

RELIGION, PLACE, & SELF IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY CANADA

Robert Norwood's Poetry

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IN ROBERT NORWOOD'S DEVOTIONAL VERSE-TEXTS of the first decades of the century, a cleavage between priestly service and poetic practice appears as a slippery interface of the antemodern language of religious authority and a modern's need to legitimize individual experience. This cleavage runs clear through his work, at times almost invisible but at other times parted and resonating with the sound of recognizably human voices. These voices emanate not only from a religious source but profoundly from the inner life of place, plumbed by way of self-discovery. In his "Voice as Summons for Belief," Walter J. Ong argues that any discussion of Christianity and poetry "must at some point enter into the mystery of voice and words."¹ To believe in God is to look for a response from Him, and this response is identical to the 'I-thou world' of phenomenological and personalist philosophy. This world, Ong believes, has never been more highly developed in the consciousness "of the human race" than it is in our postmodern times.

According to Jean-François Lyotard, the Western world just isn't the same place it was twenty years ago. Lyotard defines the spreading epistemological gap that separates us from mid-century discourse as a process of delegitimation in which we no longer find it possible to share collectively a modern nostalgia for "the sublime," for "the whole and the one," the illusion of totally communicable experience. "It is our business," he concludes, "not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented." For the mid-century, however, well-wrought urns, verbal icons, and quasi-mythological fearful symmetries were enough for a consensus of taste in which readers of poetry found "solace in good forms," pleasure in individual fusions of tradition and talent. The poet's mind was an empty vessel filling continually with language, ideas, impressions, and memories. Similarly, an object of devotion was an already full container, explaining all and any response to its sublimity. Eliot insisted that "Religion and Literature" come together in criticism as contained and containing, as a process of legitimation in which "It is our business, as Christians, *as well as*

readers of literature, to know what we ought to like.” In the *Four Quartets* the contained chaos of the imagination fuses together in an alliance between faith and art which serves, as Lyotard would say, to supply society’s demand and nostalgia for “the lost narrative.”²

Today we think it is our business to ask why anything should be legitimate in the first place. Modern poets felt a need to legitimize their experience because they saw it as essentially different from anything that came before. Speaking from the site of that *other* epistemological gap in modern times — William James pointed out that when we attempt to approve what the definition of deity implies pragmatically and empirically, “we end by deeming that deity incredible.” Religions can no longer expect to appear self-approving, James suggests, since their ‘truth’ depends on how well they minister to sundry vital needs found reigning in any given time and place. Devotion is no longer an obligation; religious legitimacy dissolves before the Darwinian law of survival, and what we need to know now is the answer to this question: “Shall the seen world or the unseen world be our chief sphere of adaptation?”³ James’s ‘delegitimation’ of the religious experience sets the stage for a modern discourse that must supply representations of the unseen world for verification in the Here and Now. It also poses a question that is fundamental to Robert Norwood’s poetic adventure.

In the year James began his Gifford Lectures, 1900, Santayana explained how — in terms anticipating Eliot — representations of the unseen world could be legitimized and how the lost narrative could be recovered.⁴ Santayana simply defined poetry as the container of religion, “poetry become the guide of life,” poetry as essentially “an outward sign of that inward grace for which the soul is thirsting,” poetry as a “momentary harmony in the soul amid stagnation or conflict, — a glimpse of the divine and an incitation to a religious life.” The most sublime poets know that their highest mission is to prophesy, and this mission “contains the whole truth,” belonging as it does to “the sphere of significant imagination, of relevant fiction, of idealism become the interpretation of the reality it leaves behind.” This reliance on poetry as the vessel of “utmost purity and beneficence,” in which religion “surrenders its illusions and ceases to deceive,” eventually led to a modernist poetry of hollow vessels, sterile frameworks, and scaffoldings that could no longer mean, but only be.

