

THE ELEPHANT IN THE NEXT ROOM

*Anatomy of a Long Work**

Hugh Hood

I HAVE OFTEN REPLIED in humorous terms to inquiries about how it feels to live with a literary conception of great magnitude lodged in my head for thirty years, perhaps forty years. The metaphor usually developed is that of dwelling in a smallish apartment consisting of drawing room, study, hall, bedroom and bath, and kitchen, with the looming presence of some enormous living creature, woolly mammoth or whale, persistently suggested by noises and ever-present shadows in rooms adjacent to the one that I happen to be occupying.

While I juggle happily with my rubber duckling in the tub, sounds of heavy footfalls echo around the steamy bathroom tiles, an occasional trumpeting call making itself heard. Over solitary breakfast taken in the nook next the refrigerator, I hear snufflings and the wheezes of great lungs. Perhaps the strongest statement of this metaphor comes with intimations of evening when I find myself seated comfortably in the softly lighted drawing room, reading or listening to Haydn or just relaxing, eyes half-shut, as the digital clock on the record player shows later and later times. I am separated from the study by a pair of inadequately latched, glass-panelled doors, and I am certain that the big fellow is in there moving restlessly about. I hear the swish of one tail-like appendage, then of two, and I realize what sort of beast this is. Besides the caudal appendage it possesses a forward or nasal pendant. It isn't a woolly mammoth; it isn't a whale; it's an elephant, and it's in the darkened study, all of it there in the next room. I never feel fear at this realization; what I feel is the urgent need to persuade the creature into the light so that I can see all of it. I get up and throw open the connecting doors, and there stands the enormous being in the dark, backing and filling, turning massive head with hesitation towards the soft light, reflecting ivory. I see what I am to become, the mahout, the little guy naked to the waist except for a floppy straw hat, who feeds and waters the great animal and leads it to and fro, infinitely more the possession of the great animal whom he leads than the enormous breathing dreaming creature is his.

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I wasn't sure at the start but I am now in a position to reveal that we are in the presence of an Indian elephant, not an African, the ears, the stance of the forefeet now fully illuminated. I believe too that so far as I can judge through the shadows which still envelop the body this elephant is male.

I should perhaps ask myself how far this metaphor is tenable, how far indeed any metaphor delivers useful truth. Imagine if you will a body of literature from which all metaphor has been excluded. What would that be like? Let us take metaphor in the broadest sense to mean the detection and formal expression of similarities between different things such that one can be called by the name of another: the Fifth Column, the elephant in the next room. Does the device confer any sort of truth? No names may be predicated of God, declare Aquinas and the greatest of the mystics, except analogically. God isn't a Father but is like a Father, like a Mother too in many senses. How do we assure ourselves that these analogies are apt, that they promote our understanding of the Being signified? When I tell you that my long work is like an elephant in a darkened room next to this, what am I conveying? A partial and ambiguous view? A misleading poeticism?

It might be thought that since *The New Age/Le nouveau siècle* seems to be formed in twelve parts of which the first was published about September 27, 1975, the work as a whole belongs to the middle and later parts of my life as a writer. I had after all been publishing my work since 1958, seventeen years earlier. *The Swing in the Garden* was my tenth book. Certainly the books which immediately preceded it seemed at that date to bear no relation to it, particularly the novel *You Cant Get There From Here*. Such an assumption, it now seems to me, would be exactly wrong. I was getting hints and flashes and intuitions of the presence in my darkened study, or down the hall at the other end of the apartment, of an enormous work, for many years previously.

I am totally and unalterably convinced that the *whole* thing, trunk, tusks, tail, was present from the very beginning. I think that *The New Age/Le nouveau siècle* began to rise in my person, my nature, from the earliest moments I addressed the typewriter keys, that suggestions of the work will be detected in most of the stories written around 1960 which appeared in my first book, the story collection *Flying a Red Kite* of 1962.

