

CANADA

TODAY / D'AUJOURD'HUI

Books

REFLECTIONS ON FICTIONS AND FACTS

In this issue CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI looks once more at recently published Canadian books.

There are about four hundred Canadian publishers, but this gross figure is misleading; most are small and none approach the size, range or profits of their American counterparts.

To a remarkable degree Canadians are awash in the culture of the United States or, one might say, of North America. They watch M*A*S*H, read *Roots*, drink Cokes and eat Twinkies. They also read American books and magazines; eighty-three per cent of all books sold in Canada are of foreign origin, mostly from the US.

Canadians, the old as well as the young, need heroes, villains and models of their own, and the Canadian publishers supply them, sometimes with difficulty. First of all their financial positions incline them to few adventures. They are ill equipped (and seldom tempted) to compete, with their own lines of paperbacks, against the ubiquitous racks of drugstore best sellers from the US. Their market is almost exclusively Canadian and small. (A Canadian book which sells more than one hundred thousand hardback copies—such as Peter Newman's *The Canadian Establishment*—is the phenomenon of its decade. One which sells ten thousand is considered to have done quite well.)

In recent years the Canadian government has made significant moves to support the printing of Canadian books. The Canada Council gives grants to authors—obscure poets as well as eminent personages such as John Diefenbaker—and to publishers of books and magazines. Not everyone approves. Jean Paré, publisher of *Actualité*, argues that "free money takes the wiseness out of publishing."

Still, most concerned Canadians believe that government aid solves more problems than it causes, and support for authors and publishers will probably continue. In the meantime we invite you to inspect some heroes, villains and models who have recently become available to readers at home and in some cases abroad.