Poetry in Canada has suffered as much as any other discourse from the modernist cul-de-sac, because from the turn of the century at least Canadian poets have been preoccupied with legitimizing their work as myth-oriented interpretations that leave human life and reality behind in their wake. Yet in the devotional poetry of Robert Winkworth Norwood (1874-1932) we find an example of early modern writing that succumbs to an overwhelming sense of *mis en oeuvre*, of working without rules in order to formulate rules for what will have been done, to use Lyotard’s tight-fitting language, that sense of slipping beneath the surface

and awakening to a cacophony of innumerable human voices. But how could this be? How could transitional writing from the early part of the century have anything to say to those making the transition to the postmodern condition? Perhaps the antemodern questioning of religion and the contemporary view of all knowledge as a language-game are really two sides of the same coin. In this essay I discuss the licit and illicit values that Robert Norwood assigned to the metal of this coin.

NORWOOD WAS A PRIEST deeply involved in ambitious machinations within the Anglican Church and profoundly devoted to his parishioners. The combination of his near-irresistible presence speaking in public, his seriousness, and concern for his charge guaranteed him a considerable audience among the religious. His contacts with Kenneth Leslie and Sir Charles G. D. Roberts, however, and Lionel Stevenson's appraisal of his works as having attained a new myth-making capacity in his narrative poem of the maritimes, *Bill Boram*, were not enough to convince readers of poetry in Canada that his verse was imaginatively significant enough to provide an alternative to the apparent chaos of their rapidly changing times. Too much of his reputation depended on his personal aura. He is remembered today as a member of the Song Fishermen and not entirely forgotten as a pulpit orator and the author of two religious verse dramas, but not by many. Shortly after his death, a large following of his parishioners from New York and Philadelphia attended the unveiling of a memorial bust of Dr. Norwood in a ceremony commemorating the centennial of the ultra-exclusive and prestigious St. Bartholomew's Church and the ministry of its sixth Rector.

He was born in New Ross, Nova Scotia, the son of the Reverend Joseph Norwood and educated at Coaticook Academy and Bishop's College in Quebec, King's College in Nova Scotia, and Columbia University. He failed to distinguish himself at university, particularly in mathematics, and avoided society because, as Albert Durrant Watson apologizes, he "was not financially able to dress appropriately for social functions, and, besides, he desired to read so as to perfect himself in *belles-lettres*." He was encouraged in poetry by his professor of English, C. G. D. Roberts, and given the freedom of Sir Charles's home and library. He was ordained in the same year in Halifax and was highly regarded by the Cape Breton parishioners of his first charge. He married Ethel McKeen while in Cape Breton and went on to larger parishes in Quebec, London, Ontario, and Philadelphia in 1917, at which time he became an American citizen. From 1925 to his sudden death in 1932, Norwood enjoyed affluence and prestige at St. Bartholomew's in New York City.⁵

Norwood's first book of poetry aside from *Driftwood* (1898), a student chapbook, was *His Lady of the Sonnets*, whose title poem is a sonnet sequence vaguely reminiscent of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. The book, published in Boston in 1915, was written along with his first verse play, *The Witch of Endor* (1916), during his ministry at Cronyn Memorial Church, London, Ontario. The biography and the publishing history tell us that Norwood's first allegiance was to his Church and that he saw his growing following in New York State as his poetry's audience. His reputation at home was enhanced for a time by his ability to attract American publishers. McClelland and Stewart handled local distribution for Sherman and French of Boston and George Doran of New York. His second religious closet-drama, *The Man of Kerioth* (1919), along with an undistinguished collection *The Piper and the Reed* (1917) and a sustained tribute to Browning in *The Modernists* (1918), were all written as verse-texts for his ministry in Philadelphia. Contemporary critics looked into these works and recognized the Mystical Love that had been taught Canadians by John Daniel Logan among others and, noting that Norwood and Marjorie Pickthall both chose to work with Biblical subjects, really had little else to say — except to mention his commitment and success in the field of pulpit oratory or to point out that the poet's great-grandfather married a full cousin of none other than Oliver Wendell Holmes. Aside from the chummy appreciations of his friends A. D. Watson and Elsie Pomeroy, and Logan's criticism in *Highways of Canadian Literature*, his work has gone unnoticed in Canada. This is regrettable since his *Issa* (1931), his last poetic work, is simply one of the most interesting book-length poems in Canadian literature.⁶