I find there the profuse and fundamentally comic view of Toronto as the city displayed itself historically from the 1920's through the late 1950's, in the semi-fictional memoir narratives, "Recollections of the Works Department" and "Silver Bugles, Cymbals, Golden Silks." I find there the place name "Stoverville" which denotes an imaginary pole of my experience of which an equally imaginary Toronto or Montreal may form another pole from time to time. When I first, idly and casually, chose the name Stoverville for my town of pastoral idyll and country peace, at the time of writing the story "Three Halves of a House" in

1960, I had no idea that Stoverville would underpin *A New Athens* (1977), *The Scenic Art* (1984), and *The Motor Boys in Ottawa* (1986).

When I took a second glance in the direction of Stoverville in the story “Bicultural Angela” written in February 1966 as part of the interrelated collection of stories *Around the Mountain: Scenes From Montréal Life*, I gave the title character an education at Trinity College in the University of Toronto, made her a Stoverville native, showed her in transit to Montreal, where I had already settled another Stovervillian, Maura Boston. This same range of movement, Toronto-Stoverville-Montreal, has remained a constant property of my work, with occasional excursions to London or Winnipeg or Zurich or Venice permitted, until the present day, as *The Motor Boys in Ottawa* demonstrates. There we see Matthew Goderich and his Edie in transit, in the same pilgrimage endured earlier by Angela Mary Robinson and Maura Boston, both of whom seem now to have accomplished some sort of return to Stoverville.

Preoccupation with Stoverville goings-on naturally led me to display them on a larger canvas in my next examination of the place and its meanings, in the novel *A Game of Touch*, in which Jake Price attempts to fly from Stoverville and all that it implies, especially the manners and morals of Robinson Court and environs, only to find them disguised and then transformed in the person of Marie-Ange, anti-heroine of the novel. This brilliant lady rises miraculously like Aphrodite from a Montreal bathtub in which Jake, like an enchanted acolyte, administers a much-needed shower, directing the cleansing waters all over the body of the goddess as day breaks and extraordinary recognition occurs. You can’t get away from Stoverville, Jake discovers.

I suspect that we haven’t seen the last of Jake Price, just as we now realize that we hadn’t seen the last of Duncan McCallum or “the elegant bond salesman,” earlier satellites of Angela Mary Robinson. It seems appropriate that another key element in this growing anatomy should reveal itself in *A Game of Touch*, the city of Ottawa which together with Toronto, Stoverville, and Montreal — the empire of the St. Lawrence — forms the golden triangle of central Canada.

THE CITY, THE PEOPLE, and the federal presence in Ottawa seem to have situated themselves at an apex of this golden triangle sometime in 1966, a time which proved an extraordinarily fruitful one for me and for my dream-elephant. I’m an unreconstructed and unashamed federalist and centralist. I believe in Canada as a great and united country with a rich and generous and complex people. The preparations for Centennial Year and for Expo 67 impressed me very much and seem to have unloosed special imaginative powers directed towards preserving in art what Canada felt like in 1966, 1967, 1968. It was a

totally different feeling — this is worth noting — than the nightmarish sequence of emotions which overcame our neighbours to the south at the same historical moment. Bliss was it in that 1966 dawn to be alive in Canada; it was a time when it became clear to me that this is the best country in the world to live in. I've never seen any reason to change my mind, despite the tumult and turmoil which overtook us in the later 1960's.

In a lot of ways *The Motor Boys in Ottawa* treats the years from 1966 to 1970 as the pivot, the turning point, in Canadian life. Let's see what I can show to support this notion.

On October 15, 1966, Peter Martin accepted my story sequence *Around the Mountain* for publication in June 1967, precisely when I wanted it to come out, in the middle of both Expo and the Centennial festivities. Less than a week later, on October 21, Harcourt Brace, Jovanovitch, of New York, accepted my novel *The Camera Always Lies* for publication in September 1967. These two books complement each other in an almost ideal way, a collection of stories and a novel, a book about the most minute details of life in Montreal and a book about Hollywood where I had never been. A publisher just getting started in Toronto on the smallest scale, and the enormous, world-famous New York publisher of writers like T. S. Eliot and Sinclair Lewis.

