

ON CARL F. KLINCK

Brandon Conron

MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS AGO, when he published *Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism* (1942), Carl Frederick Klinck emerged from what was then an unfashionable area of scholarship into what has since become the mainstream of Canadian criticism.

Though *Wilfred Campbell* (originally written as a Columbia Ph.D. thesis) concerns a writer whose work spans the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Klinck's particular interest over a long career as critic and scholar has been the writing done in the English language during the period before Confederation in what are now Ontario and Quebec. His contributions in this area, through the discovery of unnoticed material and the establishment of its authorship, have been invaluable; he has brought long inaccessible texts to light, and, providing illuminating critical introductions that place them soundly in their North American context, has presented them to a wide reading public. Yet Klinck has never accepted the arbitrary boundaries of period or genre. As a pioneer biographer of E. J. Pratt and William "Tiger" Dunlop; as co-editor of *Canadian Anthology*, one of the first comprehensive collections of our country's prose and poetry; as co-creator of the pioneer reference work in biography and criticism, *Canadian Writers/Ecrivains canadiens*; as the careful investigator in volumes like *Tecumseh* and *The Journal of Major James Norton* of the Indian element in our historical literature, and as initiator, general editor and contributor to *Literary History of Canada*, he has manifested not only an impressively wide scope of interest, but also a flexibility of response that has made him sensitive to virtually every aspect of Canadian literary life.

A graduate at nineteen of Waterloo College (then affiliated with the University of Western Ontario), Klinck completed his M.A. two years later at Columbia University, which was a fortunate choice in view of the later development of his interest in Canadian writers and writing. As early as 1924 V. L. O. Chittick's monograph on Thomas Chandler Haliburton and Carl Y. Connor's brief study of

Archibald Lampman's letters were published as Columbia doctoral theses. Henry W. Wells, a critic of broad interests who later collaborated with Klinck in writing *Edwin J. Pratt: The Man and his Poetry* (1947), offered him enthusiastic encouragement at Columbia from the beginning, as did Pelham Edgar who, during a summer of lecturing at Columbia as a change from his duties at the University of Toronto, gave Klinck useful advice in connection with his M.A. thesis, which was entitled "Influences on the Poetry of the Canadian Group of the Sixties". "The Sixties" of course were the 1860's, and during the period of his research Klinck gathered valuable personal reminiscences on Archibald Lampman from Charles D. G. Roberts and Duncan Campbell Scott; he also reached the conclusion that Wilfred Campbell (who, with Lampman and D. C. Scott, had expressed individual and highly independent critical views in the Toronto *Globe* column "At the Mermaid Tavern") was a central figure in the Confederation Group of poets.

Lorne Pierce of the Ryerson Press, who was always alertly watchful for promising critics, arranged for Klinck to meet Wilfred Campbell's son, Lieutenant-Colonel Basil B. Campbell, who, with his sister, Mrs. E. S. Malloch, gave Klinck free access to their father's letters and supplied copious biographical details. The result was *Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism*. One of the first systematic studies of an Ontario writer, it examined the entire body of Campbell's work and explored his Emersonian attitude to nature and natural objects, his interest in myth — including Indian legend — as a way of explaining human responses (as well as of partly cushioning the impact of the Darwinian concept of evolution), and the kind of "true British idealism" which he espoused. Klinck's personal travels in Scotland enabled him to identify the Scottish influences on Campbell, and especially that of John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, ninth Duke of Argyll and Chief of the poet's clan. In this exhaustive investigation Wilfred Campbell was interpreted in the light not only of the personal influences he absorbed but also of his historical time and his literary contemporaries. Unfortunately the Ryerson Press published *Wilfred Campbell* without the full bibliography of Campbell's writing and of secondary source materials relating to him which Klinck had prepared; this was issued later as a typed and bound supplement and supplied to a number of Canadian libraries.

In 1928, after finishing his initial graduate work at Columbia, Klinck was appointed Instructor of English at Waterloo College, and during the next four years — with a rapidity that would stagger a contemporary Promotions and Tenure Committee — he had hurdled the intervening ranks to full professor. In this

early academic period he displayed an extraordinary combination of industry, competence and versatility. While carrying a full teaching load, he found time to act as college librarian from 1936 to 1942, and when he served as Dean of Waterloo College between 1942 and 1947, the year he went to the University of Western Ontario, he maintained a substantial lecturing commitment that ranged into virtually every major period of English and American literature.

