book pages of local newspapers, and of course in the wide selection of literary journals now published in Canada.

*Editor's Note.* Sarah McCutcheon has perceptively noted the characteristics and the dominant trends of little publishing in Canada; she has also mentioned most of the active presses. But, as we become aware from the books that reach us, it is hard to keep up with the numbers of such presses and harder still to discuss them all in one article. However, for the help of our readers, we would record the names of a number of other active presses: Concorde Press (Windsor), November House (Vancouver), Aliquando Press (Toronto), Anak Press (Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan), Borealis Press (Ottawa), Manna Publishing (Toronto), Disposable Paper Press (Ville La Salle, Quebec); Klanak Press of Vancouver, a pioneer in the Sixties, has reactivated itself with a finely printed volume (*When We Lie Together* by G. V. Downes), and Ladysmith Press of Ladysmith, Quebec, continues to publish regularly.

# REPRINTS AND THE READING PUBLIC

*George Woodcock*

I DON'T THINK Jack McClelland has ever quite forgiven me for a review I wrote and published in *Canadian Literature* thirteen years ago, in the summer issue of 1960. I was discussing the third batch of four titles in the New Canadian Library. (The Library and *Canadian Literature* are close contemporaries, as students of our cultural history might profitably note). I had been greatly encouraged by the series as an idea, and on the whole with the first eight selections which Malcolm Ross, the General Editor, had made. They included — the record by now has become literary history — such basic Canadian books as *As for Me and My House*, *Over Prairie Trails*, *Barometer Rising* and *The Tin Flute*; my own assessment of the eight was six bullseyes and two misses, and since I revised my view of *Such is my Beloved* shortly afterwards, my scoreboard for those first eight titles would now be seven palpable hits, though I still confess to being quite unable to appreciate Charles G. D. Roberts' *The Last Barrier*, perhaps because it was imposed on me with excessive enthusiasm at the age of ten by a Canadophil father in England.

Given such a fine beginning, the third quartet of the New Canadian Library was no less than terrifyingly bathetic. A second Leacock (in the first twelve titles), dull volumes by Raddall and Drummond, and a collection of Confederation poets with too much Carman and too little Scott! The real disappointment was that there was nothing here to represent the vital trends in Canadian writing that had been emerging since the later thirties; one feared — at least I did — that the series might be taking a downturn into conventionality, that it would end up with Service and Grey Owl, and in my review, perhaps provocatively entitled "Venture on the Verge", I expressed my apprehensions that the fate of such a laudable venture as the New Canadian Library might be — if care were not

taken — to “perpetuate in the minds of ourselves and others the feeling that writing in Canada is a pretty dull business after all.” I ended, more pompously than I would today:

I wish the New Canadian Library well, since I realize what it might be, but unless something more daring appears under its covers than the four volumes now presented, I fear my wishes will not be of much avail.

Looking back over those years, I cannot be surprised that at a party in Vancouver shortly afterwards (the first and one of the few times we have met) Jack McClelland should have complained with considerable vehemence. I still believe that what I said had at that particular time in our literary history to be said — though perhaps not quite as I had phrased it — but I can understand the exasperation of a publisher who has sunk money and confidence into the task of giving his country back its literature and then is sharply criticized by an editor who in some ways should be his natural ally.

That is a long time ago and in the interval since 1960 there have been gestures of mutual confidence. I submitted a book of my critical essays — *Odysseus Ever Returning* — to the New Canadian Library; Malcolm Ross accepted it and Jack McClelland published it. But the implied is never quite the same as the explicit, and this occasion, when I discuss one of the most interesting phenomena in recent Canadian publishing, the proliferation of reprints, is perhaps the appropriate time to say one or two things directly. I am happy to have learnt that my apprehensions of 1960 were not justified, and to underline this remark with the further observation that, when one talks in 1973 of Canadian reprints, it is automatically of the New Canadian Library that one first thinks. The achievement has been notable; more than that, invaluable.

In the history of the New Canadian Library one sees much of our cultural pilgrimage over the past decade and a half recapitulated. Sales in the late fifties and the early sixties were not spectacular, and it needed more than a modicum of confidence for the publisher and the editor to continue. Their subsequent success has been partly due to changes in the academic ambience. Courses in Canadian Literature have proliferated to an extent unexpected in 1960, and it is likely that a fair proportion of the hundreds of thousands of copies of these books now sold every year will never be opened again by their owners once their courses are ended. That is the fate of all college texts, but in the meantime the academic demand has kept titles in print and brought others to the press that otherwise would not have been available to the public outside the universities and the

schools, and this voluntary public — the most important public — for Canadian books has clearly been increasing steadily over precisely the same period as the New Canadian Library has been in existence.

I propose to dabble in no occult questions of cause and effect; the fact is that the emergence of the right reprint series coincided with the movement of interest that made it a success, and if that makes Jack McClelland a perceptive publisher — as for my money it does — he must be given the credit. I am not saying that every title included in the 93 reprinted volumes and the 8 special anthologies which to date form the series has excited me. In the pile of recent titles that lie on my desk I find a familiar unevenness of quality. Three — *The Edible Woman*, *The Fire-Dwellers* and D. C. Scott's collection of stories, *In the Village of Viger* — are so obviously excellent by any critical standards that their inclusion was almost mandatory. Historical reasons justified the inclusion of Rosanna Leprohon's early Victorian *Antoinette de Mirecourt*, though it is hard and at times absurd reading. But no amount of delight in Douglas Le Pan's poetry can for me be metamorphosed into pleasure in his novel, *The Deserter*, and I found Hubert Evans' *Mist on the River* not quite worthy of the fine background introduction with which my friend and colleague W. H. New has provided it. But the point by this stage is not that the New Canadian Library sometimes brings out books not to the taste of all readers; it is rather that it has always kept enough superb titles moving through its list to allow us a rambling personal choice among the other more marginal books — those products of talent never taking the plunge into genius — which form so large a proportion of our literature and which make it seem at times so tense a gamble.

An interesting chapter in any book on literature and the reading public might be written on the role of reprint libraries in explosions of literary awareness. There is no doubt that the Everyman Library, bringing out its hundreds of classics and of nineteenth and early twentieth century masterpieces at a shilling — and then two shillings — apiece, was one of the key influences in the great spread of literary interest that came in Britain after the universalization of education during the late Victorian era. Penguins, dramatically ending a publishing deadlock during the depression of the 1930s with their sixpenny paperbacks, accompanied and partly caused a similar breakthrough — at a time when economic factors were changing social values — into a wider popular consciousness of modern literature, its aims and methods, as well as of many aspects of contemporary scholarship that hitherto had achieved little currency.

Both the Everymans and the Penguins, even if they were pioneers, quickly

became merely the leaders in larger movements, as reprint ventures proliferated, and similarly, though the New Canadian Library has in our country been the most dramatic success in terms of sales and popular acceptance, it is only part of a very widespread development in contemporary Canadian publishing.

THE REASONS for the great upsurge of reprinting are fairly obvious. The public for books of all kinds — to the discomfiture of the sometime prophet Marshall McLuhan — has increased immensely; the libraries have also become so numerous that an expensive hardcover edition is sure of selling its two or three thousand, and then the book, if it has any kind of popular appeal, can go into a paperback edition. Though there are exceptions — New Press and M. G. Hurtig come immediately to mind — the great mass of Canadian reprint editions (both soft and hard covered) have been undertaken by the large established publishing firms, who have both capital and backlists of contracts; this alone must modify any assumption that recent changes in the aspect of Canadian publishing are entirely or in every respect the result of an invasion of new personalities and new philosophies of book production and distribution. The new publishing houses that have appeared during the past decade have widened the field of publication in the sense of giving greater scope for the experimental in prose and verse, yet — even though some of the smaller presses have managed extraordinary press runs for books that standard publishers would have considered unsaleable — the largest share of the increased market has gone to the older publishers — and particularly the largest share of the reprint market. In this development, of course, new printing processes have played their part.

The reprints, of which many scores now appear in Canada each year, can be divided into two categories, which rather arbitrarily I term *fortuitous* and *systematic*. By *fortuitous*, I mean the reprint that does not fit the pattern of a particular series; by *systematic* I mean one that is part of a series and in many cases is there because of a special aim or philosophy behind the series. Most publishers are inclined nowadays, when a hardcover book sells out quickly, to follow with a paperback edition rather than going through the succession of progressively cheaper hardcover reprints that was customary in the past until, after some years or even decades, the books would reach some widely popular level like Everyman or Penguin. Thus McClelland & Stewart, Macmillan and Oxford reprint many books outside the regular series they may maintain. Good recent examples are Oxford's paperback reprint of John Glassco's *Memoirs of Montparnasse* and

McGraw Hill-Ryerson's reprints of Klein's *The Rocking Chair* and of Alice Munro's *Dance of the Happy Shades*. I was interested to observe, in a recent McClelland & Stewart blurb for their paperback reprints, that 15 were individual titles of this kind, as against 16 which were appearing in their various reprint series.

One aspect of this individual reprint phenomenon is the extraordinary telescoping that has taken place in terms of time. Now a paperback edition of a book will often appear in the next season to the original book; in fact, some publishers — McClelland & Stewart, Oxford, Anansi — have found it advantageous, especially with poetry, to eliminate the intermediate stage, and to publish the paperback edition (which would normally have been the reprint) simultaneously with the hardcover edition, a procedure which has obvious benefits in view of the fact that most poetry-buyers today are likely to be young people unable to afford normal hardcover prices.

The reprint series themselves vary a great deal in character and intent. Some, like Macmillan's Laurentian Library (which has recently been bringing out the less familiar early novels of Morley Callaghan) and Clarke Irwin's Canadian Paperbacks (notable for their reprints of Emily Carr and Robertson Davies), while they are both oriented towards Canadian writing, seem still mainly intended to keep in print the more interesting writers these houses have published over the years. The same is true of Toronto's excellent Canadian University Paperback series, which has now passed its 130th title. Though the Canadian University Paperbacks are concerned mainly with Canadian themes and publish mostly the works of Canadian authors, in neither case are they exclusive; the list in fact presents a fine, broad selection from the past publishing record of one of the continent's best academic printing houses. From its earlier titles, which included key works as varied as McLuhan's *The Gutenberg Galaxy* and McNaught's *A Prophet in Politics*, down to such recent titles as Jones' *Butterfly on Rock*, it maintains an extraordinary list of books that are basic to the understanding of Canadian society and Canadian culture.

