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Margaret Fairley and the Canadian Literary Tradition

In an article published in 1954, Canadian editor and critic Margaret Fairley (1885-1968) insisted that in contradiction to current opinion, Canada possessed a lively culture. In the field of literature, she cited several anthologies and literary histories that revealed a vibrant tradition emerging in the English Canada of the early nineteenth century and stretching unbroken to the present ("Our Heritage is Rich"). In the rather passive and desultory cultural milieu of the 1950s, Fairley was one of a small minority of commentators who defended Canada's literary achievements in historical terms. But her comments went largely ignored, not only because of public indifference but also because of her political loyalties. From 1936 until her death, she was a member of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). For most of her lifetime, her writings were confined almost entirely to Communist-sponsored periodicals and books. Her only successful bridging of the political gap was her edition of selections from the writings of William Lyon Mackenzie, published by Oxford University Press in 1960.

After several decades of neglect, Fairley has recently been rediscovered, not by Canadian literary history, but by a historian of Canadian left politics. David Kimmel, in a 1993 article in the journal *Left History*, has documented the main facts of Fairley's life and career, and defended some of her writings as significant contributions to the understanding of Canadian culture. However, Kimmel sees Fairley not primarily in terms of the Canadian literary tradition, but in terms of the socio-political subjects on which she wrote as a theorist and propagandist. In attempting to place Fairley in a literary

context, Kimmel focuses on Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, presenting Fairley's work as a qualification to Atwood's generalization that before the 1970s little scholarly or serious popular attention was paid to Canadian literature. In fact, Fairley's development as both an editor and promoter of Canadian literature was simultaneous with the flowering of scholarly and pedagogical interest in the subject in the twentieth century. Her career as a critic and teacher of Canadian literature was not a prescient anticipation of later developments, but the consequence of numerous antecedent and contemporary influences.

Like most other Canadian critics and scholars who emerged in the 1920s, her ideological assumptions and aesthetic tastes were formed by a bourgeois anglophile cultural tradition. Her family background, which at first glance seems to be at odds with the radicalism she eventually espoused, contributed to her political and aesthetic development. Her father, the Reverend William H. Keeling, headmaster of Bradford Grammar School in England, absorbed the principles of social reform then growing in the Church of England, especially in the northern industrial centres. He was committed to progressive ideas in education, and in 1875 established a girls' grammar school in Bradford (*Victoria History* 473-74). As a student and later as tutor of English literature at St. Hilda's College, Oxford, Margaret Keeling was attracted to the revolutionary aesthetics and ideologies of the nineteenth-century English romantics. Her earliest scholarly achievement was an edition of selected works by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poems of Nature and Romance 1794-1807* (1910), and an annotated *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1912), both published by Oxford's Clarendon Press. The literature of the early nineteenth century, Keeling declared in her introduction to *Poems of Nature and Romance*, constituted a reaction "against such sides of eighteenth-century life and thought as had been unadventurous and complaisant," and she stressed the influence of the French Revolution, Rousseau, Godwin, and Paine on Coleridge's thought (30, 42).

These two editions were more than the ephemeral exercises of a neophyte literary scholar. As late as 1983, a survey of Coleridge scholarship praised the edition of *Poems of Nature and Romance*, singling out Keeling's introduction as "excellent" (Crawford and Lauterbach, 2: 69). The two Coleridge volumes were in fact the beginning of Fairley's career as an editor/anthologist which was to climax in Canada with the Mackenzie edition—appropriately published by the Canadian branch of the publisher that had brought

out her Coleridge work in England fifty years earlier. Keeling thus began her career with solid commitments to a well-established academic tradition of English literature. Her acknowledgements in her edition of *Poems of Nature* include expressions of gratitude to two distinguished Oxford literary scholars, Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire. The influence of Darbishire is particularly significant: in an alternative world, Keeling might have followed Darbishire's example and become one of the pioneering Oxbridge women literary scholars of the early twentieth century.