My whole artistic enterprise was starting to come into the light in my own mind. I saw with accelerating excitement how the thing hung together. I began to understand that what I was doing somehow existed as *representative* of the whole of Canadian life. I began to have a sense of mission. I began to see my work in Wordsworth's superb phrase as "a leading from above, a something given." I came to see that I was being proffered what seems to me a providential lead through those "fallings from us, vanishings; / blank misgivings of a creature / moving about in worlds not realised," whose obscure misleadings I had celebrated in the first story in my first published book. This sense of vocation grew upon me in the closing months of 1966. Ideas crowded in on me so thick and fast (as John Dryden said) that I could scarcely find time to deal justly with them. And besides, whoever gets two of his cherished darlings of the imagination accepted — and by such publishers — within a single week?

Stimulated by this sense of acceptance and mission, I conceived the idea for *A Game of Touch*, which I started to write on December 1, 1967. I completed a draft on my birthday the following year, April 30, which also happens to be Matt Goderich's birthday. The book was meant to put forward in as many modes as possible a group of images of reconciliation, merging of opposed forces, most publicly perhaps in the scenes depicting the working out of medicare legislation in a series of federal/provincial negotiations. A dull subject for a novel? It's only dull if Canadians are dull, because it is as Canadian a subject as there is. The federal/provincial negotiation issuing in a compromise settlement at an important

conference — that's our unique contribution to political theory and practice. It may be dull but by God it's us!

While I was getting the ideas for *A Game of Touch* and writing the first draft, I was reading the middle volumes of Anthony Powell's twelve-volume series of novels, *A Dance to the Music of Time*. Powell had reached the mid-point of his narrative with *The Kindly Ones*, 1962. It was by then clear that with this loosing of the Eumenides upon the world the action of Powell's series would pivot around the events of World War II. The immediately following books showed me that Mr. Powell was developing his series as in effect a quartet of trilogies, with the books devoted to World War II carrying the action away in a descending downhill rush towards the final trilogy which was to appear in the early 1970's.

This arrangement suggested a number of fundamental principles which might be embodied in the parts of a long work. It must have been during Centennial Year that I saw at last where my proper direction lay. The extraordinary euphoria and sense of achievement which the celebrations of that year yielded to a writer living in Montreal, summering in pastoral eastern Ontario, publishing in Toronto and New York, teaching at *l'université de Montréal*, began to urge me to attempt something really big. A testament, a witness, a celebration, a leading from above, a something given.

Apart from my wife Noreen, the first person I ever said anything about this to was my friend Dennis Duffy, sometime in 1968 or 1969. I remember saying to Dennis that I was starting to get strong signals in my imagination about some very large thing existing in its murky recesses. This was just when Dennis was working on his essay "Grace: the Novels of Hugh Hood" which appeared in *Canadian Literature*, 47, Winter 1971.

Then on February 23, 1969, at 1:00 P.M., I stuck a sheet of bond paper in my typewriter and typed out this:

NB: THIS IS THE FIRST THING I'VE PUT ON PAPER ABOUT THIS PROJECT, WHICH MAY TURN OUT TO BE THE GRAND OVERRIDING WORK OF MY LIFE FROM THE TIME I'M 46 YEARS OLD TO THE TIME I'M 69 OR THEREABOUTS, AS FOLLOWS:

Possible enormous twelve-volume *roman-fleuve*. A combination twelve-volume novel-book of annals-memoir. My reason for conceiving it is that I'm so much at the center of life in Canada now, seem to know everybody or know somebody who knows everybody, without being at the center of power myself. This would be the first time such a book (Saint-Simon, Proust, Powell) has ever been done in Canada.

