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LRC

Literary Review of Canada

The LRC 100

Canada's Most Important Books

Introduction

All comparisons are odious and lists are by nature comparisons. Therefore all lists are odious, and I for one have a lot of trouble making them up. A list called *The LRC 100: Canada's Most Important Books* is a recipe for a brawl, as there will be many disagreements about what should or should not have been included. In fact, the list itself—we're told—is a product of furious though presumably civil wrangling among its compilers. We hope no tea-cups were thrown.

My own long-ago experiences after the publication of *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*—a book that has made it onto the dreaded 100, though with a disparaging note attached to it—would indicate that the editors of this list will receive more than one sackful of hate mail. Some will rail against what they feel is a biased exclusion of their favourites, others will denounce the effort in its entirety as elitist, racist, centrist, socialist, capitalist, stodgy, radical, stateist, colonialist, naively nationalist, feminist, misogynist—you name it. Yet others will say that the enterprise *per se* is hopelessly outdated, as there isn't and never has been a Canada, or a Canadian tradition in literature, or a respectable Canadian body of work—which is where *Survival* came in, back in 1972.

A good definition of Canada might be that it is the only country that is being told repeatedly—from both inside and outside itself—that it doesn't really exist. This is a tub that has been thumped even more loudly of late, as Canada—if you allow that it once did have an essence, form, and being—supposedly fragments into provinces, interest groups, ethnic constituencies, and hyphenations. In view of these rumblings *The LRC 100* will provide a test case: if it's a bone worth fighting over, there's a dance in the old dame yet. If you believe in Canada, bite the list!

It may soothe some offended souls to note that this modest offering does not claim to list the hundred best Canadian books. That a work can be "important" without possessing much literary merit as such has long been a truism. (Take, for instance, the *Geological Survey of Canada*, 1863—number 6 on this list.) But what is meant by "important"? Many of these books were highly influential in



their day but are now largely forgotten; others have become classics. Each listing has a small paragraph attached to it, defending its inclusion. From them, we learn that "important" has many meanings. Perhaps these books may be viewed as having made us what we are today.

Whatever that may be, some will say. Those that do say so might try reading through this mini-library of essentials. They'll have a much better idea then.

Will *The LRC 100* become required reading for our politicians? Can moose fly? Never mind. For teachers, students, citizens, and the nationalistically disoriented, this list will open doors and windows, stimulate thought and debate, and offer a few pathways through the post-modern labyrinth.

Zip up your parka. Grab your mosquito repellent and your recipe for stewed gopher and your last spike and your joul dictionary and your *Anne of Green Gables* egg-racing spoon. Turn off your Blackberry. Look out for Coyote. Stop gnashing your teeth because you wanted some other, presumably finer list. Read on.

Margaret Atwood

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1 *Bref récit et succincte narration de la navigation faite en MDXXXV et MDXXXVI (Account of the Second Voyage of the Navigation of 1535 and 1536) (1545)*

Jacques Cartier

Cartier not only explored what would become the centre of New France; in retrospect he coined a name for a nation. Through an apparent misunderstanding, he used the Huron-Iroquois word Canada, meaning village, to refer to the area surrounding what is now Quebec City. Later iterations of loose usage (as so often happens in the case of newly discovered lands) led to further extensions of the word's meaning, first to refer to the entire Laurentian region, then to the territory north of the Great Lakes as well and, finally, to most of the northern half of the continent. Cartier's unwitting coinage, which appears for the first time in his *Bref Récit*, gave the country he helped discover a moniker far more suitable than the other term common at the time of Confederation—British North America.

Mark Lovewell

2 *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean (1795)*

Samuel Hearne

Hearne's *Journey* is the foundational classic of northern exploration literature. While telling the enthralling story of a 5,600-kilometre northern trek, Hearne paints a vivid word-portrait of a way of life that was soon lost to smallpox; he also devotes 50 pages to pioneering descriptions of little-known sub-Arctic animals, including the beaver. This book includes the only written account of one of the most controversial moments in Canadian history, the massacre of innocents at Bloody Falls. Given that Hearne lived for an extended period in a foreign culture, *Journey* is one of the earliest examples of "immersion reporting" in North American literature.

Ken McGoogan

3 *Wacousta; or The Prophecy: A Tale of the Canadas (1832)*

John Richardson

At an isolated British fort on the Canadian frontier, the entire regiment is jolted awake after an apparent intrusion by an unknown enemy, who now lurks in the forest outside. So opens this best-known work of the first Canadian-born novelist. Richardson's conflation of factual history and fictional suspense is spiced with liberal dashes of political allegory. *Wacousta* encapsulates, perhaps more than any other work, Northrop Frye's theory of early English Canada's garrison mentality. The novel's microcosm of polite colonial society is alternately repelled and attracted by the lawless freedom that looms just beyond the fortress gates.

Mark Lovewell

4 *Report on the Affairs of British North America (1839)*

Lord Durham

Only in Canada could royal commission reports be essential documents of self-awareness. John George Lambton, Lord Durham (1792–1840), landed in Quebec in 1838 to investigate the causes and effects of the recent rebellions and stayed five months. He created ten sub-commissions to examine subjects ranging from the seigneurial system to the educational structures of the country, concluding that it was actually "two nations warring in the bosom of a single state." A fascinating snapshot of 1830s Canada, Durham's report would have mixed success. His call for the establishment of "responsible government" was immediately acted upon; his open wish for the assimilation of French Canadians would be mocked by old and young alike for the eight generations that followed the publication of the Report.

Patrice A. Dutil

Geological Survey of Canada: Report of Progress from Its Commencement to 1863 (1863)

This volume is truly a Canadian classic: it was published only 20 years after the survey was authorized in 1843 by the provincial government of what was then Canada—roughly, modern Quebec and Ontario. The book gives a systematic description of the area's rocks, minerals and fossils, and is accompanied by a geological map (issued separately). Prior to its publication, only a few scattered observations had been made on the geology and mineral resources of Canada. Afterward, there was a scientific foundation on which the mineral and petroleum industry could build, one that established—among other things—that it was futile to search for workable coal deposits in the region.

Gerard V. Middleton



Susanna Moodie

5 *Roughing It in the Bush, or Life in Canada (1852)* Susanna Moodie

When Moodie, a well-educated English immigrant, published her account of life with her husband, John, on a pioneer farm in Upper Canada in the 1830s, she dispelled any illusions her British readers may have nursed about the colony. She described a raw society of illiterate newcomers and the back-breaking struggle to survive. But Moodie broke new ground in more ways than one. She was one of the few immigrants to record her experiences, and her self-portrayal has made her an icon of CanLit—the pragmatist who discovers her own strength as she overcomes adversity. The Moodie stereotype marches through novels by authors as varied as L.M. Montgomery and Margaret Atwood, exercising a powerful hold on the contemporary Canadian imagination.

Charlotte Gray

***Canada and the Canadian Question (1891)* Goldwin Smith**

A former Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford, Smith did not move until his late forties to Canada, where he soon gained notoriety for his political polemics. In this best known of his works, he argued that Canada could never be a successful nation, not least because of its linguistic divide. While French Canada had its own destiny, English Canada's future lay in a continental union that would strengthen Anglo-Saxon civilization. Smith's blatant ethnocentrism was widely scorned in his own day, yet elements of his logic continue to reappear—often in strangely inverted forms, especially among today's Quebec sovereigntists. Yet little acknowledgement is given to the intellectual debts owed to this path-breaking contrarian thinker.

Mark Lovewell

8 ***Wild Animals I Have Known: Being the Personal Histories of Lobo, Silverspot, Raggylug, Bingo, the Springfield Fox, the Pacing Mustang, Wully and Redruff* (1898)**

Ernest Thompson Seton

Although he spent his childhood watching wildlife in Toronto's pre-parkway Don Valley, Seton assembled the stories in *Wild Animals I Have Known* only after settling outside New York City. A bestseller in its day and in print ever since, the work popularized its genre and its subject like no book before and few after. It did not, however, originate the modern animal story, as Seton claimed. Its romantic, pathos-driven stories of animal heroes are neither true nor realistic, as Seton also claimed and some believed. And there is nothing distinctively Canadian about those animals, as Seton never did claim, but others have. Nonetheless the book touched the hearts of a generation and, for better or worse, helped North Americans make the giant cultural leap between *The Deerslayer* and *Bambi*.

Nick Mount

9 ***The Poems of Archibald Lampman* (1900)**

Archibald Lampman

Categorized with Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman and Duncan Campbell Scott as one of the "Poets of Confederation," Lampman died young but was the first to be recognized as a poet of substantial achievement. He worked in Ottawa and wrote primarily about the natural world close to the capital, which he explored on foot and by canoe. His poetry is remarkable for its quiet, meditative, often melancholy evocativeness and its descriptive precision and emotional restraint. In many respects, it serves as a verbal though subdued complement to the later paintings of the Group of Seven.

W.J. Keith

10 ***The Imperialist* (1904)**

Sara Jeanette Duncan

Some books are important because they capture a crucial moment in a culture's history. This smart and savvy novel, which scrutinizes Ontario politics at the turn of the 20th century, caught Canada at the height of imperialist fever when we had nowhere to go but down into the cozy embrace of the Americans and their enormous markets. In a style derivative of both Jane Austen and Henry James, Duncan has her hero, Lorne Murchison, fight valiantly but in vain for the maintenance of the imperial connection. The fact that we know the Americans won us in the end does not take away from the fun of reading about the tug-of-war as it was taking place.

Bronwyn Drainie

11 ***Anne of Green Gables* (1908)**

Lucy Maud Montgomery

For most of the 20th century, Canadian school children learned early that literature, like life, was elsewhere, nestling among Wordsworth's daffodils or in Tennyson's Camelot. *Anne of Green Gables* was the first Canadian book most of us read, and it made our own country magical. The poignancy of Anne's loneliness and eventual triumph has a universal appeal—witness the book's hold on the Japanese imagination—but for Canadians, its added fillip is its assurance that one of our own pious, smug, puritanical communities can yield such rich stories, such varied eccentricity.

