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## BACKGROUND BOOKS

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### CANADA

A Canadian fantasy:

The President of the United States, desperate for Canada's Arctic natural gas, announces the unilateral annexation of Canada. A 15,000-man U.S. occupation force airlifted to Canadian cities is rounded up on the ground by bands of outnumbered, outgunned, and outraged Canadian militiamen. ("Ah didn't know you Canadians had that much gumption, but ah sure know it now," a captured American general admits.) As U.S. armored columns race toward the Canadian border, the hotline rings in the Oval Office. Moscow vows nuclear war if Canada is invaded.

In Richard Rohmer's **Exxoneration** (McClelland, 1974, cloth; Paperjacks, 1977, paper), the United States loses not only its face but also one of its oil companies. Canadians found the potboiler cathartic enough to make it an instant best seller.

But belligerence, even in fantasy, is out of character for Canadians. The United States has always been "the great Canadian hang-up," concedes James Sloan Dickey, professor of public affairs at Dartmouth, in his comprehensive, though slightly dated, **Canada and the American Presence** (N.Y. Univ., 1975), yet "anti-Americanism need not be, and rarely is, malevolent or even unfriendly." Rather, it is Canada's way of emphasizing its individuality.

The United States is an overwhelming cultural presence. Half of all books purchased in Canada are published south of the border. While Canadian academics once lamented a "brain drain" to the United States,

today 15 to 20 percent of Canada's university teachers are Americans. Small wonder that Canadians dwell on the qualities that set them apart.

One of these qualities, writes poet Margaret Atwood, is a preoccupation with simple **Survival** (House of Anansi, 1972, cloth & paper). Where the American frontier held out hope and excitement, she argues in this idiosyncratic reflection on Canadian literature, Canada's forbidding emptiness bred anxiety. "Our stories are likely to be tales not of those who made it but of those who made it back, from the awful experience—the North, the snowstorm, the sinking ship—that killed everyone else."

Canadians have been driven not by the pursuit of glory but by sheer necessity. In **Canada and the Canadians** (Faber & Faber, 1970; rev.ed., 1973, cloth; Macmillan, rev.ed., 1973, paper), journalist George Woodcock concludes that, partly as a result, the Canadian today "sees himself as unheroic, but as rational and decent and at times willing to endure and suffer for reason or decency."

Decency seems to mark Canadian political history. After putting down the 1837 rebellions against colonial rule without much bloodshed, the British Governor-General pardoned most of the rebels, exiled eight, and executed none.

This was Lord John Durham, whose 1839 **Report on the Affairs of British North America**, 3 vols. (Kelley reprint of 1912 ed., 1970), offers an image of the provinces during the early 19th century.

Durham's Canada compared unfavorably with the United States. Its people were "poor, and apparently unenterprising, though hardy and industrious, separated from each other by tracts of intervening forest, without towns and markets, almost without roads, living in mean houses, drawing little more than a rude subsistence from ill-cultivated land."

Lord Durham favored creation of a united, more independent Canadian nation in part to prevent American hegemony and guarantee the pro-British sympathies of at least one government in North America.

Independence offered other advantages. Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli considered Britain's colonies "millstones around the Mother Country's neck." During the U.S. Civil War, cross-border strikes—by Confederate agitators attacking in one direction, fanatic Irish Fenians in the other—were frequent. Annexationist sentiment ran high in the Northern states. London deployed 15,000 troops in Canada for the duration of the conflict.

In 1864, John A. MacDonald of Canada's Conservative Party, George Brown of the Reformers, and the French-Canadian Georges Etienne Cartier formed a "Great Coalition" to draw up a constitution. Historian Ramsay Cook describes the task of Canada's three Founding Fathers in his graceful **Canada: A Modern Study** (Clarke, Irwin, 1963; rev. and enlarged ed., 1977, paper only).

MacDonald was elected the first Prime Minister of the new Confederation. His "National Policy" featured high tariffs to encourage domestic industry and government-financed construction of a transcontinental railroad to open up the West.

Nothing could insulate Canada

from the worldwide economic slump that began in 1873. But the dark clouds lifted with the Klondike gold rush in the Yukon between 1896 and 1898, the last of the great North American gold strikes. As historian W. J. Morton notes in his scholarly **The Kingdom of Canada** (Bobbs-Merrill, 1963; McClelland, 1969, cloth & paper), the gold rush "drew into the Yukon, British Columbia, and the prairies many people who never saw the gold, and much capital that was merely attracted to the magnetic neighborhood."

The gold rush set off the "Laurier Boom," named for Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier (1896–1911). Mining and lumber companies prospered; new railroads crossed the continent. Between 1901 and 1911, the population of the wheat-farming prairie provinces tripled to 1.3 million. Then came World War I, which boosted demand for Canadian manufactured goods—uniforms, weapons, ships—and made light and heavy industry the leading sectors of the Canadian economy (as they are today).

Canada's tradition of public ownership of business dates back to the first trans-Canada railroad. But not until the early 1960s did Canada begin erecting a liberal welfare state. As with Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, "Prosperity, the sense of security arising from the stability of postwar society, and the general reformist orientation of the media made this full measure of reform possible." So write Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English in their comprehensive **Canada since 1945** (Univ. of Toronto, 1981).