But Keeling was not happy with British academia, especially because Oxford did not grant degrees to women, and the segregation and enforced celibacy of the women's colleges offered little opportunity for advancement or personal fulfilment. Justifiably offended with a tradition that limited professional ambitions on the basis of gender, she embarked for Canada, where she soon discovered that her Oxford education, with or without the degree, put her much in demand in that scholar-starved country. Almost immediately, she was offered an instructorship in English at the new University of Alberta, and appointed Dean of Women—a not very onerous position since female undergraduate enrolment numbered about thirty at the time. From the old-world asceticism of an Oxford women's college, Keeling passed rapidly into new vistas of professional and personal prospects in Canada. At Edmonton, she met and married a twenty-five-year-old instructor of German, another recent immigrant from the north of England, Barker Fairley.

In accordance with academic regulations of the time, the new faculty wife had to give up her teaching position. By the same set of social assumptions underlying such regulations, her husband's academic career took precedence over hers, although this precedence was supported by the strength of Barker Fairley's doctorate. In 1915 Fairley accepted an appointment to the Department of German at the University of Toronto.

In Toronto the Fairleys were absorbed into an active and stimulating cultural life. In 1917 Sam Hooke of Victoria College founded The *Rebel*, with the assistance of the Fairleys and others. In 1920 Barker Fairley assumed the editorship, and converted the intramural publication into a national magazine, retitled the *Canadian Forum*. For both the *Rebel* and *Forum* Margaret Fairley wrote articles and reviews that were informed by moderate feminism, Fabian socialism and pacifism, and indebted to such

literary sources as George Bernard Shaw, Leo Tolstoy, Romain Rolland, H.G. Wells, Virginia Woolf, and Olive Schreiner, all of whom she alluded to, quoted from, or reviewed. She had also begun slowly to discover Canadian literature and the rich vein of political criticism that it contained. A review in the March 1919 *Rebel* of the latest book by the humorist Peter McArthur expresses a fondness for what is probably McArthur's best-known work, *In Pastures Green* (1915), which uses the dry and homely voice of a farmer/narrator to satirize Canadian society's neglect of the rural life that should have formed the essential socio-economic basis of the nation. Fairley's interest in McArthur and his emphasis on the importance of reconciliation between modern industrialism and Canada's agrarian past leads directly toward her attraction to the social criticism of Mackenzie.

In the early 1920s she also began to study Marxism and Russian Communism, encouraged by a Professor of Mathematics at the university, Alfred Tennyson DeLury (1864-1951), a multi-talented scholar whose expertise included the poetry of W.B. Yeats, recent Russian history, and Marxist economic and social theory. "I first knew DeLury in the early twenties, on the committee of the Open Forums which used to meet on Sunday afternoons," Fairley wrote in a 1951 obituary of her former mentor. "I can remember the respect we all had for his understanding of the Russian Revolution and its meaning for Canadians. . . . For him the march of events was moral and artistic, as well as economic and political, and I think he will be remembered especially for this rich, balanced approach, which helped us who were far behind him in understanding" (Fairley, "Prof. A.T. DeLury").

Fairley was also influenced by the emerging scholarly and pedagogical emphasis on Canadian literature in the 1920s. Scholars from whose work she learned much include James Cappon, whose books on Charles G.D. Roberts (1925) and Bliss Carman (1930) were part of an output of biographical and historical research in Canadian literature that Cappon began to publish in the first decade of the century. In placing the post-Confederation poets in the context of the national and international literary currents and influences of their time, Cappon revealed his debt to the French historian Hippolyte Taine's theories about the influence of *race* and *milieu* on the creative imagination, as expounded in his *History of English Literature* (1863). Other Taine-influenced Canadian literary scholars produced important historical surveys of English-Canadian literature in the 1920s. Archibald MacMechan's *Headwaters of Canadian Literature* (1924) placed a strong

emphasis on nationalistic and nativist movements, while J.D. Logan's *Highways of Canadian Literature* (also 1924) was more aware of international influences. Lionel Stevenson's *Appraisals of Canadian Literature* (1926) searched for unifying themes in Canadian writing, and found a pervasive fascination with and resistance to nature that prefigure the ideas of Northrop Frye and Margaret Atwood.

Some or all of these works undoubtedly helped shape Fairley's conception of Canadian literature. Although she had not yet committed herself to Marxism, her socialist inclinations would find congenial the academic literary historicism of the 1920s, with its emphasis on the continuity between the nineteenth century and the twentieth, and on the influence of environment and the sense of communal identity on creative writing.