Suanne Kelman



Stephen Leacock

12 *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912)

Stephen Leacock

Small-town Canadian life was captured perfectly and forever in Mariposa (a.k.a. Orillia, Ontario), a place where everybody belongs to everything “and that’s what makes it so different from the city.” Leacock, an unlikely combination of economist and humourist, understood the bonds—economic, social, political—that tie people in small communities together. Nobody was allowed to have *no* politics, he explained of the wild federal election of 1911. His gallery of Dickensian figures—Dean Drone, Golgotha Gingham, Judge Pepperleigh, Peter Pupkin and a host of others—acted out that peculiarly Canadian brand of ironic but deeply humanistic comedy that echoes today on stage and television with the *Wingfield* series and *Corner Gas*.

Bruce Allen Powe

Flint and Feather (1912)

E. Pauline Johnson

“Ooh! Isn’t she savage?” one prairie farmer muttered as he watched Canada’s first coast-to-coast celebrity recite her poetry in a church hall in the 1890s. But Johnson was anything but savage. The daughter of a Mohawk chief and a well-educated English-born immigrant, Johnson grew up on the Six Nations reserve in Southern Ontario, steeped in British literature. Rising above the racism of her day, she drew on her double heritage to write both blood-curdling ballads drawn from aboriginal mythology and lyrical poetry. Way ahead of her time, Johnson had a vision of a society in which diversity creates strength—a vision that Canada struggles to achieve today.

Charlotte Gray

Maria Chapdelaine (1914)

Louis Hémon

“In this land of Quebec nothing has changed. Nor shall anything change. One duty have we clearly understood: that we should hold fast—should endure.” And nothing has changed—except today it is called the “distinct society.” Written in 1913 by a French tourist visiting the Saguenay, Maria’s meditation on the virtues of her three suitors, and her ultimate decision to marry the guy next door, has become a metaphor for the hard-wired devotion of French-speaking Quebecers to images of their rural, Catholic past. With more than 200 different editions to choose from, and only 100 pages of text, the book’s Gothic style and touching connection with place make it a universally appealing read.

Reed Scowen

Jalna (1927)

Mazo de la Roche

In some ways, *Jalna* represents the quintessential Canadian novel, aptly telling the story of settling in both Quebec and Ontario. After a military stationing in India in 1848, the British Captain Philip Whiteoak and Adeline Court migrate to inherited property in Quebec and suffer the harsh climate, only to move on to the “fertile southern shore of Ontario.” The legacy of the Whiteoak family is told through the rhythmic and poetic words of de la Roche, who details the family’s odd characters,

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tragedies and comic events, not only in this novel but in the 15 sequels that followed. According to the *Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*, the *Jalna* books had sold 11 million copies worldwide by 1966.

Carolyn Vandermeer

16 ***The Fur-Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History (1930)***
Harold A. Innis

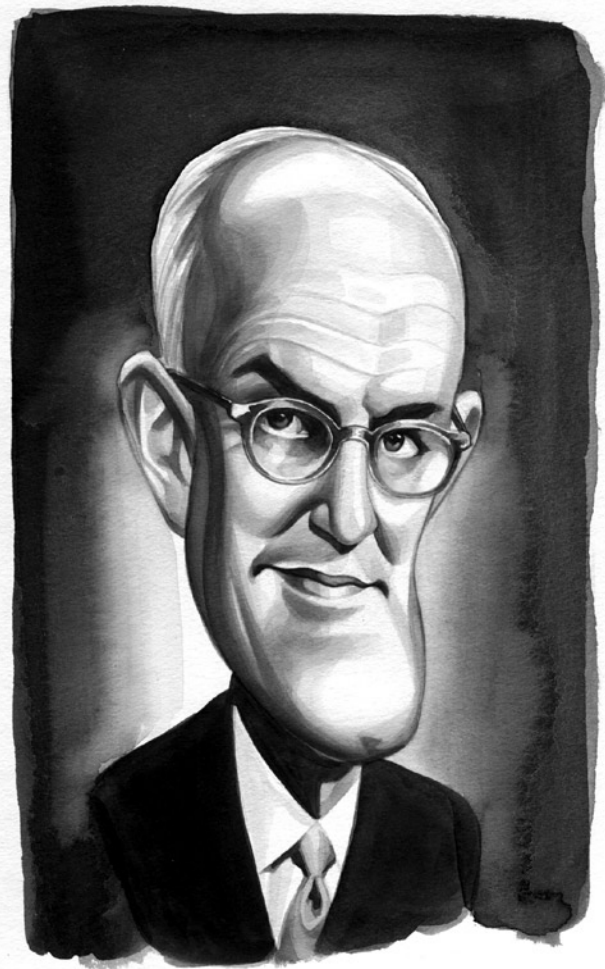
Innis's landmark study of the fur trade in Canada succeeded where no other book has: it combined the analytical tools of political economy with those of historical narrative to produce a uniquely brilliant account of our economic roots. In describing the challenges that the harsh environment presented to the early explorers and traders, it can be read as an introduction to a critical period of economic development in this country. But at a more sophisticated level, *Fur-Trade* developed theories to account for things such as staple production, inter-regional conflicts and social adaptation that remain with us to this day. Innis's work is vital to an understanding of our early colonial history.

John Courtney

17 ***Such Is My Beloved (1934)***
Morley Callaghan

Callaghan may be regarded as Canada's first "serious" professional fiction writer, and one of the first to focus on ordinary people living in a city environment. Beginning work as a newspaper reporter, he produced novels, short stories and non-fiction, but his best writing may well reside in novella-length narratives that he transformed into moral fables. The story of a Roman Catholic priest who tries to redeem two street girls, *Such Is My Beloved* is a poignant exploration of the uneasy relation between sacred and profane love, and exemplifies what Callaghan once described as the difficulties of being a Christian.

W.J. Keith



Donald Creighton

18 ***The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760–1850 (1937)***
Donald Creighton

As an idealistic Ontario youngster, Creighton told friends that he wanted to popularize the *Patriotes* of Lower Canada and their heroic struggle against the British Empire and its pompous, greedy Montreal allies. Studying facts can change your mind. The more he read, the more Creighton saw Montreal merchants as the neglected heroes of his Canada. There was the vision of a transcontinental nation, linked by river, canal and—ultimately—rail. Montreal enterprise, claimed Creighton, built Canada *a mari usque ad mare*, not self-centred *Patriotes* and not whining Westerners. Creighton gave us what we had sought in vain, a plain explanation of Canada's manifest destiny. Others offered rival notions: metropolitanism, two-nations federalism and multiculturalism. Creighton's old, unfashionable book comes closest to explaining a country we all share.

Desmond Morton

19 *Menaud, maître-draveur (Boss of the River)* (1937)

Félix-Antoine Savard

Unlike the death-dealing frozen world of Maria Chapdelaine, Savard's *Menaud* has won a lasting place in Québécois hearts for its dithyrambic description of "quicksilver streams, the sapphire of blueberries, the perfumed canes of raspberries" in an enchanted landscape. Everything else about the novel is dated, from its ultramontane Catholicism to its certainty that greedy anglophones will destroy the countryside. But of all the *romans de la terre*, it most perfectly expresses the Québécois attachment to the land—an anti-capitalist nostalgia that still helps fuel today's debates about sovereignty.

Ray Conlogue

20 *As for Me and My House* (1941)

Sinclair Ross

This novel of a bleak prairie existence during the Depression is an unforgettable portrait of a woman trapped by both poverty and lovelessness. Ross's ability to put the voice of Mrs. Bentley on the page—and to let the reader fill in what is never admitted in her journal—speaks to a wider theme of the silent suffering of women in a rigid society. It is our *Madame Bovary*. Later writers such as Margaret Laurence and Richard B. Wright would take up this theme, but nobody has conveyed it better than Ross.

Phyllis Bruce

21 *Two Solitudes* (1945)

Hugh MacLennan

There's the book—and then there's the title, which has developed a life of its own. Conceived in 1945 and recently buried (still breathing?) by our new Governor General, "Two Solitudes" became a trademark for all the English/French debates of the past 50 years and has gone into wider use as shorthand for schizophrenic behaviour of every kind. The book itself, set in the period between the two World Wars, is actually about the tensions among three solitudes—feudalism, rationalism and materialism—and the essential debate takes place within the soul of a single person, Athanase

Tallard. MacLennan is an astute, dispassionate yet sensitive observer, even if his formal writing style seems a bit dated.

Reed Scowen

Bonheur d'occasion (The Tin Flute) (1945)

Gabrielle Roy

This novel did not just herald the arrival of Roy as a major Canadian writer; it also, and more to the point for this endeavour, marked a turning point in the portrayal of Quebec society. What the reader gets is no longer a Quebec rural and somewhat folkloric, but rather a vivid panorama of a small urban, gritty corner of that society in a time of turmoil and transformation as the world, dragging Quebec with it, edged out of the Depression and headed into World War II.

John Crow



Gabrielle Roy

23 **Report of the Royal Commission to Investigate the Facts Relating to and the Circumstances Surrounding the Communication by Public Officials and Other Persons in Positions of Trust of Secret and Confidential Information to Agents of a Foreign Power (1946)**

Kellock-Taschereau Commission

The Royal Commission report on the Gouzenko spy case introduced Canada to both the Cold War and to espionage, in one fell swoop. The report included details of the commissioners' interrogations of all the main suspects in Canada's juiciest spy story. It also included the first public account of Igor Gouzenko's defection and the portrait he drew of the Soviet Union's clandestine methods and aims, based on his knowledge as a military intelligence official. It was the first (and probably last) such report ever to become a best seller. It had a considerable impact on public attitudes toward the Soviet Union, a wartime ally, and it helped shape government security policy throughout the Cold War.

Wesley Wark

24 **Who Has Seen the Wind (1947)**
W.O. Mitchell

If the story of one boy, Huck Finn, is the beginning of contemporary American fiction, the story of another boy, Brian O'Connell, growing up in a small Saskatchewan town during the Depression is the beginning of contemporary Canadian fiction. *Wind* introduces a slice of Canadian geography—the Prairies—with humour and gentleness comparable to Camara Laye's introduction to West Africa in *The African Child*. W.O. Mitchell celebrates the particular, in which prairie wind and sky and gophers are never far from Brian's developing consciousness, while connecting to the universal experience of birth and death. Few novels so delicately lattice innocence and experience, nature and the formation of human consciousness.

