

# IMAGINING A NORTH AMERICAN GARDEN

## *Some Parallels & Differences in Canadian & American Culture*

*Ramsay Cook*

In the beginning (he said) God created me and you and put us in a second English garden Victoria where to prove his love primrose and hawthorn bloomed in the wilderness

And why (I asked) did you leave the first English garden?

England (he said) being perfect required looking at from a distance and proved more perfect from Victoria than from London my ship rounded the Horn I heard whales with mermaids' heads singing I touched a Gold Rush the whales turned into seagulls and crows who flew impudently said raucous fascinating things about this new England

I see no other England (I said) I see trees bigger than the tallest English mountain wider than the British Isles I see myself now trunk shaped settled like a tree my hands long branches that feather a sky with iridescent paint I have rolled out a new map giving names to unknown indentations

I am Canadian

Florence McNeil, "Conversations with my Father Establishing place,"  
*Emily*.

“CROSSING THE BORDER” is one of those claustrophobic stories so characteristic of the American writer, Joyce Carol Oates. It is the story of a failing marriage in a failing country, of a young American couple heading north into exile, to Canada, looking for “a new life, a new country.” From Florida Canada looked like a northerly country, “with fresh air, chilled from the arctic, a ceaseless cleansing wind.” But from Detroit, Canada only three minutes away, the view was different — it would be sweltering there, too. Indeed, you travelled south from Detroit to enter Canada.” Momentarily Canada was south, the United States north. But that was mere geography. “The border between two nations,” the young woman in the story mused as she looked at the road map, “is

always indicated by broken but definite lines, to indicate that it is not quite real in any physical sense but very real in a metaphysical sense. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Though she lived in Canada for several years, Joyce Carol Oates seems never to have attempted to specify the metaphysical nature of Canada, except perhaps to hint that its best writers were still trying to cast off the yoke of the nineteenth-century British tradition.<sup>2</sup> If that perception is a bit outdated, it is nevertheless true that in looking for cultural comparisons between Canada and the United States, it is the metaphysical rather than the physical that must be examined. Well, not quite. Both Canadians and Americans have a lot of geography and it is the fashion in which that geography has been interpreted that provides each of these two nations with a culture — what Joyce Carol Oates meant by “metaphysical.” As Northrop Frye once remarked, “The countries men live in feed their minds as much as their bodies: the bodily food they provide is absorbed in farms and cities; the mental in religion and the arts. In all countries this process of material and imaginative *digestion* goes on.”<sup>3</sup> It is the manner and speed of imaginative digestion that offers a clue to parallels and differences between nations like Canada and the United States.

Let me begin at the beginning with a few, simple, obvious but important historical observations. First there was Europe which from the sixteenth to the twentieth century spread out through much of the world. In that process North America was Europeanized, its indigenous populations pressed to the margins as European peoples, institutions, and beliefs became dominant.<sup>4</sup> But a second process was also taking place: Europeans, peoples, institutions, and beliefs, were being Americanized. By that I mean that Europeans in North America came, at various rates, to think of themselves as distinctive, as people no longer of Europe, but rather as people of North America.

In the case of the United States, that process of Americanizing European culture was completed before the end of the nineteenth century. The decision to enter into that process was taken quite explicitly in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence. By approximately the centenary of Independence the process of nationalizing the community — a process which included a bloody civil war — was virtually complete. In Canada the process was far slower, for reasons that are commonplace. The country was founded on two distinct European cultures. One, the French, had been separated from Europe not by choice, but by conquest. The other, the English, was composed to a large extent by people, the United Empire Loyalists, who had come to Canada to avoid separation from Europe. Together these communities were small and divided in almost everything that counted: language, religion, and culture. They were united, mainly, in the conviction that they did not wish to become part of the United States. To both communities that appeared to mean retention of European ties: military, political, economic and, at least for the English Canadians, cultural ties. Unlike the people of the United

States, whose decision to Americanize European culture was being fulfilled in the nineteenth century, Canadians believed that an Americanized culture, one cut loose from its European roots, would destroy the distinction between Canada and the United States. Canada, then, was to be British North America, the name which remained on its constitution when it became the Dominion of Canada.