Even more important for Fairley's development as an editor were some of the anthologies of Canadian literature that appeared in the 1920s. *The Voice of Canada: Canadian Prose and Poetry for Schools* (1927), was edited by A.M. Stephen, a schoolteacher and labour activist who, like DeLury, was much interested in the Russian revolution and remained a sympathizer of Marxist Communist ideology, although he never joined the party. Stephen's anthology emphasized the poetry of nature and nationalism prominent in late nineteenth century Canada. His prose selections included essays of social criticism by Joseph Howe and Thomas D'Arcy McGee, as well as a short excerpt from William Lyon Mackenzie's 1834 address to the "Reformers of Upper Canada," which might well have been Fairley's earliest exposure to Mackenzie's writings. Another anthology, which Fairley read and continued to recommend years after it had gone out of print ("Our Heritage"), is the *Book of Canadian Poetry and Verse* (1926), co-edited by E.K. Broadus. Broadus was an American, invited up to the University of Alberta in 1910 to establish and head the English department that Margaret Keeling was shortly to join as a young lecturer. Originally from Virginia, Broadus seems in both art and politics to have been a combination of conservatism and radicalism. A scholar of British poetry and a poet in his own right, whose work appeared in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*, his interests ranged from English Renaissance literature to recent experiments in imagism. In spite of—or perhaps as a result of—his cosmopolitan perspective on literature, Broadus expounded a view of writing in Canada that stressed nationalistic and historical coherence. "Much of the best of Canadian literature has been either directly inspired by the Canadian scene or has reflected the effort to

recreate the historic past," the editors observed in the Preface to the anthology (vii). *Canadian Prose and Verse* also includes a section entitled "The People," with selections representing "a picture of the past and a panoramic view of the varied aspects of Canadian life to-day" (viii). Although Broadus obviously uses the word "people" without any partisan political connotation, it is easy to see a degree of consistency between his conception of Canadian society and the Marxist views of his former colleague.

The development of literary studies in Canada, carried forward so hopefully by scholars like Cappon, Stevenson, Stephen and Broadus, came to a halt with the Depression, as university budgets were slashed, publishers avoided Canadian books as unprofitable, and the promotion of a national literary tradition was preempted by more pressing concerns. Similarly, Fairley's development as a Canadian writer and editor was disrupted in 1931, when Barker Fairley was offered the headship of the Department of German at Victoria University in Manchester, England. Almost from her arrival back in the economically devastated north of England, Fairley found herself homesick for Canada, but the years in Manchester were not wasted, for amid the poverty, unemployment and radical political activism of the region she confirmed her commitment to Marxism, and joined the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Soon after the University of Toronto had lured Barker Fairley back with an offer of the headship of the department of German in 1936, Margaret Fairley joined the Communist Party of Canada. The year 1936 was a time of intensive activity, as well as impending crisis, for the CPC. Throughout the 1930s the party had struggled against police harassment and imprisonment of leaders to defend the rights of the workers and unemployed. As the Conservative Dominion government of R.B. Bennett, the RCMP and city police forces struck out against the party with oppressive legislation, raids and padlockings, the party fought back in court and through its newspaper, the *Daily Clarion.*

Canadian Communists of the 1930s were not as culturally active as their British and American counterparts, but a literary magazine entitled *Masses,* sponsored by the party, had appeared in Toronto between 1932 and 1934, and most local parties had arts clubs. In 1936-37 the independent "popular front" magazine *New Frontier* attracted a number of party members as editors and contributors, including Margaret Fairley, who contributed several

book reviews. Having just returned from England, she was assigned books by British writers of leftist leanings, including Stephen Spender's *Forward from Liberalism*, and Vera Brittain's novel *Honourable Estate* ("Not much as a work of art; might have popular appeal," observed Fairley of the work of the socialist Brittain [Feb. 1937: 20]).

But plagued by financial problems and the hostility of police and government toward left-wing activity, *New Frontier* closed down in October of 1937. In the last two years before the outbreak of World War II, the only national outlet for Communist writing was the *Clarion*. But Fairley did little writing for publication, keeping busy with her family responsibilities and with a routine of meetings and other Party activities.