While many of the provinces had already fashioned social "safety nets" of their own, action on the federal level awaited the efforts of Lester B. Pearson, the Liberal Prime

### OUR BEST SELLERS AND CANADA'S

*Judging by what they read, Canadians and Americans have quite different things on their minds. The nonfiction best-seller lists from Maclean's and Time for the week of March 29, 1982, show that American book buyers seem to favor sex, self-help, and humor; the Canadian list tilts toward current events and history.*

#### *Canada*

- 1 **THE ACQUISITORS**, by Peter Newman: The second volume of a study of the Canadian business establishment.
- 2 **CONSEQUENCES**, by Margaret Trudeau: The Prime Minister's estranged wife tells all.
- 3 **THE LORD GOD MADE THEM ALL**, by James Herriot: The life of a Yorkshire veterinarian.
- 4 **THE NEW CANADIAN REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT GUIDE**, by Henry Zimmer: How to get rich without really trying.
- 5 **THE GAME OF OUR LIVES**, by Peter Gzowski: A year in the life of the National Hockey League's Edmonton Oilers.
- 6 **THE HOLY BLOOD AND THE HOLY GRAIL**, by Henry Lincoln, Michael Baigent, and Richard Bardmont: A theory that Christ had descendants who today form a secret society among the English aristocracy.
- 7 **FLAMES ACROSS THE BORDER**, by Pierre Berton: The Canadian-American conflict during the War of 1812.
- 8 **JANE FONDA'S WORKOUT BOOK**, by Jane Fonda: A physical and philosophical regimen for women.
- 9 **I REMEMBER SUNNYSIDE**, by Mike Filey: A history of a Toronto amusement park and how people spent their leisure time in bygone days.
- 10 **MEN OF PROPERTY**, by Susan Goldenberg: A profile of the top 10 land development corporations in Canada.

#### *United States*

- 1 **JANE FONDA'S WORKOUT BOOK**, by Jane Fonda.
- 2 **A FEW MINUTES WITH ANDY ROONEY**, by Andy Rooney: Musings by the *60 Minutes* television commentator.
- 3 **A LIGHT IN THE ATTIC**, by Shel Silverstein: Humorous cartoons and verse.
- 4 **NOBODY'S PERFECT**, by Hendrie Weisinger and Norman Lobsenz: How to make friends and influence people.
- 5 **HOW TO MAKE LOVE TO A MAN**, by Alexandra Penney.
- 6 **WEIGHT WATCHER'S 365-DAY MENU COOKBOOK**, by Weight Watcher's International.
- 7 **WHEN BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE**, by Harold Kushner: Words of solace from a Massachusetts rabbi.
- 8 **WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT MEN**, by Joyce Brothers.
- 9 **THE I LOVE NEW YORK DIET**, by Bess Myerson and Bill Adler.
- 10 **THE INVISIBLE BANKERS**, by Andrew Tobias: An exposé of the insurance industry.

Minister elected in 1963. Within two years, national medical insurance and social security had been introduced, and Ottawa was embarked on ambitious job training and public works programs. By 1971, social spending accounted for 24 percent of the federal budget. Special beneficiaries: Indians and Eskimos.

Wrangling between the provinces and the federal government, not popular resistance or sniping by interest groups, was the chief obstacle to the new measures. Indeed, to judge from journalist Peter C. Newman's encyclopedic group portrait of **The Canadian Establishment** (McClelland, 1975), even Canada's business and financial elite are not all that interested in national politics per se.

Newman sets out to describe "the 1,000 or so men who really run Canada," from oil-man John A. Armstrong to Hartland de Montarville Molson, patriarch of the beer-brewing clan. What he proves is that the rich, in F. Scott Fitzgerald's phrase, are "very different from you and me," no matter where they live. He cites the example of one mogul who paid \$10,000 (Canadian) to have a fallen meteorite pulverized into gravel for his driveway. The Canadian Establishment is an exclusive club: Few non-WASPS gain admission. French-Canadians, Ukrainians, and other ethnic groups, Newman contends, have not gotten their fair share of wealth and status.

Peter Desbarats' **René** (McClelland, 1976, cloth; Seal, 1977, paper) and Richard Gwyn's **The Northern**

**Magus: Pierre Trudeau and Canadians** (McClelland, 1980) are the best full-length biographies of Canada's foremost political sparring partners.

Trudeau, scion of a wealthy French-English family, was educated at the University of Montreal, Harvard, the Sorbonne, and the London School of Economics. He taught law at his Montreal alma mater and edited *Cité Libre* magazine before entering politics in 1965. René Lévesque, son of a country lawyer, gained fame as a television news commentator. He was elected to the Quebec legislature in 1960.

During the late 1950s, the two men joined an informal discussion group of Quebec intellectuals and politicians. They often disagreed. But Gwyn writes of their long duel: "While each wanted passionately to win, neither, down deep, wanted to destroy the other."

No matter what the outcome of the Quebec issue, Canadians will probably continue to agonize over their national future, wondering who they are and where they are headed.

In **The Canadian Imagination** (Harvard, 1977), a collection of essays on Canadian poetry, fiction, and theater, edited by David Staines, literary critic Northrop Frye suggests that what Canadians need to do is to stop viewing themselves as visitors to their own country. Frye recalls an anecdote about a city doctor traveling in the north with a native Eskimo guide. A blizzard closes in and the doctor panics. "We are lost," he moans. "We are not lost," replies his guide. "We are here."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Many of the titles in this essay were recommended by Kathie Meizner, a librarian at Baltimore's Enoch Pratt Free Library, who was formerly on the staff of the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C.*