The United States was a revolutionary society which had a Declaration of Independence and a belief in self-evident truths about man's inalienable rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Canada was a conservative society with a British North America Act committed to "peace, order, and good government." The United States was a society that had evolved from history, and took its self-image from the past. For Canada borders were important — they defined its separateness from the United States. Greg Curnoe's "Close the 49th Parallel, etc.," could have been painted in the 1850's as easily as in the 1960's, though the style would have been British Imperial rather than American Pop. For Americans not borders but "frontiers" were what was important. Frontiers were not boundaries, but places to go, to expand. Above all they were places to go to become American — further away from European influence. Frederick Jackson Turner, exponent of the frontier interpretation of history, summed up a century of American thought when he wrote in 1893 that "the frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him in a European dress, industries, tools, mode or travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization, and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. . . . Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe. . . . The fact is that here is a new product that is American . . . the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines." "Me impurturbe, standing at ease in Nature," was Walt Whitman's way of expressing his attitude to nature whose frontiers encompassed "the Mexican Sea and Kanada."<sup>5</sup>

Canada expanded, too. Economic imperatives and population pressures were present by the mid-nineteenth century as they were earlier in the United States. But the ideology — the rationalization for expansion — was revealingly different. Americans wanted to "Americanize" the west; Canadians were engaged in laying the basis for "the Britain of the west." The Canadian frontier would provide a place to "reproduce the British constitution with its marvellous heritage of balanced power and liberty; and to do this across the whole breadth of a continent — these are objects which are worth some labour, some sacrifice to obtain."<sup>6</sup> What that magazine writer of 1874 made explicit, was clearly implicit in Ralph Connor's novel, *The Foreigner* in 1909: the frontier was not an escape from Europe, but an extension of Europe.<sup>7</sup> In the United States, nature made man; in Canada, man civilized nature.

**D**URING MUCH OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY Canadians, especially English Canadians, expressed an attitude toward nature that was markedly different from their United States contemporaries. A painter like Thomas Cole, or a writer like Ralph Waldo Emerson, looked at nature and found God. In his 1835 "Essay on American Scenery" Cole wrote that from nature could be learned the "laws by which the Eternal doth sublime and sanctify his works, that we may see the hidden glory veiled from vulgar eyes." In 1836 Cole painted a series of five pictures entitled "The Course of Empire." They were individually entitled "Savage State," "Pastoral State," "Consumption," "Destruction," and finally "Desolation." In each painting a lofty mountain symbolizes Nature. But only in the second panel, "Pastoral State," does a second, sublime, peak reach high above the first. That was the perfect state. Here was a visual version of Emerson's essay on "Nature," published in the same year. "There I feel nothing can befall me in life — no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me with my eyes) which Nature cannot repair. . . . I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God."<sup>8</sup>

These views contrast starkly with the fashion in which nature and civilization are presented in, for example, John Richardson's novel *Wacousta*. There civilization and morality are found within the military garrison, while chaos and terror lie outside, in nature. Here is the central image:

When the eye turned woodward it fell heavily and without interest upon a dim and dusky point known to enter upon savage scenes and unexplored countries, whereas whenever it reposed upon the lake it was with an eagerness and energy that embraced the most vivid recollections of the past, and led the imagination buoyantly over every well remembered scene that had previously been traversed, and which must be traversed again before the land of the European could be pressed once more. The forest, in a word, formed the gloomy and impenetrable walls of a prison house, and the bright lake that lay before it the only portal through which happiness and liberty could again be secured.<sup>9</sup>

Where James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo might "light out to the west" in search of life, liberty, and happiness, Colonel de Haldimar obviously preferred the peace, order, and good government of Europe. And as has often enough been remarked, Mrs. Moodie, while *Roughing It in the Bush*, also had Richardson's sense of being surrounded — by the Irish, by "the ultra-republican spirit," by rampant disrespect for authority. Some might say by North America, where wilderness was a "prisonhouse."<sup>10</sup>

