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# CANADIAN LITERATURE No. 9

*Summer, 1961*

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BY A. J. M. SMITH

Conference of the Arts

BY ROBERT FULFORD AND ROBERT WEAVER

Preface to a Novel

BY MALCOLM LOWRY

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## CANADIAN LITERATURE

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*editorial*

## SHOOTS FROM AN OLD TREE

**O**NE OF THE MORE HAPPY consequences of traditional colonialism, in which it seems to differ profoundly from the atomic-economic imperialisms of our own day, has been its complex propagation of cultures—and particularly literary cultures. It is true that even today certain features of the North American way of living—usually the worst—and certain equivocal manifestations of Russian ideology, may find their way into the neutral regions of the earth. But the age is past when large numbers of colonists, of Britons and Spaniards, of French and Dutch and Portuguese, set out to make their homes in distant lands and carried with them their native literatures, rooted in the living soil of language. Little as one may wish to minimise in any way the destruction of indigenous cultures by the colonists, there is at least some consolation to be drawn from the fact that they did not create a cultural vacuum; Peru cannot give us back the world of the Incas, but it has given us the poetry of Cesar Vallejo; Mexico cannot give us back the world of the Maya, but it has given us the painting of Orozco.

The ties of language and literature in particular have proved more durable than those of politics. Two centuries after New France was forcibly detached from its parent country, almost as long after the United States detached itself from Britain, and nearly a century and a half after the American colonies of Spain became the republics of Latin America, the descendants of the colonists still speak French and English and Spanish with variations which, considering the time that has elapsed, are surprisingly slight. Printing has conserved languages in a way that was impossible during the centuries after the breakup of the Roman Empire. Nor has the literary heritage been lost; Racine and Shakespeare and Cervantes are as deeply read and understood in Montreal and San Francisco and Mexico City as they are in Paris and Oxford and Madrid.

Yet we have already recognised an American literature that—while sharing the same roots—is distinct from English literature, a Mexican literature that is distinct from Spanish literature, a way of writing in Quebec that is different from the way of writing in Paris. And we are becoming more and more aware that something very similar happens when Canadians and Australians use the English language to represent their own distinct and individual ways of life.

In fact, it is when “empires gleam / Like wrecks in a dissolving dream” that the cultures which grow in their shadows are liberated to take on new and various forms in the lands of colonisation. Rome has left its indelible mark on every European literature west of the Rhine, but this does not mean that French and Italian, Spanish and English literatures are merely offshoots of the Latin. Each has been moulded by the history and the physical environment in which it has developed. Yet the heritage of Rome—and the heritage of Greece before it—remain, diffused and immensely enriched by history’s long process of selective breeding.

The same is happening to the literature of Britain. The colonial empire merges and melts into the loose organisation of the Commonwealth, and while this is happening, the fragments of the culture which the colonists took with them begin to take on new life and new forms over all those regions where British men and women settled and where British administrators introduced their own conceptions of education.

In a recent issue of *Canadian Literature*, Dr. R. E. Watters showed how differently Australian and Canadian writers are solving their peculiar literary problems. The Penguin and Oxford anthologies devoted to poetry in Canada, Australia and New Zealand have further emphasised the differences between what is being written in the outlying lands of the Commonwealth and what is being written by poets in contemporary England. Now the subject has predictably aroused the interest of American scholars, and pioneer courses in Commonwealth literature are already being taught in some universities south of the border, while Cornell University Press has recently published an illuminating collection of essays, edited by Professor A. L. McLeod, under the title of *The Commonwealth Pen* (Thomas Allen, Toronto, \$3.75.)

The contributors Professor McLeod has gathered are mostly from the countries whose literature they discuss; Canada, for instance, is represented by our own frequent contributor, F. W. Watt. The panorama they present is one of contrast and variety. It is true, as one might expect, that the countries where a large proportion of the population speaks English as a first language are producing the

most copious literatures in that language. Poets like Roy Campbell and William Plomer and Charles Madge have long made us aware of the claims of South Africa, and in recent years the West Indians have been creating a vigorous and unique literature in English. At the same time, English has a special appeal in countries where many dialects and languages are spoken; writers in India and West Africa can actually command larger audiences in their own countries if they write in English than if they wrote in their own tongues, and so in both these regions one finds considerable and very original literatures in English which respond to regional conditions and are as far as Australian or Canadian literatures from being pale imitations of London models.

Much can be gained, and nothing lost, from closer links of understanding among these various awakening currents of literature in the English language, and one hopes that volumes like *The Commonwealth Pen* will be the beginnings of nearer contacts, both personally and through receptive reading, between writers in the great family of literatures which includes, besides all those described in Professor McLeod's symposium, the literatures of America and of Britain itself.

WITH GREAT REGRET we learnt of the recent death of Anne Wilkinson. Anne Wilkinson was one of the most sensitive and urbane poets of the generation that made the Forties in Canada so stimulating in its new literary departures. From the end of the War onwards her work appeared in the better literary magazines, and her first volume, *Counterpoint to Sleep*, was published by John Sutherland's pioneering First Statement Press in 1951. She was one of the founders of *Tamarack Review*, and remained closely associated with it until her death. She also wrote, in *Lions in the Way*, a highly personal history of the Oslers, from whom she was descended. Her death has silenced a clear poetic voice we had hoped to hear often again.

# ECLECTIC DETACHMENT

*Aspects of Identity  
in Canadian Poetry*

*A. J. M. Smith*

I  
N THE CLOSING PARAGRAPHS of the Introduction to *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* I made an effort to suggest in a phrase that I hoped might be memorable a peculiar advantage that Canadian poets, when they were successful or admirable, seemed to possess and make use of. This, of course, is a risky thing to do, for what one gains in brevity and point may very well be lost in inconclusiveness or in possibilities of misunderstanding. A thesis needs to be demonstrated as well as stated. In this particular case I think the thesis is implicit in the poems assembled in the last third of the book — and here and there in earlier places too. Nevertheless, I would like to develop more fully a point of view that exigencies of space confined me previously merely to stating.

The statement itself is derived from a consideration of the characteristics of Canadian poetry in the last decade. The cosmopolitan flavor of much of the poetry of the fifties in Canada derives from the infusion into the modern world of the archetypal patterns of myth and psychology rather than (as in the past) from Christianity or nationalism. After mentioning the names of James Reaney, Anne Wilkinson, Jay Macpherson, and Margaret Avison—those of the Jewish poets Eli Mandel, Irving Layton, and Leonard Cohen might have been added—I went on to say:

The themes that engage these writers are not local or even national; they are cosmopolitan and, indeed, universal. The bewildering multiplicity of scientific, moral and metaphysical data with which the poet must now come to terms, and the burden of guilt, fancied or real, which the disintegration of values in religion, politics and morals places on his unsupported shoulders, make it very difficult, if not impossible, for him to be anything but complex, divided, erudite, allusive, and



sometimes obscure. These, of course, are the characteristics of modernity in the poetry of Europe and the United States as well as of Canada.

So far there is no room for misunderstanding and little, I imagine, for disagreement. But now we come to the essential point:

But the Canadian poet has one advantage—an advantage that derives from his position of separateness and semi-isolation. He can draw upon French, British, and American sources in language and literary convention; at the same time he enjoys a measure of detachment that enables him to select and adapt what is relevant and useful. This gives to contemporary Canadian poetry . . . a distinctive quality—its *eclectic detachment*. This can be, and has been, a defect of timidity and mediocrity; but it can also be . . . a virtue of intelligence and discrimination.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the phrase *eclectic detachment* in the light of its applications, to clarify it if necessary, and to defend its validity. This is a useful undertaking, for even if it should fall short of its full purpose it cannot fail to stir up some lively controversy and stimulate thinking about the quality of Canadian poetry that might be exciting and helpful, and that might even ultimately lead us to discard a point of view that sees the Canadian poet as in a predicament, plight, or fix.

I FIRST USED the phrase *eclectic detachment* in an effort to define concisely the essential quality of the best modern Canadian poetry in 1955 in a paper read at the Canadian Writers' Conference held at Queen's University in the summer of that year, and the poets then cited as exhibiting this quality were Scott, Klein, Anderson, and Page, as well as Reaney, who, of course, had not then yet published *A Suit of Nettles*. Nobody took much notice of it at the time; but some comments in recent reviews have suggested the need for amplification and explicit illustration. Professor John Bilsland in the course of a detailed review of the new *Oxford Book in Canadian Literature* questions the validity of the phrase in a paragraph I will quote:

The expression [he writes] *eclectic detachment* sounds well: it seems to suggest a learned objectivity, the capacity in our poets to draw freely on diverse cultures and traditions.

I interpolate briefly here. It does not *seem to suggest*; it does suggest; as a matter of fact it states. I believe that one of the greatest advantages that a poet like Frank

Scott or Reaney or Klein or Gustafson really possesses is the fact that he is immersed both in the European and the North American cultural tradition—I use “cultural” in the widest possible sense to include the sociological and political aspects of environment and inheritance as well as the literary and the artistic—but he is not *of* it. He stands apart and, as all Canadian writers must do, he selects and rejects. He selects those elements from varied and often disparate sources that are useful to him, and rejects those that are not. Useful *to him*. This brings in the personal. Detachment surely does not imply in this context detachment from the Self or from personality. This is where Professor Bilsland, it seems to me, goes wrong. He continues:

One wonders if the very attractiveness of the fine expression has not misled Professor Smith. Surely a very marked quality of much of the best Canadian poetry is its intensely personal note. Many of our poets are highly derivative, but writers like A. M. Klein, Anne Wilkinson, and Irving Layton have achieved a decidedly personal utterance, not particularly eclectic, and not at all detached . . . .

The question at issue is: What is the Canadian poet detached from? *Eclectic* detachment would suggest that he is not detached from everything, but only from what he chooses to be detached from. This implies also that there are some things he chooses to attach himself to. I emphasise *himself*. It is someone, a person, a poet, who is attached or detached. The term *detachment* in this context has nothing to do with objectivity or impersonality. It is actually an affirmation of personality. Certainly in poets like Klein and Wilkinson and Layton it is.

The function of personality in the poet is to create a thing, a persona, a poem; and in Canada the problem of the critic, if not of the poet, has been to relate this thing to its place and to its time. For the scholar, watching the critic as the critic watches the poet, the Canadian literary scene offers an almost classic instance of an easily isolable phenomenon: the quick and almost forced development of a compact and self-contained literary tradition—arising from the practice of the poets—and of an orthodoxy (rather rapidly changing)—arising from the sensibility of readers and the cogitations of critics.

The task that the Canadian establishers of a literary orthodoxy addressed themselves to with the greatest enthusiasm was the effort to isolate and describe some peculiar quality that might be felt to distinguish Canadian poetry. W. D. Lighthall in his Introduction to *Canadian Songs and Poems* published in London and Toronto in 1892 was quick to recognize that there are two main streams of Canadian poetry, which for convenience I have called the cosmopolitan and the native.

The present [he wrote] is an imperfect representation of Canadian poetry from a purely literary point of view, on account of the limitation of treatment; for it is obvious that if only what illustrates the country and its life *in a distinctive way* be chosen, the subjective and unlocal literature must necessarily be passed over, entraining the omission of most of the poems whose merit lies in perfection of finish.

The anthologist himself italicises for emphasis the phrase *in a distinctive way*; and it is interesting to note the assumptions implicit in his point of view: that what is distinctively Canadian (or perhaps merely local) will tend to be (a) technically crude and (b) impersonal or objective. This second condition is not, however, meant to imply coldness or insensitivity, but is an early perception of a view that later critics, looking back, were able to substantiate. This is the conception of Canadian poetry as being in its essence heroic and mythological rather than personal and lyrical which Northrop Frye developed in his *Canadian Forum* review of the first edition of *The Book of Canadian Poetry* (Dec. 1943) and his paper on "La Tradition narrative dans la poésie canadienne-anglaise" in *Gants du Ciel* (Spring 1946), and which is behind much of the thinking in James Reaney's brilliant essay "The Canadian Poet's Predicament" in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* (April 1957).

Lighthall's critical introduction is not all forward-looking and perceptive. It has (inevitably) the defects of its time. The book was just able to include some of the early poems of Roberts, Carman, Lampman, Campbell, and Scott; it illustrates the spirit of rather blatant nationalism characteristic of the post-Confederation period and prepares the way for the Maple Leaf school of versifiers and critics that was dominant until the late twenties. A few more sentences from the Introduction will suffice to indicate the tone.

The poets whose songs fill this book are voices cheerful with the consciousness of young might, public wealth, and heroism. . . . The tone of them is *courage*;—for to hunt, to fight, to hew out a farm, one must be a man! Through their new hopes, doubts, exultations, questionings, the virility of fighting races is the undertone. Canadians are, for the most part, the descendants of armies, officers and men, and every generation of them has stood up to battle.

This is not language or feeling or thinking likely to be echoed or approved today. Yet if we disregard the Carlylean or Kiplingesque rhetoric we find that it all boils down to the assertion that the characteristic note of Canadian poetry is the heroic. And to foresee so early a tradition that was to include *David* and *The Wind Our Enemy* as well as *At the Long Sault*, *Brébeuf and His Brethren*, and *Towards the Last Spike*, with nothing more than the somewhat tentative efforts of Heavyside,

Mair, and Crawford to guide him, is not an entirely despicable achievement.

The effort to isolate a peculiar Canadian quality in the poetry of the Dominion has since Lighthall's time become a kind of occupational hazard of the Canadian critic and anthologist. Lighthall's point of view is a little naive, and it is certainly too narrow, but it marks a beginning.

The modern critic has had not only a much larger but a much more varied and complex body of work to consider. In the last twenty years a new and incomparably more vital and sophisticated poetry has arisen in Canada; and it has made imperative an effort to assimilate it and evaluate it, which has called forth the talents of a remarkable school of new scholarly critics.

The new poetry and the new criticism have had their effect on the poetry of the past. The critics have had to raise their sights as it were and have imposed an increasingly severe standard of judgment, not only on the early pre-Confederation versifiers but upon the poets of our rather glibly or perhaps ironically named "golden age"—the Roberts-Carman-Lampman group. This is much better than adulation, but there is a danger too that something valuable may be lost.