J.S. Porter

25 **Les Plouffe (The Plouffe Family) (1948)**

Roger Lemelin

While Lemelin's first novel, *Au pied de la Pente douce (The Town Below)*, had greater depth than his second, *Les Plouffe*, it was not as widely known or as influential. This was particularly true in English Canada, where a television series based on *Les Plouffe* was very popular in the latter part of the 1950s and played an important role in breaking down the two solitudes, as did the political and economic upheaval of Quebec's Quiet Revolution—to which the book and its French television adaptation undoubtedly contributed. Lemelin's French Canadian working-class family life, though richly Québécois, was universal enough for anglophones to create an image of a Quebec much more accessible than Duplessis's "corporate-clerical" fortress. In 1981, a Gilles Carle film based on the book was both a critical and a box office success.

Roland Penner

26 **Refus Global (Complete Refusal) (1948)**

Paul-Émile Borduas

This small, mimeographed booklet, initiated and signed by Montreal painter Borduas along with eight men and seven women who also considered themselves Automatistes, vehemently protested repression by the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec. It was also directed against government-run education and the conventionality of society in general. *Refus Global* urged "resplendent anarchy" for artists, who, Borduas believed, must be free of such suffocating influences in order to create. This manifesto not only voiced an important stance for artists, but is also often considered a precursor of the Quiet Revolution in the early 1960s in Quebec.

Elspeth Cameron

27 *Empire and Communications*

(1950)

Harold A. Innis

In this insightful work, Innis used his vast historical knowledge, focused initially on the Canadian fur trade and cod fisheries, to elaborate his idea that the character of historical empires is profoundly affected by their forms of communication—as seen particularly in the change from an oral tradition to literacy. Ranging from the origins of our alphabet to the spread of modern religious freedoms, this work remained largely neglected until Marshall McLuhan’s successes helped bring it to a wider audience; today, scholars acknowledge *Empire and Communications* as a pioneering work in the study of media, culture and power. The importance of Innis’s imaginative revelations can hardly be exaggerated.

Philip Marchand

28 *Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949–1951*

Massey-Lévesque Commission

Until mid-way through the last century, *laissez faire* attitudes and dubious returns meant that Canadian governments generally avoided funding the arts: they left that to wealthy patrons and public taste. When Vincent Massey, the Most Reverend Georges-Henri Lévesque and their fellow commissioners tabled their report, however, it marked the beginning of a new cultural era. Perhaps most importantly, they argued that Canadian art was vital to preserving a distinct national identity against encroaching Americanization—which made it worth paying for. Specific proposals included establishing CBC Television, channelling federal money to universities and creating what became the Canada Council for the Arts to provide nationwide arts funding. Over the next 20 years, rising nationalism carried most of the commission’s recommendations into reality, decisively reshaping Canadian culture.

Alastair Cheng

People of the Deer (1952)

Farley Mowat

Academic critics have never given Mowat his due. Possibly they resent his spectacular commercial success: books published in 25 languages and 40-odd countries, international sales exceeding 14 million copies. More likely, they have dismissed Mowat because the prevailing orthodoxy privileges fiction over non-fiction, and certainly over what the author called “subjective non-fiction.” With *People of the Deer*, a work distinguished by its literary strategies, Mowat launched a singular career, advancing the traditions of both exploration literature and what today we call creative or, more accurately, narrative non-fiction. This account of his encounters with the vanishing Ihalmiut people during a two-year stay in the Arctic is a landmark of Canadian literature.

Ken McGoogan

So Little for the Mind (1953)

Hilda Neatby

Neatby’s eloquent attack on the incipient trend toward “progressive” teaching in Canada rocked the education establishment when it was first published, with booming sales prompting a new edition only two months later. She failed to stem the tide, but because the object of her attack has now become the prevailing philosophy of education, her book seems more pertinent now than it was when she wrote it. Neatby was a member of the Massey-Lévesque Commission that created the Canada Council, and her educational ideals played a key role in securing federal aid for the country’s universities; she went on to write Vincent Massey’s speeches for him when he was Governor General. With *So Little for the Mind*’s success, she became one of our finest public intellectuals until her death in 1975.

Paul Wilson

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31 **John A. Macdonald: The Young Politician (1952) and The Old Chieftain (1955)**
Donald Creighton

No selection of important Canadian books is complete without Creighton's authoritative biography of Sir John A. Macdonald, which should top any list. It illuminates the political environment in Canada at the time of Confederation as well as the personalities of contemporary players. Hard though it is to believe, it is the first definitive story of Sir John A. It meets high academic standards but is not impeccable: it treats Sir John A.'s inevitable flaws as peccadilloes, and a contemporary writer would no doubt be more critical and possibly even more analytical. It is, however, an important story of Canada, told vividly and accurately, and reminds us that without leaders of vision, however vain and wily, nations do not get built.

Barbara McDougall

32 **Insight: A Study in Human Understanding (1957)**
Bernard Lonergan

This book is the cornerstone of Lonergan's philosophical universe, a study in both epistemology and metaphysics. He was prepared to face, when most of his contemporaries were not, the radical shift from a classicist mentality, in which a culture and system of belief is normative, to a modern culture with its historical consciousness and unsettling fluidity. For Lonergan, no culture or philosophy is perennial or normative; one has to turn to intentionality analysis and human interiority to discover the perduring, the constant. His considerable opus (University of Toronto Press is publishing his multi-volume work) and his far-ranging influence (institutes, centres of research and doctoral dissertations on his work) literally span the globe.

Michael Higgins

Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (1957) **33**
Northrop Frye

Anatomy is one of the 20th century's greatest works of academic literary criticism. By the time he wrote the book, Frye had an unbelievable grasp of the structure of western literature, the permanence and interconnectedness of its forms and themes and imagery. Although there was an inevitable reaction to the almost suffocating dominance of Frye's theories (promulgated by disciples known as the "small Fryes") in Canadian university English departments in the 1960s, and although later developments in literary theory fiercely challenged his ideas, Frye's approach will likely prove as intellectually persistent as Gnosticism or Jungianism—Frye works in the same tradition of timeless metaphors and resistance to history.

Philip Marchand

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz (1959) **34**
Mordecai Richler

Duddy was not the first Canadian Jewish novel, but it changed our landscape forever. Richler skewered all three of Montreal's communities with an exile's reluctant nostalgia. His unwilling affection for the world he had left never softened the cruel clarity of his vision. It was also the first salvo in a war that had not yet been declared: the fight of minority communities in our multicultural society to be portrayed only as they wish to be seen. It was a Canadian novel that made people angry, and that was new. But it is no sociological tract; you can re-read it with pleasure today.

Suanne Kelman

35 *The Spice-Box of Earth* (1961) Leonard Cohen

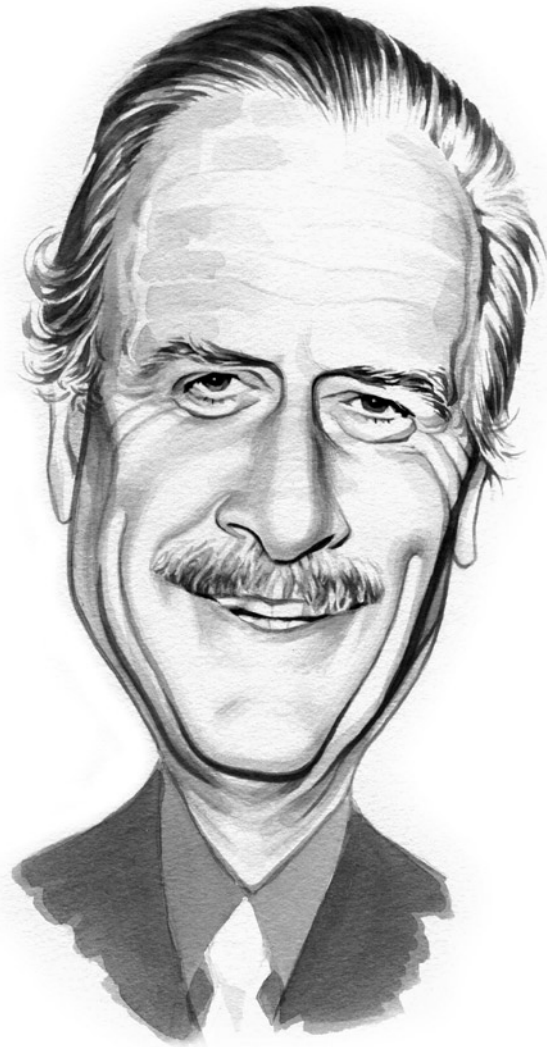
Poet, novelist, singer and songwriter, Cohen is a man of moods and masks. He plays vaudeville clown, satirist, man at prayer, ladies' man and lover, often in the same book. In *The Spice-Box of Earth*, the lover holds the stage with periodic raids from other intruding selves. If you are in the mood for wooing, you can't beat "As the Mist Leaves No Scar" or "Go by Brooks," or "Beneath My Hands" with the irresistible line "your eyelashes / are the spines of tiny fragile animals." *Spice-Box* contains a dozen of Canada's finest love lyrics, rippling into the poetry of John Newlove and Patrick Lane. Nothing human is alien to Cohen's wide-embracing heart.

J.S. Porter

36 *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962) Marshall McLuhan

The best of the books by this Canadian genius, media guru and world-class intellectual, *Gutenberg Galaxy* describes how, in the electronic age emerging around him, McLuhan clearly saw the rise, and fall, of the age of print. From the Gutenberg press flowed the Renaissance and the Reformation, the individual and the nation. From the electronic media would come wrap-around globalization, tribalism, the disappearance of childhood and life in the fast lane. Incredibly, McLuhan's far-out talk of the wired world foresaw the post-Gutenberg Internet before it happened. With this book, McLuhan established the scholarly reputation that made him a founder of media and communications studies. Consisting of short essays and scattered aphorisms, the book is both profound and accessible.

Mel Watkins



Marshall McLuhan

37 *Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years* (1963) Peter C. Newman

This post-mortem of John Diefenbaker's government appeared only months after his defeat, a meticulous chronicle of the embarrassing Progressive Conservative slide following a spectacular rise to power. Newman's approach galvanized readers: beyond a merciless array of facts and quotes, he used literary devices to vividly portray the former prime minister as an inarticulate, dishonest egomaniac. *Renegade in Power* became an unprecedented bestseller in Canadian political writing, and the book haunted Diefenbaker's reelection attempts while securing Newman's role as a leading public voice. A breakthrough work of "creative non-fiction" in this country, it also helped shake off a long tradition of respectful deference to our leaders.