The New Canadian Library is perhaps — to date — the most important of the schematic series. Looking back over the long list of titles, one realizes how carefully Malcolm Ross has arranged his choices in such a way that an interest in contemporary Canadian books would lead to an interest in the more neglected classics of our literature, and vice versa. Of course, the series would not have been so successful as it actually is if it were not for the nationalistic trends that have created a deeper interest in Canadiana of every kind and have encouraged



the phenomenal proliferation of studies of Canadian books in universities and schools. Still, a touch of special insight was needed to anticipate a development of this kind; indeed, there is no doubt at all that the New Canadian Library contributed a great deal towards the very situation from which it has benefitted.

Other reprint libraries were encouraged by a related phenomenon — the interest in the Canadian past that came into being through a whole series of centennial celebrations beginning with the B.C. festival of 1958 and carrying on through the 1960s. M. G. Hurtig, in Edmonton, apart from the interesting regional Albertan titles which he has produced as part of his regular publishing programme, has also experimented in the reprint of Canadian literary classics; he has brought out new hardcover editions of Callaghan's early *Strange Fugitive* and of Hugh MacLennan's volume of essays, *Cross Country*, the latter with a curious new preface by the author. But the most important of Hurtig's ventures to date is undoubtedly the Canadiana Reprint Series, a handsomely bound line of facsimile reproductions which concentrates mainly on travel literature, including Butler's *The Great Lone Land*, Franklin's two narratives, Hearne's *Journey to the Northern Ocean*, Ballantyne's *Hudson's Bay* and the accounts which Alexander Mackenzie, Paul Kane and Alexander Henry left of their journeys; it varies in price from John Palliser's *Solitary Rambles* at \$5.95 to George Heriot's *Travels through the Canadas* at \$23.00 and Henry Youle Hind's *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition* at \$25.00.

Coles Canadiana Collections — of which 47 titles appeared in the most recent list with apparently a dozen more to come shortly — tends to overlap the Canadiana Reprints. There is even one work in common — George Heriot's *Travels through the Canadas*, and in the Coles Collection it costs only \$7.95, but it is paperbound, and it lacks the background introduction which is a feature of each Hurtig reprint. (I gather that in this respect the Coles policy may shortly change and introductions may be commissioned.) Coles Canadiana tends to be less concerned with the explorers than with the pioneers, and it includes a variety of forgotten titles that are intriguing documents of social history (such as *The Canadian Handbook and Tourist's Guide*, 1867, *Canadian Folk-life and Folk-lore* by William Parker Greenough, 1897, and *The Canadian Home Cookbook*, 1877), together with nineteenth century travel narratives, mainly of the prairies (e.g. *My Canadian Journal* by the Marchioness of Dufferin, *Ocean to Ocean* by George M. Grant, and Milton & Cheadle's *The North-west Passage by Land*) and, finally, a small group of Canadian literary classics — Anna Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* and Catharine Parr Traill's *The Back-*

*woods of Canada* and *Canadian Wild Flowers*. As will be evident, the stylistic level of the series is uneven; the documentary level is uniformly high, and all one misses is the kind of scholarly notation that sets the work in its context.

One is aware of the same deficiency in the new Ryerson Archive series, and there it is even less justifiable, since the reprints are expensive at \$12.50: three times as dear as many of the Coles reprints and almost twice as dear as many of the Hurtig reprints, which also are bound and which do have introductions. One finds it hard to determine what public outside libraries is envisaged for the Ryerson Archive reprints.

AN ESPECIALLY GOOD SERIES is the oddly titled *Social History of Canada*, published by the University of Toronto Press under Michael Bliss's editorship, and consisting of a variety of books — published mainly between 1860 and 1930 — that recall the social debates and struggles of our formative era. Goldwin Smith's *Canada and the Canadian Question* is there; so are J. S. Woodsworth's *My Neighbour*, Nellie McClung's *In Times like These* and Alan Sullivan's strange social novel, *The Rapids*, while Ralph Connor's *The Foreigner* and Stephen Leacock's *The Unsolved Riddle of Social Justice* are announced. Each of these volumes has its own special documentary interest, but the most striking feature of the series is the high quality of the introductions. Carl Berger's opening essay to *Canada and the Canadian Question* is in its own rights a classic study of Smith and his significance for his times, while Richard Allen's introduction to Salem Bland's *The New Christianity*, the most recently published title, is not only better written than the book it prefaces, but also a much more lucid — because more concise — exposition of the Social Gospel than Allen's own book, *The Social Passion*. This is a series to be watched with special interest.

Another reprint series — on the indeterminate verges of history and sociology — which has turned out to contain a great deal of material peripherally interesting both to the historian and to the literary critic, is the Carleton Library, published by McClelland & Stewart but originated as a project of the Institute of Canadian Studies at Carleton University. Under the general editorship of Michael Gnarowski, the series now includes 70 titles. Some are special complications of essays previously printed in periodicals — like Bruce Cox's recent *Cultural Ecology* — which under its laconic and unpromising title conceals a group of

very useful studies of Canadian Indian life and its basis in the environment. Others, like the first volume, *Lord Durham's Report*, are crucial Canadian constitutional documents, and yet others, like Peter Newman's *Renegade in Power* among the recent reprints, are classic examples of good Canadian journalism. George Grant's *Lament for a Nation*, André Siegfried's *The Race Question in Canada*, O. D. Skelton's *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, Mason Wade's *The French Canadian Outlook* and J. B. Brebner's *North Atlantic Triangle* are among the notable works that up to now have appeared in the Carleton Library. One pleasing aspect of the series is that the editors have not confined their choice of reprints to books originally available through the ordinary channels of publishing and book distribution. Of the latest batch of titles one — Ronald Liversedge's *Recollections of the On to Ottawa Trek* — is the reporting of a narrative originally made available more than a decade ago in a mimeographed form, while a second, H. Blair Neatby's *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec*, is an edited version of the thesis Neatby submitted for his doctorate in 1956; both are excellent finds. Finally, among reprints in the field of history, McClelland & Stewart have begun to reissue in paperback form the early titles of the Canadian Centenary Series, beginning with McNutt's *The Atlantic Provinces*, Careless's *The Union of the Canadas* and Craig's *Upper Canada*.

FINALLY, some very useful reprinting is being done in a field which I suppose one can best describe as literary antiquarianism — the republication of those writers who have long been names in the literary histories but for many years have been readily available only in anthologized fragments. The New Canadian Library, of course, has done its bit for this cause, but mainly in the field of prose (such novels as *The History of Emily Montague*, *The Golden Dog* and *Wacousta*), though David Sinclair's *Nineteenth-Century Narrative Poems* is an example in the field of verse. However, the major contribution in this field is being planned by the University of Toronto Press, which has two series in hand — Literature of Canada, published in both paper and cloth, and a more expensive series of cloth-bound books, entitled the Toronto Reprint Library of Canadian Prose and Poetry and designed mainly for "public circulation". Both series are edited by Douglas Lochhead, and the 38 titles already announced for them promise a valuable extension in our stock of available Canadiana.

The first four volumes of Literature in Canada are now off the press — fat

books, well printed, with scholarly introductions and, considering their bulk, reasonably priced in paperback between \$3.95 and \$4.50. One tends to approach them on divided paths: the literary antiquary delighted, the literary critic cautious and somewhat apprehensive — a tone by no means absent from some of the introductions.

There is of course no doubting the quality of Isabella Valancy Crawford's *Collected Poems*, though one wishes James Reaney's introduction had been a little less playfully oblique in its approach and had tackled frontally the question of Garvin's manipulative editing of the original, which is here reproduced in facsimile as printed, with no attempt to show, by annotation, the evident divergences between Crawford's intent and what after her death appeared in print.

To the other volumes one's reactions are mixed in a rather different way. It is not the scholarly apparatus that leaves the literary antiquary unsatisfied so much as the basic material which leaves the critic in doubt. It is doubtless "a good thing" to have Charles Sangster available in extenso — both *The St. Lawrence and the Saguenay* and *Hesperus* in one volume — but one soon realizes why Gordon Johnston is so defensive in his introduction. "So the best advice (unfortunately vague) is that we not expect too much of him, and at the same time we not under-estimate him. We should be ready to be delighted." Indeed, there are *moments* of delight, harmonious passages, occasional lambent images, but the journey one takes to earn these rewards leads one through vast sloughs of boredom, through echoing defiles of empty eloquence. A. J. M. Smith with great discrimination picked for his *Book of Canadian Poetry* most of the passages from Sangster the general reader is likely to need. But for the literary historian such a reprint as the present is still invaluable.

There is an even deeper sinking of the critical heart as one wades one's grumbling way through the Victorian ineptitudes that fill most pages of Edward Hartley Dewart's *Selections from Canadian Poets*, originally published in 1864; except for a few pieces — and here Charles Heavyside impresses with a kind of preposterous power — the actual contents of the anthology have far less interest than Dewart's introduction, which is well argued and well written, quite apart from its special interest as one of the earliest manifestoes of Canadian literary nationalism, one of the first essays to suggest that there might be a local source of inspiration, different from European sources in its essential character.

I have remarked elsewhere that Canadians developed a power of functionally eloquent exposition while they were still unsure of the imaginative forms that would be appropriate to their experience, and this observation, I feel, is sup-

ported not only by Dewart's Introductory Essay on Canadian Poetry, but also by the three early critical works that Clara Thomas collects and introduces in the last of the first four titles in *Literature of Canada*. These are John George Bourinot's *Our Intellectual Strength and Weakness*, Thomas Guthrie Marquis's "English-Canadian Literature" and Camille Roy's "French-Canadian Literature", all of them pioneer critical documents which helped to shape our cultural consciousness during the years that followed their publication. To have these works available, with Dr. Thomas's excellent historical introduction, will be most useful to the reader who seeks to trace the development of a Canadian critical tradition. By the time Marquis and Roy wrote in 1913, there was already a body of literature that — whatever its unashamed derivations — could be accepted as distinctively Canadian besides containing some works good by any standards in the English-writing world. This, of course, makes all the more surprising the accuracy of prophetic insight with which, having such dubious material from which to judge in 1864, Dewart so clearly envisaged the future of our literary development, short on history and drawing its strength from an immediate apprehension of "external Nature" and a deep questioning immersion in "human nature".