Reading the serious reviews of the *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* I have been surprised to see how far the revulsion of feeling has gone and how sudden has been the reversal of fortune. Everyone seems ready to discard the colonial pioneer poets to the junk pile. "Victorian versifiers like Heavysege and Sangster and Mair," wrote George Woodcock, "were dead before they reached the grave." And this critic's praise of Lampman, Roberts, and Carman is distinctly unenthusiastic. "One should not over-disparage Lampman," he warns I suppose himself, and goes on, in an obvious effort to be fair, to say *something*, however vague, in praise of the group. His praise, however, is pretty much nullified by the qualifications that precede it. "[Lampman] and Roberts may have been minor Victorians, colonials in their dependence on English models, and almost completely derivative, but they did bring to Canadian poetry what it needed before it could even start—a sense of the image and a high craftsmanship. . . ." Nevertheless the critic found it laborious "except perhaps in nostalgia for the Edwardian afternoon, to read through as much of the Confederation poets as [the] anthologists . . . give us." Millar MacLure in *Tamarack* No. 17 agrees. He confesses a long-standing inability to assume a scholarly stance before the verses of the Confederation poets. "Lampman," he declares in a rather self-conscious effort to be unscholarly, "is a good old cheese, but Roberts and Carman belong on captions in the New Brunswick Museum (Carman's verse is to poetic speech what Baird's Lemon Extract used to be to Demerara rum)." On the earlier poets he is considerably more

severe. "I can see no reason for taking either Heavysege (lie heavy on him, earth!) or Mair more seriously than John Hunter Duvar. . . ." Norman Levine, reviewing the Oxford Book in England, speaks "of the dead wood of the nineteenth century" and of "the much overvalued output of the poets of the 1860s." Donald A. Davie, an unprejudiced outsider, finds only *one poet* before Pratt—Lampman, of course.

I cite these opinions not mainly because they come from intelligent, responsible, and serious critics but because nothing like this emphatic and widespread denigration of the past found its voice when the three editions of *The Book of Canadian Poetry* appeared in 1943, 1948, and 1957 or when Ralph Gustafson's Penguin anthologies came out in 1942 and 1958. I myself would not wish to discard and do not think it necessary to scorn our older poetry. It is worth preserving because it shows us what our ancestors were able to do when they tried to do their best. They do not and could not provide us with a tradition, but neither do they offer us horrible examples and furnish us with something consciously to reject. They simply show us what it felt like to live here in 1840 or 1860 or 1890. These earlier poets did not have what the modern reviewer might call advantages. They had not read Hulme or Eliot or Dylan Thomas, but we must not condemn them entirely for having read Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, or Matthew Arnold,—as most of them, and I think fruitfully, had. Do we condemn the Bartlett prints because they are not like the paintings of the Group of Seven or later abstractionists?

The more tolerant point of view I have been outlining has never of course been without its exponents, and if I call one or two of these as witnesses it will bring us back to where we started—to the question of our sense of identity and to some illustrations of our *eclectic detachment*.

**N**ORTHROP FRYE, who has the catholicity of the true scholar, is able to see the always changing and always developing kaleidoscope of our literary history as a single pattern, and thus can see also the characteristic virtues and defects of the Confederation poets in the new perspective that modern poetry places them in. Frye excels in the art of making just discriminations. Speaking of Roberts, Carman, Lampman, and D. C. Scott, he says—

All four are romantic and subjective poets, at best when confronting nature in solitude, in moods of nostalgia, reverie, observation or extra-sensory awareness.

Their sensibility is emotional in origin, and they obtain conceptual precision by means of emotional precision. . . .

After speaking of the greater frequency of Lampman's successes and of the common tendency for Roberts and Carman to "let their sensibility get out of focus," he ventures some more general assertions, which bring us closer to the question of a Canadian tradition—though I am not sure whether *habit* might not be a better word.

This subjective and lyrical sensibility, sharp and clear in its emotional foreground but inclined to get vague around its conceptual fringes, is deeply rooted in the Canadian tradition. Most of its characteristics reappear in the Group of Seven painters, in Tom Thomson and Emily Carr, with their odd mixture of *art nouveau* and cosmic consciousness.

This is followed by a statement that every Canadian writer and reader should take to heart:

The Canadianism of Canadian poetry is of course not a merit in it, but only a quality in it; it may be revealed as clearly in false notes as in true ones, and may be a source of bad taste as well as of inspiration.

These sentences from Northrop Frye's general survey of poetry in Malcolm Ross's *The Arts in Canada* (1958) bring us back to the idea of *eclectic detachment*. For the person living in Canada, there are two things he cannot be detached from—his personality and his Canadianism. These are both invisible and often unconscious attachments, and they condition the inevitable way in which emotion and thought rise out of sensibility. Where freedom of choice comes in is in the intellectual effort of the artist as maker who seeks to eliminate bad taste and encourage good, who chooses the true note and rejects the false. In Canada this task is made easier by the absence of conventional bonds that fasten us to an oppressively superior tradition such as that of English poetry and leaves us free to pick and choose just those poets (or just those aspects of those poets) that can satisfy our needs. The most exciting poets of the present revival have found refreshment and nourishment in the most widely varied and often surprising sources—James Reaney in Chaucer and Spenser; Irving Layton in Nietzsche, Catullus, the Hebrew prophets, and William Carlos Williams; Jay Macpherson in Blake and Northrop Frye; Ralph Gustafson in Job, Hopkins, and Melville; Margaret Avison in Tycho Brahe, George Herbert, and Marianne Moore.

Professor Malcolm Ross in the Introduction to his recent paper-back selection from the Confederation poets sees this eclecticism in them also—and sees it, I think,

as a kind of limitation or brake on a too obvious nationalism:

Our leap from colony to nation [he writes] was accomplished without revolution, without a sharp cultural and ideological break from Europe, without the fission and fusion of Civil War. Roberts and Carman learn as happily from Emerson and Royce as from Browning, Rossetti, and Verlaine. And Darwin is made to take on the look of a Miramichi backwoodsman! True, Lampman and Roberts suddenly find they are Canadians. But they are also (and at the same time) thoroughgoing provincials (with a feeling for place), and thoroughgoing citizens of the world (with a feeling for time).

The terms *provincialism*, *regionalism*, and *colonialism* are not generally o.k. words, and a good deal of Canadian criticism has been a wasted effort either to deny or excuse these appellations. Professor Ross sees, however, that these local applications do not rule out but in Canadian poetry go along with cosmopolitan ones.

Our group of Confederation Poets is important for us [he continues]—among other reasons—because already it shows forth the peculiar and inevitable “openness” of the Canadian culture.

It is in an “open” culture that an eclectic detachment becomes possible. Milton Wilson, literary editor of the *Canadian Forum*, and perhaps the most receptive to advanced trends of all Canadian literary critics, had already developed this idea in some brilliant paradoxes in a paper read before the Association of Canadian University Teachers of English at Edmonton in June 1958 and easily available in the *Tamarack Review* No. 9. Part of his purpose was to reconsider “that doubtful quantity, our ‘sense of identity’.” He does so by dealing with the problem first in relation to space—the effect of the vastness and the emptiness of the country into which a small number of quite divergent regions have been placed at intervals—and then in terms of *time*.

When we speak (he says) of a recognizably Canadian poet we usually mean a regional poet who uses the distinctive objects and actions of his locality as poetic material. . . .

After mentioning some of the regions where an active poetry seems to be flourishing particularly at the present time—Montreal, New Brunswick, southern Ontario and Toronto, and the West Coast—Wilson goes on to point out that labels don’t always stick, that the regionalists hop about a good deal, and that “our regionalism is perhaps more a way of looking at things than a rooted stance.”

Perhaps our identity is to be one of Miss (P. K.) Page’s ‘Permanent Tourists’, and

our larger sense of place is best expressed by the kind of hopping regionalism exemplified in (Earle) Birney's *North-Star West*—(or F. R. Scott's *Trans-Canada*)—with its transcontinental series of scenes joined by compressed air, and its rapid shifts of perspective.

The effect of this is named by the critic, accurately enough but hardly I think discriminatingly enough, as “a kind of continental discontinuity”. Not discriminatingly enough because I discern the very same phenomenon in the contemporary poetry of the United States. It is a continental one, a North American one, not merely a Canadian one.

Mr. Wilson, admitting that all discussions of the Canadian poet's sense of space tend to be fanciful and arbitrary, says that “something more substantial can be said about his sense of poetic time”. What he goes on to say is something quite new and at first seems startling, if not bizarre; but through paradox I believe he has hit on the truth, and like the poor brother of the fairy tale discovers in our very limitations the source of our special good luck:

We have often been told [he writes] of our necessary dullness because we had no Revolutionary War, no French Revolution, no War Between the States. In poetry likewise we had no Renaissance, no neo-Classicism, no Romanticism. But one of the advantages of a poetry less than a hundred years old is that all the things that couldn't happen when they should have happened keep happening all the time. . . . The Canadian poet can be *avant-garde* with whatever material he chooses. . . . I even wonder whether colonialism may not be, in theory at least, the most desirable poetic state. It gives you a catholic sense of all the things poetry can do without embarrassing you by telling you what at this particular moment it can't. . . . The Canadian poet has all the models in the language (not to mention other languages) at his disposal, but lacks the deadening awareness that he is competing with them.

This bring us round full circle to freedom of choice and eclectic detachment. There is only one flaw, as I see it, in this provincial paradise. There is a serpent lurking in the phrase “lacks the deadening awareness that he is competing with them”. It seems to suggest a double standard—which I am sure is far from Mr. Wilson's intention. The Canadian poet, like every poet, is in competition with every other poet, past and present, or, more precisely he knows he must be judged by as severe standards as any. And I believe that it is an informed freedom of choice that comes from being Canadian that has made it possible for our best poets to sustain this test—and perhaps more easily than if they had been Englishmen or Americans.



# STRUCTURE OF LOSS

*The Poetry of  
Phyllis Webb*

*Helen W. Sonthoff*

**I**N SEARCH OF VALUES she cannot clearly see and will not live without, Phyllis Webb writes poems which reveal both the lacerating chaos of human experience and a deliberate cutting in to the hard core, the centre that may hold. Since one may not in the instant know whether pain is ultimately toward life or toward death, the experience of pain in these poems is not resolved in terms of the one or the other. The resulting balance communicates a kind of passionate tough-mindedness, an anguished will to completeness.

Many of Phyllis Webb's poems are luminous, sensuous, richly-colored, free in movement; some burst into a rollicking bawdiness or gait. In all of them, from the most reckless to the most serenely lyrical, wit both releases and controls the emotion. Balance, in craft and in attitude, is as significant as it is in the poems which look for "seeds of meaning".

In these poems, fury, despair and bitterness are responses to the corruption and insignificance of man in a meaningless world that "shifts like an island in the sea, uneasily / like the age", in a brutal world of "murder, ignorance and lust", whose history is characterized by years "when soldiers came / and the dogs and harpies visited churches". This world threatens to shatter or smother whatever value man may hope for. If he retreats, he is trapped in a self too small, too dark to sustain life. If he walks out under the tormenting but blank and nerveless sun, his day is splintered, chaotic in its endless round and rage.

It is in this life and on this earth that Phyllis Webb seeks a vision one might

claim “with tense impersonal unworth”. If it does not exist here, it does not exist at all. The vision and the hope in these poems are that roundness may show wholeness, that light may be luminous, that darkness may be “a deep place where green begins”. But there is always the other and terrible possibility, of meaningless circularity, withering glare, brutal and blank darkness.

In an early poem, “Sprouts the Bitter Grain”, against the knowledge of the hot rank growth of hatred in the human heart is set a wistful nostalgia for “the weather of meadows, / the seasons and gardens of children”. But it is not the brief longing at the end that balances the horror of the main part of the poem. The balance lies rather in certain images. Fury is seen as a “desperate love”; the bitter grain of hatred, growing green and fervent, is seen also as “a forest of green angels, a threat of magnificent beasts”. The poem moves from a sense of overwhelming destruction, through recognition of a kind of love, a kind of creativity and magnificence in the bitter experience, to a cry “to the gods of temperate climes”. But this cry of other gods, this prayer for “praise” and for the destruction of “these criminal branches”, hints no resolution. It is an exhausted posing of the central ambivalence, and out of the exhaustion comes the nostalgia for an earlier, simpler experience.

This ambivalence characterizes not only the private, singular experience but also the experience of love in its relationship to society and history. In another early poem, love is “like falling glass shaking with stars / the air which tomorrow, or even today, will be / a slow terrible movement of scars.” Always there are the two possibilities: that our shattering, fractional life may be just endless destruction, finally meaningless, and that this shattering may be necessary to a construction of value. A single poem may incline toward one view, but in the framework of the total poem and in its imagery, the possibility of the other is always maintained.

In “Pain” the dominant tone is positive.

Whether pain is simple as razors edging the fleshy cage,  
or whether pain raves with sharks inside the ribs,  
it throws a bridge of value to belief  
where, towards or away from, moves intense traffic.

Or, should the eyes focus to cubes and lights of pain  
and the breasts' exquisite asterisks breed circular grief,  
this bird of death is radiant and complex,  
speeds fractional life over value to belief;

The bridge spans by contemporary pain  
Centuries of historical birth.<sup>1</sup>

The view we are given in the first stanza is that pain, whether it cut into our flesh from outside or tear at us from within, does reach and reveal our essential structure of bone. This structure is like a bridge. Pain reveals, establishes "a bridge of value to belief".

This is a spatial image. In the second stanza, pain is seen as recurrent in time. The primary image is the phoenix. The great circle of flaming death and life rising from it contains both the pain which, like a bright light, stabs and burns our vulnerable flesh and also the pain bred, "a circular grief", in our bodies. Pain, like the phoenix "radiant and complex", is able to lift our "fractional life" to belief.

The space and the time images meet and spread out in the final quick stanza. Here the pain which reveals each man's framework and recurs in each man's time, our "contemporary pain" which has been, is and will always be now, is a bridge spanning "centuries of historical birth".

The main image is constructive. But the bridge of the first stanza can carry traffic two ways, toward belief and away from it. The phoenix of the second stanza is a bird of death. And in the last stanza, partly through the image and partly through the stillness at the end of a couplet in a sequence of quatrains, we are given in "centuries of historical birth" a sense of pain stretched over vast travail, a sense of death and futility.