Alastair Cheng

38 *Report of the Canada Royal Commission on Health Services (1964)*

Hall Commission

Commissioned by his old classmate John Diefenbaker in 1961 to head an inquiry into health care, Supreme Court Justice Emmett Hall took three years to research and write this remarkably eloquent text. The Hall Report called for a joint federal/provincial system that would cover the costs of preventive healthcare services and hospital care for all Canadians. This proved to be a most influential work: Parliament passed the legislation necessary in 1966, and Canada would celebrate its centenary with a new national healthcare program. The author went on to write many more influential royal commission reports, but this work won him the title “father of medicare” in many circles.

Patrice A. Dutil

39 *The Stone Angel (1964)*

Margaret Laurence

The Stone Angel is Margaret Laurence’s finest novel in the Manawaska series, and a re-shaper of the psychic landscape in Canada. Hagar Shipley—a crusty ancient of days—has been imprinted on the nation’s imagination, a noble and sturdy survivor in the psychological and meteorological winterscape that defines the country. Hagar’s sheer durability, the irreplaceable woman’s voice, the creative admixture of memory and imagination in a compelling first person narrative—all these features, plus the fact that the novel turns up on more high school English courses in this country than any other homegrown work, ensure *The Stone Angel* a foundational place in the English Canadian literary canon.

Michael Higgins

40 *In Praise of Older Women: The Amorous Recollections of András Vajda (1965)*

Stephen Vizinczey

Praise revealed not only that sex was a Good Thing but that it was even better when practiced between young men and older women (and vice versa). To a country—at least the anglo parts of it—raised on Presbyterian values and a permanent clampdown on libido, the novel ushered in a new/old European sensibility in matters of the heart and the flesh, as it followed the amorous adventures of the young Hungarian András Vajda through the crumbling salons of post-war Budapest. Canadian writing about sex was never the same again, which was mostly a Good Thing.

Helen Walsh



Margaret Laurence

41 **Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism (1965)** **George Grant**

Well, Canada is still here, but what, pray, is it? Grant wrote this brilliant, deep essay on the question in the early 1960s, in the aftermath of Diefenbaker's political downfall. He wrote of a small "c" conservative society, respectful of tradition, that was disappearing under the pressure of continentalism. Forty years have passed, but *Lament* still speaks to us directly of important issues. It is a must-read for anyone interested in what might define a nation called Canada—especially given that the formula of "medicare with peacekeeping" is more glib than inspiring, and factually shaky as well.

John Crow

Grant wrote several important books, but *Lament* galvanized much of a new generation. It argued that, because of poor political leadership and a greedy, unpatriotic corporate elite, Canada had sold so many of its assets and so much of its soul to America that it had already ceased to be a nation. Grant's book was widely reviewed and hotly debated. A new nationalism leading to the formation of The Committee for an Independent Canada, the Foreign Investment Review Agency and Petro-Canada can be traced to Grant's prophetic book. Told that it was already too late, or at best that their backs were to the wall, Canadians came out swinging and helped revive a widespread passion for our country.

Mel Hurtig

42 **Prochain épisode (Next Episode) (1965)** **Hubert Aquin**

Aquin was a leading member of Quebec's intelligentsia, an acclaimed writer, editor and maker of film and radio. In 1964, however, police arrested him in a stolen car and charged him with carrying an illegal firearm; when asked his occupation, he answered "revolutionary." Written over the following four months, which Aquin spent institutionalized, *Prochain épisode* reflects the author's complex passion for Quebec sovereignty. It describes a jailed separatist distracting himself by writing an allegorical thriller about attempted political assassination. Aquin's brilliant first novel immediately

transformed him into a nationalist literary icon, stoking the frustrated idealism that eventually erupted in October of 1970.

Helen Walsh

The Vertical Mosaic: An Analysis of Social Class and Power in Canada (1965) **John A. Porter**

This book's rather turgid style was more than offset by its impressive content: a comprehensive review of theories of class and power alongside provocative new ideas and hypotheses to explain Canadian inequality, with massive amounts of data brought to bear on these questions. Porter's Canada was a rigid and self-perpetuating hierarchy, where those of British origin occupied the top positions in a class system that relegated most other groups to lowly "entrance status" on the bottom rungs. Although radical demographic shifts eventually undermined Porter's conclusions about Canadian society, his analysis was received as revealed truth in social science circles at the time, and inspired students and scholars for more than a decade.

Donna Dasko

Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel (A Season in the Life of Emmanuel) (1965) **Marie-Claire Blais**

The brutal existence of Quebec's rural poor is laid bare in this terse short novel, which chronicles one year in the life of a family consisting of an exhausted mother, a violent and indifferent father, their 16 offspring and a grandmother who represents power, stability and endurance. Any vestige of romanticism, especially about the Roman Catholic Church, is stripped away, and Blais's chilling portrait of a pedophile priest predates the Mount Cashel revelations by more than two decades. Although tragic, the novel is written with such antic energy that it resonates with the work of William Faulkner and Gunter Grass.

Bronwyn Drainie

45 **Combat Journal for Place d'Armes: A Personal Narrative (1967)** Scott Symons

This highly experimental illustrated novel documents a symbolic personal journey from Toronto to Montreal. In this celebration of Canada's centennial year, Symons located the heart of Canada in the "place of arms"—*Place d'Armes*—in the core of Old Montreal, where he embraced, literally and figuratively, his male Québécois lovers. It is to French Canada and the symbolic buildings surrounding Place d'Armes that Symons turned (and away from the cerebral, superficial, increasingly Americanized culture of English Canada) to find that fourth dimension that is Canada's soul—and in doing so, provided the first depiction of a gay literary sensibility in the Canadian context.

Elsbeth Cameron

46 **The Ecstasy of Rita Joe (1967)** George Ryga

Ecstasy, with an unusual blend of realism, lyricism and expressionism, shows the experiences and eventual fate of Rita Joe, a young First Nations woman in the city. The work is significant in three ways: first, Ryga drew the attention of comfortable theatregoers to the plight of many Native people who come to the city, and their exploitation and the fumbling attempts of the well meaning to aid them; second, Ryga successfully brought together his talents for tragedy and poetic language with urgent social issues; and third, the drama's success in Vancouver (1967) and Ottawa (1969) signified the beginning of English Canadian playwriting's ongoing and increasing prominence in performance.

Malcolm Page

47 **Final Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1967–70)** Laurendeau-Dunton Commission

The Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission Report was important in introducing to a broader Canadian audience the wisdom of recognizing, on an equal footing, the two principal languages in Canada. Specifically, it recommended effecting that recognition by legally making French one of the country's two official languages, both at the federal level and in the provinces of Ontario and New Brunswick. An incidental result of the report was the advent of official multiculturalism, which provided authoritative sanction for recognizing the fact that there are many cultures represented in the Canadian mosaic and that these are all entitled to acknowledgement by public policy.

Donald Macdonald

48 **Les belles-sœurs (1968)** Michel Tremblay

Tremblay's *Les belles-soeurs* premiered in Montreal in 1968, inaugurating a distinctly Canadian theatre that brought the Québécois presence to centre stage, and broke with tradition by focusing on the harsh realities of the working class and by using *joual* to convey an anti-establishment approach. Germaine Lauzon recruits family members, friends and neighbours to help her paste into a book the million supermarket trading stamps that she has won. As she dreams of the items she can acquire with the stamps, the all-women cast speaks frankly about their tedious lives and daily frustrations, evoking tragic yet hopeful rhythms.

Rachelle Lerner

49 **Federalism and the French Canadians (1968)**

Pierre Elliott Trudeau

Millions of dollars were added to the cost of the launching of the Canadian patrol frigates just to translate the manuals for these warships into French! The bilingualism of the federal civil service and indeed of politicians has given rise to French immersion and a myriad of French-language training options. One man more than any other is responsible for bilingualism: Trudeau. Just as Hitler articulated his agenda in *Mein Kampf* so too did PET spell out his intentions in *Federalism*. This book reflects the rationale behind the present “bilingual” state of Canada, one which my grandfathers would not comprehend!

Roy Thomas

50 **Nègres blancs d'Amérique (White Niggers of America) (1968)**

Pierre Vallières

Part autobiography, part manifesto, *Nègres blancs* is nothing less than an explosion of rage tempered with the indisputable rationality of the human cry for freedom. Written in a New York prison, with Vallières awaiting extradition to Canada to face charges of manslaughter, it outlines the making of Québécois militancy and the emergence of the Front de libération du Québec. At the time of its publication in English in 1971, the book was heralded as a way for Canadians to know the terrorist enemy. Three and a half decades later, it stands as a bristling literary chronicle of the oppression faced by generations of French Canadians, burdened by conquest, colonization, class exploitation and a servile church—a political knife in the heart of Canadian statecraft. Nothing quite like it exists in Canadian letters.

Bryan D. Palmer

51 **Fifth Business (1970)**

Robertson Davies

Rich, wolfish, charming Boy Staunton throws a snowball with a stone in it at his pal Dunstan Ramsay on the streets of Deptford, a small Ontario town. Like the chaos theory butterfly whose wing-beat ultimately triggers tornadoes, so is this snowball, which hurtles on to fell a pregnant woman and cause madness and a premature birth that create saints, sinners, magicians and suicides. *Fifth Business* also created an international reputation for Davies, and ultimately led to comparisons with Thomas Mann and Charles Dickens and talk of a Nobel Prize for literature. But its most significant impact, and that of the other two volumes of the Deptford trilogy, was the realization that one could be struck by grotesqueries and grandeur even in small-town Anglo Canada.

Val Ross

52 **Gentlemen, Players and Politicians (1970)**

Dalton Camp

This is surely one of the most charming and most perceptive memoirs written on Canadian politics. Camp redeems a dismal though very popular genre. He is light, modest, amusing, penetrating. His account of the Tory campaign in the 1953 federal election (disastrous for them but lucky for the country) is a classic on how Canadian elections were actually run in mid century, and will endure long after the worthy, oh so worthy, books by Meisel and Regenstreif are consigned to the inaccessible stacks. The very great pity is that Camp never wrote a second volume.