It was not merely the belief that moral order lay in European civilization, and moral chaos in nature, that prevented Mrs. Moodie and other nineteenth-century Canadian writers from leaving their garrison. It was also a conviction that they

would find nothing outside to stimulate their imaginations. Emerson and Thoreau urged their countrymen to look at nature, rather than to history, to find imaginative inspiration — “the landscape,” Thoreau wrote, “. . . is earth’s eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature.”<sup>11</sup> Catharine Parr Traill, for all that she recognized and painted the beauties of Canadian nature, found nothing there for the imagination — largely because she was looking for something that was not there. “As to ghosts or spirits they appear totally banished from Canada,” she wrote in *The Backwoods of Canada*. “This is too matter-of-fact a country for such supernaturals to visit. Here there are no historical associations, no legendary tales of those that come before us. Fancy would starve for marvellous food to keep her alive in the backwoods.”<sup>12</sup>

Where Mrs. Moodie and Mrs. Traill looked to Europe to discover the mythologies necessary to feed their fancies, Thomas Cole, his biographer tells us, had concluded that “remoteness from the old world is not a disadvantage as many may suppose, but decidedly beneficial . . . Nature is the foundation on which to build and not past art.”<sup>13</sup> Cole’s Canadian contemporary, Joseph Legaré, used nature to depict historical themes and yearnings, for history was close to him. He was always conscious of his people’s defeat in 1763, and the need to struggle to preserve a distinctive identity. If American romantic historians — Bancroft and Parkman, for example — extolled the making of a new nation in America, the French-Canadian historian F-X. Garneau called upon his people to preserve their Frenchness: which was made not on the frontier, but in Europe. Where Walt Whitman turned to nature as an inspiration for his songs about America’s glorious achievements and unbounded future, Louis Fréchette and Charles Mair each turned to a version of Canadian history — not the same one — to inspire their nationalistic verses. Whitman wrote of “Democratic Vistas”; Fréchette of “Le légende d’un Peuple,” the struggle to conserve its identity, Mair of “Tecumseh” and the struggle for the border.

Almost every European visitor to North America — Alexis de Tocqueville, Lord Bryce, André Siegfried — when they bothered to visit Canada — was struck by the contrast between the two nations. Tocqueville thought he found the *ancien régime* alive and well in Quebec, Bryce and Siegfried were both struck by the continuance of European institutions in an American context. Friedrich Engels, in 1888, wrote that “It is a strange transition from the States to Canada. First one imagines one is in Europe again, and one thinks one is in a positively retrogressing and decaying country.”<sup>14</sup> This, of course, was a perceptive but limited observation. There was much about Canada that was unEuropean. Goldwin Smith, that pessimistic polemicist of the Grange, was totally convinced that Canada was, in reality, a North American nation by the 1890’s, and that the British connection and British institutions only shallowly disguised reality.

Whatever the truth of Goldwin Smith’s claim, the Canadian “metaphysic”

remained distinct from that of the United States. That was demonstrated by the Canadians' unwillingness to accept the logic of Smith's argument which was simply that since Canadians and Americans had a common environment, and a geography that united them, nature in the form of annexation should be allowed to run its course.<sup>15</sup> But accepting nature and rejecting tradition was exactly what Canada's whole history had refused to do. Americans had founded their identity on nature; they had nationalized that history. This is simply another way of stating what Ann Davis says in her splendid catalogue, *A Distant Harmony*, when she concludes her analysis of parallels in Canadian and American art with the observation that differing approaches to man and nature "encouraged an American concentration on the present and future and a Canadian interest in the past."<sup>17</sup>

If Americans during the nineteenth century "imaginatively digested" North America, Canadians were certainly beginning the same process. Even Mrs. Traill, for all of her sympathy with the poet's lament for the lack of a mythology, recognized another source of at least "amusement and interest." "If its [Canada's] volume of history is yet blank," she observed, "that of Nature is open, and eloquently marked by the finger of God. . . ."<sup>18</sup> Before the end of the century Archibald Lampman had grasped the full potential of this romantic theme. In a poem entitled "Freedom" he declared:

Out of the heart of the city begotten  
 Of the labour of men and their manifold hands,  
 Whose souls, that were sprung from the earth in  
   her morning,  
 No longer regard or remember her warning,  
 Whose hearts in the furnace of care have forgotten  
 Forever the scent and the hue of her lands;  
 . . . . .  
 Into the arms of our mother we come,  
 Our broad strong mother, the innocent earth,  
 Mother of all things beautiful blameless.  
 Mother of hopes that her strength makes tameless,  
   Where the voices of grief and of battle are dumb,  
   And the whole world laughs with the light of  
   her mirth.