These undertones, precise and finely handled, have the effect not of blurring but of extending the meaning of the poem. Characteristic of much of Phyllis Webb's verse is the view that in a single fact there are conflicting possibilities, that it is of vital importance to know which is real, that the real truth cannot be known by any glossing over of the fact itself or dodging of its felt horror. Therefore whatever is must be known, must be used. It cannot be walked away from. No part or aspect can be ignored. The most powerful images in these poems are, therefore, transmuting, not transcending.

<sup>1</sup> We wish to acknowledge the permission of Miss Phyllis Webb to publish "A Pardon to my Bones", and of Messrs McClelland & Stewart to publish "Pain" and a number of extracts from other poems included in Miss Webb's volume *Even Your Right Eye*.—Ed.

ONE OF THESE IMAGES is bone. Bone is harder than flesh, and deeper; it can be fractured and is, finally, dust; it is shaped and shaping, rigid and jointed; it is the skeleton which glistens with death and it is the structure of our living.

This our inheritance  
is our distress,  
born of the weight of eons  
it skeletons our flesh,  
bearing us on  
we wear it,  
though it bares us.

In this first stanza of “. . . Is our Distress”, the shaping weight of eons is a dead weight, but we are in our living borne along by it. It is an inheritance of a kind that we can neither lose nor dissipate, since it is our core, our central fact. Yet there is a distinction in this poem between our living person and our bones which link us to our dead and to our death: we are aware; we wear our skeleton. Though we cannot choose not to, our will can consent or not. Here, the will consents, and so it is as if the skeleton were also worn externally, apparent and obvious.

The central image, clean as bone in the spare lines of the verse, is complicated in the first stanza by the grammatical tension in the line “bearing us on”, which holds together the action of our inheritance on us (it skeletons our flesh) and our action (we wear it, though it bares us.) Through rhyme, the word “aware” in the second stanza carries our wearing of our skeleton which bares us forward to despair; and through a kind of hovering sentence structure which has an effect like that of a hovering accent, despair is given both as the nature and as the result of our act. In the last stanza, the word “overture” carries the sense both of the involuntary and the voluntary; both our beginning and our act of disclosure are seen in the worn skeleton. This overture, made “where prayers of defeat are sown”, is, in the final image, an inheritance which is bright, though “bright with death / spangled with bone”.

In a recent poem, “A Pardon to My Bones”, the central image is no less complex, but the statement and structure of the poem are broader, easier. In the singular human experience of this poem, one’s own skeleton—always in some

way separate from one's self—though it seem sometimes master, sometimes partner, sometimes enemy, can be accepted. A kind of peace or truce can be made with it.

With the prescribed number of bones  
I have walked to this year,  
but have despised dear bones' intent  
to grow, to motivate, to be bent.

Some cracked, yet show now lovely through the tent  
of flesh. Although ignored, misused, can now relent  
in this casual thirty-third year  
because they walked me here.

Because they walked me here  
there has been gross expense  
of life's uneconomic science,  
of love's long argument with common sense,  
a relay race from past to present tense.  
The Horn of Plenty muted coming near.  
And so my bones have walked me here.

Because they walked me here,  
sleep-walking sight-seer,  
urban dirt, personal graffitti,  
the indecent exposure of my city,  
plucked from definite sex a baleful ditty,  
moved to a pagan shout, did not come clear  
because dumb bones have walked me here.

For they have walked me here.  
Or we have danced or pitched in pain.  
That all these bones are jointed by their hooks  
I am dumbfounded as by a great book  
whose leaves lie open, for illustration took  
the cheating history we revere.  
Bones of the appointed animal twitch the ear,  
and I must be appalled, merciful, must care  
that my human bones have walked me here.

The inherited and shaping structure, the number of whose bones is prescribed, is imposed on the person of this poem. She has walked with them, but feels more insistently walked by them, as if she were victim to them. Because they have

relentlessly walked her to this place, they have involved her in an expense that seems wasteful, in a race from past to present to past to present that seems interminable and exhausting.

But these bones are not simply inherited, shaping. They themselves grow and are bent. They may even crack and yet be finally lovely. Dumb, persistent, they are also so tenaciously jointed as to make a whole, a single structure, so intricately jointed as to be capable of quick animal responsiveness.

Though the person of the poem has ignored, misused, despised this inherited structure of her living, struggled or argued or shouted out against it, she has now arrived at a view both comprehensive and detailed before which she acknowledges, wryly but honestly and warmly, her own requirement: she must be appalled; she must also be merciful, must be concerned.

The struggle recalled in this poem with wry humor is a struggle maintained by a refusal to stop short, by a will to pay whatever must be paid that the full truth of living be known. "The cheating history we revere" is not enough. But the search is bewildering, the searcher uncertain because the facts seem to speak contraries.

"Double Entendre" is centred on these contraries, and on the question, rising from them, whether "the right / the light" is in the facts of the impersonal, inimical universe or in those facts seen, reflected in man's eye. The first sequence of images reveals a connection between structures of the impersonal world and man-made structures.

The seed white  
                                   beneath the flesh  
   red and diamonded  
   under the skin  
   rough, round,

of the round pomegranate

                                  hopes in essential shape  
   for a constellation of fruit

Just as the pregnant woman  
                                   in the street  
   carrying her three-year-old son

is one and entire  
                                   the tribe of woman  
   weighed down by the race of man —  
   always to be renewed,

For the man killed  
                                   by the Temple clock when it fell  
   told me time had not stopped —  
   Oh, only for him,

  though I saw

in this unflattering  
   accidental  
   irony  
   that he had indeed come

to a timely end  
   within the courtyards of the English  
   Courts of Law.

The tough skin of the pomegranate is not, like the skin of an apple, a covering for flesh so much as it is a bag for many seeds, many cells of seed and thin red flesh. Seed upon seed within the flesh within the skin, this is the shape, tasting slightly acid, of hope—for more fruit, more seed.

The woman who carries both her unborn and her born, male child carries seed upon seed, but in this second image the natural impulse toward eternity, fertility, hope of which the pomegranate is a symbol is reinforced by the woman's caring for her three-year-old son. It is by acts not only of body but also of human imagination, or emotion, or will, that she bears the hope "always to be renewed".

This hope, moving in human history, is shaped into concepts and images of Time, concepts and images of Justice so important and real to man that, for example, his own "timely end" does not end time. Destroyed by his own images of time, man may acknowledge the end of time for himself and yet speak its continuance.

These images are seen as "exaggerations of the nature of the Thing", and they are compared to such reiterations in works of art as Octavian's successive masquerades in *Der Rosenkavalier*, or as "the portrait of the artist / holding a mirror." The comparisons elucidate the meaning of the first sequence of images as

## STRUCTURE OF LOSS

exaggerations of the nature of the thing. When the painter uses a conscious contrivance which clearly distinguishes between the man and the painting, he emphasizes the paintingness of the painting, shows a portrait not as a facsimile but as itself, a new creation. And these comparisons with works of art also carry us one step further than the first triad of images did into a contemplation of man as making, as compelled to make, even out of his bone and flesh, "a structure for his loss". The image of bone and flesh, and the next, "seeds of meaning", recall the first and simplest image. For the pomegranate's "hope" obviously requires its own destruction; it is the shape of fertility and eternity only as it loses, must lose, its singular form. So the woman "weighed down by the race of man"; so the man "indeed come / to a timely end". A circling through the whole chain of images tightens again to the structure of hope as a structure for loss, to the copious seed as "pitiful", taken "from the dross".

The double meaning that lies at the heart of many of Phyllis Webb's poems leads to this circling journey which man the maker, the seeker, the observer must take.

For in his strange  
                                  peripheral orbit  
                                  of reality and dream

he wanders, wonders,  
                                  through the play within the play  
                                  knowing not  
                                  which is the right  
                                  the light

the star in the cold, staring sky,  
                                  or the star reflected in a human eye.



# PREFACE TO A NOVEL

*Malcolm Lowry*

This preface to the French Edition of *Under the Volcano*, which casts considerable light on Malcolm Lowry's view of his own novel, was prepared while Malcolm Lowry was working with Clarisse Françillon on her translation of his novel; the final version was actually prepared in French from Lowry's English notes, so that no English original exists. The following translation has been made by George Woodcock. The edition of *Under the Volcano* in which the preface appeared was published by Corrêa and the Club Français du Livre in 1949 and reprinted by Corrêa in 1960.

**I** LIKE PREFACES. I read them. Sometimes I do not read any farther, and it is possible that you may do the same. In that case, this preface will have failed in its purpose, which is to make your access to my book a little more easy. Above all, reader, do not regard these pages as an affront to your intelligence. They prove rather that the author here and there questions his own.

To begin with, his very style may assume an embarrassing resemblance to that of the German writer Schopenhauer describes, who wished to express six things at the same time instead of discussing them one after the other. "In those long, rich parenthetical periods, like boxes enclosing boxes, and crammed more full than roast geese stuffed with apples, one's memory above all is put to the task, when understanding and judgment should have been called upon to do their work."

But to take a criticism of style—as Schopenhauer conceived it—as a criticism of the mind and character of the author or even, as others would like, of the man himself, is beside the point. That at least is what I wrote in 1946, on board a

bauxite ship in the middle of the waves between New Orleans and Port-au-Prince. That preface was never published. As for this one, the first reason for my drafting it was the fact that in 1945 my book received a very lukewarm welcome from an English firm (which has since done me the honour of publishing it). Although the publishers considered the work "important and honest", they suggested wide corrections which I was reluctant to make. (You would have reacted in the same way had you written a book and been so tormented by it that you rejected and rewrote it many times.) Among other things, I was advised to suppress two or three characters, to reduce the twelve chapters to six, to change the subject, which was too similar to that of *Poison*; in short, to throw my book out of the window and write another. Since I now have the honour of being translated into French, I take up once again my letter of reply to my publisher and friend in London. The enterprise was doubtless a foolish one: to give all kinds of good esoteric reasons why the work should stay just as it was in the beginning.

Those reasons I have now almost completely forgotten, and perhaps that is lucky for you. It is in fact all too true, as Sherwood Anderson has remarked, that in all concerning his work a writer assumes the most extraordinary pretensions and is ready to justify anything. It is also likely that one of the few honest remarks an author has ever made was that of Julien Green on the subject, I believe, of his masterly *Minuit*: "My intention was—and has ever since remained to me—obscure."

In writing this book, which was started when I was twenty-six (I am now about to salute my fortieth year) and finished five years ago, my intention did not at first seem to me obscure, although it became more so as the years went on. But, whether obscure or not, it still remains a fact that one of my intentions was to write a book.

And, indeed, my intention was not to write a tedious book. I do not believe a single author, even the most irascible of them all, has ever had the deliberate intention of wearying his reader, though it has been said that boredom can be used as a technique. But once this book did in fact appear boring to a reader—and a professional reader at that—I thought it necessary to reply to the observations of that professional reader, and here is the gist of what I wrote. All this may perhaps appear to you terribly vain and pompous, but how can you explain to someone who claims to have been bored by your prose that he was in the wrong for letting himself be bored?

"Dear Sir," I wrote then, "Thank you for your letter of the 29th November 1945. I received it only on New Year's Eve. Moreover, it reached me here in

Mexico where, entirely by chance, I am living in the tower which served as a model for the house of one of my characters. Ten years ago I had only seen that tower from the outside, and—in chapter VI—it became the place where my hero too experienced some slight vexations as a result of delayed mail . . .”

Then I went on to say that if my work had already assumed the classic form of the printed page instead of the sad and desolate aspect which characterises an unpublished manuscript, the opinion of the reader would certainly have been entirely different because of the various critical judgments that would have assailed his ears. Since the tiresomeness or otherwise of the beginning of *Under the Volcano* appeared to me dependent on the reader's state of mind, on his readiness to seize the author's intention, I suggested—doubtless in desperation of my cause—that a brief preface might neutralise the reactions which my professional reader foresaw. I continued thus: “If you tell me that a good wine needs no label, I may perhaps reply that I am not talking about wine but about mescal, and that even more than a label—once one had crossed the threshold of the tavern—mescal calls for the accompaniment of both salt and lemon. I hope at least that such a preface may bring a little lemon and salt.”

In this way I wrote a letter of round about 20,000 words, which took me the time I might just as well have employed on starting the first draft of a new novel, even more boring than the other. And since, in the eyes of my reader, the first chapter seemed to be the novel's greatest crime, I limited myself to an analysis of that long first chapter which establishes the themes and counter-themes of the book, which sets the tone, which harmonises the symbolism.

The narrative, I explained, begins on All Souls' Day, in November, 1939, in a hotel called Casino de la Selva—selva meaning *wood*. And perhaps it would not be out of place to mention here that the book was first of all conceived rather pretentiously on the sempiternal model of Gogol's *Dead Souls*, and as the first leaf in the triptych of a kind of drunken *Divine Comedy*. *Purgatory* and *Paradise* were to follow, with the protagonist, like Chichikov, becoming at each stage slightly better or worse, according to one's point of view. (However, if one is to believe a recent authority, the incredible Vladimir Nabokov, the progression postulated by Gogol was rather: Crime, Punishment, Redemption; Gogol threw almost all of Punishment and Redemption into the fire.) The theme of the dark wood, introduced once again in Chapter VII when the Consul enters a lugubrious cantina called El Bosque, which also means *wood*, is resolved in Chapter IX, which relates the death of the heroine and in which the wood becomes reality and also fatality.

This first chapter is shown through the eyes of a French film producer, Jacques Laruelle. He establishes a kind of survey of the terrain, just as he expresses the slow, melancholy and tragic rhythm of Mexico itself: Mexico, the meeting place of many races, the ancient battleground of social and political conflicts where, as Waldo Frank, I believe, has shown, a colourful and talented people maintained a religion which was virtually a cult of death. It is the ideal setting for the struggle of a human being against the powers of darkness and light.

After leaving the Casino de la Selva, Jacques Laruelle finds himself looking into the barranca which plays a great part in the story, and which is also the ravine, that cursed abyss which in our age every man presents to himself, and also, more simply, if the reader prefers it, the sewer.

The chapter ends in another cantina where people are talking refuge during an unseasonal storm, while elsewhere, all over the world, people are crawling into the air-raid shelters; then the lights go out, just as, all over the world as well, they are going out. Outside, in that night created by the tempest, the luminous wheel is turning.