Klinck's second important contribution to Canadian literary history was the biographical section of *Edwin J. Pratt: The Man and his Poetry*, published at the time when he was leaving Waterloo for London, where he has lived ever since. This was the book in which he collaborated with his former Columbia mentor, Henry W. Wells, who had successfully sponsored the American publication by Knopf of Pratt's collected works. In his part of the book, which John Bartlett Brebner in his Foreword appropriately described as "an intimate, imaginative and affectionate enquiry", Klinck worked very closely with Pratt, who made manuscripts, lectures and other relevant material freely available. Because it was derived so largely from first-hand contact with the poet's own autobiographical account, read in manuscript and heard in conversation, *Edwin J. Pratt* will continue to serve as an invaluable authentic basis for subsequent studies of Pratt, especially in relation to his early life.

The University of Western Ontario had pioneered in giving courses in Canadian Literature ever since the early 1920's, and while Head of the English Department there from 1948 to 1956, and subsequently Senior Professor of Canadian Literature, Klinck increasingly devoted his teaching and scholarship to the writings of our country. At this time one of the most urgent needs for those who taught and followed courses in Canadian Literature was a suitable anthology. A. J. M. Smith's excellent critical and historical verse anthology, *The Book of Canadian Poetry*, had appeared in 1943, and Earle Birney's *Twentieth Century Canadian Poetry* followed in 1953, but there was no volume available for undergraduate study which embraced both poetry and prose and supported the selections with relevant and accurate biographical and bibliographical information. In collaboration with R. E. Watters, who was then working on the first edition of his *Check List of Canadian Literature and Background Materials, 1628-1950* (1959), Klinck developed the kind of book that seemed best fitted for the purpose. The result of these joint efforts was *Canadian Anthology*; published in 1955, revised and expanded in 1966 and in 1974, it has, with its judicious selection of writers, its excellent biographical introductions and its bibliographical aids,

played a considerable part in making courses in English-Canadian literature possible and even — ultimately — respectable.

KLINCK HAD LONG BEEN FASCINATED, in a more special field, by the exploits of William “Tiger” Dunlop, which were related admiringly by Robina and Kathleen Lizars in their late nineteenth century book, *In the Days of the Canada Company, 1825-1850*, and in the late 1950’s he became curious about references to Dunlop in *Fraser’s Magazine* and in *Blackwood’s*, to the latter of which Dunlop had actually contributed. Obviously in England Dunlop was regarded as a distinguished literary figure, and Klinck set out to find what in the previous connections of this agent for the Canada Company in Goderich had given him this reputation. Dunlop had in fact published little in Canada, but from researches in Edinburgh, in the British Museum and the Colonial Office in London, in the newspapers which Dunlop had once edited in Calcutta, and in a variety of other locations, Klinck established that Dunlop had been closely associated with Christopher North, John Gibson Lockhart and James Hogg, the founders of *Blackwood’s*. As intimate friends and convivial drinking companions they had met in Ambrose’s Tavern, from which their column, “Noctes Ambrosianae”, acquired its name.

Out of these discoveries emerged *William “Tiger” Dunlop: Blackwoodian Backwoodsman* (1962), a careful biographical and critical study which not only provided an understanding of Dunlop’s early career and of his international reputation, but also revealed his hitherto unsuspected influence on the development of literature in Canada. Dunlop presented *Blackwood’s* as a model for aspiring Upper Canadian writers. His *Statistical Sketches of Upper Canada* was an important book in its time, very popular in England and well reviewed in *Blackwood’s*, *Fraser’s* and elsewhere. Its tone was ironic and satirical, and its whimsical descriptions of real conditions in Upper Canada poked fun at the flattering misrepresentations of current travel and immigration literature. Dunlop’s career showed that, if Upper Canada did not acquire a humourist on the scale of Haliburton, it did possess the makings of a vigorous satirical tradition. William Maginn, one of the contributors to *Blackwood’s*, was also the editor of a series of sketches of famous writers that appeared in *Fraser’s Magazine*, and he considered Dunlop important enough to include him among his distinguished English colleagues, in an article illustrated with drawings by the once famous artist Daniel Maclise.

Another of Klinck’s persistent interests was first aroused by the Columbia lec-

tures on the Indian in American literature which were delivered by Hoxie Fairchild, later the author of *The Noble Savage*. Klinck's desire to know more about the part played by the Indians in the early history of Ontario was sustained by reading A. C. Casselman's edition of Major John Richardson's *War of 1812* (1902) and Mabel Dunham's regional history, *Grand River* (1945), and he began in particular to search out contemporary writings on the great Indian leader Tecumseh. He found in the British Museum Richardson's poem, *Tecumseh or The Warrior of the West* (1828), and other references to Tecumseh in Richardson's prose. Later, when he was working on the Lower Canadian writer Levi Adams in the National Library of Scotland, Klinck discovered an anonymously published book entitled *Tales of Chivalry and Romance* (1826). At that period, moved by a feeling that the literary contribution of early Ontario had been grossly underestimated in comparison with that of the Maritimes, he had been digging into early journals in the hope of finding vital information about Upper Canada between 1800 and 1850, and even earlier. In the process he found that a poem entitled "Tecumthé", which appeared anonymously in the *Canadian Review* of December 1826, was identical with an item in *Tales of Chivalry and Romance*. By analyzing various shreds of evidence, he was able to establish that Levi Adams, the author of other poems in the *Canadian Review* and in *Tales of Chivalry and Romance*, had also written "Tecumthé". In *Tecumseh: Fact and Fiction* (1961), Klinck performs a notable synthesis of English, Canadian and American records of the Indian leader. Originally designed as a text book of primary source material for undergraduate term papers, the book in fact illuminates not only the career of the Shawnee chief, but his entire period as well.