Lampman also wrote a poem entitled "The City at the End of Things"<sup>19</sup> — which might have been composed after a viewing of Thomas Cole's "Destruction" — for it is a bitterly apocalyptic denunciation of industrial society's destruction of nature. That poem may offer a key to the drift of the Canadian imagination. As Canada became an increasingly industrial and urban society — a development which followed not far behind the United States — a new view of nature's meaning emerged, a view not dissimilar from one widely held in the

United States.<sup>20</sup> At its most elementary this new view presented nature as a physically and morally healthy alternative to the city, manifested itself in hiking clubs, summer camps and cottages, Boy Scouts and Alpine Clubs, and produced national parks and conservation. It can also be seen in the popularity of the animal stories of Ernest Thompson Seton and in the life and writings of Grey Owl. In 1910 a young Canadian painter named A. Y. Jackson expressed the unease that he shared with many other Canadians about the spread of machine civilization and its effects upon the artistic sensibility. "Some day the farm hand will go to work," he told his cousin,

start the day by punching a clock in the Farm Products Co. Ltd., and then set about turning levers and pressing buttons. Even now the romantic milk maid has faded away, and cows are being milked by machinery. The ploughman weary homeward plods his way no more — its nine furrows at once and run by gasoline. And how on earth the artist is to find any sentiment in that kind of thing beats me. The big round cumulus clouds that pile around the horizon in the summer time and look so majestic and calm — just imagine when the aeroplanes and dirigibles get busy at 90 miles an hour; won't we see the poor old cumulus stirred up like custard, and flung all over the sky.<sup>21</sup>

It was out of that sense of unease about the way of the Canadian world that the philosophy of the Group of Seven was born.

THAT STORY HAS BEEN TOLD often enough, and well.<sup>22</sup> But four aspects of it deserve repeating with emphasis: the rejection of Europe, the discovery of the north, the influence of nineteenth-century American writing, and its relation to Canadian writing. Let me look at these aspects separately and briefly.

Over and over again members of the group insisted that what needed to be done, and what they were doing, was emancipating Canadian painting and Canadian culture, from Europe. F. E. Hausser made the point most emphatically when he wrote that "Our British and European connection, in fact, so far as creative expression is concerned, has been a millstone about our neck. . . . For Canada to find a complete expression of herself through art, a complete break with European traditions was necessary; a new type of artist was required, a type with sufficient creative equipment to initiate of its own through handling new materials by new methods and what was required more than technique as a deep rooted love of the country's natural environment." If Canada wanted to discover what was distinctive about its culture its artists would have to desert the cities, "Which are like all cities the world over," Arthur Lismer claimed, and get out into the natural environment.<sup>23</sup>

For the Group, especially for its most articulate spokesman, Lawren Harris, the

natural environment was the North. The discovery that Canadian nationality was connected with the north was hardly new.<sup>24</sup> But Harris' north had a special, even a religious, meaning. Writing in 1926 Harris declared that

We in Canada are in different circumstances than the people in the United States. Our population is sparse, the psychic atmosphere comparatively clean, whereas the States fill up and the massed crowd a heavy psychic blanket over nearly all the land. We are on the fringe of the great North, and its living whiteness, its loneliness and replenishment, its resignations and release, its call and answers — its cleansing rhythms. It seems that the top of the continent will ever shed clarity into the growing race of America, and we Canadians being closest to this source seem destined to produce an art somewhat different from our southern fellows — an art more spacious, of greater living quiet, perhaps of more certain conviction of eternal values. We were not placed between the Southern teeming of men and the ample replenishing of North for nothing.<sup>25</sup>

Since Doug and Bob Mackenzie have taught us that the “comparatively clean psychic atmosphere” of the great, white north has long since been polluted by beer and back bacon, we now find Harris' messianic rhetoric rather naive, to say the least. But in a twentieth-century Theosophical way, characteristic enough of Canadian culture of the time,<sup>26</sup> Harris was rationalizing nature, the north in particular, for Canadians, as American artists and writers had done a century earlier.