Watson saw in Norwood's verse a "masterful art and clear prophetic vision" where others noted an overly rhetorical flair, but many agreed that the main value of Norwood's verse was its sense of purpose in the transmission of his faith.⁷ His rewritings of Biblical subjects and the theme of inspiring love worked to reinterpret modern life for Canadians in such a way as to instil a confidence in religious narrative that had been lost after Darwin and Higher Criticism. Norwood thought he should espouse the values of formal craftsmanship and prophetic aspiration as a poet, yet from the beginning he could not resist supplementing these with his own pulpit-rhetorical voice. It was this reliance on a specifically public voice that, I shall argue, caused his verse to shear away from the then-dominant values of poetry in Canada: that poetry ought to be an object of aesthetic beauty, that it should employ the prophetic mode, and that it should pursue the creation of a local mythology which the nineteenth-century Canadian long poem had begun. In his verse as in his ministry, Norwood strove, as he says in "Fellow Craftsman" from *His Lady of the Sonnets*, to bring "full confidence" to the lives of his parishioners in a co-ordinated Christian context that they "know / Thou and thy God can perfect everything!"⁸

The Lady of the thirty sonnets in the title sequence is a multiple figure among whose aspects are: Woman, Eve, "A dear Dream-Goddess," Diana, an immortal soul, innocence, a "hidden, lovely Eremite," a "goddess, robed in white," "Water turned to Wine," a "Dear Comrade," Helen of Troy, "white light," and Christ as love incarnate among other things. Similarly, the male persona comprises: Man, Adam, a dreamer in a paradisaal garden hung with precious metals and stones, Endymion, one who "knows / How you surpass the lily and the rose," the three wise men, a Roman slave, one of Charlemagne's servitors, Renaissance Italian nobles, and Plantagenet and Guelph robed in purple, and more. These two multiple figures are primarily an arrangement in which physical love is inexhaustibly deferred so that the poet has space enough and time to propose a rule of ethical conduct, which would seem somewhat compromising for a priest, and certainly not begotten by scripture. The major symbol of the sequence is a kiss that is capable of miracle, of "Transforming void and chaos" into the Kingdom of God on earth. The lovers "have lived before" through cycles of reincarnation. In each life the mystical kiss comes closer to perfection and atonement within the divine unity of God. Neither death nor sin, flesh nor malice can withstand the onslaught of this eternal supplementarity whose representation in the sonnets is meant to "Let Joy and constant Certainty appear." The poem is centred on an affirmation of emotion and physical love, but this centre at once drops away toward the primitive origins and a future sublimity of the kiss. The reader is thus offered a paradigm of kisses as a rule to live by.

His Lady of the Sonnets continues with a sequence of ten dizains, "Antony to Cleopatra, After Actium," in which the theme of love between man and woman as a mutual sacrifice akin to Christ's is further developed. Then follows "Paul to Timothy," a dramatic monologue (that later appears in *The Modernists* and to which I will return), which describes Paul's conversion to a faith in "One God, / One Law, one Hope, one Faith, and One Desire." "Dives in Torment," the next poem, is a dramatic piece set in seventy-four quatrains reminiscent of Wilfred Campbell's "Lazarus" and Francis Thompson. Here, Norwood unfolds the tenet that he is working toward: that the One Desire will have been the vehicle of salvation for all men who, like Lazarus in this poem, incorporate the divinity of the saviour. The book closes with a miscellany of songs and sonnets that reprise the themes of reincarnation, the perfection of the human spirit through history, and love's absolute authority.

In 1915 Norwood had set out to produce an annual book of verse-texts for the message of his ministry. His two verse-dramas expand on the theme of love as modern man's answer to a lack of confidence in traditional methods of achieving certainty in salvation. *The Witch of Endor* continues his rewriting of Bible-narratives. *The Man of Kerioth* teaches that it was Judas's impatience to know the Kingdom of God on earth before its appointed time that led to his betrayal.

The play in effect absolves Judas in that his impatience was due to love of Him, and thereby elevates human love above all uncertainty and alienation. "The Slow Emerger," in *Piper and the Reed*, asserts that man's "task of slow emergence from the clod" is to perfect himself through love in the present and to learn through the examples of history that "man must not chain a woman's soul," that "dear and tender fiction."⁹ This book sentimentally pursues the theme that one must not bind society and society's voice, poetry, to conventional rules of behaviour and practice.