In reviving the pre-modern literature of Canada, at least one of the little presses is playing an interesting role. The Golden Dog in Ottawa has begun to issue a series of finely printed pamphlet-sized reprints of single works that have acquired a classic standing in Canadian literary esteem. The first three titles are Charles Heavyside's impressive little narrative poem, *Jezebel*, his *Dark Huntsman*, in two variant versions, and Archibald Lampman's *The City of the End of Things*, published as Lampman evidently intended it and not as D. C. Scott thought proper to rearrange it for inclusion in the posthumously published *Collected Poems*.

One might argue that the current upsurge of reprinting in Canada is merely part of the general paperback revolution, which has kept in circulation or brought back to the bookshops an amazing variety of titles from the world's literatures. Yet I think there is a specially intentional character in what has been done here which is quite distinctive. The reprinting of saleable books merely to keep them in print has been less important in Canada during the past decade and a half than the deliberate reassembling of the materials for a cultural tradition. Our reprint publishers and editors are not only giving us back our past but also sustaining the vitality of our contemporary movement by keeping its works in productive circulation.

## THE ROYAL COMMISSION

Morris Wolfe

*Royal Commission on Book Publishing: Background Papers.* Queen's Printer and Publisher, Province of Ontario, 1972. \$3.75.

*Royal Commission on Book Publishing, Canadian Publishers & Canadian Publishing.* The Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1973. \$3.75.

THOSE WHO followed Ontario's Royal Commission on Book Publishing from its inception in December 1970 to its conclusion in February of 1973 probably found its final report—*Canadian Publishers & Canadian Publishing*—anticlimactic. The moderately nationalist tone of that report and many of its specific recommendations had been anticipated; the Commission's interim reports and effective public relations had seen to that.

The announcement by Ontario's then Premier Robarts of a Royal Commission came on the eve of the sale of Ryerson Press to the U.S.-owned McGraw-Hill Co. of Canada. Ryerson had been the second major textbook publisher (Gage was the other) to come under the control of U.S. interests in 1970. The members of the Commission were lawyer and writer Robert Rohmer; former president of the national Conservative Party, Dalton Camp; and Marsh Jeanneret of the U. of T. Press. Their terms of reference were broad:

to conduct an examination of and report upon:

- (a) the publishing industry in Ontario and throughout Canada with respect to its position within the business community;
- (b) the functions of the publishing industry in terms of its contribution to the cultural life and education of the people of the Province of Ontario and Canada;
- (c) the economic, cultural, social or other consequences for the people of Ontario and of Canada of the substantial ownership or control of publishing firms by foreign or foreign-owned or foreign-controlled corporations or by non-Canadians.

It became clear quite early that this was going to be a Royal Commission with a difference. Even before its hearings began, Jack McClelland had announced that McClelland and Stewart was facing bankruptcy and might have to sell to U.S. interests. Within days the Commission issued a special Interim Report recommending a government loan to the publishing house of just under \$1,000,000. "McClelland and Stewart," said the Report,

represents an accumulated creative momentum in original Canadian publishing which could not quickly be replaced by other Canadian publishing enterprises. . . . [It is] a national asset worthy of all reasonable public encouragement and support.

The Government agreed to the loan almost immediately. (Following the creation of the Commission, William Davis had replaced John Robarts as Premier of Ontario, and he was now eager to demonstrate *his* nationalism.)

Three months later, in June 1971, the Commission issued its Second Interim Report, charging that a concerted effort was under way

on the part of one or more non-Canadian individuals, or corporations, engaged in the wholesaling and distribution of periodicals and mass-market paperback books to gain control of the principal distributors, or wholesalers, of similar merchandise in Ontario and possibly elsewhere in Canada.

Eight days later, the Ontario Government had brought in legislation which would require paperback and magazine distributors to be licensed and which would withhold licenses from new companies that weren't 75 per cent Canadian owned.

In August 1971 a Third Interim Report appeared, recommending that financial aid be given to Ontario's book publishing industry through a government-supervised board. The Report restated the fundamental lesson of Canadian publishing economics it had learned only too well in its early hearings: because book publishing is a capital-intensive industry, Canadian publishing companies are at a double disadvantage.

Not only do they quickly reach the point where their total capital is tied up in inventories, often with relatively slow turnover prospects, but as a consequence new Canadian publishing opportunities are lost

... to the Canadian branches of foreign publishing firms. . . .

Under the Commission's recommendation, the Ontario Government would guarantee loans and pay 50% of their interest upon approval of an application by the book publishing board. The Commission also recommended that it be a matter of government policy

that any further sales of Canadian-owned book publishers to non-residents be considered contrary to the public interest.

Again the Ontario Government acted quickly. Premier Davis announced acceptance of the Report's proposals, and asked the Commission itself to evaluate and approve applications for capital assistance. (The Commission subsequently received a number of applications for loans, and approved five. But the loans weren't announced by the Government until April 1972, and the five didn't get their money until almost the end of the year. It seemed as if there was no longer any great urgency for the now re-elected Davis government.)

The Fourth (and final) Interim Report of the Royal Commission in March 1972 dealt primarily with a potential monopoly in southern Ontario by Metro Toronto News — an American-owned distributing company; the Report's recommendations would have forced Metro News to reduce its operation substantially. Ironically, *American* anti-trust action against the owners of Metro News, as much as threatened action by the Ontario Government, ultimately forced them to sell their Canadian operation to Maclean-Hunter. As a result, Maclean-Hunter has become the only Canadian among thirteen national distributors. The Fourth Interim Report also recommended that

distributors be required to carry a "reasonable" number of Canadian-edited and published books and magazines — clearly a step, an important and necessary step, towards the kind of quotas the CRTC has established for radio and television.

The flurry of Commission and Government activity, particularly prior to the October 1971 election, generated a great deal of excitement — excitement reinforced by news of the stringent regulations the Quebec government was planning to introduce to combat foreign control of French-language publishing. Dennis Lee perpetuated the myth that it's the fault of Americans that much of our publishing industry has fallen into their hands. He attacked branch-plant publishers in Canada for their

abysmal failure . . . to accept *their* [my italics] responsibilities . . . to risk, on talented Canadian writers, a few of the millions of dollars they have grossed teaching Canadian school-children to venerate Abraham Lincoln.

James Lorimer suggested that only Canadians be allowed to publish books in Canada. Twenty Canadian-owned publishing houses — McClelland and Stewart the only important exception — formed the Independent Publishers' Association. Their moderately nationalist constitution declared that "books of our own are essential to the educational, social and economic life of an independent Canada" and that "vigorous Canadian-owned and controlled book publishers are essential to the accomplishment of this goal" — a view later subscribed to by the Commission itself in its final report.

In April 1972 the Royal Commission published *Background Papers*, a specially prepared collection of nineteen essays on

aspects of Canadian publishing ranging in subject from history to distribution to copyright. This generally excellent volume is the most comprehensive study of publishing ever undertaken in Canada, and in itself provides sufficient justification for the existence of the Royal Commission.

There's a fine essay by H. Pearson Gundy, "The Development of Trade Book Publishing in Canada," with its gloomy reminder that the literary boom of the twenties was followed by a period when the best books — C. B. Sisson's biography of Egerton Ryerson, for example — had to wait years to be published. There's George Woodcock's perceptive essay, "On the Resources of Canadian Writing." In it he suggests that, as a kind of over-reaction to past conservatism, current Canadian publishing tends

among writers, towards an experimental foolhardiness that often outruns talent; among editors towards a permissiveness that fails to provoke a writer into his best form; and among publishers towards a thirst for novelty, a restless neophilia, that can be just as detrimental . . . [as the desire for] safety and respectability. . . .

One is inclined, however, to quarrel with Woodcock's rather sanguine view that if one is patient a good book will eventually get published in this country. University presses — the U. of T. Press is a prime example — are finding it increasingly difficult to subsidize books that can't reasonably be expected to recover their own costs. The trouble is that some of the best scholarly books, particularly those unsupported by grant money, fall into this category. (Surely it's no longer any more reasonable to expect a scholarly book to cover its own costs than it is to expect a scholarly institution to do so.)

There's a disturbing piece, "Public and



School Libraries," by Sonja Sinclair; she points out that as recently as 1960, "sixty-four per cent of [Ontario's] municipalities and thirty per cent of its population were still without any library service of any description" — or, one might add, and here the percentage of the population is even greater, any bookstores worthy of the name. And anyone who believes that the recent wave of literary nationalism has had a substantial effect on our elementary and secondary schools is in for a surprise. Ms. Sinclair reports:

There appears to be a remarkable lack of concern among the educational establishment for the survival of an indigenous publishing industry or the propagation of a point of view . . . unadulterated by the nationalism of others. One secondary school principal admitted . . . that, out of one thousand books recently purchased from a wholesaler for the school's new library not a single one was Canadian.

(This confirms my experience in Guelph, Ontario, where my three children — grades 6, 5 and 3 — have almost no Canadian content in the classroom, and the *only* Canadian authors in their school library are Farley Mowat and L. M. Montgomery.)

The best essay in the collection is Sheila Egoff's "The Writing and Publishing of Canadian Children's Books in English." According to Ms. Egoff, there are no full-time writers or editors of children's books in Canada; the market is too small to support them. Understandably, she says, some Canadian children's writers — Christie Harris, for example — prefer to be published in the U.S. (If nothing else, there's the chance of better sales. According to Ernst and Ernst, children's books in Canada, including imports, account for only 6 per cent of sales; in the U.S. they account for 22%.)