By the time that Harris was writing, the mid-1920's, American writers had already developed an attitude toward nature that rejected the pantheism of Lampman, and the theosophy of Harris. In a poem published as early as 1890 Emily Dickinson had written of a Darwinian nature:

Apparently with no surprise  
To any happy flower,  
The Frost beheads it at its play —  
In accidental power —  
The blonde assassin passes on —  
The Sun proceeds unmoved  
To measure off another Day  
For an approving God.

Thirty years later in 1919 Wallace Stevens published a poem “Anecdote to a Jar,” in which a jar symbolizes civilization on a mountain top surrounded by “slovenly nature.” At the end of the poem, in direct contrast to Thomas Cole's “Course of Empire,” the jar, civilization, “took dominion everywhere.”<sup>27</sup>

It was not American poets like Dickinson and Stevens who impressed the poets who dominated Canadian art in the 1920's. Rather it was American writers of an earlier period. While Walt Whitman had always had a following in Canada — Richard Maurice Bucke, the London psychologist and mystic had been his biographer and literary executor — it was not until the twentieth century, when



European traditions were being discarded and nature discovered that he came into his own. Searching to find a way to describe Tom Thomson, whom he mythologized as a man who “had nothing to do with Europe,” Arthur Lismer described him as “a sort of Walt Whitman, a more rugged Thoreau.” Emily Carr read Whitman and “learned heaps of him by heart,” and also carefully perused Emerson’s essay on Nature — all at the urging of members of the Group of Seven. Though engaged in a rather different artistic enterprise than the group, David Milne also took inspiration in nineteenth-century American writing, specifically Thoreau’s *Walden* which he once described as producing “an explosion in my mind.”<sup>28</sup> What these American writers provided for some of Canada’s artists was something they had already provided for their American contemporaries: they turned attention away from Europe and inherited culture, toward nature as the source of an indigenous culture.

By the 1920’s, then, an aesthetic revolution was underway. That revolution brought modernism in culture and a North American perspective. The European tradition, according to Harris, “was totally inappropriate to the expression of the character, the power and clarity and rugged elemental beauty of Canada.”<sup>29</sup> And that same discovery was being made by a new generation of Canadian poets. Where Mrs. Traill with her European way of seeing could find no mythology in Canada to sustain her imagination, F. R. Scott concluded that she had looked in the wrong place. He wrote:

Who could read old myths  
By this lake  
Where the wild ducks paddle forth  
At daybreak?

For this new generation of painters and poets and writers, Canada had to seek its metaphysic in nature rather than in history; “Geological time,” Scott wrote, “made ancient civilization but yesterday’s picnic.”<sup>30</sup>

Yet Scott realized, as perhaps the Group of Seven did not, that nature alone was no answer for Canadians in search of a culture in the modern world. Indeed Scott knew very well that while nature had to be assimilated in culture, it alone could not make a culture. That, in part, was the meaning of his wonderfully satiric poem ironically entitled “The Call of the Wild,” doubtlessly taken from the he-man American writer, Jack London. Scott wrote:

Make me over, Mother Nature,  
Take the knowledge from my eyes,  
Put me back among the pine trees  
Where the simple are the wise.  
Clear away all evil influence,  
That can hurt me from the States,  
Keep me pure among the beaver  
With un-Freudian loves and hates

Where my Conrads are not Aiken,  
 And John Bishop's Peales don't sound  
 Where the Ransom's are not Crowing  
 And the Ezras do not Pound.<sup>31</sup>

Scott, and those who thought like him, knew that the Canadian imagination could not reject history any more than it could reject the modernism of Ezra Pound, at least if it wished to have a living culture. But the history that would inform Canadian culture would be of Canada's own making. That is essentially the meaning of Scott's well-known poem, first published in 1946, entitled "Laurentian Shield." It brings together nature and history in a way that finally nationalizes nature in Canada. The story begins with the new land:

Inarticulate, arctic  
 Not written on by history, empty as paper.