That wheel is the Ferris wheel erected in the middle of the square, but it is also, if you like, many other things: the wheel of the law, the wheel of Buddha. It is even eternity, the symbol of the Everlasting Return. That wheel, which demonstrates the very form of the book, can also be considered in a cinematographic manner as the wheel of Time, which is about to turn in an inverse direction, until we reach the preceding year. For the beginning of the second chapter brings us to All Souls' Day a year before, in November, 1938.

AT THIS POINT I tried modestly to insinuate that my little book seemed to me denser and deeper, composed and carried out with more care than the English publisher supposed; that if its meanings had escaped the reader, or if the latter had deemed uninteresting the meanings that float on the surface of the narrative, this might have been due at least in part to a merit rather than a failing of mine. In fact, had not the more accessible aspect of the book been designed so carefully that the reader did not wish to take the trouble of pausing to go below the surface? "If that is true," I added, not without a certain vanity, "for how many books can it be said?"

In a more sentimental tone, but with only an appearance of greater modesty,

I then wrote as follows: "Since I am asking for a re-reading of the *Volcano*, in the light of certain aspects which may not have occurred to you, and since I do not wish to undertake a defence of every paragraph, it may be as well for me to admit that in my view the principal failing of the book, from which all the others flow, lies in something which cannot be remedied: the mental baggage of the book is subjective rather than objective; it would better suit a poet—I do not say a good poet—than a novelist, and it is a baggage very difficult to carry as far as its destination. On the other hand, just as a tailor who knows his customer's deformity tries to hide it, I have tried as far as possible to hide the faults of my understanding. But since the conception of the work was primarily poetic, these deformities may hardly matter after all. Besides, poems often call for several readings before their meaning is revealed—is exposed in the mind as I believe Hopkins said—and it is precisely that notion which you have overlooked."

I demanded the most serious examination of the text, and I asked how, without appreciating its contents, the reader had reached his view that the book was too long, particularly since his reaction might well be different after a second reading. Did not readers, just as much as authors, take a risk of falling over themselves by going too fast? And what a boring book it must be if so hasty a reading were all that could be granted!

I went on to explain that my novel consists of twelve chapters, and the main part of the narrative is contained within a single day of twelve hours. In the same way, there are twelve months in a year and the whole book is enclosed within the limits of a year, while that deeper layer of the novel—or the poem—which derives from myth is linked at this point with the Jewish Cabbala, where the number twelve is of the greatest importance. The Cabbala is used for poetic ends because it represents Man's spiritual aspirations. The Tree of Life, its emblem, is a kind of complicated ladder whose summit is called Kether, or Light, while somewhere in its midst an abyss opens out. The spiritual domain of the Consul is probably Qliphoth, the world of husks and demons, represented by the Tree of Life turned upside down and governed by Beelzebub, the God of Flies. All this was not essential for the understanding of the book; I mentioned it in passing so as to give the feeling, as Henry James has said, "that depths exist".

In the Jewish Cabbala the abuse of magic powers is compared to drunkenness or the abuse of wine, and is expressed, if I remember rightly, by the Hebrew word *sod*. Another attribution of the word *sod* signifies garden, or neglected garden, and the Caballa itself is sometimes considered as a garden (naturally similar to that where grew the tree of forbidden fruit which gave us the Knowledge of Good

and Evil), with the Tree of Life planted in the middle. In one way or another these matters are at the base of many of our legends regarding the origins of man, and William James, if not Freud, might be in agreement with me when I affirm that the agonies of the drunkard find a very close parallel in the agonies of the mystic who has abused his powers. Here the Consul has brought everything together in a magnificently drunken fashion. In Mexico, mescal is a formidable drink but a drink which one can get in any cantina much more easily, if I may say so, than Scotch whisky in the Impasse des Deux-Anges. (Let me say in passing that I see I have done wrong to mescal and tequila, which are drinks I like very much, and for that I should perhaps present my apologies to the Mexican government.) But mescal is also a drug which is taken in the form of mescalín, and the transcendence of its effects is one of the best-known experiments among occultists. It seems as though the Consul has confused the two states, and perhaps after all he is not in the wrong.

This novel, to use a phrase of Edmund Wilson, has for its subject the forces that dwell within man and lead him to look upon himself with terror. Its subject is also the fall of man, his remorse, his incessant struggle towards the light under the weight of the past, which is his destiny. The allegory is that of the Garden of Eden, the garden representing this world from which we are now even a little more under the threat of ejection than at the moment when I wrote this book. On one level, the drunkenness of the Consul may be regarded as symbolising the universal drunkenness of war, of the period that precedes war, no matter when. Throughout the twelve chapters, the destiny of my hero can be considered in its relationship to the destiny of humanity.

"I hold to the number twelve," I then added. "It is as if I heard a clock sounding midnight for Faust, and when I think of the slow progression of the chapters, I feel that neither more nor less than twelve should satisfy me. For the rest, the book is stratified in numerous planes. My effort has been to clarify as far as possible whatever at first presented itself to me in a complicated and esoteric manner. The novel can be read simply as a story during which you may—if you wish—skip whole passages, but from which you will get far more if you skip nothing at all. It can be regarded as a kind of symphony or opera, or even as something like a cowboy film. I wanted to make of it a jam session, a poem, a song, a tragedy, a comedy, a farce. It is superficial, profound, entertaining, boring, according to one's taste. It is a prophecy, a political warning, a cryptogram, a crazy film, an absurdity, a writing on the wall. It can be thought of as a kind of machine; it works, you may be sure, for I have discovered that to my own expense.

And in case you should think that I have made of it everything except a novel, I shall answer that in the last resort it is a real novel that I have intended to write, and even a damnably serious novel.”

In short, I made terrific efforts to explain my own idea of this unfortunate volume; I waged a notable battle for the work as it stood, as it was finally printed, and as it today appears for my French readers. And remember, I wrote all that in Mexico, in the very place where ten years before I had started my book, and in the end I received, from the hands of the same tiny postman who brought the Consul his delayed postcard, the news that it had been accepted.

After this long preamble, my dear French reader, it would perhaps be honest of me to admit to you that the idea I cherished in my heart was to create a pioneer work in its own class, and to write at last an authentic drunkard's story. I do not know whether I have succeeded. And now, friend, I beg you continue your walk along the Seine, and please replace this book where you found it, in the second-hand bookseller's 100-franc box.

MALCOLM LOWRY,  
*September, 1948.*



1. *Robert Fulford*

“Culture is a many-faceted jewel, each facet of which must be measured by a different instrument . . . It is important to all of us to know the relative status of Canada’s cultural development . . . to keep on knowing it . . . and to make every effort to ensure that it keeps on expanding, so that Canada can continue to grow as a strong, virile nation.”—Program, Canadian Conference of the Arts.

“This is a conference for the suppression of the arts.”—Member, Agenda and Conference Committee, Canadian Conference of the Arts.

**T**WO NIGHTS AFTER the Canadian Conference of the Arts concluded on May 6, a group of Toronto painters, sculptors, musicians and writers held, in the beerhall basement of a midtown restaurant, a “Canadian Conference on the Canadian Conference of the Arts”. Signs on the wall said “Peace through love” and “Peace through art”. A badly played saxophone made gestures toward modern jazz, and a loudspeaker blared. There was a reading of some Chinese poetry, and there were “statements”, mostly incoherent, from several of the painters present. When each one finished, a young lady said over the loudspeaker: “Thank you for your contribution. That was very con-tro-ver-si-al, and, after all, controversy is what we are here for. We all like controversy.”

But it was no good. Everyone drank a great deal of beer, everyone eventually danced and had a good time, but no one really believed that an effective parody of the Canadian Conference of the Arts had been achieved. The conference, it turned out, was so mindless, so lacking in purpose or point of view, that it was effectively parody-proof.

The Canadian Conference of the Arts (formerly the Canadian Council of the



# A CULTURAL FLIRTATION

*Two Views of the  
Conference of the Arts*

Arts) is the name of an organization made up of organizations. The thirty-seven members range in importance from the National Ballet Guild of Canada through the Association of Canadian Industrial Designers down to the Brantford, Ont., Arts Council. The conference which took place—perhaps *occurred* describes the occasion better—at the O’Keefe Centre in May was apparently the result of the national organization’s desire to do something with itself. It was decided to call a conference which would be of a generally artistic nature, which would be open to the public, and which would bring together both Canadian and foreign artists in most fields of creative activity.

The purpose of this was not decided in advance, and is not yet evident. The front page of the program carried a lamentable slogan, “To measure Canada’s cultural maturity”. But even the director, Alan Jarvis, disowned this idea as an adman’s slogan, a week before the conference began. As it finally fell together, the week-end was a mixture of art exhibit, concert, poetry reading, panel discussions, and speeches. The art exhibit brought together paintings and sculpture by artists who had received Canada Council grants, and it turned out to be no advertisement for the Council. There was a good deal of valuable art, but there was much that was bad and many of the individual pieces seemed no more than

eccentric. The concert, given by the C.B.C. symphony, was made up entirely of work by contemporary Canadian composers, like Barbara Pentland, Harry Somers, and John Weinzweig. It drew an encouragingly large audience.

But the speeches and the panel discussions presented more serious problems. As the conference drew near, those responsible for it began to exhibit signs of uneasiness. No one had any idea what it was all about. Sir Julian Huxley was coming from Britain, Isamu Noguchi was coming from the United States, and planeloads of painters and poets were on their way from Quebec. Yet by the middle of the last week before the conference, those responsible for panel discussions were coming agonizingly to the conclusion that they were in danger of acting out in public the classic dream in which a dreamer becomes a concert pianist, sits down at the piano before a huge audience, and then realizes that he cannot play. They were calling each other on the telephone, begging for instructions and receiving instead confessions of equal ignorance. On the day the conference opened, George Lamming of the West Indies could be found in the bar, asking what he was expected to do. He had, after all, come a long way.

This private concern became a public embarrassment when the panel discussions began. On the Friday afternoon, Lamming opened the literary panel by remarking: "One thing the panelists have in common is an utter uncertainty about why they are here and what they are going to say." This was followed by a statement from Mordecai Richler: "I don't know what to say to you. I don't see why you're having this conference—I don't understand what it's about." In other panels held simultaneously—on music, on art, on theatre, on town planning—there was more earnest discussion. Yet a distinguished foreign artist was heard saying, as he left the room at the end of the art panel: "Take me out of here. I can't stand any more of it." He was rushed off to his hotel.

Most of the arguments I heard had the intellectual content of casual, coffee-house chatter; yet they lacked the saving grace of informality, since most of the panelists seemed to feel that the occasion called for the most extensive possible use of formalized language and even outright cliché. Suburbia was condemned, and so was the poor market for serious books and the public's lack of interest in town planning. Sir Julian Huxley rose from the audience at one panel discussion to say that there was a great need for a publicity campaign which would make the public aware of the need for a better physical environment. Only a few hard-shelled artists let it slip that they didn't much care what the public thought.

In general, the artists involved in the conference found it pointless and even a little degrading. (Richler remarked afterwards that the most serious controversy

of the week-end concerned whether the participants should have to pay for their own drinks.) But for the artistic middlemen—patrons, collectors, critics, directors, producers, town planners—it had some small value. They were allowed to exchange ideas, and to obtain from each other a sympathetic hearing for their complaints about the public. Occasionally they even managed to inspire one another. At one point, in a panel discussion on the applied arts, the British architect Jane Drew sketched eloquently and memorably her own hopes for the future of cities. Her ideas were naïve almost beyond belief, but their very hopelessness gave them a special charm. This, like most of the conference, was entirely spontaneous. Only a few speakers arrived with prepared papers, and of these only one was genuinely thoughtful: Northrop Frye's talk on academicism in the arts, in which he suggested that a scholarly and historical approach was one of the distinguishing marks of the modern artist. Later, during a poetry reading, Irving Layton paused long enough to condemn Frye's speech and insist that academicism was death for the artist.

Masochistically, the audience of tastemakers reserved its most enthusiastic applause for a witty attack on themselves. Russell Lynes, the managing editor of *Harper's*, began by making his target obvious: "this distinguished group that I think I can safely call tastemakers." Then he said that what Jacques Brazun had called America's love affair with culture was more a flirtation than a serious affair. Audiences, he felt, were ogling the arts without really coming to grips with them, and tastemakers were setting artificial barriers between artist and audience. "I sometimes wonder if the artist of our time isn't being understood to death—over-interpreted, over-criticized, over-explained and overwhelmed with self-consciousness."

The readiness with which the audience accepted this criticism, and the eagerness with which Lynes' point of view was discussed later, suggested to me that the people who attended the conference were already deeply conscious of their own shortcomings. "You have revealed us to ourselves," the chairman told Lynes happily at the end of the talk, but it would have been more correct to say that he articulated certain fears which had already half-formed themselves in the minds of his listeners. They seemed pitifully anxious to stand condemned of flirting with culture, of taking art frivolously, and finally of helping to destroy that which they affected to love. But it would be unfortunate if the judgment were not appealed, for the role of the tastemaker is surely not without honor of some kind. We can examine several fields in which no tastemakers operate effectively—current television, say, or Detroit automobile design, or low-cost residential housing—

without finding any support for the idea that creators and public can get along better by themselves. Lynes may be bored—certainly most of the artists at the conference were bored—with the professional art appreciators, the designers' guilds, the culture-pushing women's committees; but in a culturally insecure society these forces have at least temporary value.

On a more serious level, many of the participants were obviously conscious of a failure which they could neither understand nor excuse. The theme of the conference emerged as their dissatisfaction with their own efforts to develop a humane community. A sense of guilt turned up, again and again, in talks by town planners, architects, designers, theatre people. Robert Whitehead reported on the melancholy condition of the Broadway theatre, and William Kilbourn gave an angry talk on community planning. In both cases, and in others, the public was given some of the blame; but in no case could the speaker avoid his own failure to make his own ideas applicable and effective. They all seemed to know that much of their talk was meaningless except to themselves; the public was still out there, unguided and essentially hostile, and no amount of panel discussing was likely to change it.

2. *Robert Weaver*

**T**HE CANADIAN CONFERENCE of the Arts took place at the O'Keefe Centre in Toronto at the end of the first week in May. Two or three days later one of the organizers told a friend of mine: "The Conference was a great success. Every meal was over-subscribed!"