I felt like God, you see. No doubt about it. I felt like God overseeing the doings of the Leviathan or the Elephant, the giant animal, the body politic. A crazed ambition, really loony, the act of an egomaniac? Here's a man who thinks he's Almighty God? No. I hadn't got myself mixed up with God. I thought God was moving in me and I still do.

I went back and looked harder at what Mr. Powell was doing. He had written five novels in the 1930's. World War II had interrupted his career and he didn't get back to the novel for a decade. Sometime about 1949 he must have begun work on his series; the first volume appeared in 1951 when its author was forty-five years old. He lived to complete his series in 1975 at the age of seventy, in the same publishing season in which *The Swing in the Garden* came out. Twenty-five years, I told myself. It takes twenty-five years. Time I bestirred myself.

THE SWING IN THE GARDEN swam into consciousness in the most remarkable way. In early 1969 my notes describe the opening book in some detail.

Composed 1974/75. I: Depression, 1925-1935. Narrator is 0-10 years old.

I'd got the time span approximately correct, and the age of the Narrator, to whom I hadn't yet given a name. I knew just about when the book should be published, on a twenty-five-year timetable, but one very peculiar circumstance intervened to keep the book from surfacing in my imagination. I had a marvellous idea for quite a different novel, which I knew that I would have to write before I attempted the first book in the series. *You Cant Get There From Here* seemed so vivid in the foreground of my thinking, and took on flesh so quickly as I thought about it, that it simply had to be written.

I was now composing two novels in my head at the same time. A close reader of *You Cant Get There From Here* (1972) and *The Swing in the Garden* (1975) will spot how intimately the two books are connected as opposite poles of the same consciousness. I could not have written either book if I hadn't been thinking of the other one at the same time. A wholly imaginary, non-factual community somewhere in the world but not necessarily anywhere versus Summerhill Avenue in Toronto in the early 1930's. A bitterly tragic action of betrayal and intrigue versus a child's discovery of sweet and ever-widening freedom. Chaos versus safety, tragedy versus beatitude in the garden.

Both books issue in the end of something. "It made for a long fall." I conceived *You Cant Get There From Here* as an apocalyptic work. *The Swing in the Garden* begins in the garden of Eden and the swing is a growing inclination towards the long fall of the closing line. I had in mind the poles of Genesis and Apocalypse, according to Northrop Frye the termini of departure and return in all literature, of which the Holy Scriptures are the divinely ordained model. I wrote my apocalypse first, then swung around to the beginnings of things. "In those days we used to have a red-and-white garden swing set up in the backyard beside the garage . . ."

I wrote *You Cant Get There From Here* between February 1 and June 18, 1970. The book flowed out of my mind like maple syrup from a ten-gallon can. The whole book was right there, almost on the end of my tongue. I wrote twenty pages a week, four pages daily in a five-day working week, and never missed a day for the first ten weeks. Never had to pause and think out the next sentence or the next turn of the action. It is tremendously exciting to compose a book at that pace with never a detail to search for, never any pause in the outpouring of ideas. It is now, sixteen years later, perfectly obvious to me that *The Swing in the Garden* was as it were standing in line behind the other novel, pushing it out into the light, like the second child of twins kicking in the birth canal. These novels should always be read as nearly simultaneously as possible.

You Cant Get There From Here was published by Oberon Press of Ottawa, with whom I issued ten books through the 1970's, in September 1972 to uniformly favourable reviews, better notices than any of my other early novels. By this time I was talking to Michael Macklem of Oberon about a proposal for a long series. I have always felt enormously encouraged by something Mr. Macklem said to me during these talks. "You write them, and we'll publish them." Very few publishers would dare to give a blanket commitment like that without having seen so much as a page of the proposed work. As late as the publication date of *You Cant Get There From Here* I had nothing on paper, barring a few pages of notes, not even an opening paragraph, yet Michael Macklem made that commitment before I had anything to go on except a terrible ferment in my head. By May 13, 1972, I knew the titles of the first three novels in the series and had some notion of their structural implications. I wasn't sure about the fourth book but even at that date I knew that Number Five was to be called *The Scenic Art* and that Number Six would have something to do with cars. I thought that it might even be called *Cars, Cars, Cars*.