In 1939, as war loomed and liberal democratic countries like Canada, the United States, and Britain continued to ignore the fascist threat, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression treaty with Nazi Germany. When war broke out in the fall, the Hitler-Stalin pact gave Canadian police and government the excuse they had been looking for. Armed with the argument that the Soviet Union was an ally of the enemy and that the connection with the Comintern made the Communist Party of Canada an agency of a hostile foreign power, the RCMP began a series of raids and closures of CPC property, including the *Clarion* offices. Various party functionaries were arrested and interned without trial, mostly political leaders and union officials, but including many others selected with such an apparent randomness and vindictiveness that party members and sympathizers went about their lives in fear, and many were forced into hiding. As her daughter recalls, Fairley gathered her family about her to warn them that she was in danger of being arrested, and to advise them of possible courses of action if the worst happened (Ann Schabas, interview).

Fairley was not interned, although the arrests continued through 1941 and engulfed many journalists and writers. In spite of this repressive atmosphere, a courageous group of journalists banded together to create a new weekly newspaper that would serve as the voice of radical socialism in Canada. Carefully emphasizing its status as a "journal of democratic opinion" independent of any political party or other organization, the *Canadian Tribune* was launched in Toronto in January of 1940. Although watched by police, and even closed down briefly in 1941, the newspaper flourished as the journalistic voice of Communism in Canada.

Fairley immediately began writing for the paper, and was soon appointed

book review editor. Over the next four years she reviewed a wide variety of volumes, ranging from books of literary history and criticism to works on British colonialism, many of them with a Canadian focus. In addition to doing a great deal of reading about Canada, she had contacts with many Canadian writers and scholars, at the University of Toronto and through the network of contributors to the *Tribune*. The most important of her new contacts was Stanley B. Ryerson, a Marxist historian who had embarked on a reinterpretation of Canadian history in his books *1837: The Birth of Canadian Democracy* (1937) and *French Canada: A Study in Canadian Democracy* (1943), published by the party's Progress Books. Encouraged by Ryerson, Fairley began planning a literary anthology to remind Canadians of their rich cultural heritage. Just as Ryerson was rewriting Canadian political history, Fairley hoped to begin the process of rewriting the country's literary history, and especially to bring the old Taine-influenced view of the subject into line with Marxist thought. The book was issued by Progress in early 1945, under the title *Spirit of Canadian Democracy: A Collection of Canadian Writings from the Beginning to the Present Day.*

The volume included short prose extracts interspersed with lyric poems, and was arranged into three sections: "From the Beginnings to 1850," "From 1850 to 1930," and "From 1930 to the Present." Topical subsections illustrated the evolution of democratic traditions in Canada ("Responsible Governors," "Civil Liberties," "Education"), with the modern section highlighting the protest movements of the Depression years. The book was strongly anti-Nazi, emphasizing Canadian ethnic and cultural diversity as opposed to German claims of "racial purity." But Fairley also used her selections to reveal alternatives to the bourgeois liberal bias of most histories of Canada. Like Stanley Ryerson, she avoided such conventional war-time sentiments as the glorification of the British Empire and British parliamentary traditions, in favour of an emphasis on Canada's ability to stand independent and self-sufficient among nations. "Democracy" was not identified with imperial unity, nor with the anarchic individualism of the United States, nor with the capitalist ideal of unrestricted economic opportunity. Rather, it was related to the liberation from economic and political authoritarianism of disadvantaged people such as native Indians, French Canadians, refugees, and workers.

Fairley also emphasized the continuity between socialist literary activity and other writing of political and economic protest. From earlier centuries

she chose writers in the radical reform traditions such as William Lyon Mackenzie, Louis Joseph Papineau, Louis Riel, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Peter McArthur, and Archibald Lampman. In the modern section she did not limit herself to Marxist writers, for it was her purpose to reveal a national cultural "united front," comparable to the international political front that had fought the fascists in Spain and was now fighting the totalitarianism of Germany and Japan. From the twentieth century, her writers included non-partisan social critics such as Leo Kennedy, Morley Callaghan and Frederick Philip Grove, socialists like Kenneth Leslie, and even the Trotskyist poet Earle Birney, as well as Communists such as Norman Bethune, Joe Wallace and Dorothy Livesay.

With its diverse representation of writers and ideological positions, as well as the brevity of the extracts and variety of subject matter, the book was designed to appeal to a wide popular audience. Predictably, however, non-Communist newspaper reviewers ignored *Spirit of Canadian Democracy*, as they ignored everything published by Progress Books. The *Tribune* gave it enthusiastic promotion, but it achieved limited sales among the comparatively small Communist readership, and was blacklisted by the Ontario Department of Education (Kimmel and Kealey 255).