That may even have been as safe a way as any to judge what was (in large part deliberately) a circus of the arts. For on another level participants in the Conference have been arguing about its success or failure ever since it ended. Alan Jarvis, who was the Conference's National Director, informed readers of his syndicated newspaper column "The Things We See" that it was indeed a success. Mordecai Richler, who was on the literary panel, wrote in *The Star Weekly* that the Conference was a flop.

The Conference was designed to promote unity, but a good deal of the time it succeeded in emphasizing division. In the afternoon panel sessions the various arts were carefully segregated—though whether the miscegenation that Mordecai Richler advocated would have been a good idea is at least open to argument.

There was division between the writers and artists on the one hand and their audience on the other. There was even division between some of the organizers and the artists they had invited to attend; at the afternoon cocktail hour most of the writers, painters, and musicians were out front with the public buying their own drinks while segregated private parties were going on backstage. Most of the comments about the Conference that I heard came from novelists or poets, but I spoke afterwards to one or two musicians and theatre people as well. From their point of view, Mordecai Richler had it taped: the Conference of the Arts was a flop.

This was the second arts conference with which I've been actively concerned, and its atmosphere was strikingly different from that of the first, the Kingston Writers' Conference in the summer of 1955. F. R. Scott got the idea for that gathering. He came to Toronto for an informal planning session with a few literary people; there was an informal meeting later in Kingston. Queen's University provided an umbrella for the conference; the Rockefeller Foundation donated a few thousand dollars.

From such casual beginnings the Kingston conference grew into a three day meeting that surprised almost everyone with its cheerful, useful and unpretentious feeling. It had, of course, certain advantages that were lacking in Toronto this year. It was limited to writers and editors, and they speak more or less the same language. (But even at Kingston the poets tried to scorn the magazine and C.B.C. writers, and condescended to the novelists.) Kingston is a small city, and no one had much trouble meeting the people he wanted to meet. There were plenty of parties, and they were easy to find. There was enough privacy for writers to talk seriously, and without too much posing, to one another.

(I've always thought that the success of the Kingston conference was demonstrated in a rather ironical way; as soon as it was over, the delegates from the West Coast hurried back to set up their own regional conference. Despite the C.P.R., C.N.R., T.C.A. and C.B.C., British Columbia still resists Confederation.)

There was little that was casual or informal about the Canadian Conference of the Arts. It was preceded by eighteen months' planning complete with formal meetings, minutes, parliamentary procedure, committees and sub-committees, and a permanent secretariat. Its budget was in the neighborhood of \$75,000.00. The money came from the Canada Council, from the Province of Ontario and Metropolitan Toronto, from the Atkinson and Koerner Foundations, and from more than thirty companies and individuals.

The formality of the Conference was made inescapable by the decision to hold

it in the O'Keefe Centre. This Theatre, which looms like an expensive matron over downtown Toronto, has a peculiar place in the city. Many theatre people despise it as nothing more than a home-away-from-home for wandering Broadway musicals, yet in one year it has made Toronto the second theatre centre in North America. The theatre itself is large, handsome and not too fussy, but its surroundings are pretentious. The Centre provided the Conference of the Arts with the space it needed, but it made it hopelessly difficult to find people and almost impossible to communicate naturally and spontaneously.

The Conference of the Arts really had its beginnings in 1945 when the Canadian Arts Council was formed. This organization set out to gather information about the arts and to lobby for various cultural programs. It supported the Massey Commission and promoted the Canada Council. It sponsored a lavish survey *The Arts in Canada*, which was edited by Malcolm Ross and published by the Macmillan Company. But when one of the battles it fought had been won and the Canada Council had been established, the Canadian Arts Council was faced with a double irony: it had to change its name, and it had to find new reasons for its existence.

So the Canadian Conference of the Arts was born, and the cultural circus at the O'Keefe Centre was held partly to discover whether a national, semi-annual conference might provide in itself a useful function. At the same time the annual business meetings were held of the nearly forty organizations from French and English Canada that are member societies of the Conference of the Arts. These groups range from Actors' Equity to the Canadian Society of Creative Leathercraft, and from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada to the Brantford Arts Council.

The public sessions in the afternoons and evenings ranged over a wide territory. At the poetry reading on the first night five poets read—Earle Birney, Leonard Cohen, Gilles Henault, Jay Macpherson, and Irving Layton—and they were all, I think (even Mr. Layton), as astonished and terrified as I was to find several hundred people waiting for the reading. I've heard most of the poets read better on other occasions, but I've rarely seen a more attentive audience. There was a lesson in the poetry reading: it was one of those rare occasions during the Conference when the artist spoke to his public solely as an artist.

But if the poetry reading seemed to be a success, the literary panel, which I had organized, was a disaster. I think everyone on the two panels would agree with that judgment; the writers were sour, gloomy and dispirited. On the first afternoon I wandered away for half an hour to see what the other panels were doing. There

was a deathly hush where the musicians had gathered, and a friend told me afterwards that the hush was almost unbroken for two long afternoons. The painters were fighting: a bearded, aggressive, humourless Toronto artist in the audience baiting Alan Jarvis (in the chair) and Harold Town (on the panel). Mr. Jarvis finally offered the beard the use of the microphone, the audience booed its negative vote, the painter left in a huff (wife in wake). I left for the theatre, where the dramatic arts were huddled in discussion on the enormous stage. This panel looked lonely and puny in the empty cavern of the theatre, but its talk sounded professional if not greatly exciting.

No conference can be quite as complete a failure as Arnold Edinborough said this one was: at the very least people meet and talk together. But when you consider the energy and the money that went into the Conference of the Arts, the meetings in Toronto seem an awful bust. There were plans that didn't work out. At one stage the keynote speaker was expected to be André Malraux, but that entangled the Conference in surprisingly high-level diplomacy, and they finally got for the keynote speech (possibly for their sins) Sir Julian Huxley.

Everything I have written here is hindsight, of course, and so have been the other public criticisms made since the Conference ended. No one spoke up loud and clear in the planning sessions, partly because long before May the Conference had somehow achieved an impetus of its own that, I suspect, left even its most fervent organizers somewhat dazed and helpless. And on the other hand scarcely any writers or painters or musicians or theatre directors refused to attend: the Conference was painful evidence that there are no real intellectual and ideological differences in the arts in this country, and that the arts would be healthier if there were. (Sad to watch Mordecai Richler and Hugh MacLennan unable to manage any real disagreement.) The Conference took on that fatal air of patronage and condescension that must hang over Park Avenue committees in aid of Negro sharecroppers. It had no real aim except to try to discover an aim for itself.

It is sad to think now how many other functions the Conference of the Arts might have found for itself. It might have raised \$75,000.00 to sponsor some of the writers and artists the Canada Council has to turn down each year; or to help establish experimental theatres; or to subsidize *The Canadian Forum* for a decade; or to help begin a monthly magazine of all the arts. In the future there is one function it might well undertake: it might campaign annually to raise the additional money the Canada Council needs to do its job adequately. In any case, no more Conferences of the Arts. For what the Conference at the O'Keefe Centre demonstrated is that good will is not enough.

# A MARITIME MYTH

*Donald Stephens*

**I**T IS AMAZING, though not surprising, what Bliss Carman means to a majority of Canadians. They think back to school days, hesitate, and mention “Low Tide on Grand Pré”, falter over whether or not he wrote “Tantramar Revisited”, muse over “Vestigia” (‘I took a day to search for God’), and lapse into memories of other school days in other times. For the people in the Maritimes, things are different, but not much. Thanks to the New Brunswick Tourist Bureau, Fredericton is called the Poet’s Corner of Canada, with the elms—some decayed—magically reminiscent of the vaulted ceilings of the other Poet’s Corner in Westminster Abbey. At the University of New Brunswick there is a plaque dedicated to Carman, Roberts, and Sherman, and a bronze bust of Carman in the foyer of its library whose much needed haircut receives jibes from students, and professors, alike. Once a tree was planted at Carman’s grave (“Let me have a scarlet maple for the grave-tree at my head”) but that was twenty-five years after his death, and was brought to the attention of the university by an American tourist, and the university succumbed in an anniversary mood. People mumble about Carman, and are proud. His poems are not fondly remembered; rather, there is an apathy, a superficial awareness that a poet once roamed the New Brunswick fields, wrote a few poems, was a nice boy, but died.

And perhaps this attitude is right after all. For was Carman a poet to be proud of? There is pride here, but is it not superficial? There is the bronze bust, the rusted plaque, the grave-tree; but is there anything more? Should there be? Is it worth mentioning if there is? Is this shallow reverence in the Maritimes an acknowledgement of a kind of gift which flourished with the maritime air, and was stilled? Is there greatness here?

Carman wrote some fine regional poetry, and his knowledge of the maritime



scene is authentic and clear. But does regionalism make a good poet? Because a poet is remarkably Canadian, and captures the Canadian mood, does this make him great? Surely a poem which would be understood and appreciated everywhere is called great. Where is Grand Pré? The autumn colours may be scarlet and golden, the hills may be ablaze with colour, but does that picture appear real to a resident of Hawaii, or to one who lives on the Canadian prairies, for that matter? Regionalism does not make a poet great, though to listen to some Maritime scholars, one would certainly think so. What about the poetry, then?

The most remarkable thing about Carman's poetry—if not remarkable, at least it is the most noticeable—is that it is so highly imitative. Desmond Pacey says:

The fact is that Carman is one of the most 'derivative' poets who ever lived. This is as true of his best poems . . . as of the inferior works.

Even the kindly James Cappon says the same thing:

Everything in Carman's training and temperament tended to attach him to the older tradition in literature . . . even his style and methods of composition when they have the most individuality show respect of the standards of older literature.

Any reader can agree with these men. There abounds in Carman's poetry a great deal of conscious, and at times, unconscious, borrowing from the poets whom he admired. And he admired a great many. At times this was done skilfully; at other times the blatant borrowing is stultifying to the reader.

The most obvious pattern in Carman's poetry is one that is essentially Romantic in character and tone. From the publication of *Low Tide on Grand Pré* (1893), through the *Songs of the Sea Children* (1904) and *April Airs* (1916), and in the *Later Poems* (1921), there is the always present Romantic tone. Carman, like his Canadian contemporaries, was much attracted to the beauty and magic of the songs of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. He sang of Nature as Wordsworth did, with the same attitude of child-like fascination. From the Lyrical Ballads he learned that simple diction was the best method to describe Nature. It was easy to imitate Wordsworth; there was the similar environment. Carman was a young man with wild nature all about him, and one whose memories were deeply rooted in New Brunswick's wind-swept marshes and rocky coast-lines when the nature poetry of Wordsworth with its lyrical magic took possession of his verse.

Carman's haunting lyricism is best when he writes about Nature:

And there when lengthening twilights fall  
As softly as a wild bird's wing,  
Across the valley in the dusk  
I hear the silver flute of spring.

(“The Flute of Spring”)

Like Wordsworth, Carman revelled in the physical beauty of external Nature; he worshipped the vivid loveliness of a budding tree, a blooming flower, and the restless inimitable sea. He attempted, as Wordsworth did, to liken man to Nature and its phenomena:

Was it a year or lives ago  
We took the grasses in our hands,  
And caught the summer flying low  
Over the waving meadow lands,  
And held it there between our hands?

The while the river at our feet—  
A drowsy inland meadow stream—  
At set of sun the after-heat  
Made running gold, and in the gleam  
We freed our birch upon the stream.

(“Low Tide on Grand Pré”)

Here is Wordsworth's contemplation and music, mingled with his plaintive wistfulness. Carman adopted the Wordsworthian philosophy that Nature was good. Both poets believed in the essential goodness of man and Nature; and Carman saw God in Nature:

I took a day to search for God  
And found him not. But as I trod  
By rocky ledge, through woods untamed  
Just where one scarlet lily flamed  
I saw His footprint in the sod.

(“Vestigia”)

But Carman cannot be called, like Sangster, a true Wordsworthian Canadian poet, for he was too conscious of symbols in his Nature poetry. He saw himself as a part of Nature and considered that he, too, was growing like a plant:

Between the roadside and the wood,  
Between the dawning and the dew,  
A tiny flower before the sun,

Ephemeral in time, I grew.  
 ("Windflower")

Wordsworth used the flower as a symbol of Nature, but his Nature poetry was a summation of philosophy rather than true symbolism. Carman used Nature, its growth and decay, as an inherent symbol, and he related his myth of man to Nature and the seasons.

As did Coleridge and Shelley, Carman expressed his ideas in terms of physical sensations. He modelled his first ballads after Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner"; the suggestive and pictorial metaphors are not always concrete and are often illuminated mystically as are Coleridge's. Many of his poems, and especially "The White Gull", suggest Shelley; there is the use of similes in great profusion and the restless spirit of Shelley:

The gray sea-horses troop and roam;  
 The shadows fly  
 Along the wind-floor at their heels;  
 And where the golden daylight wheels,  
 A white gull searches the blue dome  
 With keening cry.

But where Carman occasionally uses the fervid tones of Shelley, he sings most frequently in the autumn calms of Keats. The Keatsian love of beauty is manifest in all his work; every object to Carman was a 'thing of beauty', and what was sordid he disregarded. By the use of exquisite diction, he tried to attain Keat's supremely natural utterance in order to create a poem that would be individual, spontaneous, and poignantly musical. He never attained the rapture, the joy, and the exuberance which Keats created, but at times he almost succeeded. With his classical training, Carman could equal Keats in subject matter, but the Keatsian atmosphere was unattainable. The influence of Keats is strongest when Carman uses metaphor and personification to give an excessively Romantic character to his verse:

Lo, now far on the hills,  
 The crimson fumes uncurled  
 Where the caldron mantles and spills  
 Another dawn on the world.  
 ("A Northern Vigil")

Possibly, too, the undercurrent of melancholy in Carman's verse owes much to Keats. This note was originally heard in his first volume, *Low Tide on Grand Pré* (1893), and was to occur in most of his verse. He sang sad songs of absent

women, of unrest, the futility of striving, and the Arcadian gardens where one would find love and dreams. His epitaph, perhaps, best exemplifies the melancholy of his poetry:

Have little care that life is brief,  
And less that art is long;  
Success is in the silences,  
Though fame is in the song.

Keatsian metaphors seem to come naturally to Carman. In "At Michaelmas" there is the constant ability to find the right concrete image for his thought:

Soon we shall see the red vines ramp  
Through forest borders,  
And Indian summer breaking camp  
To silent orders.

