

BEGINNING AGAIN

EIGHTEEN YEARS AGO, George Woodcock accepted the editorship of a new magazine to be called *Canadian Literature*. To many, a journal devoted solely to the study of Canadian writers and writing seemed an unlikely venture. But in the intervening years Canadian writing has flourished; the study of Canadian writing has grown from an almost secret pursuit into a public venture and a respectable academic enterprise; and George Woodcock has built *Canadian Literature* into the independent journal of opinion and analysis which in the first editorial he promised it would be. On July 1st of this year he retired from the editorship. Readers will be pleased to know that he will continue to write for the magazine, and so to share the insight and the fine literary judgment which characterize his work. But the daily organization of the magazine he leaves behind. He also leaves more than one editorial legacy. There are several issues' worth of excellent essays awaiting publication; there is his reputation, which, as the incoming editor, I find not just a little daunting; there is the journal's independence, which he established and which I reaffirm now as an editorial policy to be preserved and still further pursued.

At the same time as George Woodcock is retiring, there are other changes taking place in editorial guidance, for Donald Stephens and Ronald Sutherland are also leaving their posts. They have contributed greatly to the journal's development and in very particular ways to the shape it has taken from issue to issue. Their work has been much appreciated. Fortunately they, too, will continue to write for *Canadian Literature*, so readers will have the continuing benefits of their perspectives. As they leave, I welcome the assistance of a new Associate Editor, Herbert Rosengarten, who will already be familiar to readers, for his reviews and comments have been appearing regularly here for nine years.

The articles that have been published in *Canadian Literature* over the past years have varied greatly in approach and intent. Textual analyses have appeared alongside autobiographical and polemical commentaries; large thematic surveys have alternated with close examinations of symbol, structure, and metric form. Many of these articles were generated, moreover, by the particular needs of the time they were written. Eighteen years ago few Canadian works were in print (the New Canadian Library, for example, had only just started), booksellers were inclined to hide what Canadian books they stocked, and few readers could be relied upon to be familiar with titles, names or plots. Writers had to be identified, plots to be explained. Much of the critical process was devoted to gathering information and, under various guises, listing it. Now, though this process has by no means been completed, the work that has been done has made us aware of the complexities of the literature we are studying and suspicious of the generalizations that have often been accepted as axioms. On a personal level, neither Frederick Philip Grove nor Malcolm Lowry turned out to have lived quite the lives they publicly declared to have been theirs. At a more general level there is that perennial tension about identity. Generations worried themselves because they couldn't find it in Canada. The more we have come to know about intellectual history and cultural expression, however, the more we have realized that it was not a matter of a missing identity, but a matter of looking for it with eyes, ears, and minds attuned to societies other than our own.

We need further explorations now of the many connections between cultural and intellectual history: of the impact of ideas and social experience upon literature in Canada. We need sound studies of the interrelationships between literature, the other arts, and science. We need further illumination of writers and writings that are too little known; interviews, reminiscences, and biographical accounts; perspectives on the publishing industry and political involvement in literature. We need comparative studies which will not merely list parallels or differences but will use the process of comparison to elucidate their subject and to guard against easy assertions of distinctiveness. We need reflections on newspapers and other kinds of journal, on television, radio, and film, and on the literary connections or the literary potential each medium possesses. And we need sophisticated considerations of and by our major writers. There is much to do. This journal has never been bound by its academic connection. It seeks readers and writers both inside and outside university circles. Beginning again after eighteen years, it still takes as its subject, as its first editorial announced, "Canadian writers and their work and setting, without further limitations."

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