Fairley was not the sort of person to be discouraged by the failure of her book. In fact, like other Communists in 1945, she was generally optimistic, for it seemed that the world was entering a new era of international cooperation and political tolerance. In 1943, the CPC had changed its name to the Labour-Progressive Party (LPP), in part to deflect government and police hostility, and in part to enhance its image as a conventional political party. By 1945 a few Labour-Progressives had been elected across the country at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. Party membership was growing, with the support of influential unions such as the Canadian Seamen's Union and the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers. Soon after the end of the war, however, a darker side of the new era emerged. In the fall of 1945 Igor Gouzenko, a Russian cipher clerk at the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, convinced Canadian authorities that the embassy was an operating station in a Communist spy network, and his revelations were followed by the arrest of Labour-Progressive MP Fred Rose and sixteen others. In 1946, the Canadian government flouted its own immigration laws to allow into the country a convicted criminal from the United States, Hal Banks, to

smash the Canadian Seamen's Union and replace it with a U.S.-centred anti-Communist union. The RCMP began a vigorous program of intimidation and harassment of party members. The cold war had come to Canada.

In March 1949 Fairley went to a Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace in New York, a conference attended by a variety of distinguished artists and scholars, including Aaron Copland, W.E.B. Dubois, Lillian Hellman, the Canadian poet Kenneth Leslie, Thomas Mann, F.O. Matthiessen, Arthur Miller, and Paul Robeson (printed programme, Fairley Papers). But shortly after her arrival, Fairley was expelled from the country by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, acting on the conviction that the peace movement was a Soviet-backed Communist plot ("Culture Sessions").

She was much too busy, however, to brood over any personal sense of injury. In the spring of 1947 the LPP had established a national cultural commission, under the direction of Stanley Ryerson, to explore ways and means of increasing party activity in literature and other arts ("The LPP and the Arts," mimeographed bulletin, Fairley Papers). Fairley eagerly participated in commission activities. By 1950 she was teaching creative writing in extension classes organized by the commission's Toronto Cultural Group, and writing short plays for amateur productions sponsored by the Group (course prospectuses, play typescripts, Fairley Papers).

By early 1951 she was involved in plans to establish a "new Canadian cultural magazine," as the *Tribune* described it, dedicated "to the building of a Canadian people's culture in a world at peace" (30 July 1951). The first issue of the quarterly, with Fairley as editor, appeared in January 1952. *New Frontiers*, its name a deliberate echo of the independent leftist *New Frontier* of the 1930s, was arguably the most distinguished literary publication that the party produced. Although edited in Toronto, the magazine was a national periodical, drawing its readers and contributors from regions and ethnic groups across Canada. In an editorial in the first issue, Fairley emphasized the possibilities of expanding the national cultural heritage by encouraging the creative potential of immigrants, native people, and the younger generation. The intention was especially to compensate for the shortcomings and political biases of the few Canadian culture magazines then in existence, and to provoke the Dominion government to implement the recommendations of the Massey Report and provide financial support for artists.

With limited circulation and resources, Fairley did a remarkable job of attracting a variety of visual and literary artists to *New Frontiers*. The contributors were mostly Canadian, but occasionally there were works in translation from eastern Europe and Asia, including poems by the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet, and a short story by Yuri Ritkheu, identified as the first Chukchi (Siberian Inuit) writer.

Canadian contributions included historical reprints of work by Norman Bethune, Pauline Johnson, Isabella Valancy Crawford, and E.W. Thompson. Contemporary contributors included established authors in the socialist tradition, such as Kenneth Leslie, Wilson MacDonald, and Joe Wallace, as well as younger radicals such as Milton Acorn (whose first published poem appeared in *New Frontiers*) and George Ryga. *New Frontiers* anticipated by fifteen years the anti-war literature inspired by Vietnam, with short stories and articles protesting the Korean conflict. The magazine was also far ahead of its time in recognizing the cultural achievements of aboriginal and ethnic communities.

