



Guy Montpetit, *Love Trip*, 1971, acrylic on canvas, 104" x 248" (triptych), Courtesy Galerie de Montréal. These paintings sponsored by Time Canada Ltd. are currently on tour across Canada.

On Judging a Country by Its Covers

CANADIANS brood a lot. Their unaggressive country will always be flanked by great powers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

That is not an all-bad prospect; by and large it must be more restful to be Switzerland than China. But the position has problems, and the most persistent one may be the problem of national identity.

It is universally known (at least in Canada) that the economy of the United States dominates the economy of Canada; U.S. based firms control almost all of Canada's petro-chemical production, for example, and they dominate much of the rest of the country's industry.

It may also be perceived that the products of U.S. culture are circulated in Ottawa, Vancouver and Winnipeg to almost the same extent as they are in Milwaukee. Canadians read books about the U.S. by authors from the U.S., they see Robert Redford and Paul Newman flicks, and they watch *All in the Family*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *The Streets of San Francisco*, and *M.A.S.H.* There are a few fortunates in Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver or Calgary who have Pollocks or Nolans or Picassos hanging on their walls. (Picasso was not, of course, an American, but neither was he a Canadian.)

Some persons see in these circumstances the almost certain doom of the Canadian identity; they fear that in time there will be no Canadian economy and no Canadian culture that are dis-

tinct from the economy and the culture of the big land below. Many are more sanguine. Richard Gwyn recently suggested in the *Toronto Star* that the real problem with which Canadians must learn to cope is that "by any standard — economic, social, political — Canada today is one of the healthiest and strongest countries in the world and will remain so except by quite conspicuous incompetence." Northrop Frye, in a recent conversation with CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI editors, expressed his belief that while the economic domination of Canada was a matter of real concern, the cultural threat is not significant; culture is not produced by multinational corporations but by individuals, and Canada's individuals are doing quite well. In Professor Frye's opinion Canada's first-rate writers, for example, earn recognition and decent wages at rates comparable with those in the U.S., and Canada's second-rate writers do better than their counterparts.

If one is looking for the Canadian identity, cultural or otherwise, it is well to look in books, and in this issue we offer our annual Spring Bookshelf, with reviews of fiction and non-fiction dealing in one way or another with the national conundrums.

And in our pages as further evidence of cultural survival, we present some paintings from the exhibition *The Canadian Canvas* which opened in January at Montréal's Musée d'art contemporain.