Meanwhile, many aspects of Canadian life have never, or rarely, been written about for children — the arts, for instance. When it comes to fiction, Ms. Egoff claims, writers of Canadian children's books are in a class by themselves:

While other English speaking children, as seen through their books, are coping with ineffectual parents, no parents, one parent, being unhappy, tuning in, dropping out, brushing up against drugs, alcoholism, homosexuality and racism — Canadian children are still visiting a lighthouse, crossing the barrens, discovering a cache of Indian relics, escaping a murderer, catching a bank robber, or getting a pony for Christmas.

Apart from Christie Harris and Farley Mowat, she says, the writers of Canadian children's books choose to avoid controversial subjects.

In February 1973, ten months after the publication of its *Background Papers* and, significantly, on the same day that the Secretary of State announced federal government assistance to publishers through its book purchase programme, the Royal Commission's final report appeared. *Canadian Publishers & Canadian Publishing* contained few surprises. Nonetheless, it did a remarkable job of drawing on the 19 background papers, 185 briefs, and other pieces of information at its disposal to put together a coherent and far-ranging picture of the difficulties faced by the Canadian book industry.

The Report concerns itself mainly with the need to create a climate in which an indigenous Canadian publishing industry can compete on an equal footing with foreign subsidiaries. What that comes down to is money. The Commissioners put the problem this way:

Because of the difference in size of potential markets, the unit cost of a book originated in this country tends to be high, while the traditional price levels are set by imported

books, chiefly by those from the United States. Thus the same percentage of publishing misjudgments is more costly in Canada and the same percentage of publishing successes provides less income with which to underwrite the mistakes.

Another major area of discussion is educational publishing—still the most lucrative part of the publishing industry (50%) although changing patterns of education, including a move away from prescribed texts, are making this an increasingly less secure branch of publishing. The Commission strongly commends the Ontario Department of Education's Circular 14, which lists acceptable texts and clearly states that "preference should be given to books by Canadian authors or editors, printed and bound in Canada [*sic*]." Without this preference policy, the report declares, there would be many fewer Canadian books in the schools. (But even with the preference policy, as the Toronto Graphic Arts Labour Council complained in its brief, more than 50% of Ontario's textbooks in 1969—\$29,000,000 worth—were imported, mostly from the U.S.)

The Commission recommends the establishment of an Ontario Book Publishing Board to administer a programme of title grants and the establishment by that Board of a programme of Ontario Literary Awards, especially in areas such as children's books where there are almost no existing awards. (The Governor-General's Award for best children's book was discontinued in 1960.) It recommends that all books awarded title grants "be manufactured wholly in Canada." (This seems unwise, since there are cases where a publisher would be further ahead declining a grant and manufacturing a particularly expensive book abroad.) It recommends that the Board encourage

the development of post-secondary courses in all phases of book production and marketing. (The Report comments on the general scarcity of good creative editors, and the particular need for them in a country such as Canada without "the inspiration of a national literature developed over the centuries.") It recommends that the Board give assistance to one or more Ontario-based periodicals devoted primarily to book reviewing. (The fact is that we in Ontario don't have such a periodical worthy of public support. We'll have to create one first.)

In the area of educational publishing, the Commission recommends partial defrayal of research and development costs for selected textbooks, and encourages schools at all levels to find ways for "Canadian authors, artists, book designers, and other creative people closely connected with book publishing" to come into contact with students. Significantly, it also recommends a programme of title grants for books about and/or by Indians and Eskimos. The cultural genocide we've committed on our native peoples through *our* texts, the Commission seems to say, parallels what American texts are doing to us.

According to the Commission, the minimum annual cost of funding the Ontario Book Publishing Board and its various programmes would be \$1,000,000. But the Commission expresses concern about adding to an already overburdened provincial budget, and recommends, therefore, that this sum be raised by removing from magazines their exemption from the provincial sales tax (now 7%). The sum of \$1,000,000 and the sales tax as a means of raising it reminded me of Peter Martin's appearance before the Commission shortly after the loan to Mc-

Clelland and Stewart had been announced. Martin told the commissioners that he thought it would take maybe \$10,000,000 in low-cost federal and/or provincial loans to save the Canadian publishing industry. "As it happens," he said, "this is about the price that the Department of National Defence is paying for its fifth Boeing 707; one wonders

which investment contributes more to national survival." I don't know whether \$10,000,000 is the right figure (I suspect it may be) but I like Martin's point. If there's no stinting when it comes to the Department of National Defence's kind of national survival, then surely the same standards should be applied to an equally important kind of national survival.

## REANEY COLLECTED

*Margaret Atwood*

JAMES REANEY, *Poems*. Edited by Germaine Warkentin, New Press \$12.95

WATCHING POETS' CRITICAL reputations is a lot like watching the stock market. Some poets make slow but steady gains and end up safe but dull, like Blue Chips. Others are more like shady gold mines: they're overvalued initially, then plunge to oblivion. More often it's a combination of the two, with each high period being followed by a low of sneers and dismissals and an ultimate recovery engineered by a later squad of critics who rescue the poet's reputation, from a safe distance.

This is especially likely to be true of a poet who, like James Reaney, has been associated with a trend, group or movement which has either angered people or gone out of fashion. Judging from a sampling of recent critical commentary on his collected *Poems*, Reaney's reputation is in its slump phase; which is a shame. Any poet who has created an original body of work, especially one of such uniqueness, power, peculiarity and, sometimes, unprecedented weirdness as Reaney's deserves better treatment. A critic might begin by attempting to actually *read* the poems, as opposed to reading into them various philosophies and lit-

erary theories which the poet is assumed to have. If you start this way, with the actual poems, one of your first reactions will almost certainly be that there is nothing else *like* them.

I'd never before read most of the uncollected single poems — my reading of Reaney had been limited to *The Red Heart*, *A Suit of Nettles*, *Twelve Letters To a Small Town*, and *The Dance of Death in London, Ontario* (as well as the plays and the short story "The Bully") so I was most intrigued by sections I, III and V of this volume. I was especially struck by the early appearance of a number of Reaney images which crop up again and again, variously disguised, in his later work. The fascination with maps and diagrams ("Maps", 1945), the collections of objects ("The Antiquary", 1946), the sinister females, both mechanical ("Night Train", 1946) and biological ("Madame Moth", 1947), and that nightmare, the Orphanage, already present in "Playbox", 1945 — all foreshadow later and more fully realized appearances.

But what became clear to me during a chronological reading of this book is

that most commentators — including Reaney himself, and his editor and critics — are somewhat off-target about the much-discussed influence of Frye on his work. I have long entertained a private vision of Frye reading through Reaney while muttering “What have I wrought?” or “This is not what I meant, at all,” and this collection confirms it. Reaney is to Frye as a Salem, Mass. 17th century tombstone is to an Italian Renaissance angel: Reaney and the tombstone may have been “influenced”, but they are primitives (though later in time) and their models are sophisticates. The influence of Frye, however, was probably a catalyst for Reaney rather than a new ingredient; let me do a little deductive speculation.

The world presented to us in the early poems, up to and including *The Red Heart* (1949), does not “work” for the poet on any level. The people in them are bored and trivial, like “Mrs. Wentworth”, or they are actual or potential orphans, loveless, lost or disinherited, like the speaker in “Playbox” or the one in “Whither do you wander?”:

... I never find  
What I should like to find;  
For instance, a father and mother  
Who loved me dearly ...  
Instead I must forever run  
Down lanes of leafless trees  
Beneath a Chinese-faced sun;  
Must forsaken and forlorn go  
Unwanted and stepmotherishly haunted  
Beneath the moon as white as snow.

The reverse side of the melancholy state of being an orphan — hate for and disgust at the rest of the world and the desire for revenge — is explored in two other orphan poems, “The English Orphan’s Monologue” and “The Orphanage”, but in these the orphans are not

touching and wistful children; they are repulsive, “With plain white/And cretinous faces”, or filled with elemental destructiveness. Within a larger social context, the speakers are stifled by their society, like the speaker in “The Canadian”, who longs to escape from a parlour haunted by his “grim Grandfather” and the Fathers of Confederation to “hot lands” and “heathen folks” (a theme treated more succinctly later in “The Upper Canadian”). In these “social” poems, Reaney does not analyze, he dramatizes; and, like a dramatist, he counterpoints. Thus to the smothered longing of the provincial in the “Canadian” poems he opposes the sneering of a cosmopolite who has escaped the Fathers of Confederation, is reading Tristram Shandy and Anais Nin, and who says to the “proletariat”:

Your pinched white and gray faces  
Peer in  
Like small white tracts held off at a  
distance.  
Well ... is it not all very beautiful?  
As you stand hungry in the rain  
Just look to what heights you too may  
attain.

(“The Ivory Steeple”)

If this poem had been written by anyone else but Reaney, everyone would have called it savage socialist satire; in fact it’s a good deal more savage and socialist than much that passes by that name.

In these early poems the objects — and the poems bulge with objects — create the effect of a kind of rummage sale, partly because the objects are lacking in all but personal significance:

... my spotted ring  
And the wool blanket hemmed in red ...  
Also the corduroy suit  
And the scarf with the purple bars ...

(“Play-box”)

The Cup had the outlines of a cup  
In a lantern-slide  
And it was filled with Congou tea  
What did it mean this cup of tea?  
("Faces and the Drama in a Cup of Tea")

The speaker can rarely make "sense" of them by relating them to anything else; all he can do is record them, and the effect is a still-life, captured and rendered immobile, like the pictures Miss French takes in "Kodak":

They have their camera.  
No one sits in its gloomy parlour  
Of pleated walls.  
No wind stirs or ghost stalks . . .  
And all my garden stands suddenly  
imprisoned  
Within her pleated den.

In the early poems on "love" — and there are quite a few of them — the love is either unconsummated, as in "Platonic Love", or it turns into sex, which is as inextricably linked with death as it is in the poetry of Al Purdy. This is sex observed through a child's eyes, foreign and monstrous. At times Reaney manages a kind of queasy humour, as in "Grand Bend", which begins:

It is the rutting season  
At Grand Bend  
And the young men and the women  
Explode in each others' arms  
While no chaperones attend.