Among the prominent features of *New Frontiers* were the vigorous editorials which started off each issue. Besides protesting the cold war commitments of the Massey Report, Fairley expressed her opinions on current issues such as the firing of the "Symphony Six," the members of the Toronto Symphony who were dismissed in 1952 after being refused entry to the United States because of their alleged involvement in radical causes (Editorial, *New Frontiers*, Fall 1952). Another theme was the domination of American junk culture on the emerging Canadian television network. She also attacked expatriate Canadian writer Thomas B. Costain for the alleged racism of his representations of Canadian native peoples in his popular history *The White and the Gold* ("Costain's White Supremacy," Summer 1954). When the government announced in 1953 its intention to form the Canada Council, Fairley warned that "the Council might be used as a blind pretense, or as a body set up to control, instead of to stimulate, our cultural institutions," especially if U.S. business and political interests succeeded in their efforts to ensure Canadian subservience to American economic and political goals ("The Canada Council," Winter 1954: 2). And in 1955, Fairley launched a vehement protest against the granting of the Governor General's Award to Igor Gouzenko. Gouzenko's novel, *Fall of a Titan*, was a clumsily written piece of anti-Soviet propaganda, and as many Canadian writers both Communist and non-Communist believed, the prize was "not for the

recognition of genuine literary merit, but a reward for political services" ("Cold War Award," Summer 1955: 2).

But in spite of the vigour of its editor and her little band of supporters, *New Frontiers* was not a financial success. The non-Communist literary establishment ignored it, most book and periodical dealers boycotted it, and the relatively small number of party members interested enough in cultural matters to subscribe fell far short of what was needed to break even. The spring 1956 issue appeared much reduced in size, and printed on less expensive paper. The summer issue began with a strong plea for financial support, but it was too late: the magazine was discontinued with this issue.

The main reasons for the disappearance of *New Frontiers* were economic, but it is more than a coincidence that the last issue appeared only a couple of months after the international Communist movement, which was so frequently assailed from without during the Cold War, received a severe shock from within. In the spring of 1956, Nikita Kruschev's speech to the Soviet Congress of Deputies attacking Joseph Stalin was released in English translation. The Canadian party, which had been intensely pro-Stalinist, was devastated. Hundreds of members resigned. Fairley's faith in Communism remained secure, but like others, she must have been badly shaken by this blow to the international party's credibility.

The failure of the magazine plus the disarray in the Communist movement at large would have been enough to discourage a much younger person. Far from having any intention of slowing down or withdrawing from her political and cultural commitments, however, Fairley at age seventy-one continued busy as ever. Turning to her historical research, she resumed her work on the Canadian historical personality who had fascinated her for years, William Lyon Mackenzie. Interested especially in establishing Mackenzie's reputation as a journalist and essayist, she searched the back-files of the various papers which Mackenzie had edited or contributed to, and his manuscripts in the national, provincial, and Toronto archives. By the summer of 1959 she had ready for the press *The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie 1824-1837.*

Emphasizing Mackenzie's work as an essayist and travel writer, the *Selected Writings* presented a new perspective on the controversial journalist and rebel, and provided an illuminating complement to Mackenzie's repu-

tation as a political figure, which had been re-established in William Kilbourn's recent biography *The Firebrand* (1956). The book was less obviously partisan Communist than most of Fairley's writing, and with its Oxford imprint it was distributed and reviewed internationally. But her focus on Mackenzie's career up to the rebellions of 1837 suggests a historical view consistent with the Marxist concept of the inevitability of revolution.

Mackenzie's observations of his contemporary society can also be fitted into the Marxist critique of capitalistic systems and the economic injustices they create. Speaking on behalf of the farmer, small merchant, artisan, and worker, Mackenzie frequently denounces government support of speculative land companies and exploitative industrialists, and government manipulation of the rights of the free press and franchise. Through personal narrative sketches of travel and observation Mackenzie evokes a close-up view of the "people" as seen by one of themselves. His sketches also convey impressions of an overriding coherence and unity in the ethnically, religiously, and occupationally diverse society of Canada: whether members of fringe religious sects like "the children of peace," mechanics and labourers in the growing towns and villages of York County, or aboriginal natives settled on land grants on the Credit River, the inhabitants of Canada speak with one voice in resistance to autocratic authority. Mackenzie's language, as Fairley emphasizes, prefigures Marxist rhetoric when he identifies labour as "the true source of wealth": "The farmer produces Wheat—the Miller converts it into Flour—the Labourer breaks Stones and Macadamizes Roads and these roads with the aid of Steamers and Boats convey the Flour to the place where the Foreigner will buy it at the highest price. The owner of the Flour receives his money, be it one thousand or ten thousand dollars—this is wealth; it was wealth before paper money was in existence—and I hope it will be so considered when a paper currency shall be no more" (215-16).

