

# Smut for the millions!

## Nubile nympho writes memoirs

**I AM THE BEAUTIFUL STRANGER** by Rosalyn Drexler (Dell, 60c)

One of the blurbs on the cover of this little book bills the heroine as "a thinking-man's Lolita". The heroine (or anti-heroine) is Selma Silver, an unusual creature of thirteen years who is writing a sort of diary of her experiences with dirty old men and dirty young men.

Unusual? Selma is undoubtedly one of the most unusual characters in current fiction. She regards life as some sort of unpleasant game and tries desperately to play it with some degree of pleasure. The characters she talks about without exception come through as vile, filthy creatures.

Selma herself is a neurotic, precocious child. She intersperses her diary with witty, half-serious little literary creations that reveal quite a bit about her attitudes to the world around her.

Although the book is supposed to be the story of the girl's sexual upbringing, it is in a sense a universal novel, casting light on the unpleasant aspects of every facet of society.

Selma is always candid about her doings, and seems to have no moral conscience at all. She is vulgar and offensive, thinking more like an adolescent boy than a demure young girl. She is under the impression that every man she meets is after her body—and, as it turns out, most of them are.

Parts of the book are wildly funny. Selma sees things so much

as they are (albeit with a twist to vulgarity), and is so honest about the way she sees things, that the humor of a fumbling would-be lover or the disposal of a fetus comes through admirably.

The narrative is not provocative in the sense that most "pornographic" novels are. It is crude and blunt, and never portrays the sex act as a particularly pretty thing, even though Selma says that she enjoys it.

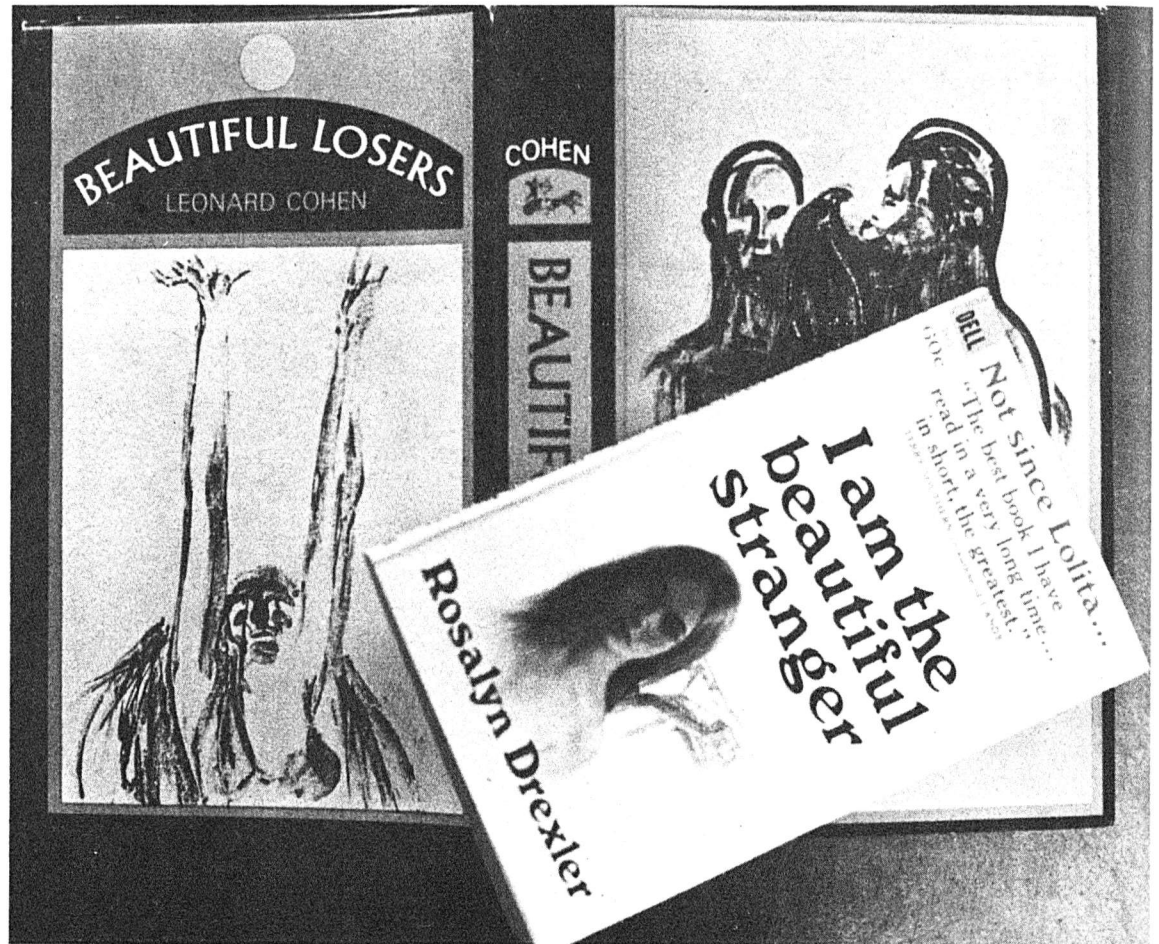
This of course leads to the question of whether or not the novel is truly "pornographic". It would be foolish to try to define that word—suffice it to say here that a novel of this type is not acceptable literature unless it has some point outside of the things in it that make it a favorite among thrill-seekers.