Of his eight books of verse, *The Modernists* is the most accessible to a modernist reading. The nineteen personae of these dramatic monologues range from "The Cave Man" to "Darwin" and the "Voice of the Twentieth Century." The book traces the evolution of human perfection through history in such a way as to make sense of life as his readers knew it in 1921. In this grand design the modern common man is a King. The Second Coming will have been our age of democratic humanitarianism in which Man becomes the sign and the instrument of the Word, the Will, and Law of God. The sign of this sign is the book's personal, unaffected voice, the voice of ordinary men articulating the inner truth and life of a righteous community held together by love.

The Modernists attempts to bring order to a jumble of abstract and contradictory images and motifs in discursive fashion, but it is in *Bill Boram* (1921) that Norwood strikes a truly original note, producing a fiction of confidence and certainty for his charge that surpasses his earlier rewritings of Classical and Biblical texts. As Stevenson says, the subject-matter "is so simple, dominated by a single entity — the ocean — and devoted to a single calling, that the poem, without seeming overburdened with detail, presents a synoptic view of the locality." The poem's prospect of a legitimate yet personal coherence is set in the Nova Scotia fishing villages that Norwood knew as a child and as a young priest in Cape Breton. Charles G. D. Roberts, his life-long friend, felt that its characters came intensely alive on the page and that it was a vividly objective dramatic narrative, despite the language Norwood chose to use, which was too vulgar for Roberts's taste. To John Daniel Logan, however, the poem as a whole lacked "imaginative truth and dramatic power" because Logan could not believe that the conversion of Bill Boram's love of sensuous beauty into a spiritual love was possible and appropriate to poetry.¹⁰ Yet it is just this vulgar impossibility, this unpresentable testing of 'legitimate' notions of religious and poetic truth, that Norwood found himself confronting in *Bill Boram*.

THE POEM COMBINES subjectivity and objectivity in the manner of the documentary poem of succeeding decades. It presents human voices,

moreover, as masks for an interior dialogue of I and thou. Such communication is only possible “in a world shared by our individual consciences so that by naming the objects in this world we can break through our solitude and communicate with one another.”¹¹ The voices of the poem, in naming the locality from which they spring, are like the voices of children who believe they know something as soon as they can name it. Out of the interiority that voice masks, therefore, emerges a further dialogue on the ways in which its personae make sense of their lives and locality. Norwood impales this I-thou narrative of place and self, however, upon the crucifix of a sincere and rigorously worked out treatise on the One Desire, guiding his readers toward an I-thou parallel by means of a lyrical and supplemental sermon that concludes predictably:

My story ends. The polar night is breaking.
 What do you think, my friend, of bad Bill Boram?
 To me this Northern sky with song is shaking —
 The song of Christ: “O come, let us adore him!”

As a whole, the poem is a composition of example and lesson, but as Ong points out, “Faith moves toward knowledge and love of persons,” and persons cannot be known as objects.¹² The voice that manifests bad Bill Boram’s blasphemy, atheism, and drunkenness does not deny or resolve the essential incoherence of life in his place and time. On the contrary, it invites us to respond to that fathomless interiority in an act of faith.

Norwood’s strategy is to release his reader’s inner feelings of doubt and confusion, and then to guide these feelings toward compassion. His belief is that this act will instil full confidence in the reader. The narrative consigns all evil and sin in life to relative insignificance with the one exception of malice, personified by “The She Weasel.” Since malice is the only sin and since the scrap of tenderness in Bill’s personality must by its nature extinguish malice:

. . . With wealth
 Of tenderness, amazing us, the thick
 Hard hands of Borum paid in full the score
 Writ down against him by the pen of God.