Non-Communist reviewers of the *Selected Writings* either failed or declined to see Marxist connotations in Fairley's work, for the reviews were very favourable. Robert Fulford, in the *Toronto Star*, hailed it as a "worthy companion" to Kilbourn's biography; Kilbourn, in the *Globe and Mail*, was equally enthusiastic about "this first readily available anthology of Mackenzie's writings." Carl Klinck, writing in the *Canadian Forum*, praised Fairley for establishing Mackenzie's reputation as a man of letters, and included Mackenzie in his article "Literary Activity in the Canadas, 1812-1841," in the *Literary History of Canada* (1965). In England, the *Times*

Literary Supplement hailed the "well-edited and handsomely produced selection." In August, 1961, after being ignored for years by the city, provincial, and national cultural establishments, Fairley was an invited guest of the Toronto Historical Board at an open house to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Mackenzie's death ("Board Planning to Hold Open House," clipping, Fairley papers).

With the Mackenzie volume completed, Fairley turned to various projects, including a proposed anthology of workers' autobiographical narratives that she had been working on since the early 1950s (but which she did not live to complete), and editorial work on the *Marxist Quarterly* (renamed *Horizons* in 1966), a socio-political journal published in connection with the Marxist Study Centre of Toronto.

In her articles and book reviews for the new magazine, Fairley continued the assertion of her deeply held faith that the true "spirit of democracy" could be discovered in the historical continuity of the struggle of the people of Canada for a bearable existence free of economic and political compulsion. Unlike other Marxists who conceived history as the evolution of abstract political and economic principles, Fairley saw history in terms of human experience. In "Roots of Patriotism in English-Speaking Canada Before Confederation" (Winter 1963), an essay obviously related to her research into Mackenzie's writings, she contrasted the community spirit of nineteenth-century Canadian settlers to the anarchic frontier individualism of the pioneers in the United States. In "The Moral Responsibility of the Communist" (Winter 1966), Fairley insisted that the Communist must reject class privilege, racism and other false systems of values that support capitalist society.

In this essay, Fairley briefly quotes from Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique* (1963), a work that was to have a major influence on the women's movement of the late twentieth century. The quotation is a general reference to the possibilities for human moral improvement, but the fact that Fairley was reading recent feminist work suggests that her interests were moving in new directions—or perhaps she was returning to earlier interests, when in the 1920s she read such authors as Virginia Woolf and Olive Schreiner. As a Communist, Fairley's compassion was directed to all segments of the population whose disadvantages were primarily definable in social and economic terms. But some of her Communist writings indicate

an awareness of the exploitation to which women can be subjected. As the new women's movement developed in the 1960s and 1970s, Fairley might have become increasingly committed to it.

By 1966, however, she was eighty-one years old. Increasingly frail, she managed to continue to devote attention to her cherished cultural interests. Finally, she suffered a stroke that left her bed-ridden for over a year, until her death on 14 February, 1968. At her request, there were no funeral services. Little notice was taken of her death by the capitalist press, but her many friends and associates within and without the Communist movement mourned, and tributes to her appeared in the *Canadian Tribune* and *Horizons*. "Culture, for her," wrote Stanley Ryerson, "was not something 'added' to the movement of Communism but of its essence" (1). Her sense of the importance of culture, he continued, grew out of her "basic attitude of commitment"—a commitment to the belief that all human beings can achieve high levels of refinement and cultural sensitivity when the weight of economic and political domination is lifted from them. Thus the "cultural worker" must work to help the people rise to such levels. "To look outward, to enlarge experience," Fairley wrote shortly before her death, "that is, and always has been, the first job of the artist" ("The Cultural Worker's Responsibility" 5). With her lifelong commitment to the cultural improvement of people, Margaret Fairley was by these criteria a true artist, whose place in the Canadian literary tradition should be at least as secure as the many nineteenth and early twentieth-century writers she championed.

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