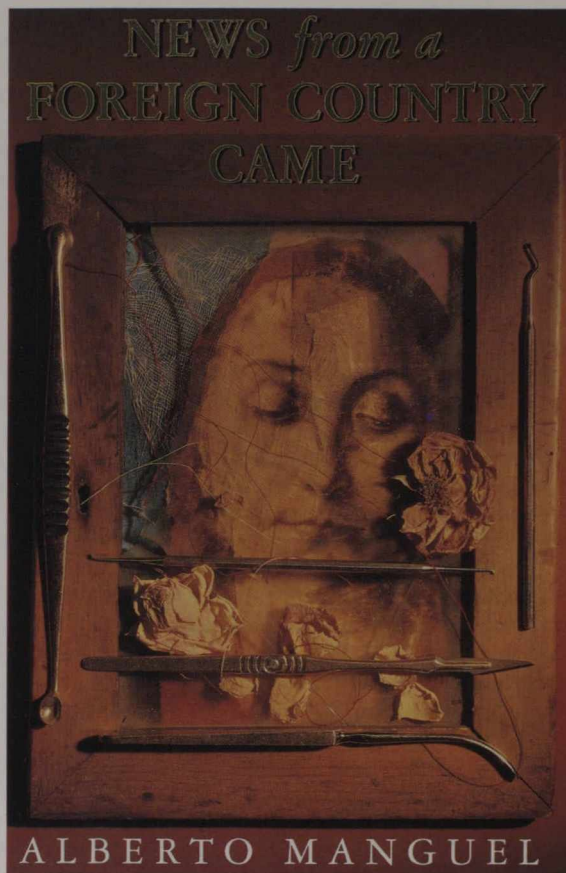


Alberto Manguel



‘A gripping and profoundly disturbing first novel’

Time Out Mar 91

so are Alberto Manguel's in *News from a Foreign Country Came* (Collins) where Toronto, Boston and Brisbane or Canada, Algeria, France and Argentina are all present, shifting in and out of the focus like a series of liquid transparencies in memory.

Even Atwood's *Cat's Eye* (Virago) with its very Canadian scenario of Toronto and Vancouver engages in time travel as the narrator tries to orient herself on her return to Toronto by looking down at the sidewalk 'like a tracker', seeking clues to a path in the wilderness. Leslie Hall Pinder's *On Double Tracks* (Bloomsbury) goes further into this imaginative wilderness territory in a novel which focuses on Indian land rights, legends and psychic landscapes.

‘The characters are entrancing and believable, the detail precise, and the style superb’

The Listener Jan 91

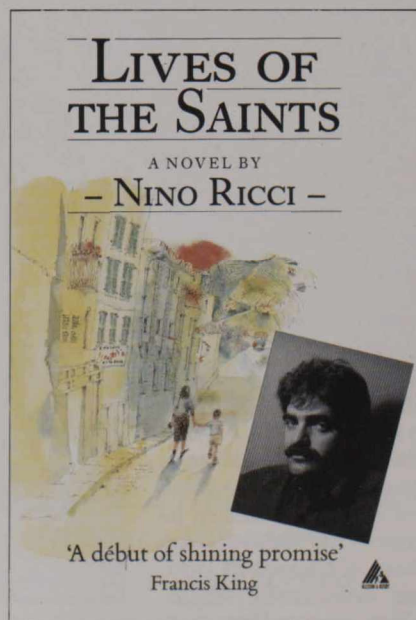
*The Fat Woman Next Door is Pregnant* by Michel Tremblay

While Michel Tremblay's second novel to be published here in English translation, *The Fat Woman Next Door is Pregnant* (Serpent's Tail) would seem to be anchored in Montreal domesticity, it too shifts beyond that frame into fantasy. (His first novel *Making Room*, French title *Le Coeur Decouvert* was published here last year). Jane Urquhart's novel *Changing Heaven* (Hodder & Stoughton) and Neil Bissoondath's short stories *On the Eve of Uncertain Tommorrow* (Bloomsbury) encode their shifts of position into their very titles.

‘Well written and wise, lovely phrases flit through the stories’

Sunday Times Nov 90

*On the Eve of Uncertain Tommorrow* by Neil Bissoondath



Four recently published novels are not set in Canada at all. Kate Pullinger's *When the Monster Dies* (published in England by Johnathan Cape before being taken up by Random House in Canada) is set in South London; Josef Skvorecky's *The Miracle Game* (Faber) is a very European fiction which takes place in Prague; Bombay is the setting for Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* (Faber); and Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints* (Alison & Busby) is set in a small Italian Village.

So, how to define Canadian? And what is the appeal of this fiction for British readers? Of course the appeal lies in its very heterogeneity and in its energetic establishment of a variety of positions from which to speak about human experience. Everybody reads novels because they tell stories with which we can identify, either as realistic representations or as imaginative encounters with the unfamiliar. The best fictions are a mixture of both, so that there is often no clear distinction between what is real and what is fictional. All of these novels expose the limits of