More often it is simple horror, mixed with revulsion, as in "The Orphanage":

They that lie pasted together  
In ditches by the railroad tracks  
And seethe in round-shouldered cars  
With the lusty belches of a Canadian  
spring.  
Young men with permanent waves  
Crawl over ghostly women  
Whose cheeks are fat as buttocks . . .

"So love does often lead a filthy way to death" one poem ends, and another concludes, "It has always been that lust/Has always rhymed with dust."

Reaney's early world, then, is an unredeemed one, populated with orphans and spiritual exiles, littered with couples engaged in joyless, revolting and dangerous copulation, and crammed with objects devoid of significance. In it, babies are doomed as soon as conceived (as in "Dark Lagoon"), the "real world" is the one described at the end of "The School Globe", filled with "blood, pus, horror, stepmothers and lies", and the only escape is the temporary and unsatisfactory one of nostalgic daydreaming. If you believed you lived in such a world, you'd surely find the negative overwhelming. Anyone familiar with the techniques of brainwashing knows that all you have to do to convert almost anyone to almost anything is subject him to a nearly intolerable pressure, then offer him a way out. The intolerable pressures rendered with such verbal richness in the earlier poems are those of the traditional Christian version of this earth, but with Christ (and escape to Heaven) removed; sin with no possibility of redemption, a fallen world with no divine counterpart.

Frye's literary theories — this is a guess — would surely have offered Reaney his discredited childhood religion in a different, more sophisticated, acceptable form: the Bible might not be *literally* true, but under the aegis of Frye it could be seen as metaphorically, psychically true. Frye's "influence", then, is not a matter of the critic's hardedged mind cutting out the poet's soul in its own shapes, like cookie dough: "influence", for good poets, is surely in any case just a matter of taking what you need or, in reality, what you already have.

Frye made a difference (and again I'm guessing) not so much to Reaney's choice of materials, or even to his choice of

forms, but to the kinds of resolutions made available to him. Horror remains and evil is still a presence, but a way past the world, the flesh and the devil is now possible. The redemptive agents are all invisible, internal: they are the imagination, the memory, verbal magic (Reaney has several poems about language, and many references to the magic tongue) and — I'm thinking here of the short story "The Bully" — dream. These elements are so important in Reaney's work because the hideousness of existence can be redeemed *by them alone*: it is the individual's inner vision, not the external social order, that must change if anything is to be salvaged.

It is this arrangement of priorities that surely accounts not only for some of Reaney's themes, but also for some of his characteristic structures, in the plays as well as the poems. The pattern I'm thinking of is that of the sudden conversion — a Protestant rather than a Catholic pattern. If you think of the Divine Comedy with the Purgatorio left out you'll see what I mean: we get the hellishness of the "earthly" situation and the quick turnabout followed by a transcendent vision, but we are never told how you get to the vision — what process you undergo, what brings it about. No indulgences sold here; it's Faith, not Works and you just somehow have to "see". There are several Reaney plays (*The Sun and the Moon*, *The Kildeer*) in which the evil witch figure is defeated simply by being perceived as a fraud; but in the lyric poetry, this structure can best be illustrated by that unsettling poem, "The Sparrow". It's a poem about grubby lechery in the most unappealing places — underpass, the episcopal church —

symbolized by obscene chalk drawings, and the fourth verse starts like this:

Dirty, diseased, impish, unsettling, rapist  
Illegitimate, urban, southless, itching,  
Satyromaniac, of butcher string the harpist,  
The sparrows and their gods are everything.

Then comes the turn:

I like to hear their lack of tune  
On a very cold winter snowy afternoon.  
They must be listened to and worshipped  
each —  
The shocking deities: ding dung is sacred  
So is filthiness, obscenity . . .

And the last stanza makes the point: *everything*, not just beauty, is in the eye of the beholder:

Christ and Gautama and Emily Brontë were  
Born in the midst of angelic whirl  
In a dripping concrete den under,  
Under the alimentary trains: it is we  
Who see the angels as brown lechery  
And the sacred pair — Venus and Adonis  
As automatons coupled as a train is.  
And so step down my chalky reader,  
Why keep our festival here  
In this crotch?  
*Ding dung chirp chirp:*  
*A sparrow sings if you but have an ear.*

In Reaney's work, the Songs of Innocence come *after* the Songs of Experience; in fact, you can take a number of figures or images from the earlier poems and follow them through the *corpus*, watching how the Lost Child gets found (most notably in *Night-Blooming Cereus*), how the sinister Orphan gets changed into the harmless comic-strip Little Orphan Annie, how the baby doomed from before birth is allowed more latitude (though he can be the Christ Child as parody dwarf, he can also be the real Christ Child or magic baby; see "A Sequence in Four Keys"), and how the collection of random objects is permitted (or perhaps forced) to have universal significance (see, for in-

stance, the pebble, the dewdrop, the piece of string and the straw, in "Gifts").

The problems I have with Reaney's work are both theoretical (I can't see certain pieces of evil, for instance Hitler and the Vietnam War, as angelic visitations or even unreal, no matter how hard I try; and I don't think that's a flaw in my vision) and practical — that is, some of the poems work admirably for me and others don't get off the ground at all. Reaney's best poems come from a fusion of "personal" and "mythic" or "universal"; when they lean too far towards either side, you get obscurity or straight nostalgia at one end or bloodless abstraction at the other. And at times, reading his work, I feel the stirrings of that old Romantic distinction between the Fancy and the Imagination, though I try hard to suppress it; I even hear a voice murmuring "Whimsy", and it murmurs loudest when I come across a concrete image linked arbitrarily and with violence to a "universal" meaning. If you can see a world in a grain of sand, well, good; but you shouldn't stick one on just because you think it ought to be there.

But this is a *Collected* rather than a *Selected*; it isn't supposed to be Reaney's best poems, it's all of his poems, and I can't think of any poet who produces uniformly splendid work. It's by his best, however, that a writer should ultimately be judged; and Reaney's best has an unmistakable quality, both stylistic and thematic, and a strength that is present only when a poet is touching on something fundamental. Certain of Reaney's poems do admirably what a number of his others attempt less successfully: they articulate the primitive forms of the human imagination, they flesh out the soul,

they dramatize — like Blake's "Mental Traveller" — the stances of the self in relation to the universe. That sounds fairly heavy; what I mean is that Reaney gets down to the basics — love, hate, terror, joy — and gives them a shape that evokes them for the reader. This is conjuring, it's magic and spells rather than meditation, description or ruminating; Coleridge rather than Wordsworth, MacEwen rather than Souster. The trouble with being a magic poet is that when you fail, you fail more obviously than the meditative or descriptive poet: the rabbit simply refuses to emerge from the hat. But you take greater risks, and Reaney takes every risk in the bag, including a number of technical ones that few others would even consider attempting.

The physical appearance and presentation of a book such as this is really the least important part of it, but it never hurts a book to look good. Typeface and design — spare and antique, but somehow lush and eccentric — are in harmony with Reaney's world. The Introduction by Germaine Warkentin, informative about both poet and poems, represents only a small part of her editorial task; the major piece of work must have been the sifting, comparison and selection of the poems, some of which exist in a dismayingly large number of versions.

The most unattractive thing about this collection is its price. The ways of publishers are unfathomable, but I hope someone can convince New Press to bring Reaney's poems out in paperback soon so that more than a few people will have the chance to read what Reaney actually wrote rather than what he is popularly supposed to have written. The difference, it seems to me, is considerable.

# RICHLER'S JOURNALISM

Doug Fetherling

MORDECAI RICHLER, *Shovelling Trouble*. McClelland & Stewart, \$6.95.

THE REASONED CONCLUSION must be that Mordecai Richler is sometimes — not usually or often, but sometimes — a far, far better journalist than he is given credit for being. Among his contemporaries in Canada (not among his peers, who are understandably silent) he is known for having churned out, especially during Centennial year, all those articles about what was going on in the country from which he had exiled a decade or so. The reaction, one feels, is against not only his brashness but against the fact those pieces — the one for *New Statesman*, the one for *Look*, the ones for a lot of what lay between — were essentially the same article, restyled a bit for each appearance.

But there remains also the fact that when he is good, Richler is quite good indeed. And when he is good, it can be seen from this new collection of pieces *Shovelling Trouble*, is when he is more essayist than reviewer, when he is writing from some need deeper than a magazine cheque, about a subject he has to immerse himself in and has to think about for a longer time than it takes him to physically write the copy. In the sense, then, that he writes better information when not under pressure of deadline, Richler is not the professional journalist, or at least not the stuff of the journalist's image.

There is another sense, too, in which he is not really a serious independent

journalist, and this also has to do with the occasions on which he writes. A novelist first, last and temperamentally, Richler does not feel the need to give a running chronicle of his time, or any small part of it, in anything but his fiction. So that while the middle of this volume is comprised of reviews of books by such persons as Roth, Fiedler, Kazin and Podhoretz, there is no implication that the reviews are part of an even subconscious discussion of Jewish American writing or any phase of it. They are just statements (and generally pretty fatuous ones) on objects in hand, of no higher quality than your average newspaper review, except a little longer perhaps and smart-alecky in a way few newspaper deskmen would allow.

To aspire to stuff of newspaper quality, to allow age and not ideas to make the copy interesting, is to be no great hell as a journalist. And this is what Richler is doing a good percentage of the time. His piece "Answering the Ads," reprinted here from a 1964 *Maclean's*, is another example. It is a cheap run-down of some of those gag-writers who advertise in the backs of pulp magazines. It is what a magazine editor would call a laundry list, and it is hard to imagine it having appeared so recently in a now pretty responsible middle-class magazine like *Maclean's*. Like several other of his pieces, however, it is revealing for the light it throws on Richler's fiction, in



this case the concern with pop trivia so apparent in *St. Urbain's Horseman*.