Bill’s conversion is a part of a providential design in which all men, rich and poor, sophisticated and rough, are evolving toward perfection, “Till Was and Will-Be had become I Am!” His character is similar to Paul’s in “Paul to Timothy,” a “prisoner of Jesus Christ” condemned to sacrifice his body for the faith, except that Bill is uncouth and uneducated. Bill’s saving grace, his love of flowers, is comparable to the Greek boy who sings a song of Sappho’s to Paul in his cell. Yet both boy and flowers must be sacrificed to the One Desire. Bill “disagrees wit’ pa’sons” whose souls are frozen by orthodoxy and trusts only in his stoutness of heart:

“. . . an’ these spars
 A-tap’rin’ up’ard tells to me a sight
 More’n most o’ men c’n tell. To hell wit’ creeds!
 Yet, begod, them dam tubers gets my goat.
 I’m strong for fightin’, an’ I likes the deeds
 O’ deviltry; they is no man afloat
 C’n lick Bill Boram, an’ I’m surey bad;
 But somethin’ like a tuber’s inside me,
 That tunnels up’ard, somethin’ that is glad
 In darkness wors’n hell. What c’n it be?”

“Yer soul!”

“Oh, hell! they ain’t no soul.”

Yet he is redeemed despite himself because every man “is God’s Son,” and “his final need / Is always God.”

Norwood relies heavily on a new approach to language in this work in order to make the poem seem more immediately relevant to the ordinary man, an approach divested of decadent images of brilliance and the verbal tonalities of the prophetic voice. Yet the narrator, Tom Blaylock, a parson’s son, interrupts the narrative periodically to supply a running gloss and point up the lesson of the text. Tom explains that “they must live forever” who come to know that even the smallest forms of love are “at one with what goes up to God,” an imminent “mystical desire” whose name is Christ: “God’s ecstasy of pure creation, / He is the artist in the soul of things.” It is Bill, however, who has the last word — in these lines addressed to Bobby Fox, “the sage of the cove,” whose wisdom had “knocked to smithereens / Them fables that made the Bible a poor book”:

Bob, I found this at last: Things has their soul
 Which hides from us, accordin’ to the law
 O’ beauty, as a woman hides each breast,
 But gives ’em freely to the lips she loves.

Working toward a simpler, more personal poetic ministry, Norwood found himself at sea amidst the souls of things in *Bill Boram*. The poem questions the language of religious authority and his received notions of what a poem ought to be, “verbal color and music” that contains the “power of spiritual vision and exaltation,” in Logan’s words. Yet it ends in comedy, with the community’s laughter far more convincing as an ending than Tom Blaylock’s solemn moralizing tagged onto the close. Unlike Pratt’s uproarious *The Witch’s Brew* (1925), *Bill Boram* is not an exercise in myth-making. The reader is simply invited to laugh along the poem’s voices, with the assurance that our laughter is one alternative to life’s contraries and the pain of evanescent meaning. Norwood was unable to develop this comic aspect in his later verse, however. *Mother and Son* (1925) records his personal search for consolation and sublimation following the

death of his only son. In two long poems, the companion-pieces "The Mother of Cain" and "The Mother of Christ," woman is no longer a loose arrangement of disparate elements held in staccato coherence by the force of an intellectual passion, but an enforced separation of modernity and tradition, doubt and certainty, the plain language of Cain and the stately language of the ode.¹³ Norwood strove to heal this rupture in his poetic and in himself in *Issa* (1931), a spiritual autobiography of some eighteen-hundred lines, divided into seven cantos.

In *Issa*, Norwood uses his own life as an exemplum to teach the power of human love to bring order and meaning to a life such as his. The poem spins "Webbed images of life"

In such a dance of words
That he who reads
May feel the flight of birds
Above new seeds
Flung by the sower with a reckless hand
Down the long furrows of his hopeful land.

Thousands of images of disparate things, fragments of the man's life, faith, and homeland, well up through the poet's voice in a dialogue between himself and Issa, or Christ, whose other unnamed names are the Word and the Son. As in the Old Testament or in the Eucharist, so here in this dialogue, objects are words and not the other way around:

For nothing 'neath my roof
Lacked soul or self —
The inkwell in the hoof
High on the self.
A broken peacock fan tacked to the wall,
Trunk, hatbox, shot-flask, powder-horn, and all.

Memories of the localities in which he has lived and worked, of friends, relatives, and loved ones jostle against one another for their places in an ecstatic paradigm that includes ordinary things and a plethora of mythological and literary allusions. "Descend, you hierarchies, be made man!" cries Issa, and the speaker is so beside himself in passionate discourse with Christ that his body and the soul of his native land are become homonyms of Issa's words, blessed for sacrifice, "For high communion in this common cup." As in "His Lady of the Sonnets," the beloved other is a multiple figure whose fragments contain no totality but are rather a mobile revolving around "one law only — love!"