Bob Bothwell

53 ***Silent Surrender: The Multinational Corporation in Canada (1970)***
Kari Levitt

In the tumultuous times of the 1960s and '70s, this book took Canada—and especially college campuses—by storm. It explained better than anyone has before or since the power of multinational corporations in this country, notably their ability to get access to Canadian resources on their terms. Levitt has proven prophetic on Canada's fate: North American economic integration (through free trade agreements) accompanied by Canadian political disintegration (Quebec's nationalism and Alberta's petro-provincialism). It helped inspire Canadian concern about foreign ownership, which led to a spate of new Trudeau-era policies. The spirit of Levitt's writing lives on in the national movement against corporate globalization and "deep integration" with the U.S. economy.

Mel Watkins

54 ***The Blacks in Canada: A History (1971)***
Robin Winks

This pioneering historical study details the diverse experiences of black immigrants to Canada, including slaves brought to Nova Scotia and the Canadas by Loyalists at the end of the American Revolution, refugees who fled to Nova Scotia following the War of 1812, and Jamaican Maroons and fugitive slaves who escaped to British North America. Winks also looks at the black West Coast businessmen who helped found British Columbia (particularly Victoria), and black settlements in the prairie provinces. *The Blacks in Canada* deserves recognition as a landmark in the historiography of the African Canadian experience.

Kyla Madden



Northrop Frye

The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination (1971)
Northrop Frye

This eloquent exploration of the Canadian imagination gave much-needed veracity to the poets and writers of the 1960s and 1970s, when Canadian literature was just beginning to be taught at universities. Frye is articulate and challenging and provocative even when you don't entirely agree with him. He gave us the language to talk about ourselves and concepts such as the "garrison mentality" that became part of our national consciousness. His observations on the isolation of the creative mind in Canada made our writers see themselves in new ways. He told us our ideas mattered.

Phyllis Bruce

55

56 *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971) Alice Munro

This remarkable and complex narrative explores the lives of girls growing to adulthood in southern Ontario. It honestly catches the fragility and the tenacity of Canadian women's lives beginning in the post-war period, when parochial Protestant values and prohibitions still exerted much force but were giving way to middle class success. *Lives of Girls and Women* exemplifies Munro's approach to crafting "stories"—a genre somewhere between short fiction and novella. They evoke a detailed sense of Ontario places and celebrate the extraordinary in their inhabitants' experiences, mythologizing the everyday. By persuading women to take their personal and sexual lives seriously, to ceaselessly reinvent their own stories, Munro helped shape the Canadian cultural tradition. In particular, she strongly influenced younger women writers such as Jane Urquhart and Janice Kulyk Keefer.

Cherry Clayton

57 *Paul Kane's Frontier* (1971) J. Russell Harper

Harper's massive and scholarly tome on Paul Kane (1810–71) is a triple-crown winner: it combines a thorough study of the artist's work and career, a catalogue of all his known works (the first for any Canadian artist), and the full text of Kane's *Wanderings of an Artist* (1851) describing his three-year passage (1845–48) across the West, itself a major text by any Canadian painter. Kane's chief aim was to document, before their assumed disappearance, the numerous Indian tribes—their people, customs, dress and rituals—which he did with panache and great fidelity. Harper's achievement set the standard for works on other Canadian artists.

David Silcox

58 *Red Lights on the Prairies* (1971) James H. Gray

Red Lights marked an important step in bringing Canada's untold social history to public attention: as well as being a serious sociological study, Gray's book was entertaining. It dispelled the prevalent academic myth that the West had been settled by upstanding Bible-reading settlers, and demonstrated convincingly that the settlement years were, in fact, the raunchiest period in the history of the Prairie provinces—a time when the proliferation of officially sanctioned brothels "stirred the guardians of public morality to outraged protest." Along with considerable domestic success, *Red Lights* sold an unprecedented 30,000 copies in the United States. Ultimately, Gray showed the book-buying public that the early Canadian West—while tamer than the American frontier—had a colour and a flavour all its own.

Brian Brennan

59 *La Sagouine* (1971) Antonine Maillet

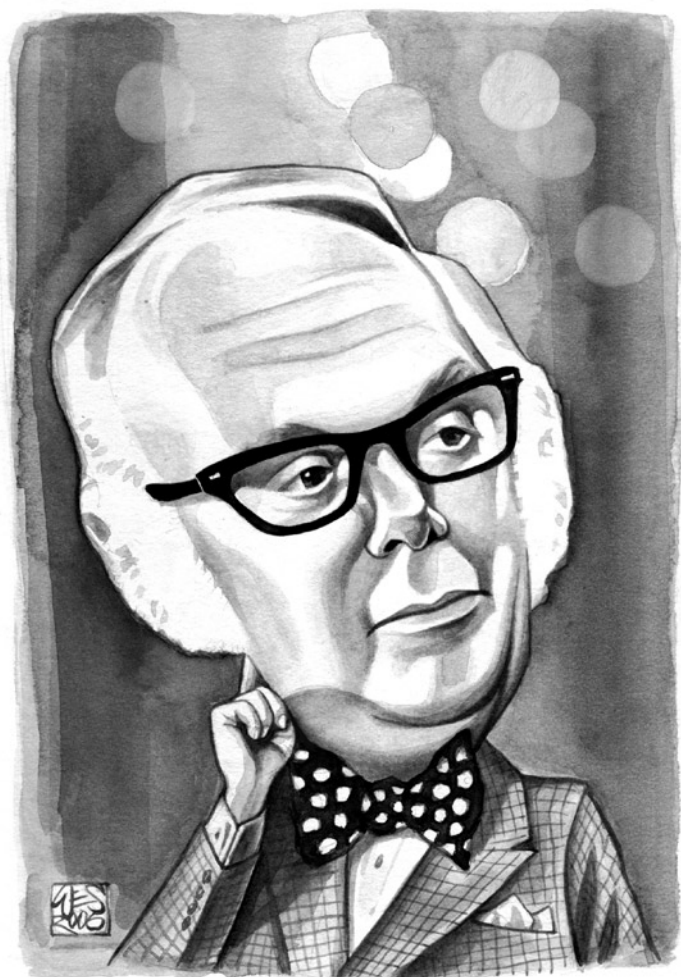
The plays of Molière and Shakespeare set the stage for the French and English literary traditions. *La Sagouine* does the same for Acadian literature. It is extraordinary in both setting and content: there is nothing on the stage but an old washerwoman with her pail and mop, no drama but her thoughts on life, marriage, death, priests—all brought to life on stage by Viola Léger, in a voice Acadians recognized as their own. The play's fatalism, humour, gritty realism and rich language made it an immediate, immense hit in both Canada and Europe. With *La Sagouine*, the Acadian people stepped out of the boat and into the world.

Clive Doucet

Leaving Home (1972)**David French**

Leaving Home, if not the *fons et origo* of that all-too-familiar Canadian trope, the displaced family, is its archetypal dramatic expression. It influenced English Canadian drama for two decades much in the manner that *The Waste Land* influenced English poetry in the two decades before World War Two. Dealing in an earnest, naturalistic manner with the travails of a displaced Newfoundland family, it imbued a specifically Canadian ambiance with a sense of high seriousness, a recognition that attention must be paid. It also underlined, and indeed helped to foster, some of the most consistent themes in 1970s Canadian playwriting—a decade of explosive creativity whose influence has, for good or bad, continued to influence what is recognizably distinctive Canadian drama.

Graham Harley



Pierre Berton

60 **The Last Spike (1972)** **Pierre Berton**

If the notion of distinguishing a Canadian consciousness from an American one retains any currency, a psychology-test question could seek a reaction to the words “the last spike.” With his book of that title, Berton drove the phrase deep into the national psyche. Elaborating on the Laurentian thesis of Donald Creighton and Harold Innis, Berton created a vivid epic of how Canada was forged into a single nation by the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway—a saga that culminated in an historic moment on November 7, 1885, with the driving of a symbolic “last spike.” Along with its companion volume, *The National Dream*, this book—and the CBC-TV series it spawned—transformed the idea of “Canada” in the popular imagination.

Ken McGoogan

Survival (1972)**Margaret Atwood**

If American culture has The Frontier at its core and British culture The Island, then Canada’s informing symbol is *Survival*—against weather and wilderness to begin with, later against foreign influences and the chaos of too much freedom. This book is so important because it nailed the relationship between wilderness, Canadians and myths. Even if it seems out of date now, with its Victim Positions One through Four and chapters on wounded animals and failed artists, it was necessary for Canadian readers to examine these themes of wilderness and survival so that we could move on to establishing some comfort with urban and many-cultured settings in our literature.

Laura Robinson

63 **Howie Meeker's Hockey Basics (1973)**

Howie Meeker

Meeker's book was hugely influential in shaping the way Canadians play hockey today. A former NHL player, Meeker was a commentator for *Hockey Night in Canada* in the early 1970s—a sort of anti-Don Cherry who decried the goonery in the game and the lack of basic playing skills. When Meeker was a commentator for the 1972 summit series with the Soviets, his arguments were borne out when the best hot-dog talent in the NHL very nearly lost to a disciplined Russian team. The shock prompted a searching reappraisal of how hockey was taught to youngsters, and Meeker's book, written in the aftermath of the 1972 series, became the blueprint for how to do so.

Chris Dornan

64 **The Temptations of Big Bear (1973)**

Rudy Wiebe

Novel, epic, tragedy and revisionist history combine in this work of fiction to become a landmark in the Canadian consciousness. Juxtaposing the historical (white) records with imaginative recreations of Cree viewpoints and experience, it reinterprets the story of Big Bear, the Plains Cree chief who opposed the signing of the Indian treaties. Wiebe's Mennonite background enabled him to respond to the Native people's understanding of the relationship of human beings to the land with full empathy, and to record the inevitable clash between political power and religious vision. This is a stylistically challenging book that transforms a uniquely Canadian story into art.