The images are specific; flowers, for example, are never merely flowers, nor trees mere trees; they are always definite species (a marigold, a daisy, a scarlet maple, a silver birch). The Keatsian qualities—those of predominant colours, love of beauty, the poignant melancholy—are obvious influences upon Carman's poetry. He recognizes this debt to Keats in one of his memorial poems:

And so his splendid name,  
Who left the book of lyrics and small fame  
Among his fellows then,  
Spreads through the world like autumn—who  
                    knows when?—  
Till all the hillsides flame.  
                                    ("By the Aurelian Wall")

CARMAN'S GREATEST DEBT was to the Romantics. His rural background in the Maritimes, and his home environment, produced a temperament which can in part be equated with that of the great Romantics. His education made their poetic values coincide with his own. All his life he was conscious of his own similarities to them, and he attempted to fuse their influences into his own poetry. He was separated by over half a century from them and limited by the standards of a different continent, but like the Romantics Carman was a poet whose main inspiration was Nature; in this respect he fulfilled his desire to con-

tinue and enlarge the Romantic tradition in Canadian poetry.

Woven into the pattern of Carman's poetry is one of the marked characteristics of the Victorian age—moral purpose. Carman was brought up in an environment which accepted the Victorian values, a society which demanded that any creative work should justify its own existence by having a definite moral significance. Carman was deeply aware of Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Carlyle, and Ruskin—men who were definite teachers of society with faith in their message and a conscious purpose to uplift and instruct. But Carman did not have Tennyson's capacity for working out the flaws in his poems, either because he did not recognize them or because he was too impatient to make a satisfactory change. He did, at times, attain the Tennysonian quality of rhythm and musical cadence:

Noons of poppy, noons of poppy,  
Scarlet acres by the sea  
Burning to the blue above them,  
Love, the world is full for me.  
(“Noons of Poppy”)

If Tennyson was an inspiration to Carman's method of description and atmosphere, he was also the source for didacticism and moralism. Carman saw, as Tennyson had seen, that perfect man was a result of a reign of order. He was a traditionalist in politics and looked back to the past for an order which would come out of a faith in that past. He was sceptical about the progress of his own society and shared Tennyson's fear of democracy in politics:

We have scorned the belief of our fathers  
And cast their quiet aside;  
To take the mob for our ruler  
And the voice of the mob for our guide.  
(“Twilight in Eden”)

But if he learned to teach from Tennyson, it was more in the style of Browning and Swinburne that this teaching was established. He wrote to his mother from Edinburgh in 1893 that he had enjoyed reading Browning, and it is at that time that the Browning influence is strongest in his poetry. “The Wanderer”, written the same year, shows Browning's optimistic vigour:

Therefore is joy more than sorrow, foreseeing  
The lust of the mind and the lure of the eye  
And the pride of the hand have their hour of triumph  
But the dream of the heart will endure by-and-by.

Where the vigour is of Browning, the rhythm of the anapaest lines is of Swinburne, an influence which for a time was predominant in Carman's verse. In *Behind The Arras* (1893), which has the Browning joy in the challenge, Carman achieves a much different style and tone from the soft, elegiac strain of his previous volume, *Low Tide on Grand Pré*. Here the mould is more of Browning; he uses the brisk pace and the metrical device of a long line in sharp contrast with a short one, which was a favourite of Browning. He could not, however, be successful with the dramatic monologue, the frame of which was too vast for Carman's mind. He lacked the intellect to give it a clear and logical development, or any real artistic unity. He could not create a picture of life and retain the sharp flavour which characterized Browning's monologues. But, at times, it was easy for Carman to make Browning's manner his own. He recaptured Browning's vision and frequently the phrases have all the vigour of the master. Browning's narrative style, with its realistic and familiar scenes, is especially apparent in "The Man With the Tortoise" (1901), and in "On the Plaza" (1900):

One August day I sat beside  
 A cafe-window open wide  
 To let the shower-freshened air  
 Blow in across the Plaza, where  
 In golden pomp against the dark  
 Green leafy background of the Park  
 St. Gauden's hero, gaunt and grim  
 Rides on with Victory leading him.

Though the Victorian age is generally characterized as practical and materialistic, nearly all the writers, and especially the great poets, attacked materialism and exalted a purely idealistic concept of life. Carman saw Tennyson and Browning as exemplar poets fundamentally, since love, truth, brotherhood, and justice were emphasized by them as the chief ends of life. He agreed with their ideas, and their poetry had a rapid and far-reaching effect on his own verse.

One aspect of Carman's poetry which is practically ignored by his critics is his love poetry. Here, the influence of Rossetti is seen most strongly. His metaphors have the Rossetti qualities of picture and suggestion, and are often magically illuminated:

In the cold of the dawn I rose;  
 Life lay there from hill to hill  
 In the core of a blue pearl,

As it seemed, so deep and still.  
 ("XXVII", *Songs of the Sea Children*)

He followed Rossetti's extensive use of colour words to create mood. Though Rossetti's words are usually applied to physical descriptions or room furnishings, Carman applies the medieval colour words to external Nature. He follows Rossetti in an over-indulgence in detailed descriptions. But often his many pictures are too heavy for his verse. In "Eyes Like Summer After Sundown" (1901), the tone is Rossetti, and the images have the concrete qualities which Rossetti gained in "The Blessed Damozel":

Eyes like summer after sundown,  
 Hands like roses after dew,  
 Lyric as a blown rose garden  
 The wind wanders through.

Swelling breasts that bud to crimson,  
 Hair like cobwebs after dawn,  
 And the rosy mouth wind-riffled  
 When the wind is gone.

The inanity of the image "hair like cobwebs after dawn" is Carman at his very worst, though it is not as bad, surely, as the image of Rossetti in "The Blessed Damozel":

Her hair that lay along her back  
 Was yellow like ripe corn.

But he does achieve greatness in "Bahaman":

Where the gorgeous sunset yellows pour aloft  
 and spill and stain  
 The pure amethystine air and the far faint  
 islands of the main.

Carman's poetry is only occasionally Pre-Raphaelite, and when it is, it is more a blending of Keats, Rossetti, and Carman's own distinctive application of the influences. From the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Carman assimilated a musical quality ("noons of poppy, noons of poppy"), a richness of colour ("Gold are the green trees overhead, and gold the leaf-green grass"), and a reaffirmation of the Keatsian love of beauty. The Pre-Raphaelites strengthened Carman's interest in the first Romantics and so, from the "last Romantics", Carman created a poetry which is for the most part Romantic in style, thought, and tone.

Bliss Carman bridged the era between the last of the great Victorians, and the new writers who evolved the complexities of Twentieth Century poetry. During this period no great major poet appeared on the literary scene: Yeats had not yet attained his greatness; the groupings of poets—the Rhymer's Club, the Georgians, the War Poets—never reached undebateable fame; Eliot was still extremely "avant garde" even toward the end of Carman's life. World poetry was in a state of fluctuation; there was no definite contemporary poetry.

Despite this, Canadian poetry flourished. The well-known Canadian poets—Carman, Roberts, Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott—wrote at this time. None of them were innovators; most of them were imitators. Carman is typical of them in that his poetry is a restatement of certain Nineteenth Century poetic values. These poets were greatly influenced by the writers in England, and tried to make Canadian poetry in the British tradition. Some poetry of imitation reaches beyond the teacher, but the verse of these poets does not. Rather, it is poetry which is reminiscent of English poetry, that vaguely refers to the Canadian scene, and poetry that is never completely successful. It is characteristic of Canadian writers to forget that to write in the English language is to compete with the best writers in Britain and the United States.

CARMAN IS THE MOST WELL-KNOWN of this flourishing in Canadian poetry, well-known mainly because his poetry is taught in Canadian schools for its strong resemblance to the great English poetry that is also taught. In both form and mood his strongest link is to the Romantic Movement. His predominant mood is one of sentimental emotionalism which his sincere and humble personality could accept without any strongly mature stabilizing factor of mind. This emotional quality has a certain charm and poignancy which was characteristic of the age and the result of the simplicity of his personality. He saw everything in terms of Nature. The connecting link in his poetry is seasonal; he correlates emotion to either spring, summer, autumn, or winter. For the most part, spring and summer, with their awakening and youthful associations, have most attraction for him. His moods are always equated with some natural phenomenon: the budding of the trees, the falling of the leaves, the ebb and flow of the tide. This is Carman's one approach to originality. The seasonal and natural phenomena are present in almost every poem, and provide the central theme of



his work, and also mark Carman's poetry as distinct from that of other poets. But it is not, after all, a very fresh idea.

His colours and imagery, too, are derived from this central theme. There is little classical, Christian, or literary imagery in his work. Even in the *Pipes of Pan*, the source of word-pictures and music is in the world of Nature. Such word combinations as "gold-green shadows", "soft purple haze", "pale aster blue", are frequently present. His musical imagery, too, is derived from the same source. For him "music is the sacrament of love" and he is a "harpstring in the wind", aware of the subtle tonal effect in Nature:

Outside, a yellow maple tree,  
Shifting upon the silvery blue  
With tiny multitudinous sound,  
Rustled to let the sunlight through.  
(*"The Eavesdropper"*)

Like many poets, Carman uses colour and music, not so much for their own sake, as for the mood and atmosphere which their cumulative effect would produce. Words and images are used to create intense mood-atmosphere, and to evoke in the reader an emotional reaction by means of tonal effects. Romantic and Victorian poetry is an attempt to give a subjective interpretation of life, and so is Carman's.

The whole tone of Bliss Carman's poetry is that of the Romantic Movement. His poetry is the manifestation of all the basic assumptions of Romanticism. He had the Romantic's faith in the creative imagination and the potentialities of the individual; the preoccupation with the particular rather than the general; an interest in the past; and a feeling of close companionship with Nature and God. Since his was an emotional rather than an intellectual personality, Carman found reflections of his own attitudes and moods chiefly in the poetry of the Romantics and the Victorians, concerned as they both were with subjectivity. When Carman is influenced by the Victorians, the Romantic elements of their work appear in his poetry. Carman brought nothing new to poetry as poetry—though it was new to Canadian poetry—and sought only to bring together his own favourite expressions in poetry which seemed to suit his limited view of life.

Carman's whole attitude to poetry was that of the devotee rather than a true creator. He worshipped at the shrine of poetry, but was unable to penetrate to the inner circle; his was a minor inspiration because of the narrow range of subject matter and mood. Had Carman been a truly original poet—in so far as any

poet can be original—he would have shown a development toward a greater assurance of style and a deeper emotional and intellectual content. However, between the early Carman and the late Carman the differences are of minor tones and that, for a time, one idea is predominant over others. For a while one may believe that there is a development, but always he returns to something which he had pursued before. There is no sign of growth as in Keats, no strongly conscious change as in Yeats. Carman's outlook and attitude changed very little from the beginning to the end of his work.

In the Maritimes, the people worship at this shrine of Carman, as Carman himself worshipped at the shrine of poetry. Perhaps the lack of real knowledge about his work indicates that Carman contributed nothing to world poetry, but because he was at least a poet in a world of few poets there should be the bronze bust, the plaque, and the grave-tree. Perhaps, too, it is guilt on the part of the New Brunswickers who realize that Carman had to go to the United States to have his work published, and somehow the material tributes can recompense for this, and show gratitude to Carman's wish to be buried in Fredericton.

The myth persists. Should it persist? Everything that Carman said had been said before; it was only the monotonous effect which was characteristically Carman. He used the same styles and themes as had the Victorians and Romantics, but in Carman the original intensity was lost. There is about his work a pervading monotony of tone, a lack of strength, and a slightness of content. His diction and his ideas lack the vigour of a Shelley or a Browning. He was a poet who had very little to say; yet, there is a characteristic quality to his work, a tone showing a delicacy of expression, a haunting melancholy, and a musical lyricism. Within his own artistic limits he displayed a consistency of expression; he was always able to capture the melody of a mood, the tone of an atmosphere, the colour of a setting. And even though his themes are limited, he was able to give a spontaneous quality to his verse. But all this does not make him a great poet; neither does it put him into the category that critics often do, that of a "minor but good" poet, an excuse which the myth surrounding his name seems to demand. It is the quantity rather than the quality of his verse which gives him a place in a study of Canadian poetry. He brought to Canadians an awareness of poetry and poets, and also the knowledge that when good poetry is wanted, it is found in other places rather than Canada.

## L'ANNEE LITTERAIRE AU CANADA FRANCAIS

Jean-Guy Pilon

**O**N NE SAURAIT raisonnablement tenter de résumer l'année littéraire au Canada français, sans souligner deux événements extrêmement importants dont l'influence aura été déterminante: je veux parler d'abord de la publication des *Insolences du Frère Untel* et ensuite de la fin du régime Duplessis marquée par la victoire libérale du 22 juin 1960. Ces deux dates historiques peuvent sembler à première vue éloignées de l'activité littéraire et culturelle, mais il ne faudrait pas s'y tromper: elles ont provoqué et rendu possibles certaines audaces et initiatives qui, jusque là, semblaient impensables.

*Les Insolences du Frère Untel* ont créé une véritable commotion dans le Québec. Le succès du livre—115,000 exemplaires vendus en cinq ou six mois—tient au fait que l'auteur, un religieux enseignant dans une ville de la région du Saguenay, a dit ce qu'il pensait du régime d'autorité, du système d'éducation, de l'enseignement de la langue française, etc. avec humour et sans ménagement. Il a parlé clair et franc. Il a dit qu'il fallait être des hommes libres et non d'éternels conscrits.

Peu de temps après, le peuple du Québec mettait fin au duplessisme. Une ère se terminait; un gouvernement libéral était porté au pouvoir et encore une fois, l'on entendait parler un langage d'hommes libres. Un programme politique vigoureux et audacieux avait été proposé à la population, et deux questions principales pouvaient retenir l'attention des intellectuels: la fondation d'un Ministère des Affaires culturelles et d'importantes réformes dans le domaine de l'enseignement.

Le Frère Untel avait parlé du système d'éducation; le gouvernement s'y intéressait au premier chef. Les intellectuels du Canada français furent amenés eux aussi à prendre part aux débats.