Even more extensive researches into early Canadian Indian history than those involved in *Tecumseh* went into Klinck's preparation, with the historian James J. Talman, of the fine Champlain Society edition of *The Journal of Major John Norton* (1970). Led by his search for the writings of the Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, Klinck discovered Norton's hitherto unpublished journal in the library of an English nobleman, and immediately recognized the value of this account of North American Indian life during the early nineteenth century. Norton's journal, written in 1816, includes both the narrative of a thousand mile journey down the Ohio from the Grand River in Upper Canada and through the states of Kentucky and Tennessee with a visit to the Cherokee country, and accounts of the Five Nations from an early period until the end of the war of 1812-14. It is a remarkable historical document, presented in an objective and realistic manner, and evidently designed to interest potential future readers in what Norton

did, saw, thought and was told on his journey in 1809-10 and his campaigns between 1812 and 1814.

Born of a Scottish mother and a Cherokee father, and adopted as a Mohawk, Norton also left many letters in which he relates intimate details of his correspondence with Wilberforce and various Quakers, and of his own adoption of a Christian humanistic attitude. In these letters and in the *Journal* to which they form a background, he portrays Indian ways and aims unsentimentally, and he notes that the relationship between whites and Indians in early Canada was quite different from, and generally more humane than, that which existed in the United States. The background information copiously and carefully assembled in Klinck's Biographical Introduction and in Talman's Historical Introduction combines with the actual substance of the *Journal* to make this a publication of considerable importance in terms of Canadian cultural and political history. In many ways it offers fresh evidence to substantiate a concept long nurtured by Carl Klinck: namely, that Canadian and American literatures are both North American continental in their orientation, but in different ways. They have many parallels because they are often inspired by similar or even the same material, but their developments have been different because political and social attitudes, especially in such directions as law and order and immigration, have been different.

Of the many critical articles which Carl Klinck has written it is impossible to discuss every one, but among those that should be mentioned are his excellent introductory essays to the New Canadian Library editions of Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1961), Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1962), "Tiger" Dunlop's *Upper Canada* (1967), Major John Richardson's *Wacousta* (1967) and Rosanna Eleanor Leprohon's *Antoinette de Mircourt* (1973). These imaginative essays are models of the process by which critical perception and broad scholarship combine to reinterpret and revitalize an earlier age. Also notable is Klinck's introduction to the Alcuin Society's 1970 reprint of Abraham S. Holmes' spicy early Victorian tale of seduction in Chatham, Canada West, *Belinda: or, The Rivals: A Tale of Real Life* (1843).

Yet perhaps Carl Klinck's most important work has lain in the synthesizing of Canadian literary history. His first work in this field was a development of Lorne Pierce's *An Outline of Canadian Literature* (1927), which for years had been the standard reference work on Canadian writers in English and French. During the early fifties, Pierce urged Klinck to undertake a revision and updating of that book, and, although it was not until after Pierce's death that the project was completed, *Canadian Writers/Ecrivains canadiens* (1964, rev. 1966) was dedi-

cated to his memory and fulfilled his aims. In this work I collaborated with Klinck and with Guy Sylvestre, author of *Anthologie de la poésie canadienne française, Panorama des lettres canadiennes-françaises* and numerous literary essays, and a critic well qualified to treat the French Canadian writers in their own language.

Though it included a Chronological Table of literary and historical events from 1606 to 1965 and a selective Bibliography of basic reference texts, *Canadian Writers/Ecrivains canadiens* was mainly an alphabetically arranged handbook of information concerning more than 350 authors and their work. It did not attempt to be all-inclusive but only to treat for the most part writers who have "produced a notable first or second book and have thereafter embarked upon a literary career with repeated publications of generally acknowledged merit." This reference volume, which owed a great deal to Klinck's encyclopaedic knowledge of English-Canadian literature, provided biographical and bibliographical information that at the time of its publication was not otherwise readily available.