The novel in question does have some point. After reading it one is left with a limp feeling, a sort of bad taste in the mouth. This is probably deliberate—we are meant to realize that Selma has a vulgar view of sex and society in general because it is that way—because we make it that way.

It is not a great novel. Its literary value is limited. But it does rank high on the list of current paperbacks that are worth reading at least for amusement's sake.

A warning to the weak-hearted, however—if you are offended by candid looks at some of the more unpleasant aspects of life, and if you are offended by jokes on the human body, excrement, sex, and all the other things that are best talked about in euphemisms, you will certainly be offended by this book. Even this writer, who has run the gamut of experience, found his stomach a little queasy at times. But his interest in the goings-on in Selma's little world never slackened.

—Dyllon Rentrey



STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

—Scarth photo

... but great reading

## Cohen's pornographic novel comes out a beautiful winner

**BEAUTIFUL LOSERS** by Leonard Cohen (McClelland and Stewart, \$6.95)

*Beautiful Losers* is a nightmare which could have been created by only a man struggling to find himself in a world gone absolutely mad.

The story is haunted with the spirit of Catherine Tekakwitha, one of the early Indian converts to Christianity in Nouvelle France. Her Indian saintliness coupled with her penitential masochism made her the ideal of the seventeenth century Christians in the New World. Her recognition has been carried down through history.

Catherine's vow of virginity, both before her baptism and after in a formal ceremony in the church leads her into a conflict of interests with her people. She refuses to marry the brave her father has chosen, and is cruelly mistreated by her relatives.

Somewhere in the lunacy of the 20th century the narrator has conceived that the redemption he has missed in life can be found again by making love to a saint. Catherine Tekekwitha becomes the focal point of the life he is struggling through. It is an interesting twist to the devotion to the saint that had grown after her death.

Catherine's story is woven through the fabric of the narrative and it is not until her 24 years of life comes to an end that the narrator's story can end.

### ELEVATOR SHAFT

The wife of the narrator, Edith, is an Indian of the A... tribe (no complete name given). She ends her life at the bottom of an elevator shaft at 24 years of age, when she can no longer cope with what life has presented her, with the state to which she has been reduced.

Her life has many parallels to that of Catherine, which in part accounts for the narrator's pre-occupation with the Indian saint.

The narrator's bosom companion, F., member of parliament, heterosexual and homo-sexual drug addict, sadist and masochist, is the only one who seems to a true master of himself. Yet, he ends up dying "in a padded cell, his brain rotted away with too much dirty sex." F. is a genius, a pervert, a manipulator and a millionaire.

His activities with the 'Quebec Libre' movement seem incongruous with his occupation in Ottawa, but then F. is a very incongruous man. He is a brilliantly contrived personality, a SUPERMAN in the Nietzschean sense, and he is developed in the novel as a product of his age and environment.

The narrator is cast in the role

of a historical writer (What else do writers write about these days?), and his project is to research and write about the A...s, Edith's ancestors. The remnants of this vanishing race (Edith is one of the last four) are the symbols of decay and death that prevail on his mind. His devotion to Catherine may be a desperate attempt to bury himself in the living past. He is, of course, doomed to frustration, even though his life does become 'miraculously' hinged on Catherine.

Cohen writes with a virility that has been matched by few if any Canadian writers to date. His ability to express himself and his society in a Canadian context is truly remarkable.

Without any sloppy patriotism, I truly feel that Cohen has produced a great work.

—John R. Green

## Stupid conversation

A dialogue between *Self* and *Soul* overheard in the furance room of the Arts building.

*Soul* (blushing indignantly): I was browsing through the bookstore the other day and I picked up—purely by accident, you understand—a copy of Henry Miller's (that awful man!) *Tropic of Cancer*. Why is this filthy smut allowed to be distributed? It's corrupting the minds of our youth!

*Self*: Filth? Nonsense! Literature has the right to discuss any field of human experience, and in any terms whatsoever.

(*Soul* has a catatonic fit but recovers in time to make the following witty rejoinder.)

*Soul*: Yah! Yer mudder chews

tobacco!

*Self*: Really, I am surprised that you would sink to such vulgarity of terminology.

(*Soul* punches *Self* in the nose. *Self* turns the other nose. *Soul* punches that too.)

*Self* (rising weakly but determinedly): Smut rules the world! *Soul* (contemptuously): What pitiful dialectic, what miniscule of intellect! Any literature worthy of the name must be pure as the driven styrofoam.

(*Enter the Platonic Form of the Good, who waves his (her, its?) magic Form of the Wand, and changes *Self* and *Soul* into pillars of salt.*)

—The Fantastic Duo

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