A SAINT-SAUVEUR, au début du mois d'octobre 1960, se tenait la Quatrième Rencontre des Ecrivains Canadiens. Le thème du congrès était le suivant: *Comment concilier notre culture française et notre civilisation américaine?* Sujet vaste et qui ne manquait pas de difficultés. Or, par un curieux phénomène, il arriva que la plupart des conférenciers, jeunes écrivains canadiens, fit le procès de notre système d'enseignement avec vigueur, et le mot *laïcisation* revint plusieurs fois dans les discussions. La Rencontre se termina en adoptant trois résolutions dont la principale était de demander au gouvernement provincial la création d'un Ministère de l'Instruction publique.

A deux semaines de là, la Compagnie de Jésus annonçait son intention de demander une charte universitaire pour le collège Sainte-Marie; la réaction ne se fit pas attendre. Elle provint d'abord des professeurs de l'Université de Montréal. Quelques jours plus tard, les journaux de l'est du pays publiaient la déclaration de 102 intellectuels qui s'opposaient fortement à ce projet en invoquant les raisons suivantes: (a) Le gouvernement ne devrait pas accorder de charte universitaire avant d'instituer une commission d'enquête sur l'enseignement, pour en connaître les besoins et en revaloriser les structures; (b) l'absence des laïcs à la direction de l'enseignement supérieur ne devrait plus être tolérée; (c) si la commission d'enquête en arrivait à la conclusion qu'une nouvelle université est nécessaire, cette université devrait en être une d'Etat.

Les syndicats et quantité d'associations se prononcèrent par la suite dans le même sens et l'on assista, durant deux mois à un débat passionné, vif et à quelques reprises, méchant, qui devait faire échouer le projet. Les intellectuels avaient commencé à faire entendre leur voix: l'année s'engageait bien.

Parallèlement à ce débat, des livres de qualité faisaient leur apparition. Ce fut d'abord *La corde au cou* de Claude Jasmin qui remporta le Prix du Cercle du Livre de France: un roman qui a été reçu de façons fort diverses, mais auquel il faut reconnaître de grandes qualités, comme celle de démontrer le mécanisme de certaines habitudes, de mettre le lecteur en face d'une réalité dure où la révolte devient le seul moyen de survivre.

Au même moment, Claire Martin publiait, simultanément à Paris et à Montréal, son deuxième livre, *Doux-amer*, une oeuvre très attachante qui raconte la naissance et la fin d'un amour, avec beaucoup de nuances et de sensibilité.

Dans le même sens que Claude Jasmin, mais sur un ton et avec des moyens différents, Gérard Bessette nous donnait *Le libraire*, un livre excellent où les masques tombaient avec une sûre ironie.

De leur côté, les poètes ne restaient pas inactifs. Pierre Trottier publiait *Les belles au bois dormant*, et Jacques Godbout *C'est la chaude loi des hommes*: deux recueils, deux manières, deux visions du monde. D'autres recueils s'ajoutèrent à ceux-là; mentionnons entre autres, ceux de Paul-Marie Lapointe, de Gilles Constantineau, de Gérald Godin.

Les Editions de l'Homme continuaient leur travail admirable en publiant des ouvrages d'actualité et en les diffusant largement à travers la province à un prix populaire. Un peu plus tard, le directeur des Editions de l'Homme allait fonder sa propre maison, les Editions du Jour, en conservant la même formule. De telle sorte que nous avons maintenant à Montréal deux éditeurs dynamiques qui publient à toutes les semaines des livres sur des questions d'actualité, des essais et qui publieront aussi des ouvrages littéraires, des récits et des romans.

Mais les problèmes d'éducation n'étaient pas oubliés. Au cours de l'hiver, le Mouvement laïc de langue française fut fondé qui se donne comme but de réclamer la création d'un secteur d'écoles neutres et non-confessionnelles, parallèle aux secteurs déjà existants. Car l'unanimité religieuse n'existe plus, et ce pluralisme dont on ne pouvait parler précédemment ne peut pas être passé sous silence. Encore ice, on l'imagine bien, un débat public s'est engagé qui n'est pas à la veille de se terminer. Les intellectuels, faut-il le préciser, y participent très activement.

Un autre phénomène saute aux yeux de qui tente de résumer les faits marquants de l'année 1960-61: la montée du sentiment séparatiste dans toutes les couches de la population et en particulier parmi les écrivains et les artistes. *La Presse* et *Le Devoir*, les deux quotidiens de Montréal, ont entrepris des sondages en ce sens, et les résultats prouvent que 70% des personnes qui ont répondu favorisent l'indépendance du Québec.

Dans ce panorama, il convient de signaler l'apport culturel des deux revues *Cité Libre* et *Liberté*. Chacune à leur manière, dans des perspectives assez différentes, elles ont offert régulièrement à leurs lecteurs des textes dont il ne faudrait pas sous-estimer l'importance dans le mouvement actuel des idées. Et le 22 juin 1961, les deux revues accordaient le *Prix Liberté* au Frère Untel, pour son courage. Ce prix sera dorénavant décerné tous les ans à la personne qui aura posé un geste d'homme libre au cours de l'année.

Plusieurs romans ont également paru dans cette deuxième moitié de la saison. Yves Thériault, en publiant à trois mois d'intervalle, *Ashini* et *Cul-de-sac*, est l'un des rares écrivains dont l'activité ne se ralentisse jamais. Avec *Les Pédagogues*, Gérard Bessette n'a pas réussi à retrouver la qualité du *Libraire*; par contre, Jean Filiatrault, en publiant *L'argent est odeur de nuit* nous a donné son meilleur livre.

Signalons enfin *Aucune créature*, de Robert Charbonneau dont nous n'avions rien lu depuis une dizaine d'années. Enfin, deux recueils de nouvelles, *Jeu de masques* d'Ollivier Gouin qui est de qualité inférieure à *La cruauté des faibles* de Marcel Godin.

**J**E VOUDRAIS en terminant, souligner ce fait qui se dégage de ce panorama que je me suis employé à tracer : le rôle de plus en plus grand que les intellectuels entendent jouer sur la place publique. Nous avons déjà eu l'occasion de déplorer leur absence ; ils participent maintenant davantage aux luttes de la société. Leur véritable place est en train de se définir et il faut en voir un écho dans les articles récents qu'un romancier comme André Langevin vient de publier autour du sujet suivant : *Le peuple et les intellectuels s'interrogent dans le même sens*, et dont je voudrais, pour conclure cet article, détacher le paragraphe suivant : "Dans leur propre apprentissage, les intellectuels ont appris la vertu de modestie. Il n'est pas vrai qu'ils se réunissent entre eux pour parler du bout des lèvres de 'dénier' le peuple. L'image est trop grossière pour convaincre. L'intellectuel sait bien qu'il n'existe pas en suspens dans le vide et qu'il doit s'alimenter à la réalité dont il vit s'il veut donner un sens à sa démarche. Pourquoi la privation l'aurait-elle rendu avare ? Pourquoi, lui qui dénonçait l'absence de toute générosité intellectuelle, mépriserait-il une soif semblable à la sienne ?"



## HUMANIZED HISTORY

Margaret Ormsby

DALE C. THOMSON. *Alexander Mackenzie, Clear Grit*. Macmillan. \$6.75.

SOMETHING EXCITING has happened to Canadian History in the last ten years: it has been humanized. Probably it was Donald Creighton who started the vogue for writing personalized history; at any rate, since the appearance of his portrait of John A. Macdonald as the young politician and the old chief-tain, our national epic has been sensibly enriched by other historians who have lured from the shadows such wraith-like figures as Frontenac, William Lyon Mackenzie, George Brown—and now—Canada's forgotten Prime Minister, Alexander Mackenzie.

With each of these emerging as a human being, and a human being at least as comprehensible as W. L. Mackenzie King or J. S. Woodsworth or Arthur Meighen—men whose works and deeds are not only fresh in memory, but recorded by historians of their own day—the economic and political development of Canada is appearing in a new light. No longer is the stuff of history the abstract principle, the confused issue, the endangering tension; as past controversies are related by historians to private character, motive and act, the contro-

versies themselves are becoming more vital and momentous. In short, a new dimension is gained with the present tendency to write Canadian history in terms of the projection of the human personality, and the projection of the dreams, ambitions and convictions—and sometimes of the base desires—of men who once aspired to be leaders.

Nor is this all. The setting of the subjects of the new biographies against particular backgrounds is introducing us to unfamiliar corners of our own national scene. There was a time, for example, when many of those residing west of the Canadian Rockies regarded Upper Canada as a never-never land, notable chiefly for its obscure political contests. But the pens of the biographers have now sketched the peculiar characteristics of colonial Kingston, Toronto and Sarnia, and at last these communities, like their distinguished sons, have identity.

In *Alexander Mackenzie, Clear Grit*, Dale Thomson has related personality to place in an extremely skillful fashion. Thus he has portrayed the Kingston that was the provincial capital, as well as the western port that became the frontier

town of Sarnia, as localities from which forces emanated that were to mould the outlook of the immigrant lad who arrived from Perthshire in 1842 to pursue his trade as stone mason. Mackenzie's Scottish antecedents were, of course, not without influence; from them and his boyhood experiences in Scotland he derived his strain of religious conviction; his habitual attachment to family and friend; his custom of indefatigable industry; and his dislike for equivocation. But it was in Canadian towns that he experienced the frustrations of poverty, social slighting and, at first, political repudiation, and these were the trials that put iron into his will. From the moment of his entry into parliament in 1861 at the age of thirty-nine until his death at seventy in 1892, Mackenzie stubbornly fought privilege and unearned advantage and took his stand on the side of justice and equal treatment for all.

At first this plain and honest man appeared "a clear, Scotchman, plain and true"; by the time he reached middle age, he was a typical Upper Canadian frontiersman—a "Clear Grit" ("pure sand without a particle of dirt in it"). A man of high principle, he loathed subterfuge and detested a "loose-fish" attitude in anyone. He commenced his political career by supporting the cause of the Reformers; in parliament he became the enemy of coalition government and the champion of the party system; as Canada's first Liberal Prime Minister, he enunciated principles of Liberalism which had an "old-country" ring to them, but which were more properly the product of his Canadian experience and the expression of his ambitions for his adopted land. No one ever doubted his integrity, questioned his sincerity or overcame his

inflexibility. His political enemies dreaded the scrutiny of his penetrating blue eyes and writhed under the lash of his tongue. In the House of Commons, he wore "a mask of stoicism and propriety", and as Leader of the Opposition, he felt it his duty to suspect the worst in every government action. His reserve, his certitude of right and faith, and his pugnacity were thrown into sharp relief through his relations with his opponent, the genial and flamboyant John A. Macdonald, and with the Queen's representative, the expansive, rash and cordial Lord Dufferin. The depth of Mackenzie's feeling was indicated by the grief that tore him on the occasions of the death of members of his own family and of old political associates. And his fortitude was demonstrated when he continued to carry out his parliamentary duties after being stricken with paralysis, when he rationed his effort so that he might still have the strength, through the pointed question, to probe and expose the malefactor.

To Professor Thomson, Mackenzie's life is "a tale of triumph" and "a story of disappointment and defeat". As a stonemason, Mackenzie was a master craftsman: an arch at Fort Henry at Kingston and buildings near Sarnia still testify to that. As a political figure, his accomplishment was distinguished: he assisted George Brown to achieve Confederation, succeeded Brown as leader of the Liberal party in Ontario, became leader of the federal Liberal party, triumphantly turned Macdonald out of office over the Pacific Scandal, and for five years from 1873 until 1878 served as Prime Minister of Canada. His premiership coincided with the Great Depression of the 'seventies. The extravagant promise, extended in 1871 by his



opponents to secure the entry of British Columbia into the union, could not be fulfilled and he found himself with an unruly province on his hands as his difficulties over constructing the Pacific railway mounted. In Opposition, he had attracted attention by the "awfu' tongue" which he had laid upon his adversaries; in office, his thrift was regarded as parsimony and his regard for propriety as evidence of his self-importance. He failed to catch the popular imagination and as the depression drew to a close, the Canadian people decided that they "preferred Macdonald drunk to Mackenzie sober".

During the next fourteen years, Mackenzie watched his arch-enemy Macdonald govern, saw the brilliant and erratic Edward Blake replace himself as leader of the Liberal party and endured "the incessant vexations of the seething

cauldron of public political life", humiliated by increasing physical incapacity.

Mackenzie's has usually been considered to have been a lack-lustre administration. In actual fact, there was substantial achievement. The delicate amnesty question arising from the Red River uprising was settled; territorial government in the West established; the New Brunswick school dispute handled effectively and both the Supreme Court of Canada and the Royal Military College established. Furthermore, although to the end Mackenzie remained "a fiery imperialist" who talked of an Anglo-Saxon mission" and extolled the superiority of British institutions, he was actually one of that little band of nationalists who advanced Canadian control of Canadian affairs and anticipated the day when Canada, still within the imperial frame-

## A Beach of Strangers

a remarkable radio play in prose and verse by

JOHN REEVES

who examines the different ways of love, the loss of innocence, and the human predicament with profundity, unflinching wit and a superbly accurate ear for speech.

*Here is a beach. Here comes driftwood, gulls, anemones, and people. Here the refugee citizen evacuates his wife and thermos; lap-dogs haul spinsters on a leash; children propel their elders with spades and cajolery; and paratroops of lovers storm the gullies. Here is summer and holiday and a million volts in the veins. Here are the many with all their histories and needs, their fathom-down thoughts and their white-cap words.*

OXFORD

*A Beach of Strangers* was written for the CBC in 1958 and won the Italia Prize in 1959. \$2.50

work, would operate within her own separate and individual orbit. During a visit to England in 1875, he was amazed to discover that "Canada is more British than Britain"; but when he moved a little in official British circles, he realized that his heart had been given to his adopted land, for in Canada there was what he admired most, a "spirit of toleration of class to class and creed to creed".

Professor Thomson has written a very good political history of the fifty years that followed the winning of responsible government in the province of Canada. More than this, he has given us a fully rounded portrait of a scrupulous, diligent

and dedicated Scottish immigrant, turned Canadian. Like most of the colonials of his day, Mackenzie was no great intellectual, but when it came to principle, he would tolerate slackness neither in himself or anyone else. We have moved away from his time—to us "jokes" falling from the lips of a sincere Baptist concerning total immersion are rather painful, and we are no longer too familiar with "total abstinence" men—but Mackenzie still represents a sense of values and a point of view that outsiders commonly recognize (perhaps too flatteringly) as distinctively "Canadian".