W.J. Keith

65 **Ten Lost Years: 1929–1939 (1973)**

Barry Broadfoot

People tell their stories. You tape them and turn them into a book. That was the simple formula that produced volume after volume of oral history for newspaperman Barry Broadfoot. It started with *Ten Lost Years*, for which Broadfoot crisscrossed Canada recording accounts of the Depression from the people who lived through it. Many of those accounts are about hardship and cruelty, but there is also love and joy; the Dirty Thirties had their moments. By themselves the tales—told in a fast-vanishing diction and idiom—are exquisite vignettes. Taken together they constitute a literary epic: the collective testament of a resourceful, resilient people.

Paul Knox

66 **Alligator Pie (1974)**

Dennis Lee

Here is the book that put Canadian children's literature on the map. No more British or American imports, no more Anne of Green Gables. We could produce our own contemporary writers and send them across the country to read to thousands of excited children—all of this long before Harry Potter. And what excitement this book brought, with its visceral sounds and catchy rhythms. Things squished and popped and wiggled, the very words conveying the messy feelings of childhood. No wonder adults who grew up on this book love to read it to their own children.

Phyllis Bruce

67 *The Siren Years:
A Canadian Diplomat Abroad*
(1974)
Charles Ritchie

This is Ritchie's account, in the form of a diary, of appeasement and the Blitz as seen by a young but very sophisticated Canadian diplomat. Ritchie catches better than anybody else scenes that do not often appear in the "heroic" accounts of World War Two: the panic that swept London when France fell, and the frantic manoeuvrings to secure passage across the Atlantic via the Canadian High Commission, where Ritchie was serving. Ritchie's book is a contribution—not just a "worthy Canadian contribution," that death knell—to what we should know about World War Two. And witty to boot.

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*Bob Bothwell*

**68** *Bear* (1976)  
Marian Engel

The concept was audacious and many considered the novel pornographic, but Engel's romance about a lonely and randy archivist named Lou, who consummates a love affair with an ancient and shaggy bear, is a totem in Canadian literature. It won the Governor General's literary award for fiction in 1976. The writing is spare, the metaphors are earthy, and the symbolic underpinnings are richly ironic. The unjustly obscure Engel, who died of cancer in 1985 at the age of 51, was well versed in the tropes of Canadian literature. She brings that knowledge to bear in a postmodern and highly readable novel that links the primeval spirit of the wilderness to erotic feminism and thereby links our largely male and colonial literary history to the flowering of women's writing and cultural nationalism in the 1970s.

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Sandra Martin

69 *A Very Double Life:
The Private World of Mackenzie
King* (1976)
C.P. Stacey

In his lifetime, Mackenzie King was regarded as a wily politician, a prudent statesman and an asexual bore. Poring through King's personal diaries after his death, Stacey revealed King's obsessive pursuit of women, including prostitutes and other men's wives, his peculiar adoration for Mother and his (male) dogs, and his habit of communicating with deceased "dear ones" and political celebrities through séances. *A Very Double Life* smashed the convention that a politician's personal life was "private," and it made Willie King a more attractive, if comic and frightening, human being. Stacey was right when he predicted in 1976 that King's diary, "the most important single political document in twentieth-century Canadian history," would fascinate researchers, among them novelists, poets and psychiatrists, for generations.

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*Heather Robertson*

**70** *Duplessis* (1976)  
Conrad Black

In this path-breaking biography, Canada's best known plutocrat-cum-polemicist provides a surprisingly sympathetic portrait of an historical figure who for many English Canadians symbolizes the most regressive aspects of Quebec society before the Quiet Revolution. Written during the rise to power of the province's first avowedly separatist party, the book showed how integral Duplessis was in shaping francophone Quebec's still active search for "a middle ground between assimilation and separation, between utter docility and armed revolt." In doing so, Black imbued the province's political history with a sense of continuity—one that even the Québécois themselves too often overlook.

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Mark Lovewell

71 *A New Athens* (1977) Hugh Hood

This is the second novel in Hood's twelve-volume series *The New Age/Le nouveau siècle*, the most ambitious fictional project ever attempted in Canada. It can be read, however, on its own without difficulty. Moreover, although the bilingual title of the series indicates locations in Ontario and Quebec, the language is always English. The Athens in question is Athens, Ontario, a small town near Brockville. The novel explores the nature of history in Canada ("How much past is past?"), and develops into a lucidly written, visionary narrative about the relation between art and life, and life and death.

W.J. Keith

72 *The Wars* (1977) Timothy Findley

Robert Ross, scion of a great Ontario manufacturing empire, heads off to World War One as a green young officer, encountering raw nature, sexual sophistication, human brutality, poison gas and flame throwers, and many beautiful horses along the way. His final act of "madness," trying to save dozens of these cavalry steeds from deadly bombardment, plays out as an eloquent last song of civilization before the darkness of the 20th century descends. In this most compelling of Canada's "war is hell" novels, Findley captures our loss of innocence and coming of age with subtlety, compassion and impressive craft.

Bronwyn Drainie



Joy Kogawa

Obasan (1981) Joy Kogawa

After Pearl Harbour, Canadian-born Naomi Nakane and her immigrant Japanese relatives are stripped of their property and dignity, sent to internment camps, then relocated to ghost towns in the British Columbia interior. The finely written story unfolds bit by bit, as the adult Naomi uncovers the traumatic experience of persecution and its effects. While Shizuye Takashima's memoir *A Child in Prison Camp* (1971) was probably the first book to describe Canada's internment of 18,000 of its own citizens, Kogawa's novel nevertheless created an unprecedented awareness of their story. Using memories, letters and actual documents, her work affected readers deeply and left them ashamed. Reading it has stiffened many ordinary Canadians' resistance to government acts that would make us again "the country that plucks people out like weeds and flings them into the roadside."

Catherine Siemens

73

74 ***None Is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933–1948*** (1982)

Irving Abella and Harold Troper

In 1982, Canadians were accustomed to thinking of themselves as compassionate providers of sanctuary to refugees. Abella and Troper's study of our behaviour during World War Two forced a reckoning of the Canadian conscience and policy, however, by revealing that we had the worst record in the world for accepting Jews from Hitler's Europe. Between 1938 and 1945, when the Canadian government knew of Hitler's extermination plan, only 500 Jews were admitted. Civil servants and politicians—including Mackenzie King and Vincent Massey—consciously clamped the doors shut. This book's power was such that, even before its publication, a manuscript copy helped convince Ron Atkey, Minister of Employment and Immigration in Joe Clark's government, to grant 50,000 "boat people" asylum in Canada in 1979, during the Southeast Asian refugee crisis.

Robin Roger

75 ***Radical Tories: The Conservative Tradition in Canada*** (1982) **Charles Taylor**

This book looks like a simple series of journalistic sketches of notable Canadians such as Donald Creighton, George Grant, Stephen Leacock and Robert Stanfield. It begins as one man's journey to the roots of Canada's conservative tradition, but *Radical Tories* ends up as a lucid recipe for conservatives of any era. Take John A. Macdonald's support for a strong central government, add a little of John Diefenbaker's wariness of Washington's continental hegemony, a dash of Eugene Forsey's civil liberties and even a sprinkle of Al Purdy's respect for the land, and you have the radical, or "Red," Tory formula most to the taste of the modern Canadian nation. Governments, generally Liberal, may come and go, but these conservative values endure and, 25 years after it first appeared, so does Taylor's trenchant analysis.

Patrick Martin

76 ***Banting: A Biography*** (1984) **Michael Bliss**

Surely insulin is one of Canada's greatest contributions to the world. We still regard Frederick Banting, the physician and scientist credited with its discovery, as one of our national heroes. Reputations are not always founded on the facts, however, and medical historian Bliss provides a detailed and accurate explanation of how insulin was discovered by a team that included Banting, but he came to receive the bulk of the credit for it. In realistically conveying the palpable sense of a complex man struggling with his private demons, *Banting* shows us that nobody—including Canada's first Nobel Prize winner—is worthy of hero worship.

Robin Roger

77 ***Neuromancer*** (1984) **William Gibson**

With more than 6.5 million copies sold, this novel introduced Gibson's vision of a *noir* future to readers worldwide. It follows a burned-out hacker named Case through the Sprawl, a dystopic late-capitalist megacity, and into the layered conspiracies of a rebel artificial intelligence. *Neuromancer* showcased Gibson's keen technological imagination; it popularized the term "cyberspace," for example, which he invented. Blasé descriptions of cybernetic implants, genetic tinkering and electronically archived personalities also called into question what it means to be human once technology can casually remake our "meat"—or simply leave it obsolete. The template for an entire genre of cyberpunk science fiction, *Neuromancer* has had a pervasive influence on popular culture that is visible everywhere, from drum-and-bass music to films like *The Matrix*.

Alastair Cheng

78 *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (1985)

The Canadian Encyclopedia was an audacious undertaking by a private company to produce a reference book that was readable, accurate and informative. There was nothing else like it either in this country or about this country in the days before the Internet. It provided enough information in more than 8,000 entries to settle dinner table disputes; it whetted the interests of students who wanted to know more about the country they called home; and it provided quick background facts for countless journalists, essayists and academics straining against deadlines.

Sandra Martin

79 *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) Margaret Atwood

In Atwood's famous dystopia, a rigid, white-male, fundamentalist, theocratic junta rule over Gilead, a territory formerly known as Maine. A large majority of the female population is sterile, and fertile women are forced into surrogate motherhood as "handmaids" to privileged but barren couples. Precisely because surrogate motherhood does not involve new technologies but still results in a world in which people and their most intimate relationships are grossly dehumanized, the novel sounds powerful warnings about similar—but massively augmented—risks from the new techno-sciences. Atwood captures both the horror of such a future and the power of the human spirit to break through the tiny cracks that can open up even in an environment of total repression.