But the land searches for an appropriate voice, a way of expressing itself. From the "prewords of prehistory" it moves to the words of history: the story of the exploitation of Canadian resources by fur trade, gold seeker and monopolistic mining companies.

But a deeper note is sounding, heard in the mines,  
 The scattered camps and mills, a language of life,  
 And what will be written in the full culture of occupation,  
 Will come, presently, tomorrow,  
 From millions whose hands can turn this rock into children.<sup>32</sup>

"THE FULL CULTURE OF OCCUPATION," man and the land, history and nature. Perhaps this is what we find in the paintings of Carl Schaefer and Charles Burchfield in whom civilization and nature seem to unite in harmony. Here are two artists whom Ann Davis has described as painters of the rural mood. But reading her perceptive text it is evident that something more is needed to capture the way of seeing that is found in these paintings. Neither strains to present nationalist claims, a theme that runs through many of the earlier paintings, more persistently in the insecure Canadian ones than in the confident American works. Those issues seem settled. Burchfield had no time for nationalist art: "the American scene is no better or worse than other scenes, and the worthwhile artist doesn't care about a subject for its national character," he maintained. Though he moved from place to place, he had a powerful sense of locality, a conviction that real roots, roots that nurtured the imagination, drew on a specific locale. That was a conviction which he shared with his Canadian friend, Carl Schaefer. "Returning to Hanover in the summers and Christmas time, in

the early thirties," Schaefer remembered, "where I discovered my own heritage, the land, man in harmony with nature."<sup>33</sup>

Here are two artists who, like their predecessors, needed to belong to an identifiable community. In the United States in the nineteenth century and in Canada well into the twentieth, they called that community a "nation." In reality, however, each painter interpreted not a nation, but a part of a nation: even the Group of Seven was as regional as the Laurentian shield. Quebec art, for example, had few affinities with the Group's version of nationalism.<sup>34</sup> Burchfield and Schaefer knew that locality fed their imaginations. In that they demonstrated — as a novelist like William Faulkner or a poet like Robert Lowell in the United States, a W. O. Mitchell or an Al Purdy, to say nothing of an Anne Hébert or a Roch Carrier, in Canada — that imagination and identity, as Northrop Frye claims, are rooted in locality.<sup>35</sup> Once, in 1963, when William Kurelek returned to paint on his father's farm in Manitoba he wrote about what that meant. "The vastness of the prairies with occasional clumps of poplar bushes really gives me a feeling of communion," he remarked. "No one seems to understand why I am fascinated with this place, not even the local people. Only I it seems can express it though others may feel it inarticulately."<sup>36</sup> David Milne at Boston Corners or Palgrave felt that sense of communion. So did Emily Carr who, as Doris Shadbolt has shown, through "her prolonged contact and empathy with one segment of the world's skin has led her to touch the pulse that animates the whole."<sup>37</sup> Even an automatist like Paul-Emile Borduas, who had wandered from Sainte-Hilaire, to Montreal, then on to New York and finally Paris, recognized the source of his imaginative nourishment. Depressed and ill in 1958 he wrote that "a little hunting and fishing, a little affection in my luminously beautiful country would be the correct treatment."<sup>38</sup> Even in his most abstract work Borduas remained close to the mountain at Sainte-Hilaire.