Trivia, together with other forms of nostalgia, is another of the keys since Richler, so much the autobiographical writer, is concerned with the past only insofar as it is *his* past and with the present only to the extent that it is personal nostalgia in the making. It is not surprising then that most of his better non-fiction is, like his fiction, first person idealizing of times gone by. Two pieces in *Shovelling Trouble* — "A Sense of the Ridiculous", a memoir of Paris in the early Fifties, and "Etes-vous canadien?", an account of his receiving the Governor-General's Award the first time — are good because he was able to employ in them the fiction technique he has been perfecting for years. The Paris piece, which is the better of the two and is in fact a first-rate job, is also confessional in the same way his "Why I Write" is confessional: because he is dealing critically and nostalgically with, in the one, a persona he has now outgrown and, in the other, with a kind of writer (if we are to believe him) he is currently ceasing to be.

Yet journalistically Richler is the same writer he always has been. His previous assemblage, *Hunting Tigers Under Glass*, published in 1968, was much like this one. It had the same simple allegorical humour and the same indulgent though funny reminiscences. It had the same commentary of Jewish folksiness and the same put-downs of the other commentators. And *Shovelling Trouble* not only has repetition, but the *same* repetition. But whereas *Hunting Tigers* included one long piece of excellent reportage, "This Year in Jerusalem", that rose above all the cleverness and the tinny style, so

*Shovelling Trouble* contains a long, serious piece also good enough to stand apart. This is "Bond", a solid chunk of literary detective work in which Richler digs out and examines the tendencies — some subtle, some blatant — toward anti-Semitism in Ian Fleming's spy novels. On this he has done a skilful and convincing job, and one wishes that he would save up these periodic flashes for a true book of essays instead of throwing them away in grab-bag volumes to keep his name on bookseller's shelves between novels.

The current vogue of novelists covering major news events has a longer history than such novelists would have us believe. Witness the journalism of Dreiser or Anderson or, only a decade ago, the coverage of the first Patterson-Liston fight by Schulberg, Mailer, Baldwin and Hecht. Richler, suited to this kind of journalism by virtue of his basic reportorial ability and his often loud, loose style, has not undertaken such assignments. This is a pity, for he also has an approach to journalism unusual (or unprofessional) enough to break through the clichés fast closing in on this type of reporting and to give new insights.

But then he is basically an iconoclastic writer, even when autobiographical, and such writers have an historical tendency to reach a certain plateau and camp there for the duration of their careers. The very fact that Richler, the iconoclastic nostalgist, could have written "Why I Write" is a strong indication that his fiction is changing or will be changing. But what about his journalism? Does he really want to be as skilled a journalist as he is a fiction writer? He could be, but, alas, he has only the one art; and with that goes the curious detachment of

art from the workaday self from which it is distilled or wrung — a detachment the journalism possibly would usurp.

At one point in "Why I Write," Mordecai Richler tells us: "When I'm not writing, I'm a husband and father of five. Worried about pollution. The population explosion. My sons' report cards." This is a state of mind one would expect from a popular comic novelist, but

one does not expect to find it so frankly articulated. A novelist such as Richler can bypass in his true work these, to him, very real daily worries. The journalistic writer Richler could be would (with the hopeful exception of the report cards) have used them rather than mentioned them. Iconoclasm must go forward too, even if it hurts.

## MOWAT'S LEVIATHAN

James Polk

FARLEY MOWAT, *A Whale for the Killing*. McClelland & Stewart, \$6.95.

FARLEY MOWAT's whale book is set in a Newfoundland fishing village, down at the heels but culturally self-sufficient, a tribal society doomed by a new fish-packing plant and Joey Smallwood's centralization policies. A pregnant whale gets trapped in a nearby cove, to be savaged by louts with rifles and speedboats. The narrator tries to save her bullet-riddled body, but his efforts are thwarted by greed, ignorance and opportunism. At length, the animal dies a slow, hideous death, mourned by its mate who swims near the impassable channel; her fate is a symbol for the extinction of the great whales everywhere. Mowat finds himself persona non grata in the village and must leave, doubting his own motives and brooding over the innate destructiveness of man.

This is a bald summary of *A Whale for the Killing*, but it may suggest what the frivolous, sensation-mad Canadian public is buying, since it is, like most of Mowat's books, a best-seller. Granted that the mood is more overtly pessimistic than is usual for Mowat, *A Whale for*

*the Killing* presents in dark relief themes which are constant throughout his work: the disintegration of a small social unit, modern man's alienation from Nature, the imminent death of the planet, the helplessness of the individual in a bureaucrat's world, and the essential isolation of the self. It would not seem to be bread-and-circuses material ready-made for the masses, but critics seldom emphasize the "dark" Farley Mowat. In fact, reviewers and interviewers seem united in giving him an amused brush-off, as if handling a crackpot uncle who is funny and good at heart, but who really doesn't belong in the front parlor.

Of course, Mowat's books vary in quality and in any one of them sentimentality and horseplay can run cheek by jowl with a probing examination of man's relationship with the Canadian environment. There is not much horseplay in the newest one; indeed, the book is excruciatingly painful to read if you identify, as you must, with the animal victim and are disturbed, as what thinking person isn't, over the plight of the

whales. Mowat makes his point that the maltreated whale is a "measure of humanity's unquenchable ignorance of life", and that the gap between man and Nature grows apace. But the reader who accepts this may have trouble with Mowat's insistence that he can bridge that gap himself. As he tells it, the whale in her agony speaks to him, deliberately trying "to span the chasm between our species. . . . She failed, yet it was not a total failure."

I believe it; thousands wouldn't, and certainly this kind of personal communion with animals is a rare thing outside the children's library. It is especially strange to find it in Canadian writing, where Nature tends to be indifferent, harsh, sphinxlike. Mowat can write about the unknowable mysteries of Nature, and yet he seems to have made unusual breakthroughs. The wolf in the snow is revealed playing tag in *Never Cry Wolf*, a book which shows the much-feared terror of the north as a decent fellow with a respectable family life. Wolves are given names (George, Angeline, Uncle Albert), whales communicate, and even the family mutt is a Dog Who Wouldn't Be, all but human. Mowat's exuberant love of the natural world demands, and gets, return in kind.

He tackles the true Canadian leviathan, the land itself, and insists that the empty unknown spaces are alive and a part of us. Landscapes become human: *Canada North* opens with the Arctic as a giant man with "a thin skin of tundra" and spring comes in *People of the Deer* with its "breath . . . that of a strong woman in the grip of passion." The blank barrens are really teeming with "life in ten thousand forms" (*The Desperate People*) which Mowat vividly details; then he

shows us long-ago caribou "waiting for the day when man would come bringing sentence into a new world." The high Arctic is not a white void, but a place with a human history and meaningful charts (*Ordeal by Ice*). The leviathan is accessible.

Thus he can allay our nagging suspicion that the natural world doesn't give a damn after all, and we read the books enjoying the idea of a wilderness made agreeable, amusing and well-intentioned. Sometimes Mowat's approach packs all the punch of a Walt Disney featurette, but usually a darker vision is nearby, checking the pull toward pathetic fallacy, offering a tension and a dialectic. Communion with Nature, first of all, is not possible without a lot of heavy boozing, physical discomforts and bickering with hard-headed Ottawa or the local rednecks. More disturbingly, Mowat must always leave the amiable beasts and unpolluted landscapes to their doom. He is a Romantic ironist, who loves, but knows all along that love is not enough.

Doom comes to nature in the shape of man, and Mowat cannot escape his genus. After nightmarish efforts to free the whale, a perceptive codger tells him: "The way I sees it you done that whale no good. You done Burgeo no good. And I don't say as you done yourself much good." At the end of *Never Cry Wolf*, Mowat hears George howling and is reminded of "a world which I had glimpsed and almost entered . . . only to be excluded, at the end, by my own self." Like Walt Whitman, Mowat is big, he contains contraries: the man who understands the animals is denied Nature after all. It is the usual Canadian view gone awry—Nature is not indifferent, but man is unworthy: we are more destruc-

tive, in the long run, than anything natural.

That too is a Romantic position, and much of Mowat's work gains interest from the conflict of Romanticisms rubbing against one another. If the Newfoundland village is Eden, the Newfoundland village is also fallen. Burgeo, in *A Whale for the Killing*, is said to contain folk who "continued to live in their own time and their own way; and their rhythm was the rhythm of the natural world." Well, maybe, but the clichés date back to those eighteenth-century tracts on Natural Man, pieties still operative in pseudo-folk songs and other cultural artefacts for the middle-class teenager, but much too easy for literate people. However, even as Mowat idealizes, he shows us Newfoundland at the moment of deterioration; the simple folk get confused and hostile; we can have our pastoral myth and lose it at the same time.

Mowat's very Canadian interest in the small group — threatened garrison cultures all — has ranged from military battalions (*The Regiment*) to early Norse settlements (*Westviking*) to men banded together on the sea (*The Grey Seas Under*). It is central to his saga of an Eskimo tribe, *People of the Deer* and *The Desperate People*, two books which constitute a long elegy on the death of the Ithalmiuts, with Mowat in his best form as tale-spinner, scientist, wit, idealist and despairing witness. Questions about the factual accuracy of these books seem beside the point; they form a discursive epic of Canada north, in which the tribe functions as a communal hero, going from gaiety and innocence to dissolution, worked upon by fate, tragic inner flaws,

disease, nature, and especially the white man and his government.

In writing about tribal societies, Mowat is once again the outsider: he cannot become one with the Eskimos and Newfoundlanders, just as it is impossible for him to grow fur and run with the pack. His stance is that of Byron's Childe Harold, the uneasy pilgrim who observes and warns and bitches and laments — and then exiles himself to another place, having none of his own. "With *him* alone may the rest pain," Byron writes; "...with *you* the moral of the strain." If Mowat cannot have or save his pastoral worlds he can report on the pain; we are left to write our M.P.'s or join a conservation group.

As with most Byronic types, the narrator's despair and irony sooner or later turn in upon himself. In *A Whale for the Killing*, Mowat begins to dream of his charge as a pursuing monster; he realizes that all mankind is trapped with the whale in an apparently pre-ordained cosmic disruption of life. Mowat sees himself trapped along with the rest, and even his need to be a guardian of the natural world becomes suspect: "Had I come to rely on her presence in order to maintain my role?" he asks, consumed with self-doubt. We are sinners in a fallen world, a moral any synod of Scots Presbyterians would recognize with grim approval. No wonder the whale book has done so well in Ontario.