Margaret Somerville



Margaret Atwood

Report on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada (1985) Macdonald Commission

80

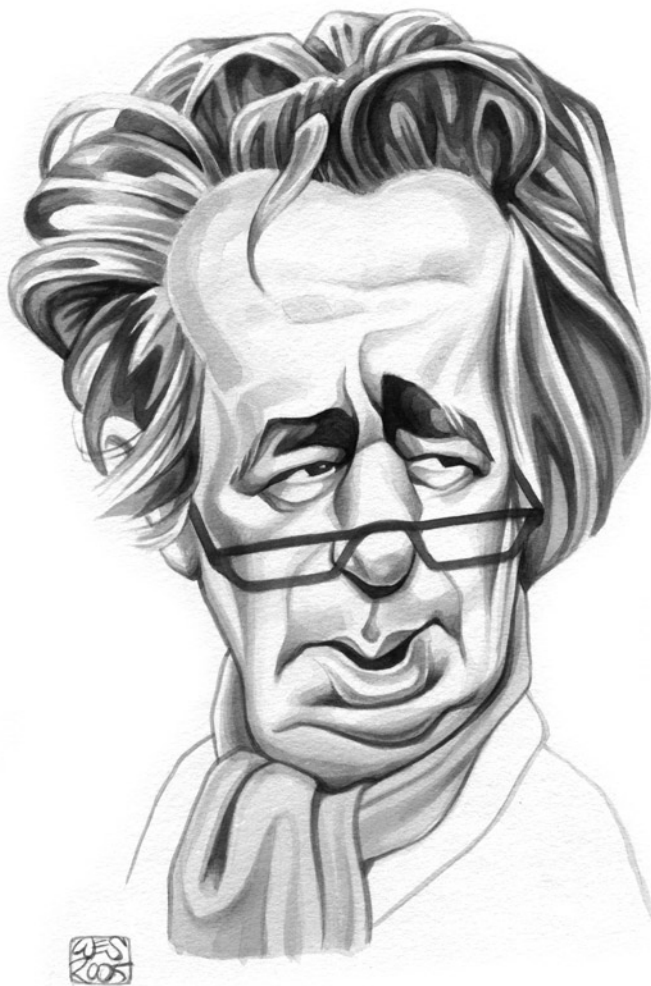
We live in an era of free trade agreements. But we tend to forget that in Canada, acceptance of free trade meant reversing more than a hundred years of economic policy. A radical transformation had to take place in the body politic before it could become the cornerstone of Canada's development strategy. This came about largely as a consequence of the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Canada's Development Prospects (the 1985 Macdonald Royal Commission) whose signature recommendation inspired a bold "leap of faith" into free trade with the United States. The Commission's significance—and that of its report—as an agent of transformative change cannot be overstated in launching Canada on this process of "continentalization."

Greg Inwood

81 *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (1989) Modris Eksteins

Approaching early 20th-century history in the same spirit as that era's painters and composers, Eksteins wrote a fractured, multifaceted vision of creative deconstruction and destruction. The book begins with the 1913 premiere of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, a ballet about pagan human sacrifice, and ends with fox-trotting Nazis in Hitler's bunker. The first and final images are linked, says Eksteins: National Socialism was modernism's mutant child, "irrationalism crossed with technicism." The power of this book is not only its thesis but also Eksteins's sometimes dazzlingly avant-garde presentation. It has appeared on curriculums across the continent, been cited as an influence by screen actors and moviemakers, quoted in publications from *American Music* to the *British Journal of Psychology*, and its author has been hailed across the English-speaking world as a major cultural historian.

Val Ross



Mordecai Richler

82 *Solomon Gursky Was Here* (1989) Mordecai Richler

Pungent aromas introduce this story: a murdered pet raven, rangy sleigh dogs, a charismatic Jew and fish. Richler takes a sweeping ride across the entire geography of Canada in this novel, stopping at unmentionable thinly disguised outposts, from anti-Semitism to unbridled capitalism to two-faced politicians and a brilliant hard-drinking son, badly loved by a jealous father. This is a novel with the epic grace and psychological complexity of a Bertolucci movie, one that shows the original, and less original, peoples of this nation jockeying for position. Until I read this book, I had not quite felt that I lived in a real place. Since then, I have never relinquished that sense of belonging. Solomon Gursky was here, and so are we all.

Gail Singer

83 *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* (1989) Tomson Highway

Playwright Highway uses a form borrowed from western culture to give eloquent voice to the aboriginal experience. The location is once more Wasaychigan, the imagined reserve of *The Rez Sisters*, but the mood is much bleaker. Seven Cree men, through violent acts or escape into alcoholic oblivion, live the nightmare of cultural loss. By assuming the comically exaggerated shapes of Wasaychigan's various women, however, the trickster Nanabush offers hope of transformation: *Dry Lips* closes with the resonantly optimistic image of one of the men, Zachary, playing with his laughing, beautiful and naked baby. As the first major theatrical production in Canada of work by an aboriginal author, the play's critically acclaimed 1989 run at Toronto's Royal Alex Theatre was a national cultural breakthrough.

Lisbie Rae

Trudeau and Our Times: The Heroic Delusion (1990) and The Magnificent Obsession (1994)
Stephen Clarkson and Christina McCall

“He haunts us still” is the best opening sentence in Canadian letters. *Trudeau and Our Times* builds on this insight to create a compelling biography of a compelling prime minister. It was Lytton Strachey who first made biography art: the four lives examined in his landmark *Eminent Victorians* capture the contours of an age. So too with *Trudeau and Our Times*. Using interviews from hundreds of associates (many now passed away), the two volumes sketch a portrait of late 20th-century Canada through the lens of a dominant personality. McCall and Clarkson wrote the indispensable source on the last century’s most intriguing Canadian.

Tom Axworthy

The Malaise of Modernity (1991)
Charles Taylor

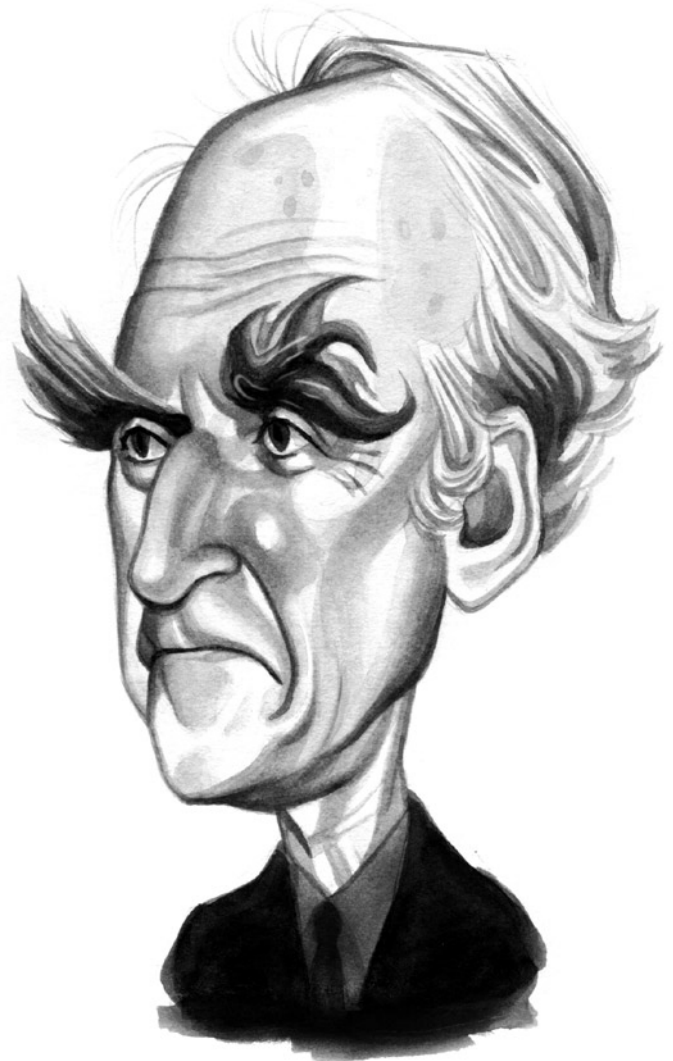
What appears to be a gentle disquisition on authenticity, delivered as the 1991 Massey Lectures, is in fact a sizzling jeremiad. Taylor, professor emeritus at McGill and one of the eminent political philosophers of our age, points out how our preoccupation with self-fulfillment on the one hand and technical efficiency on the other has produced a moral neutrality and political apathy that have brought us to the brink. Only if we recognize that individualism is a concept with abiding responsibilities—to history, community and nature—is there hope. Fifteen years after Taylor’s widely applauded sermon, the crisis of civil society continues, and his mordant analysis remains painfully pertinent.

Modris Eksteins

Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism (1993)
Michael Ignatieff

On one level this is simply a series of well-written reportages of insurgent nationalism in the Balkans, Germany, Ukraine, Quebec, Kurdistan and Northern Ireland by a journalist with a keen and probing mind. But appearing as it did just shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, it was a book that redefined world affairs for a popular readership, declaring—and this felt new at the time—that “the key language for our age is ethnic nationalism.” From a Canadian perspective, the inclusion of Quebec along with other much bloodier conflicts both shocked Anglo-Canadians and led them to a deeper understanding of Québécois aspirations.

Bronwyn Drainie



Charles Taylor



Rohinton Mistry

87 **Green Grass, Running Water (1993)** Thomas King

No writer of this generation has so competently and enjoyably created such a potent mixture of traditional Native narrative with a postmodernistic style. While part of the book follows the lives of five Blackfoot Indians in Blossom, Alberta, their everyday stories are interwoven with more fantastic voices—the trickster Coyote’s interruptions, for example, or a retelling of Genesis with extra-crispy fried chicken. This book, so complex yet so simple, is extremely well written. It has managed to become a favourite of both academics and the average reader, which is not easy to do.

Drew Hayden Taylor

The Stone Diaries (1993) Carol Shields

Shields’s masterwork won the Pulitzer and Governor General’s awards, was nominated for the Booker, but should be read and reread for its exquisite fabric of 20th-century domestic and social life. Its most ordinary heroine, Daisy Cuyler Goodwill, merely aspired to the womanly arts of home and garden according to contemporary dictates of taste and etiquette. From the elaborate family tree, drawn like a lace curtain at the beginning, through clutches of clippings, recipes, letters and even must-do lists at the end, Shields builds a monument to the trajectory of life for white, WASPISH, pre-feminist, middle-class women. Every chapter is a virtuoso turn. What could be viciously satirical is drenched in compassion, drawn with a fine brush on the smallest bit of ivory.

