

and the government of the Canadas, has persisted to this day. It is in a context of migrating cutting operations and a political climate more supportive of industrial exploitation than sound management practices, that the forest conservation movement has developed since 1880." Yet the next paragraph credits the lumbermen with forming an important power behind forest conservation: "It was the lumbermen, with the most direct economic interest in the forest, who were essential in promoting the movement." Both statements are probably true and can be explained by the fact that the ideals of forest conservation meant different things to different people over time. But the book passes too easily over the complexity and contradictions of the movement, presenting a confusing array of facts and opinion.

We had hoped for a better book; nonetheless, we are grateful that one appeared at all. Its most enduring legacy may be that it inspires more thorough research and analysis of a fascinating and complex subject.

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**Victorian Lunacy: Richard M. Bucke and the Practice of Late Nineteenth-Century Psychiatry.** S.E.D. SHORTT. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986. xvi, 207 p. ISBN 0-521-30999-9. \$29.95.

Professor Shortt's latest work appears with an intriguing title, and the curious reader will not be disappointed. However, the uninitiated may find the work more demanding than its length might lead them to expect. Shortt's research is meticulous and the scope of the book goes well beyond Richard M. Bucke and late nineteenth-century psychiatry. The aspect of the book which most impresses one is Shortt's consciousness of his own subjectivity and the caution one perceives in his judgements about Bucke and his environment.

Richard Maurice Bucke, the Superintendent of the London Asylum and a close friend of Walt Whitman, is now a somewhat controversial figure. The controversy centres on Bucke's role in promoting and permitting gynecological operations on insane women in his asylum from 1895 to 1900. Bucke and a few other "alienists" felt that the operations were an improvement over conventional treatments. Indeed, Shortt argues that they saw the treatment as a means of modernizing and legitimizing psychological medicine. No therapeutic psychiatric effect was obtained, although Dr. Bucke clearly felt that some improvements were linked to the surgery.

My only reservation about Shortt's interpretation of Bucke's activities concerns the very brief section on Bucke's sexuality. Shortt seems quite certain that, although Bucke was the intimate friend of Walt Whitman and Edward Carpenter, he was heterosexual. My own reading of Bucke's letters suggests that Bucke was far more passionate in ink to Walt Whitman than he was to his own wife. To Whitman, he never fails to send his love and goes as far as writing "I send you my love, dear Walt, and sign myself yours till death" which compares with "I am your affectionate husband." Surely Bucke's passion for Whitman went beyond what one might expect to find among heterosexual males.

Bucke's relationship with Whitman is not particularly relevant to his motivation in permitting gynecological operations on insane women. I am inclined to agree with Shortt that the evidence does not show that the surgery was a manifestation of sexual anxiety. Nor does Bucke strike one as being hostile to women, as Shortt very rightly points out.

Shortt adopts a much broader scope in his other chapters and places Bucke in the intellectual framework of the nineteenth century. His conclusions about the evolution of psychiatry and, in particular, the secularization of physiology are worth reading. Finally, the notes should not be overlooked; they are fairly readable and occasionally contain some information which ought to be in the text.

The less controversial parts of the work are also intriguing. The section of the work which deals with life in the London Asylum is particularly informative. In it, the lives of inmates and employees are examined with an impressive array of statistics balanced with literary evidence. The misery of asylum existence and exceedingly difficult circumstances led to some abuse of patients and to one patient's observation that it was often "difficult to distinguish the sane from the insane, the officer from the inmate."

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**Kurelek.** PATRICIA MORLEY. Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1986. 338 p., illus. ISBN 0-7715-9748-7.

William Kurelek was a popular Canadian painter and illustrator who died in 1977. His distinctive work became familiar to many Canadians through reproductions in *The Canadian* magazine in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Perhaps most individuals who know of his work associate him with *A Prairie Boy's Winter*, a book of illustrations with text that celebrates a child's pastoral existence on a prairie farm of a few decades ago. William Kurelek was not, however, a Canadian Norman Rockwell, depicting on canvas the pleasures of a simpler time. Much of his work was devoted to spiritual themes and to the dark messages of a coming apocalypse. Kurelek, at about the mid-point of his fifty-year life, converted to Roman Catholicism and from that time believed his painting to be a tool by which he could spread a Christian message to a secular world almost past the point of saving. The simplicity and pristine nature of some of his better known works, such as *Children's Games in Western Canada*, belie a complex and troubled artist. This paradox serves as the centrepiece of Patricia Morley's biography.

Morley is a professor of English literature. She is not by profession an art critic or an art historian, nor has she in the past attempted a full-scale biography. Her credentials to undertake a story of Kurelek's life then, are not obvious. She appointed herself to the task when she discovered that the artist's dealer, Avrom Isaacs, possessed "bags" of correspondence from Kurelek, collected over their seventeen-year relationship. Morley appears to have embarked on the project primarily because of the enormous number of documents available. After securing the Isaacs correspondence, she convinced the artist's widow to allow her the use of Kurelek's journals and manuscripts. Morley's study of the artist also depends heavily on interviews, discussions of some of his canvases but, most importantly, on Kurelek's published autobiographies. More than anything else, what this study shows is that a wealth of sources does not by itself ensure a definitive work.

In the case of *Kurelek*, regardless of the amount of material consulted, the biography does not fully illuminate the life of its subject. Rather, the author is at times too sympathetic to her subject and shies away from a critical analysis of what Kurelek saw as the central event in his life: a Christian conversion which "cured" his deep psychological