The poem demonstrates "How love makes of all life a sacrament" of "Earth's little things," and it enacts a loving rite of passage through which all must pass to the secret of Lord Issa in order to attain "their Godhood" or be lost in "outer darkness." Heaven and hell "have but one door." The poem is not an object but

an *event* of Holy Togetherness that occurs on the living, breathing threshold of language or voice, which alone can mediate and maintain the unrepresentable interiority of speakers' and listeners' sense of self, the divided I-thou psychology of man, "the sign / Of life to me — / Life, human and divine: / Duality."

For Norwood, Issa's secret is a divine mystery, a chaos that will never be contained until God and man are one. Yet the resemblance of this obscure appellation of Jesus to Isis suggests a cleavage of religious and poetic conception that is securely tied to human sexuality. The One Desire is clearly a sublimated passion, which, when we unfold it, appears to be created by at least three different contraries: "Duality / Of spirit in God's holy likeness made," the opposition between multitudinousness and the One Law, and the duality of poetry and redemptive silence. Honour and renown shall be due only to Christ when on his "glorious day" all songs will be quieted "and harps laid down." No book, church, or creed "Has value, where / Faith, like a broken reed" is ruined by dogma. The poem has a fissure running across the breadth of its metaphysics; its truth is broken within itself even as it is uttered. Poetry "Was heaven's last, highest, holiest gift to earth," but poets no less than saviours are made "Upon the thorns / Of life," and "However horrible the lonely night," they must obey "The goddess, she / Will tell you what to say." As we have seen, Norwood's goddess is no vessel or chalice of truth, no Gravesian White Goddess. She is indeed the sublimation of an extremely motile and acathetic desire capable of dotting upon anything from hatboxes to God.

This sublimation allows itself to be dispersed in the language of Charles G. D. Roberts's poetry of place. Norwood's reinscription of this language, however, privileges faith in the possibility of communication and response above all else. The I-thou condition of human life is stated in the poem's motto: "Wherever there are two, they are not without God, and wherever there is one alone, I say, I am with him. Raise the stone and there thou shalt find me, cleave the wood and there am I." The first lines make it clear, moreover, that Norwood's dialogue with Christ begins as in a dream, "Calling a name, / To waken on the world's most poignant sting — / The pain that starts with love remembering." The entire poem is Isis/Christ's answer to this call, an answer that the poem translates into words coined from the immiscible fragments of life. This language is no closed system of signifiers and signifieds. Its chief symbolic representation in the poem is a moment of beholding, "earth's most true interpreter — a tree":

I see a window where
The curtained sky
Is caught, is framed, and there
A tree so high
That all the morning's gray and gold and blue
Between its web of branches filter through.

The tree does not articulate the light; it merely marks a point in space where the beholder's attention may be focused. In terms of today's philosophy of religion, the tree is a "living framework" or a "mode of understanding" and not an invariant structure imposed on reality. The moment of beholding permits perception to filter through 'licit' confines toward, as Thomas Munson says, "an outlook that is not simply intellectual but shot through with values, with a whole way of handling and feeling things."¹⁴ It is fundamentally a religious moment of celebration in which "A stone, a plant, a tree, / Had soul and was most intimate with me," but it is also a moment of liberation that clears the "dull uncomprehending human gaze / That never knows invention or amaze." Similarly, the poem's language articulates nothing other than the site of a powerful current of pain and pleasure, yearning and hard-won confidence, or what Lyotard calls "the real sublime sentiment, which is in an intrinsic combination of pleasure and pain." The poem's pleasure derives from wonder that even "odds and ends of things" have "Soul, voice, significance," and it celebrates these "living words" despite "The hot, tear-tense / Thirst of my longing for a silent voice."