DOUTBLESS THE MOST IMPRESSIVE of all Carl Klinck's contributions to Canadian literature has been the initiation and co-ordination of *Literary History of Canada* (1965), and his personal contributions to that volume. Originally conceived in a conversation with Northrop Frye, the *Literary History* was actually initiated in 1957 when the University of Toronto Press accepted Klinck's proposal that it should be a work of various hands. He then gathered together Alfred G. Bailey, Claude Bissell, Roy Daniells, Northrop Frye and Desmond Pacey, all of them leading authorities on diverse phases of Canadian literature, to assist as contributing editors, and twenty-nine other scholars as contributors. This huge task of survey and assessment, reaching almost 1,000 pages in length, "had two principal aims: to publish a comprehensive reference book on the (English) literary history of this country, and to encourage established and younger scholars to engage in a critical study of that history both before and after the appearance of the work." Its translation by Maurice Lebel, *L'Histoire littéraire du Canada* (1970), made this valuable compendium equally available to French Canadian readers.

Despite the obvious difficulties presented by multiple authorship and differing individual approaches to a vast amount of material, the book is a fascinating account of how our writers over the centuries have responded to their natural environment and to their society against the background of other literary tradi-

tions in English. The story unfolds in four parts: "New Found Lands", "The Transplanting of Traditions", "The Emergence of Tradition", and "The Realization of a Tradition". It treats not only such central genres as poetry, fiction, drama and criticism, but "other works which have influenced literature or have been significantly related to literature in expressing the cultural life of the country": folk tales, Canadian publishing, the growth of Canadian English, the writings of historians, social scientists, philosophers and theologians, travel and nature books, children's literature, essays and biography.

The Introduction and two large chapters on literary activity in the Canadas (1812-1841) and in Canada East and West (1841-1880) were written by Klinck himself. These chapters, which reflect the result of his life-long gleanings from libraries in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, bring to light much fresh material, clarify influences and relationships between English, American and Canadian literatures, and give in vivid and lively prose the first systematic and connected story of this early period. They provide, moreover, an invaluable guide to what significant books of the time merit study or reprinting.

The *Literary History*, a revised and updated edition of which is scheduled for publication in 1975, establishes that there is plenty of good writing in this country for which neither boosterism nor apology is needed. As Northrop Frye points out in his brilliant concluding chapter, "The writers featured in this book have identified the habits and attitudes of the country, as Fraser and Mackenzie have identified its rivers. They have also left an imaginative legacy of dignity and of high courage." Without Carl Klinck's inspiration, patience and industry the extent of this legacy could not have been recognized so soon in such clear perspective.

Carl Klinck started publishing creative evaluations of Canadian writings in an age when few of his fellow academics took their own country's literature seriously and there was little encouragement for any kind of scholarship at all. Despite a number of surveys by some distinguished "zealous amateurs", the only historically oriented treatment of the early Canadian period was Ray Palmer Baker's *A History of English-Canadian Literature to the Confederation* (1920). Special studies had been published, such as Casselman's valuable notes in his edition of *Richardson's War of 1812* (1902), Chittick's *Haliburton* (1924), Pierce's *William Kirby* (1929) and James Cappon's *Bliss Carman and the Literary Currents and Influences of his Time* (1930). In 1936 the *University of Toronto Quarterly* introduced its annual review of "Letters in Canada", and W. E. Collin brought out his *White Savannahs*. In 1943, the year after *Wilfred Campbell*, influential works like E. K. Brown's *On Canadian Poetry* and A. J. M. Smith's *The Book of*

Canadian Poetry appeared. That year, too, although J. B. Brebner described the meetings of the Royal Society of Canada as “drowsy gatherings . . . the transactions slumber undisturbed”, the Humanities Research Council was formed. Within a decade one of the recommendations of the “Massey Report” (1951) led to the establishment of the Canada Council. Both these bodies not only promoted literary scholarship by various grants and aids to publication, but they also created an atmosphere in which careful investigation and considered judgment of our own writings slowly replaced the characteristic dilettante approach and parochial hyperbole of earlier literary comment.

As this new era of critical appreciation began, Professor Klinck was already an experienced journeyman. Familiar with both English and American traditions, he was well qualified to study Canadian writing within the context of universally accepted literary criteria. From the first his critical attitude was both historical and comparative. His interpretations reflect meticulous research of a work's entire background and period, and invariably clarify influences and relationships which would have been missed in the old *belles lettres* cavalier treatment. A pathfinder in the application of this systematic approach to Canadian history and culture, Klinck with his perennial enthusiasm and sensitive scholarship has encouraged an increasing number of followers to explore and chart the various regions of our country's imaginative landscape.

Since retirement from Western in 1973 Carl's productivity has continued unabated (in addition to supervising the revision of the *Literary History* and turning out scholarly articles, he is currently writing a book on Robert Service). His patient and informed sleuthing of obscure source material, his shrewd sifting and thoughtful analysis of various clues to identity or meaning in their proper context, and his ability because of his breadth of view and range of interests to synthesize our literary heritage have made Carl Klinck the many-sided historian-scholar-critic appropriate to our Canadian situation and needs.