Now for some heavy drama. I can't for the life of me recover the precise date when this took place, but I know it must have been quite awhile before May 1972 and I know that it was on an afternoon of extremely good weather in spring or summer, dry, sunny, breezy, windows of the car well open, perhaps in mid-1971 at about 4:00 P.M. Noreen and I were driving along Queen Mary Road in Montreal towards the borders of Hampstead in our comfortable old Chevy Nova sedan. There are a lot of traffic lights and stop signs in that district so we were going very slowly. We came to the stop sign at the corner of Queen Mary and Stratford Road. I could feel the breeze ruffling my hair, at that time worn very short. I turned to Noreen and said, "You remember that old garden swing we had when we moved to Hampton Avenue, the one John liked so much? We had it up till last fall, didn't we?"

She said, "We got rid of it in November. It was coming apart."

"It just struck me. That swing would make a terrific image to open my series

with. The colours are good, red and white, and besides we used to have one in our backyard in Toronto when I was just a baby.”

“So?”

“Well, you see how it all links up. I could show how father and son enjoyed the same motions thirty years apart, no, forty years. It makes a nice point about ordinary life. You can go forwards or backwards but you always come to rest in the same spot.”

“I think you might do something with that,” she said.

As soon as I had that picture in my visual imagination, I was off and running. The title came immediately afterwards. I have to have a title right at the beginning or I can’t fill in the blanks. That’s why I’ve chosen the titles for the six books in the series that are still to come.

I was beginning to feel unable to concentrate on anything else but the vessel which was coming over the horizon. I passed the summer of 1972 — the wettest and nastiest summer of recent memory until this year’s — with my wife and family at our summer cottage. One midsummer afternoon, instead of taking advantage of momentary good weather, I found myself pacing up and down in the cottage living room, gibbering excitedly to Noreen.

“It has to be an immediately recognizable familiar name, not trendy and not old-fashioned. I couldn’t call him Sacheverell, or Dwayne. He isn’t an Ambrose or a Bertram. Has to be something which will seem acceptable but not too ordinary or too bizarre, available for current usage for a long while to come.”

I think it was Noreen who suggested that we try over the names of the apostles.

“Peter?” I said. “Too common. Andrew? I might be able to use Andrew but not for the Narrator. He isn’t Scottish and I don’t want reviewers making jokes about canny wee Scots and haggis. Let’s see, Bartholomew? Too far out and besides there’s already Bartholomew Bandy. That’s a name for farce.”

“Jude?”

“I don’t want a one-syllable name. I might use Philip, but not for the Narrator. What about Matthew?”

“Matthew’s an Evangelist.”

“Right, but he’s also one of the apostles. It’s important that he’s one of the Evangelists. The name turns up in all the other European languages. Mathieu. Matteo. Matthias. Mathis. Sober but not out-of-date, in fact rather a fashionable name right now. . . . I think I’ll call him Matthew . . . hello, Matthew, welcome to the club.”

The surname arrived soon afterwards, out of a picture I’d seen as a child in one of our old high school textbooks, an aerial photograph of the town centre of Goderich, Ontario, which was in the form of a great big wheel. This fused the prophet and the evangelist in my Narrator’s name. I kept Andrew and Philip as the names for the Narrator’s father, who immediately turned into a personage

equal in importance to his son, and for Uncle Philip, not quite as important but longer-lived. The death of Andrew Goderich is the absolute centre of *The New Age/Le nouveau siècle*, and I observe that Uncle Philip is present at his funeral lending a proprietary hand to assist his brother's wife at the graveside.