Mowat's pessimism has deepened over the years. In *The Desperate People* (1959), the government bungles, sending rancid supplies to starving Eskimos and axes for a treeless land, but at least it is trying and there is hope at the end, in the establishment of a rehabilitation centre

near Rankin Inlet. Also, throughout the Eskimo books, we meet ordinary men — airline pilots, scientists, even business officials — who are looking for ways to improve the lot of the native peoples. In *Never Cry Wolf* (1963), the government is thoroughly roasted over the coals of the author's contempt and we fade out with the Wildlife Service dispatching wolf poison. Here the common man is found to be falsifying his reports, blaming wolves for the caribou his own rifle has wiped out. *A Whale for the Killing* presents government as a tawdry charade; it is the common man, newly affluent, who sprays the helpless animal with bullets. Innocent fisherfolk demand cash money for their services, and little children chant in the streets that Farley Mowat had better get out of town. Mowat's faith in human kind can be traced as a plummeting curve which has all but hit rock bottom by now.

However, he can make his desperation funny most of the time, just as another best-selling Calvinist, Mark Twain, found the knack of making bitter insights into the human condition come out like cracker-barrel wit. Mowat's intense isolation is often worked for laughs, as we find him stranded and barely coping in some god-forsaken tavern, leaky tub, Dantesque Ottawa agency or windswept tundra. Like Twain, he makes his jokes about cowardice and terror, the low estate of civilization, and Everyman's insatiable thirst for alcohol. Yet even his most lightweight works are shadowed by melancholia. Read, for example, the opening pages of the laugh hit, *The Boat Who Wouldn't Float*, in which waiting for Jack McClelland begins to seem like waiting for Godot. Or there is *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be*, advertised as "really

'doggone' funny", which turns out to be about a curiously isolated family wandering from small town to small town in the hopeless barrens of the Depression. At the end, the dog gets run over.

But then, much of the comedy is implied by the mere presence of "Farley Mowat" in the story. Like Twain again, and Byron too, Mowat has created a public persona which works independently of the writing, aided by the media and McClelland & Stewart (and, it sometimes seems, Barnum & Bailey). He is one of the few Canadian writers to have such an image; even the New Canadian Library has stopped putting authors' faces on its covers, possibly because they all look so much like everybody else. But Mowat is unforgettable: the bearded, crotchety, kilted Scot, loyal to the bottle and outrageously frank at Establishment parties. Everybody knows Farley Mowat.

This mask, if it is one, is a legitimate part of Mowat's creative production, as much as the Mowat I have described bearing the pageant of his bleeding heart with haughty scorn across the Northwest Territories. There is room for variety and contradiction in Mowat's manufactures, the number and range of which is nothing short of a miracle in the land of the one-book author. *A Whale for the Killing* is possibly not the best introduction to Mowat: like the later work of Mark Twain, it seems too dark and narrow for its own good; the subject allows no catharsis, no room to move; to read it is almost a masochistic act. I know it happened this way; anything which helps whales, I am for. But. There is a National Film Board short in which we watch a trout dying of suffocation on the screen; it shows that the pollution of our water must cease — a worthy message,

but there is a point at which assisting at the death of an animal becomes an exercise in bathos or worse, no matter what the ecological cause.

Nonetheless, *A Whale for the Killing* works; the writing is effective and Mowat is by now a master of the form he has invented: a Scotch broth of spiritual autobiography, folk legend, documentary, satire, burlesque, romance, popular biology, sermon, social analysis, narrative, digressions, and reformist tract. His genre, which Dell on one paperback cover tries to sum up as "Humor / Nature," is really "Canadian Mosaic", in which form follows content.

Although the treatment of regional groups and unspoiled landscapes is traditional in Canadian bestsellers — con-

sider *Anne of Green Gables*, *Jalna*, the works of Haliburton, Connor, Mitchell, and Raddall — Mowat's persistent refrain that Progress is destroying both suggests a hard-headedness unusual in a popular author and his reading public. Perhaps it is sociologically revealing that one of Canada's most widely read writers should be a Romantic Calvinist specializing in non-fiction about ecology and social loss. This fact may identify who and where most of us are at the moment, as well as suggesting a way of gauging Mowat's particular importance. "Oh well, Farley Mowat," as someone said to me the other day. "He's a Canadian Institution."

Exactly.

## ON THE VERGE

\*\*\*\*\* HELEN J. DOW. *The Art of Alex Colville*. McGraw-Hill-Ryerson. \$25.00. Against the disintegrative trends that have broken apart the tradition of Modern Art during the past two decades, Alex Colville has always stood out as a major exception, and perhaps most of all because he has never seen himself as part of that Movement. Though he has accepted and used the new techniques of painting, he has bent them to an art as ordered and as transcendently realist as that of Piero della Francesca, to whom one naturally compares him. His illuminist realism, in which space is used to signify infinities beyond physical perception, and in which human and animal figures enact the laws of their being, is an extraordinarily deliberate and intellectually motivated kind of art, yet it is combined with a formal instinct and a visionary perception that make his works, not surrealist in the historical sense, but superrealist in the sense that, as Robert Melville remarked, they show us reality "through an unflawed mirror which presents an image sharper and clearer than reality itself." Undoubtedly Colville is one of Canada's finest painters, and Helen J. Dow's book is an excellent presentation of his work, well-illustrated, informative about the intellectual structure that supports his artistic practice, and judiciously analytical in discussing his paintings, whose deliberate structure makes this kind of treatment especially relevant.

\*\*\*\*\* Harold B. Burnham and Dorothy K. Burnham. *"Keep me warm one night": Early Handweaving in Eastern Canada*. University of Toronto Press, \$27.50. This is much more than a charming picture book — though it is that to begin with. It is also a fine introduction to the great collection of handweaving and of weaving tools and equipment in the Royal Ontario Museum. But, most important, it is a fascinating and well-illustrated history of the craft as practiced by the pioneers in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritime provinces; it provides not merely a most exhaustive record of processes, but also, because the weaver was so important a member of the early Canadian community and his products entered in so many ways into the lives of the settlers, it opens curtains on a whole vista of pioneer social history. *"Keep me warm one night"* is likely to become a basic book for

handweavers, but nobody interested in Canadian history should neglect it.

\*\*\*\*\* DONALD CREIGHTON. *Towards the Discovery of Canada*. Macmillan. Paper \$6.95, cloth \$11.95. We are accustomed to think of Donald Creighton as the author of some of the most challenging books on Canadian history, and in recent years we have seen him taking arms in popular periodicals on behalf of Canadian nationalism. Over the years Creighton has in fact written a number of significant essays, both on the art of history and on Canadian historical problems, particularly in their relationship to the present. *Towards the Discovery of Canada* is a collection of them, and an extraordinarily interesting volume; it begins with a section on "The Craft of History" in which Creighton puts an excellent case — supported by the high writing of his own books — for regarding history as a branch of literature rather than as a social science, and goes on through further sections considering Canada's relation to the Empire, and various aspects of that Creighton-made hero, Sir John A. Macdonald, to a group of provocative essays on Canada's role in the modern world. Very interesting it is to see Creighton's transformation, without changing his essential doctrines, from an anti-nationalist imperialist into a nationalist anti-imperialist. He opposed the nationalism of Mackenzie King, which sought to detach Canada from the Empire and submerge it in a continental pattern, but now he supports the new nationalism of those who, when the Empire is dead, seek to assert the separate identity of Canada in opposition to the United States. Yet his basic beliefs remain the same: that the Fathers of Confederation intended a strong central government and that there was never any contract at Confederation between two nations, the English and the French. Hence he opposes the recent growth of provincial power and also the idea of any kind of special status for Quebec. One may disagree with him emphatically on both points, as this reviewer does, but still admire his command of Canadian history, delight in his resonant prose, and welcome him as an ally in the fight for independence.

\*\*\*\*\* William Godwin. *De la Justice Politique*. Traduction inédite par Benjamin Constant, éditée par Burton R. Pollin. Laval. \$12.00. Canada has become something of a centre of Godwinian scholarship and publishing. Some years ago Toronto published F. E.

L. Priestley's definitive edition of *Political Justice*, with its monumental scholarly apparatus, a work for which all students of libertarian doctrines must be thankful. Now Laval has published for the first time the legendary translation of *Political Justice* by Benjamin Constant of which all Godwin scholars have heard, but which few have seen, since the only copy has been preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Burton R. Pollin, the most assiduous of Godwin editors and bibliographers, obtained permission—no mean feat as anyone familiar with the Bibliothèque Nationale will know—to publish the translation, and it is the whole of Constant's incomplete rendering of Godwin that Laval now reproduces, with a copious and extremely informative introduction to the background of the work and the translation by Professor Pollin. One curious fact will strike the reader. On the dust cover flap the work is described as "De la Justice politique par Benjamin Constant", and on the spine of the book as well as of the dust cover, it is Constant's name, not Godwin's, that appears. Doubtless, in a francophone readership, Constant is likely to arouse more interest than Godwin. Still, there are limits to the propriety of appearing to give credit where it is not due.

\*\*\*\* Donald S. Hair. *Browning's Experiments with Genre*. University of Toronto Press. \$10.00. In some ways Browning was the original pioneer of mixed-media through his assiduous attempts, by grafting on to his poetry elements from other literary genres, to achieve the kind of vehicle that most nearly fitted his aim, which was the exploration of the complexity of human motives and anxieties. It is strange that no-one—before Professor Hair—has thoroughly studied this vital aspect of Browning's achievement. His book, which carefully examines all of Browning's important works and analyses the effect on them of their literary associations is therefore an extremely valuable addition to the already considerable volume of recent studies.

\*\*\*\* James Gray. *Johnson's Sermons: A Study*. Oxford University Press. \$15.50. That Samuel Johnson should have tried his hand at the writing of sermons, which he regarded as "a considerable branch of English literature", or that clergymen at a loss for inspiration should have welcomed him as a somewhat substantial ghost-writer, is not surprising. More surprising is the fact that this branch of his work, which illuminates an important aspect of

his character—his consistent piety—should have received so little attention from the critics; the fact that his sermons have not been freely republished and that there has been controversy over the exact degree of his authorship, is hardly sufficient excuse, and the explanation for the development must surely lie in a radical shift of point of view among intellectuals, not towards religion as such, but towards its institutional expression. It is for this reason that James Gray's book, *Johnson's Sermons*, is a timely and original contribution to the study of that extraordinary man who combined so memorably, like the Church of England to which he so loyally adhered, both grandiosity and true greatness.