This is not the place for an extensive discussion of *Issa*, and I have wanted only to provide an introduction to this unusual early twentieth-century work, which somewhat resembles the *Prelude* as a study of local piety and the growth of a poet's mind, as well as Pound's *Cantos* in its syncretism and thematic architecture. I have also wanted to suggest that Norwood's poetry has been unwarrantedly neglected by Canadian critics. I have relied on the language of reader-response criticism in this essay because of the importance of the role that voice came to play in his poetic. Many writers today would probably agree with Lyotard when he says that the postmodern poet is in the position of a philosopher, but as Thomas Munson suggests, modern philosophy "came to birth in religion — a fact of utmost importance not only for a dialogue between philosophy and religion, but for the understanding of religion itself."¹⁵ The relation between religion and philosophy had been hotly debated in Canadian intellectual circles at least into the 1950's, and poets as different as Avison, Klein, and Livesay — particularly in "The Colour of God's Face" or "The Second Language (Suite)" — have registered this dialogue in verse concerned with questions of place, voice, and self.

NOTES

¹ Walter J. Ong, "Religion as Summons for Belief," in *Literature and Belief: English Institute Essays*, ed. M. H. Abrams (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1958), pp. 80, 90.

² Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 81; T. S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in his *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 399.

- ³ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (London: Collins, 1971), pp. 324-25, 361-65.
- ⁴ George Santayana, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (New York: Scribners, 1900), pp. 286-90.
- ⁵ Albert Durrant Watson, *Robert Norwood* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1923), p. 20. Elsie M. Pomeroy, a friend of the poet, wrote the biographical chapter "Robert Norwood" in *Leading Canadian Poets*, ed. W. P. Percival (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1948), pp. 158-67. Sir Charles G. D. Roberts mentions the changed citizenship in his introduction to *Issa*, "The Poetry of Robert Norwood," pp. ix-xiv (New York: Scribners, 1931), in which Roberts also claims that Norwood was "a great religious poet."
- ⁶ Norwood's published poetry: *His Lady of the Sonnets* (Boston: Sherman and French, 1915); *The Witch of Endor: A Tragedy* (1916), *The Piper and the Reed* (1917), *The Modernists* (1918), *The Man of Kerioth* (1919), *Bill Boram* (1921), and *Mother and Son* (1925) were all published by Doran in New York; *Issa* (New York: Scribners, 1931). There is a copy of *Driftwood* (1898) in the Logan Collection of Canadian Verse at Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia. John Daniel Logan and Donald G. French, *Highways of Canadian Literature: A Synoptic Introduction to the Literary History of Canada (English) from 1790-1924* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1924), pp. 211-12, 315-19. Logan sees Norwood as part of "The Second Renaissance in Canadian literature," comparable with Pickthall except that she wrote of "private experience," whereas Norwood's was a public voice of interpretation on the subjects of "Ideal Love" and the "divine function of Woman," pp. 288-90.
- ⁷ Watson, *Robert Norwood*, p. 24. V. B. Rhodenizer, in his *Handbook of Canadian Literature* (Ottawa: Graphic, 1930): "Whether he is writing in prose or in verse, his ultimate purpose is to interpret the universe in terms of Divine Love" (p. 237). Lorne Pierce's *Outline of Canadian Literature French and English* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1927) provides biographical details not found elsewhere, and considers Norwood chiefly as a dramatist of great compassion interpreting "the Biblical times and characters" (pp. 117-18).
- ⁸ "Fellow Craftsman," *Lady of the Sonnets*, p. 67.
- ⁹ "The Slow Emerger," *Piper*, pp. 54-55.
- ¹⁰ Lionel Stevenson, *Appraisals of Canadian Literature* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1927; rpt. Norwood Editions, 1977), p. 234. Charles G. D. Roberts, "The Poetry of Robert Norwood," *Issa*, pp. xii-xiii. Logan and French, *Highways*, p. 318.
- ¹¹ Ong, "Summons," pp. 98, 103.
- ¹² Ong, "Summons," pp. 91, 95.
- ¹³ Logan and French, *Highways*, p. 289. "The Mother of Cain," "The Mother of Christ," *Mother and Son*, pp. 14-25 and 26-34.
- ¹⁴ Thomas N. Munson, *The Challenge of Religion: A Philosophical Appraisal* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne Univ. Press, 1985), pp. 10-12.
- ¹⁵ Munson, *Challenge*, p. 7.