I chose the name of the Narrator's mother largely as a matter of literary convention, "Is-a-belle" in the precise spelling which simply states that this personage is a great beauty. I had James Joyce's *Ici la belle* of *Finnegans Wake* in mind, as well as the delightful and ill-fated heroine of Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*. Now the characters were springing to life in my head. Andrew and Isabelle, Matthew, his brother and sister, Tony and Amanda Louise, Uncle Philip, and the harassed troubled figure of the infant Adam Sinclair (whose name makes a lot of sense to me) who pops up on the second page of *The Swing in the Garden* and has grown like Andrew Goderich into a figure of absolute importance in my story because of what he has meant to the Narrator.

Every year towards the beginning of autumn I type out a short autobiographical summary of what I've been up to in the past year and what I'm about to tackle. At the end of my note for Thursday, October 5, 1972, I find this remark:

On Tuesday next, the day after Thanksgiving, I will put the outline on paper of the first novel of THE NEW AGE, and I hope to write the opening lines a day or two after that.

I almost always do what I tell myself I'm going to do, but I have to confess that in this case I was out in my prediction by a couple of days. I drew up my scenario a few days later than predicted, on Friday, October 13, probably to defy superstition. I find this little sketch among my notes:

Draft Scenario: THE SWING IN THE GARDEN. 400 first draft pages. Covers period 1930-1939, and main theme is narrator's become aware of himself as a person. He is called Matthew Goderich, or Matt Goderich.

Five main sections, around eighty pages to a section, as follows:

Then follow the very briefest of remarks about each section, with some pencilled-in additions inserted during the writing of the book, and at the bottom of the page in my scribbled handwriting: "Sketched out Friday, Oct. 13/72." One of the most important details of this plan is the note that I should take two months to write each of the first three sections, finishing up the fourth and fifth sections much more quickly. I would write about forty pages in October, forty in November, to complete the opening section, proceed in December and January to write the second, "going to the movies" section. The same rhythm would apply to the third, "Cornish Road, Moore Park," section.

By the end of March I would, I hoped, be sufficiently in possession of my means that I could finish the book with a rush, doing the "Lazy Bay Grill" part in April, finishing up with the "Toronto Island" conclusion in May 1973. I

followed this plan exactly, and found it a very wise decision to write the opening parts very slowly, at half my accustomed rate of output. For many years I had made it a habit to write four typed, double-spaced pages a day, five days a week. I have sometimes written even faster. *Strength Down Centre* was produced against a tight deadline at a rate of five pages daily, which I found exhausting. I deliberately chose to approach the opening pages of *The Swing in the Garden* very gingerly. I didn't want to put a foot wrong anywhere. I wanted to take my time and allow what was in my head to come out in its own form and rhythm. It was almost the middle of October. Without forcing the pace I could produce an easy forty pages before Hallowe'en; then I could take things even more slowly and carefully for the next five months, a delightful, luxurious, treat for me. By the end of March 1973 I'd be all pumped up and ready for the sprint to the finish line. And I was certain that once I got the first book down on paper its successors would come along naturally and easily in their turn.

On Sunday afternoon, October 15, 1972, at 1:00 P.M., I sat down and typed out the opening lines of *The Swing in the Garden*, beginning with the words "In those days" as a conscious echo of the beginnings of the Gospel readings that I'd heard every Sunday from the pulpit since I was a baby. "*In ilio tempore.*" The next day was Noreen's birthday, and I could show her the opening four pages of typed manuscript as a kind of birthday present. The whole twelve-volume sequence will in the end be dedicated to her. The first four individual books were dedicated each in turn to our children, the fifth to my sister and her husband, the sixth and most recent to my brother and his wife. I don't claim that I've smuggled Amanda Louise and Tony into those later dedications, but I wouldn't deny it either. The first novel in the series was completed in rough draft on May 28, 1973; the final draft was ready a year later.