\*\*\*\* W. J. ECCLES. *France in America*. Fitzhenry & Whiteside. \$10.30. *France in America* appears under unfortunate auspices, which are likely to prejudice Canadian nationalists against it. It is published as a volume in the New American Nation series, which is described as a "comprehensive survey of United States history since the days of discovery..." This certainly suggests academic annexation, since only a comparatively few pages of France in America are concerned with territories—mainly in the Mississippi Valley—that have ever been part of the United States. By far the greater part of the book relates to what later became Canada, and the rest to islands in the West Indies that have never recognized the rule of any imperial land but France. It is unfortunate that Professor Eccles should have co-operated in such an imperialist failure of tact and fact on the part of the American publishers and editors of the series. Still, it would be just as unfortunate if Canadian readers were to neglect *France in America* for that reason, since it is one of the rare books that relate early Canadian history clearly to other French imperial ventures, and it makes a good condensed history of the efforts of the Bourbon monarchy to establish a viable colonial system in the Americas.

\*\*\*\* *The Canadian Oxford Desk Atlas of the World*. Oxford University Press. \$7.95. The surface of a sphere is infinitely multicentric, and for this reason alone it is possible for any country, in an access of nationalism, to regard itself as the centre of the world. In more modest terms, it is logical for a country to have an atlas which begins with its own geography and spreads outward, and this is precisely what the *Canadian Oxford Desk*



*Atlas*, in its third edition, does. A quarter of the maps and more than a third of the gazeteer are devoted to Canada; in addition, an introductory section of 20 pages presents essential Canadian statistics. The *Atlas* thus provides an excellent introduction to the geography of Canada, and at the same time gives Canadians a good introductory background to the geography of the world as a whole.

\*\*\*\* PETER C. DOBELL. *Canada's Search for New Roles*. \$2.95. BRUCE THORDARSON. *Trudeau and Foreign Policy*. \$2.95. Oxford University Press. We have passed beyond the period of careless rapture in Canadian foreign affairs. Foreign affairs under Trudeau have necessarily — as a result of the world situation rather than of the prime minister's style — been less productive of gratifying roles for Canada. In another way than Mackenzie King's, Canada has again been turning in on its own problems, and seeing its foreign policy in relation to these problems — the largest of them, of course, itself the product of a foreign connection, with the United States. In these two books the reader will find an excellent balance of views on the Trudeau era in external relations. Peter Dobell tends to represent the official attitude, and to outline without criticism what the government has been setting out to achieve in the past four years. Bruce Thordarson, while not a critic of the Trudeau regime in the manner of Walter Stewart or Peter Newman, presents Trudeau's acts and policies within the necessary context of political, academic and popular reaction, and as a slice of contemporary history, balancing all the factors and reaching highly judicious conclusions, his *Trudeau and Foreign Policy* is quite a virtuoso performance. Certainly anyone who reads Thordarson's and Dobell's books attentively can feel himself well briefed on an aspect of Canadian policy that has changed radically since Trudeau the pragmatist took over the leadership of the government from Pearson the romantic.

\*\*\*\* LESTER B. PEARSON. *Mike*. University of Toronto Press, \$12.50. ARNOLD HEENEY. *Things that are Caesar's*. University of Toronto Press, \$12.50. Lester B. Pearson and Arnold Heeney are names that have become firmly attached to the period when Canadian foreign policy first attained self-consciousness, and their volumes of memoirs may have a historical value that transcends their interest as personal documents. That of course is for historians to say; my own impression is that both men were

so conditioned by diplomatic activity that even now they let escape very little that gives a startling revelation of Canada's role as a kind of floating middle power. But inevitably there is the interest of considering politicians and public servants as men and minds, and here it is Heeney who presents the more intriguing self-portrait, partly of course because he was a figure less in the public eye and therefore less known than Pearson, but partly just because he is a better memoirist. It is hard to believe that Pearson was really a dead-level Mr. Average Canadian, but that is the kind of person he makes himself appear, and far too much of his book, where it does not concern the details of foreign service work, consists of cosy trivia told in resonant clichés. Arnold Heeney, on the other hand, deploys a surprisingly philosophic mind and a quite urbane style over his recollections. The result is that he often illuminates his time and place, and the ironically perceived "great" who move through them, in a memorable and original way, and one continues to read his book in the always satisfied expectation of vivid and revealing personal insights. *The Things that are Caesar's* is for its own sake one of the most interesting books ever written by a Canadian public servant; *Mike* is interesting for the history that rubbed off on its writer.

\*\* Peter Such. *Soundprints: Contemporary Composers*. Clarke Irwin. \$3.50. Peter Such, an interesting experimental novelist, has written a useful — if gossipy — guide to some of our contemporary and more experimental composers of music. The choice of composers — Weinzwieg, Somers, Beckwith, Beecroft, Buczynski, Shafer — is a confessedly personal one, though it has the virtue of presenting a fair variety of musical perspectives. Still, many interesting composers are absent, and it is curious to find none of the francophone musicians. *Soundprints* gives a peephole look into the world of Canadian music; for a good comprehensive book for laymen we are still waiting.

## TALK AND CREATION

*A Checklist of Canadian Literature and Background Materials*, by R. E. Waters (University of Toronto Press), is the revised version of what — since its first appearance in 1959 — has become the standard bibliography of Canadian letters. The first edition covered the period from 1628-1950; the 1972 edition ex-

tends the coverage ten years to 1960. This extension in time is accompanied by a growth in volume from 721 pages of actual bibliography (i.e. not counting index or introduction) to 1,001 pages. A minor part of this increase has been due, I suspect, to a more sophisticated typographical layout, but the greater part is undoubtedly a matter of increased content, and since this means an expansion of more than a third in size, it is evident that it cannot be caused by the extension of a mere decade in the time covered. Canadian literature has proliferated indeed in recent years, but not to that extent. In other words — and this one finds by spot-checking through the pages — a fair number of omissions in the earlier edition have been corrected, in addition to the inclusion of later titles. The *Checklist* is not only larger, but also more complete than it was before.

It is divided into two parts, the first dealing with poetry, fiction and drama, and the second — the so-called "Background Materials" — including such fields as biography, essays, local history, religion and morality, travel and a strange grab-all category called "scholarship", which seems to overlap into both biography and essays. The arrangement means that an author's works are shown together only if he has written in a single genre; otherwise they are divided among the various sections, and this many readers may find an inconvenience, but there are arguments to be made for both kinds of arrangement.

Part I claims to be complete, and indeed appears to be virtually comprehensive. Part II, we are warned, is no more than selective, and this is certainly the case, for I have found titles missing that, perhaps having different criteria from Dr. Watters, I would certainly have included. Nevertheless, the page ratio between the two sections tells us something very interesting about the Canadian literary genius. In the original edition Part I contained 321 pages, and Part II 400 pages. In the present edition Part I contains 452 pages and Part II 549 pages, and is confessedly incomplete. Thus in each case the *selected* background materials exceed considerably in length the *whole* of the so-called "creative" works. Canadians, it is evident, have been and remain in their writing a people more inclined to the didactic than to the imaginative. I suspect that the vastly increased publication of poetry and the modestly increased publication of drama and fiction since 1960 may begin to equalize the

balance. But the chilling evidence of the Watters checklist seems to be that up to now we have been far more likely to talk than to cultivate our imaginations.

In physical terms — layout, binding and dust cover — the new Checklist is a great improvement on the first.

G.W.

## BACKGROUNDS

IN VIEW of the upsurge of both interest in Canadian dramatic writing and creativity in that field, we welcome as one of the most useful of recent checklists *The Brock Bibliography of Published Canadian Stage Plays in English 1900-1972*. It is prepared by a Dramatic Media Class at Brock and sponsored by the University's Department of Drama. (Copies are available from the Playwright's Co-op, 344 Dupont Street, Toronto, \$1.50.)

The Bibliography contains almost 900 titles, yet, as the compilers admit with an astonishment which others will share, even this is an incomplete list (though certainly the fullest yet available), and supplements are apparently contemplated.

As the compilers also point out, the *Bibliography*, lengthy as it is, does not contain by any means the whole of Canadian drama. Radio and television plays, even if published, are not included; several hundred such plays have achieved print in one form or another, and there are thousands more in the C.B.C. archives which, as we have often remarked, comprise the largest pool of unpublished literature in Canada. It is to be hoped that some equally enterprising group will make the appropriate checklist of non-stage drama in Canada — for decades its most prolific and at certain periods its most interesting form — to complement this excellent Brock bibliography of stage work.

*English-Canadian Literature: A Student Guide and Annotated Bibliography*, by R. G. Moyles and Catherine Siemens (Athabasca Publishing Company, Edmonton, n.p.), is a useful search tool, listing historical and bibliographical material on the subject and indicating sources of primary material available to the student — e.g. anthologies, reviews, paperback editions, and the research resources of libraries in Canada and abroad.

L.T.C.

## INDEX TO CANADIAN LITERATURE

Readers who have been awaiting an Index to *Canadian Literature* will be interested to know that one has just been published. Entitled *An Index to the Contents of Canadian Literature*, it is compiled by Professor Glenn Clever, Head of the Department of English at the University of Ottawa, with the assistance of Burris Devanney and George Martin. It covers exhaustively all the issues of *Canadian Literature* from the beginning to No. 54 (Autumn 1972) in a volume of 170 pages. It is published, at \$6.00, by *The Golden Dog*, 15 Ossington Avenue, Ottawa, a press which is also publishing a series of valuable reprints of Canadian writings of the Colonial and Confederation periods.

Naturally, we welcome and recommend this excellent aid to the study of *Canadian Literature*, and we share the hope of its publishers that it will be "an on-going feature with periodic revisions in order to bring the compilation up to date."

G.W.

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