What Burchfield and especially Schaefer also demonstrate is the reintegration of Europe into North American art. Having come to terms with North America and nature, it was no longer necessary to reject Europe and history. That tension, which sometimes made spokesmen for the Group of Seven sound shrill and even silly, was resolved by a painter like Schaefer who readily recognized his indebtedness not only to Arthur Lismer and J. E. H. MacDonald but also to Dürer, Hirschvogel, and Altdorfer.<sup>39</sup> He realized, as Jacques de Tonnancour observed, that "art is not made after nature, but after art and with nature."<sup>40</sup>

The realization that nature and history together provided nourishment for the imagination allowed American and Canadian artists more fully to digest their countries. Through their imaginations, and in the different ways that their separate histories drew them, they were making North America their own. "An art must grow and flower in a land," Lawren Harris wrote in the 1920's, "before the country will be a real home for its people."<sup>41</sup> And making a home meant creating

that metaphysical border that Joyce Carol Oates knew was more real than the physical one. Artists — poets, painters, novelists, even historians — provide new maps, new ways of seeing north and south. As Al Purdy put it:

A. Y. Jackson for instance  
 83 years old  
 half way up a mountain  
 standing in a patch of snow  
 to paint a picture that says  
 "Look here  
 You've never seen this country  
 it's not the way you thought it was  
 Look again."<sup>42</sup>

Or Paul-Emile Borduas in his *Refus globale*: "Les frontières de nos rêves ne sont plus le même" — "The frontiers of our dreams are no longer what they were."<sup>43</sup>

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Joyce Carol Oates, *Crossing the Border* (New York: Fawcett Crest, 1974), pp. 11, 12, 16.
- <sup>2</sup> Joyce Carol Oates, "One Half of Robertson Davies," *The New Republic*, 178 (15 April 1978), 22-25.
- <sup>3</sup> Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 199.
- <sup>4</sup> Ramsay Cook, "The Social and Economic Frontier in America," in Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, *The Frontier in History* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 175-208.
- <sup>5</sup> F. J. Turner, *Frontier and Section* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961), p. 39; Walt Whitman, *Collected Poetry and Selected Prose* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1959), p. 11.
- <sup>6</sup> "Review of the Times," *New Dominion Monthly* (1874), cited by Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 127.
- <sup>7</sup> Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1977), pp. 148-57.
- <sup>8</sup> Cited by Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture* (New York: Oxford, 1980), p. 38; Perry Miller, *Nature's Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967), p. 205; Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature Addresses and Lectures* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1903), p. 10.
- <sup>9</sup> John Richardson, *Wacousta* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1964), p. 159.
- <sup>10</sup> Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1962), p. 237.
- <sup>11</sup> Cited by Novak, p. 41.
- <sup>12</sup> Catharine Parr Traill, *The Backwoods of Canada* (London: C. Knight, 1836), p. 153. In this section I have benefitted from Marcia B. Kline, *Beyond the Land Itself. Views of Nature in Canada and the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970).
- <sup>13</sup> Cited by Ann Davis, *A Distant Harmony* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1982), p. 3.