Marian Botsford Fraser

A Fine Balance (1995) Rohinton Mistry

A Fine Balance would certainly place Mistry on any list of Canada’s best writers, but its influence goes beyond its quality. This tragic story of four mismatched Parsis sharing a home in Mumbai during the violence of the 1970s Emergency was far from being the first Canadian novel about another country. But it achieved an unprecedented level of critical and particularly popular success. Mistry was already well known to Canadian and British readers of serious fiction, but *A Fine Balance* lifted him to an entirely different plane of celebrity, thanks to the Oprah Book Club. This was the book that transformed, at home and abroad, the general public’s sense of Canadian fiction. Goodbye *Survival*; hello multiculturalism.

Suanne Kelman

The Group of Seven: Art for a Nation (1995) Charles Hill

This catalogue commemorates the 75th anniversary of the founding of a nationalistic movement that dominated Canada’s art scene for most of the last century. Hill’s exhibition and book focus on the actual span during which the Group existed formally (1920–1933), held eight exhibitions and grew

in number to ten, before disbanding to make way for others. His detailed research is thorough and judicious, well illustrated and sufficiently objective to dispel some of the exaggerated—and unnecessary—myths that have clung to the Group through the years.

David Silcox

91 ***The Jade Peony* (1995)**
Wayson Choy

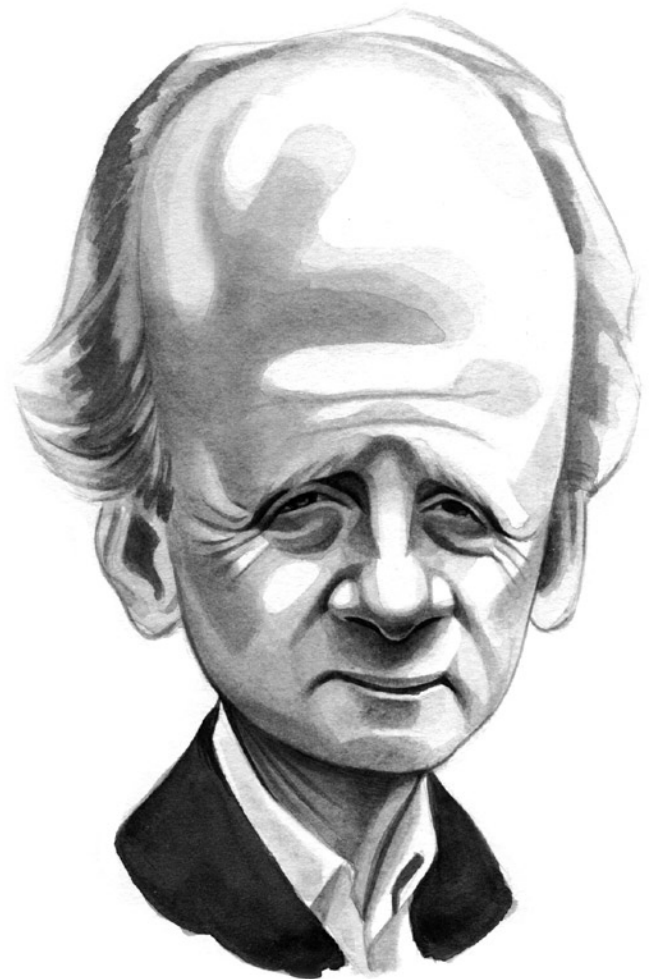
“In Gold Mountain, simple is best,” is a saying repeated often in this novel. But the mantra (using the colloquial Chinese expression for North America) sets an impossible standard for three young siblings in Vancouver’s Chinatown during the 1930s and early ’40s. Immersed in Old World myths and unspoken hierarchies, each reacts differently to the cultural complexities beyond their protective bubble. Choy’s finely modulated treatment of the ways we adapt to cultural loss centres on the experience of one of the first waves of non-European settlement in modern-day Canada. But it evokes the challenges faced by all immigrants to this country, as they grapple with the undeniable magnetism and hidden dangers of Gold Mountain.

Helen Walsh

92 ***Nationalism Without Walls: The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian* (1995)**
Richard Gwyn

Gwyn argues that English Canada must defend itself against the ideology of globalism by recalling the British-based values on which it was founded. To do this, multiculturalism must be superseded by “a nationalism without walls,” in which all English speakers work to create a strong English Canadian identity. These are bold claims: many historians believe that the ideology of British imperialism actually delayed and weakened the emergence of an English Canadian identity, while recent events have demonstrated that Quebec nationalism can not be managed as easily as Gwyn assumes. Nonetheless, the book continues to speak powerfully to English Canada’s yearning for a “normal” sense of national belonging.

Ray Conlogue



John Ralston Saul

***The Unconscious Civilization* (1995)**
John Ralston Saul

In earlier works such as *Voltaire’s Bastards* and *The Doubter’s Companion*, Saul elaborated a sweeping critique of modern western society; in particular, he bitingly dismissed the utopian promises of worldwide economic liberalization as a dangerous illusion, camouflage for the ruling elite’s retreat from political leadership to technocratic management. *The Unconscious Civilization* is a powerful distillate of these writings. Based on his 1995 Massey Lectures, the slim polemic not only won the Governor General’s Award for Non-Fiction but also topped the national best-seller list. This success created a new awareness of Saul’s humanist vision—the Canadian edition of *Time* later dubbed him a “prophet”—and gave popular intellectual support to a growing anti-globalization movement.

Alastair Cheng

93

94 *Yankee Go Home? Canadians and Anti-Americanism (1996)*

J.L. Granatstein

For 200 years, anti-Americanism served as the leitmotif of English Canadian national pride. So argued Granatstein in his lively history of the ways in which Canadians have suspected, distrusted and often detested their behemoth neighbours. Between Confederation and the 1990s, no decade was untouched by this phenomenon, and at least four national elections were defined by it. Writing in the mid 1990s, Granatstein concluded that anti-Americanism was all but dead. If the letters pages of our newspapers since September 11 suggest that this judgement was premature, his book nonetheless continues to provide a clear window onto an essential element of the Canadian soul.

George Galt

95 *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams (1998)*

Wayne Johnston

This book's lyrical name—is it not the best Canadian title ever?—catches the sadness of Johnston's novel about 20th-century Newfoundland when the British colony, while aching for glorious nationhood, was on the road to becoming a mere province. Johnston describes the real-life Joey Smallwood as a puny, poor, beaten-upon child who becomes a small but tightly wound, ambitious adult—and ultimately ushers Newfoundland into Confederation. Sheilagh Fielding is the fictional object of his passions, an alcoholic, funny, suffering newspaper-woman. While her work on a condensed history of Newfoundland helpfully gives ill-informed mainland readers an historical anchor, Fielding herself is as real and permanent a Canadian character as Duddy Kravitz. As in Johnston's other fictions, she adds emotional heft to the facts, so that they stick to the ribs and, paradoxically, ring more true.

Cynthia Wine

96 *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879 to 1986 (1999)*

John Milloy

Based largely on unprecedented access to federal and church archives, *A National Crime* provides documented proof of the rampant racism, forced assimilation policies, and physical and sexual abuse endured by thousands of Native children in Canada's system of residential schools—which operated for more than a hundred years. Milloy's book ended long-standing debate as to whether First Nations accusations of abuse in the residential schools were legitimate. His research also led to an unprecedented "Statement of Reconciliation" (no colonial government has ever taken such measures toward a colonized indigenous people) by Jane Stewart, then Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, in January of 1998 and the establishment of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation with a \$350 million grant. This book changed the misconceptions of a nation.

Dave King

97 *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies (1999)*

Naomi Klein

No Logo is a 500-page gripe about brands—specifically, about their growing presence in everyday life. It's not the kind of stuff that usually captures the imagination of those outside advertising agencies, but this book unquestionably struck a chord. Condemning the poor working conditions behind slick marketing campaigns, it became the manifesto of the anti-globalization movement and got under the skin of the corporate world. It provoked a response from Nike—a highly unusual event in itself—and spurred *The Economist* to publish a rebuttal, featured on its front cover in September 2001. And, in the process, it became a global brand in its own right, with a loyal following: check out <www.nologo.org>. Now *that's* branding.

David Dunne

98 *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History* (2000)

Erna Paris

Long Shadows looks at the way nations remember or choose not to remember their history. Although not specifically about Canada, the book raises issues of morality, justice and remembrance directly relevant to our country. It speaks to Chinese Canadians who are struggling for an official acknowledgement from Japan of war crimes, for example, and equally to those people trying to resolve Canada's difficult history of aboriginal residential schools. Beyond the two radio documentaries based on *Long Shadows* that I produced for CBC Radio's "Ideas," the book has won many prizes and been honoured, in the words of one jury, as "a magisterial, yet highly readable, book of true and lasting importance."

Marilyn Powell

99 *Fire and Ice: The United States, Canada and the Myth of Converging Values* (2003)

Michael Adams

Fire and Ice essentially argues from polling research that Canada and America's cultural values are diverging, despite increased economic integration. This thesis is especially attractive to English-speaking Canadians because it offers objective evidence that perfectly supports our deep need to feel that our society is different from America. Adams does infer too much from too little, substituting one narrow bandwidth of the values spectrum for wider claims about national divergences. However, he rightfully discerned Canada-U.S. differences in attitudes about family, gender, morality and religion that have, by 2006, become simply too large to ignore. *Fire and Ice* likewise revived professional research on, and stimulated public interest in, comparative values as a way to foretell the political future of North America.

Jason Bristow

Dark Age Ahead (2004) **Jane Jacobs**

100

With her last book, Jacobs moved from restrained optimism (*Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961) to passionate pessimism, while shifting her focus more explicitly to her adopted homeland. Perhaps this latter shift explains the book's particular resonance within Canada. Or maybe Canadians were simply ready to consider Jacobs's warnings of societal collapse. Whatever the reason, *Dark Age's* popularity reveals something about the self-satisfied mood now found in this country: beneath the celebration of distinct national values lies a fear that such rhetoric will soon prove hollow. If so, Canadians will find themselves returning to Jacobs's incisive reminders of past accomplishments squandered and future promise unfulfilled.

Mark Lovewell

We sincerely thank all the writers who contributed to *The LRC 100: Canada's Most Important Books*. We received approximately 300 recommendations from which we chose the final 100.

If you think that something inappropriate is on the list, or that something indispensable is *not* there, why don't you let us know?

You can e-mail your comments on *The LRC 100* to review@lrcreview.com and we will post them to our website, www.reviewcanada.ca.

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