My mother had been in failing health for some time in the early seventies. In June of 1974 I went to Toronto and read the whole text of *The Swing in the Garden* to her, one section each afternoon for the inside of a week. I asked a high official at CBC Radio if he could lend me a broadcast quality tape recorder so that I could tape this reading, the only complete reading of a novel I've ever done. He refused on the grounds that the occasion was not sufficiently interesting or important to Canadian literary history or culture. Anybody could come along and make the same request. He couldn't allow CBC equipment to fall into unqualified hands. This seems a pity. Anyway I went ahead, and my mother seemed to take great pleasure in hearing the book evolve from one part to the next. When I had finished on the Friday afternoon she exclaimed, "Well you certainly didn't use me as a character, did you?"

"No," I said. "Isabelle is a lot nicer than you, and Matthew isn't as smart as I am."

We both laughed a lot over that. I got up to leave my mother's room, and after kissing her good-bye I strolled along to the end of the corridor, then turned and called to her, "I'll be back in eighteen months to read the next one to you."

She blew me a kiss. "I'll be waiting," she said.

But I never got to read *A New Athens* to my mother. She died four weeks later in early June 1974. "I'll be waiting," were her final words to me. I could have recited *A New Athens* to her at that point — a work of almost wholly religious conception and execution — or at least I could have given her a lively sketch of its dimensions, but I wouldn't have wanted to tire her and it never occurred to me to do it. I wish I had.

A New Athens was complete in its first draft before *The Swing in the Garden* was published in the fall of 1975. It was with *A New Athens* that I initiated the habit of composing each new novel in the series from January to June, then writing a final draft in the same months of the following year. I see from my annual autobiographical notes of August 30, 1975, that:

Then between Sunday, January 5th, 1975, and Friday, April 25th, 1975, I wrote the first draft of *A NEW ATHENS*, the second volume in my series. This is simply a great book, and a gift from heaven.

Imagine how I felt, with *A New Athens* complete in its first draft (my first drafts are always very polished and usually quite publishable) before *The Swing in the Garden* appeared. I felt mighty smug, I can tell you. All through that fall, whenever people asked me what guarantees I could offer of completing such a foolhardy, even presumptuous undertaking, I could respond by saying that I had the next volume drafted and about ready to go. This has almost always been true. I have the seventh book in the series completely drafted at this moment; it could be published as it stands so that if I break my neck tomorrow there will be at least one more book in the series available to its readers. *Tony's Book* will appear in the fall publishing season of 1988, and that's all I'll say about it at this point.

I think I should record, writing on September 26, 1986, that besides a complete version of my seventh volume I have a very full conception of what my eighth book will do. I have the basic idea for the ninth, which makes a giant leap backwards in time and unfolds in a somewhat surprising place. I have a very clear intimation of the long opening section of the eleventh book — where it will take place and what it will lead to — and I have a strong, clear, vigorous conception of the final book, which I could sit down and start to write at this moment.

There is an area of vagueness about Book Ten, though why this should be so I can't even guess. It might turn out to be the best novel of the whole series. It's certainly going to be a novel in which Matt and Edie Goderich's children will take a prominent part.

On the whole, I'd be prepared to claim that the remainder of *The New Age/Le nouveau siècle* already exists in varying intensities of realization. More than

that, I have to disclose that as the mahout shoves the big fellow's hindquarters into the light, ropy tail lashing him across the face, he notes that the creature's right hind leg is fastened to a stout length of rope, itself fastened to a heavy stake, well secured in the earth. The rope, the stake, the earth supply the forms for the seven or eight books I plan to write after the elephant is safely seated in his own comfortable armchair in my big front room. I give you fair warning.

UNTITLED

C. M. Donald

For my christening, my parents
gave me a pot, sealed, containing
a formless terror.
Then they gave me clothes,
manners, rules and a style
to make me acceptable
as best they could.

Later I discovered that the shape
of the terror was theirs
and the core of it, me.

THE LENGTH OF THIS LAND

Allan Ennist

they pursued reflections
(on water)

they pulled shadows along
blending theirs with *chinook*
osprey
and *grizzly* among others

they invented a time
measured by shadows
(perpetual
rise and fall of empires)