- <sup>14</sup> Cited by Cook, p. 156.
- <sup>15</sup> Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canadian Question* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose, 1891).
- <sup>16</sup> Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970).
- <sup>17</sup> Davis, p. 181.
- <sup>18</sup> Traill, p. 155.
- <sup>19</sup> D. C. Scott, *Poems of Archibald Lampman* (Toronto: Morang, 1900), pp. 6, 17, 179.
- <sup>20</sup> George Altmeyer, "Three Ideas of Nature in Canada," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 11 (August 1976), 21-36; Douglas Cole, "Artists, Patrons and Public: An Enquiry into the Success of the Group of Seven," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 13 (Summer 1978), 69-78; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967).
- <sup>21</sup> AGO, N. G. Jackson Papers, A. Y. Jackson to cousin, 23 September 1910.
- <sup>22</sup> Ann Davis, "The Apprehended Vision: The Philosophy of the Group of Seven" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, York Univ., 1973).
- <sup>23</sup> F. G. Hausser, *A Canadian Art Movement: The Story of the Group of Seven* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926), pp. 13, 17; Arthur Lismer, "Art and Life," in *Foundations: Building the City of God* (Toronto: SCM, 1927), p. 74.
- <sup>24</sup> Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," in Peter Russell, *Nationalism in Canada* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1966), pp. 3-26.
- <sup>25</sup> Lawren Harris, "Revelation of Art in Canada," *The Canadian Theosophist*, 7 (15 July 1926), 85-86.
- <sup>26</sup> Michèle Lacombe, "Theosophy and the Canadian Idealist Tradition: A Preliminary Exploration," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 17 (Summer 1982), 100-18.
- <sup>27</sup> Thomas A. Johnson, ed., *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), pp. 667-68; *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (Boston: Knopf, 1972), p. 76.
- <sup>28</sup> Arthur Lismer, "Tom Thomson: Canadian Painter, 1877-1917," *The Educational Review of the Province of Quebec*, 80, no. 3 (1954), 170, 172; Maria Tippett, *Emily Carr* (Toronto: Oxford, 1979), pp. 175-76; "David Milne His Journal and Letters of 1920 and 1921," *Artscanada* (30 August 1973), p. 22.
- <sup>29</sup> Lawren Harris, "The Group of Seven in Canadian History," *Report of the Canadian Historical Association* (1948), p. 29.
- <sup>30</sup> Sandra Djwa, "'A New Soil and a Sharp Sun': The Landscape in Modern Canadian Poetry," *Modernist Studies. Literature and Culture, 1920-1940*, 2, no. 2 (1977), cited p. 10; See also Sandra Djwa, "F. R. Scott," *Canadian Poetry*, no. 4 (Spring 1979), pp. 1-16. In an uncanny way Scott here seems to be replying to Mrs. Traill who wrote that "instead of poring with mysterious awe among our curious limestone rocks, that are often singularly grouped together, we refer them to the geologist to exercise his skill in accounting for their appearance: instead of investing them with the solemn characters of ancient temples or heathen altars, we look upon them with the curious eye of natural philosophy alone." Traill, *Backwoods*, pp. 153-54.
- <sup>31</sup> *The Collected Poems of F. R. Scott* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1981), p. 255.

- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 175.
- <sup>33</sup> Davis, *A Distant Harmony*, pp. 175, 169.
- <sup>34</sup> François-Marc Gagnon, "Painting in Quebec in the Thirties," *The Journal of Canadian Art History*, 3, nos. 1 & 2 (Fall 1976), 2-4.
- <sup>35</sup> Frye, pp. ii-iii.
- <sup>36</sup> Ramsay Cook, *William Kurelek. A Prairie Boy's Visions* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1980), cited p. 37.
- <sup>37</sup> Doris Shadbolt, *The Art of Emily Carr* (Toronto and Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1979), p. 196.
- <sup>38</sup> Paul-Emile Borduas, *Ecrits/Writings, 1942-58* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1978), p. 153. In an unpublished paper entitled "Paul-Emile Borduas et le Paysage de Sainte-Hilaire," François-Marc Gagnon argues convincingly that the mountain at Sainte-Hilaire informs Borduas' most *automatiste* work. LeMoine Fitzgerald wrote that "subconsciously the prairies and skies get into most things I do no matter how abstract they may be." Cited by Ann Davis, "Lionel LeMoine Fitzgerald A North American Artist," in *Lionel LeMoine Fitzgerald The Development of an Artist* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1978), p. 63.
- <sup>39</sup> Davis, *A Distant Harmony*, pp. 145, 149.
- <sup>40</sup> Cited by Ann Davis, *Frontiers of Our Dreams. Quebec Painting in the 1940's and 1950's* (Winnipeg: Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1979), p. 14.
- <sup>41</sup> Cited by Eli Mandel, "The Inward, Northward Journey of Lawren Harris," *Artscanada* (October-November 1978), p. 20.
- <sup>42</sup> Al Purdy, *Selected Poems* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972), p. 77.
- <sup>43</sup> Borduas, p. 46.

## TWO POEMS

*Peter Stevens*

### YORKSHIRE SPRING

Over the ragged nests, fists hammered  
 into winter-brittle trees, then thrust  
 lost, knuckles torn to splinters, the rooks  
 are riding the high wind on frayed wings.  
 With a blunt clatter of wings and wood  
 they perch rocking on the meagre limbs.  
 Caught in wind's bluff bombast, their harsh throats  
 rasp dishevelled scatter of defiance.