## TROIS POETES

*Jean Menard*

JACQUES GODBOUT. *C'est la chaude loi des hommes*. Les éditions de l'Hexagone. \$1.00.

JEAN-GUY PILON. *La Mouette et la large*. Les éditions de l'Hexagone. \$1.00.

PIERRE TROTTIER. *Les Belles au bois dormant*. Les éditions de l'Hexagone. \$1.00.

L'ON SE TROMPERAIT peu, si l'on affirmait que Jacques Godbout a trouvé assez tôt sa manière. Dans *Carton-Pâte* (Paris, Seghers, 1956), il raillait les travers d'une société bourgeoise, repue de clichés, et substituait, à un monde de carton-pâte, un monde de chaude sympathie. Se refusant de jouer au demiurge, l'auteur partait toujours d'une réalité concrète et palpable. Un peu comme un peintre, il encadrait ses visions, découvrait le ciel à travers une ruelle. Dans *Les pavés secs* (Montréal, Beauchemin, 1958), sa manière restait la même, mais s'élargissait: moins de croquis et plus de tableaux. Un long séjour en Ethiopie (de

1954 à 1957) semble avoir enrichi le poète de mille images. Des poèmes pleins de lumière, chantent, non point des étés furtifs, mais un soleil lourd:

J'ai fait un long voyage  
dans un sale pays sec  
j'ai fait un long voyage  
Dieu merci j'avais ma gourde  
son sein  
dans le soleil  
qui traversait la portière  
ouverte

Cette œuvre, sans rhétorique, ni délayage, réagissait contre la métaphysique assez creuse de certains de nos prophètes.

Dans *C'est la chaude loi des hommes*, Jacques Godbout, plus ambitieux, veut

capter l'univers, et non plus quelques pavés secs. Il sait qu'il habite une terre menacée de destruction et il se penche avec épouvante sur ses enfants. Mais à côté de la mort apocalyptique, la mort quotidienne, la mort tout court, si l'on peut dire. L'auteur peint également le déracinement de l'homme moderne qui croit se sauver, en détruisant ses frontières.

Je n'ai plus de nom, anonyme, je suis  
anonyme

Seule une certaine fraternité, semble nous dire le poème *L'eau*, pourra triompher de l'anéantissement.

Dans cette œuvre de transition, Jacques Godbout veut aborder des thèmes, plutôt que peindre des tableaux. Des poèmes, comme *Jamais plus*, *Un nouveau voyage*, témoignent de hautes aspirations, mais contiennent aussi des balbutiements. L'auteur des *Pavés secs* se contente parfois de quelques croquis, et l'inspiration ne baisse pas pour autant:

Dans le Hoggar il est des enfants  
Sans jouets préfabriqués in U.S.A.  
Ils les font eux-mêmes  
Mais n'ont pas de papier n'ont pas de  
ciseaux  
N'ont pas de couleur de colle  
Alors prennent des os  
Des os de chameaux morts hagards.

\* \* \*

Il n'est pas de poètes qui nourrissent de plus hautes ambitions que Jean-Guy Pilon. Qu'on l'aime ou non, on reconnaît que sa poésie n'est jamais vulgaire, ni facile. On admire sa tranquille ascension, son désir patient de perfection. Il a renoncé assez vite au néo-romantisme superficiel de *La fiancée du matin* (Mont-réal, éditions Amicitia, 1953). Qu'il ait, après coup, subi l'influence de René Char, il semble difficile de le nier. Mais

dans ses derniers recueils, on entend son chant à lui.

*La mouette et le large* ressemble à un inventaire. Le poète découvre, non sans mélancolie, qu'il a trente ans.

Suis-je déjà pèlerin d'une seule jouissance  
Engerbée dans une ruche  
Que menace l'hiver

Il ne peut oublier l'enfance lointaine et perdue, qu'il porte en lui, mais que la vie lui interdit de contempler.

Je me souviens je me souviens  
Les ponts faisaient naître les rivages  
Et les îles n'étaient pas éteintes  
Dans leur solitude d'eau.

Uni à la femme, le poète veut posséder l'univers, ne le perdre jamais. La femme est partout dans ce recueil, et surtout dans les poèmes où Jean-Guy Pilon ne la nomme pas. On ne sait point où débouchent certains vers. Le poète découvrit-il la femme à travers la nature ou la nature à travers la femme? Il écrit: "Femme: sorte de mouette". Dans le cadre austère des Cévennes, dans un paysage de genèse, la femme éternelle se dresse devant lui. Le romantisme du premier recueil surgit à quelques reprises.

A des siècles de sa naissance  
Elle était nue et fiévreuse  
Sous sa chevelure

Qu'on lise aussi "Les yeux fermés", l'un des meilleurs poèmes du recueil.

Sous l'arc de nos corps  
Se brisaient les semaines et les saisons

La possession de l'univers est chose rapide et presque illusoire: les étés sont lumineux, mais brefs, et finalement ensevelis. Des poèmes qui s'intitulent "D'un hiver à d'autre", "Fille de la neige", "Nous franchirons les glaces", chantent la tristesse des instants dévastés.

Les derniers poèmes du recueil, dans

l'ensemble plus prosaïques, contiennent des exclamations plus enthousiastes, que lyriques:

Je me rappelle les promesses d'Amsterdam  
 La baie vertigineuse de Rio  
 L'émouvante naïade de Copenhague  
 Et les nuits du monde  
 Ajoutées aux bonheurs  
 Des jours sans pareil

La poésie peut tout embellir, mais cette trop célèbre nymphe m'a toujours paru aussi peu émouvante que le lion de Lucerne.

\* \* \*

On dirait que, pour Pierre Trottier, la poésie n'est jamais gratuite et que chaque poème suppose un engagement. Pourtant son premier recueil, *Le combat contre Tristan* (Montréal, les éditions de Malte, 1951), peu original dans l'ensemble, contenait un certain nombre de clichés et de

souvenirs littéraires assez mal digérés. On devine une longue méditation entre cette œuvre et *Poèmes de Russie* (Montréal, éditions de l'Hexagone, 1957), ce livre si émouvant où l'on découvre partout l'influence de la sainte Russie. Déjà la mort tourmentait le poète, mais on pourrait croire que la liturgie orthodoxe, si profondément axée autour de la Résurrection, avait, par moments, apaisé le poète.

La liberté chante pour ceux qui ressuscitent.

La mort est partout dans le dernier recueil de Trottier, *Les belles au bois dormant*. La disparition d'une mère adorée paraît avoir précipité la course du flot poétique.

Dors ma femme nue  
 Dors ma fille innocente  
 Dors ma mère morte

ARTHUR S. BOURINOT

## POEMS

PAUL BUNYAN      THREE LINCOLN POEMS      & OTHER VERSE

*with a drawing by Thoreau MacDonald*

LIMITED EDITION; PRICE \$3.00 POSTPAID

IN THIS VOLUME, the first substantial collection since *This Green Earth* in 1953, Arthur S. Bourinot has gathered, not all, but many of his poems which have seemed more or less popular (by reason of wide distribution), if that word can be used in connection with poetry, and that have appeared in anthologies and school books in Canada, the U.S.A., the United Kingdom, and other countries. Most of them were included in volumes now out of print. An original drawing by the Canadian artist, Thoreau MacDonald, illustrates the poem, *Shadows*. The jacket drawing depicts Paul Bunyan as seen by the author. The book was designed by William Colgate who supervised its production.

Copies may be ordered from the author,  
 Arthur S. Bourinot, 158 Carleton Road, Rockcliffe, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

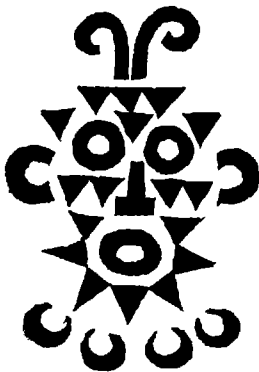
Le destin a coupé l'amarre première et essentielle, et lance brutalement le poète sur l'avenir et la mort.

Mais pourquoi l'auteur a-t-il donné à cette œuvre funèbre un titre aussi joyeux? On maquille la mort, on lui sourit en lui tournant le dos, on la baptise d'antiphrases. Nous gardons le souvenir d'un certain caveau palermitain où des jeunes filles, au crâne décharné, grimâçaient, en robes de bal, où des curés en surplis tendaient des râteliers qui tombaient en poussière. Les belles au bois dormant sont ces jeunes filles de bonne famille qui, tous les ans, avaient accoutumé de faire da révérence à la reine d'Angleterre.

Jeunes filles qui dansez jusqu'au petit jour  
Insouciantes de ceux qui sont au dernier  
jour

La mort prend ici des noms divers, c'est "l'embaumeuse éternité", c'est "la mort cuisinière", c'est la veuve aux voiles noires. Le poète rejoint l'imagination populaire qui a surnommé la guillotine "la veuve".

O tard venu



Ne crois pas que ta destinée  
Se cache sous un voile noir  
Toutes les veuves de la terre  
Sont trop fidèles à leurs souvenirs  
Ou trop vieilles pour toi

Cette poésie est très rythmée: l'auteur revient même parfois au vers traditionnel. Certaines cadences apaisent, d'autres évoquent l'éternel retour de phénomènes lancinants et tragiques. En lisant *Danse javanaise*, poème de la mort et de la nirvâna, nous songions à ces fanfares funèbres de la Nouvelle-Orléans qui chantent tout le chagrin de la terre.

L'auteur a beau ensevelir sous la neige, François Paradis, le trappeur amoureux de Maria Chapdelaine; son œuvre n'en contient pas moins une espérance. Qu'on lise le beau et mystérieux poème "Le cœur des vieilles filles".

Les cœurs des vieilles filles mortes sans  
amour  
Se sont remis à battre un dimanche de  
Pâques

Dans "La morte des quatre jeudis", les chevaliers de l'Apocalypse se sauvent "avec la clé du grand mystère".

L'auteur semble avoir subi l'influence de Villon et de Pasternak. Curieux problème d'histoire littéraire: tout comme Jean-Guy Pilon, il consacre un poème au cirque de Navacelles.

Ce recueil nous paraît la meilleure œuvre de Trottier. Qu'il y ait parfois des maladresses, une préciosité et une recherche assez pénibles (jouer sur le mot "vers" n'offre aucune espèce d'originalité), que l'inspiration baisse de temps à autre (certain poème, *Jeunes Délinquants*, abuse de périphrases mal venues et artificielles), on ne saurait en douter. Le lecteur passe outre, et poursuit, en compagnie du poète, une méditation à la fois funèbre et lumineuse.

# THE PRINCESS

*Ethel Wilson*

PAULINE JOHNSON. *Legends of Vancouver*. McClelland & Stewart. Cloth. \$2.50.  
Paper \$1.50.

THIS ADMIRABLY BOUND and produced paper-backed book by Pauline Johnson is published by McClelland & Stewart, who have done a service to letters in Canada by preserving these legends and their mode of telling which might otherwise have become lost to us. They should not be lost. The very words and modes of the telling proclaim a day and days which are past. Ben Lim's drawings directly interpret the sense and sensibility of the legends in beautiful small decoration. Indeed the whole simple print and format of the book redresses a certain lushness in the telling of the tales. The publishers might easily have harmed rather than helped the preservation of these legends, by florid decoration. I admire the discriminating presentation of the book.

A careful reading leaves me with a sense of melancholy. The good and lovely woman who perpetuated these legends was sustained throughout her life by a strong element of romance. She was a devoted Indian maiden, a Victorian Miss, an intrepid barnstormer; she was well equipped to be a legend-story teller but was poetess rather than poet. Pauline Johnson was the descendant of many Mohawk chiefs and of three generations of white women. She had Indian passion in her blood and it was never quenched by age or circumstance. There is beauty and

banality in these stories. We should recognize her as a sort of troubadour who with courage and considerable charm pursued a path of her own making, and did this with integrity until the last day of a life which was—despite friends and admirers—lonely. It is as this figure that we see her, and we acknowledge the service of interpretation which she has rendered us, whether we are Indians or Palefaces.

In these stories Pauline Johnson is a translator, and is faced with a difficulty experienced by all translators—that of combining sense and feeling, while being true to sense and also to feeling. She transforms the language of her old friend Chief Joe Capilano who speaks his own kind of English, into a language which is her kind of English and—for purposes of “writing”—she further changes it into another form of English which is lavishly romantic. Although there is real poetic infusion of feeling in many of the stories, there are also “grandsires”, “shy little bride-wives”, and “pulses of rioting blood”.

A mistake has been made in trying to create from Pauline Johnson a purely literary figure. She had the warm natural gifts of the sympathetic and dramatic story-teller, and was an interpreter of the Indian ethos as no one else could be. Her sympathy derives from a deeper wilder place than our ordinary humanity. It

comes spontaneously from a deep spring of race within her.

"A thousand arrows," she writes with innocent satisfaction, "ripped the air, two hundred gallant northern throats flung forth a death cry exultant, triumphant as conquering kings—then two hundred fearless northern hearts ceased to beat . . . 'What glorious men,' I half-whispered . . ." In this book there is an echo of an echo of a true echo, but one man's "glory" is another man's melodrama.

When Brutus urged Volumnius to kill him, he did not say "We in our golden days of youth trod Eton's hall together". He said "Thou know'st, that we two went to school together," and our hearts melt within us.

In one of her more simply told legends, "The Lost Island," Pauline Johnson touches us with a universal meaning and pathos of life. She comes nearer in that story, I think, to the place of art than in any other. In "The Deep Waters" she relates the remarkable Capilano Indian version of The Flood.

I was taken one night, when I was

about ten years old, to the plain small Methodist chapel in Homer Street, in Vancouver, to hear Pauline Johnson speak. What did we hear? Did she sing, did she recite? I do not remember. But I recall a buxom glowing woman with an eagle's feather in her hair and I remember, too, at the end of the evening, being propelled forward to shake hands. I heard the words "You may come and see me if you like," kindly spoken.

"Oh thank you," I said in terror, floundering in a turmoil of doorbells, princesses, poets, eagle's feathers, escape and inadequacy (what would we talk about, I feared, already sitting stiffly in a room).

On the way home the sardonic goblin who inhabits and be-devils and preserves shy people of all ages, laughed derisively. This he did daily, and I did not, could not, ring the princess's doorbell.

Many years later I saw her in a crowded street. She was much much older, yet she had a sad beauty. She was ill, walking very slowly and lost in sombre thought. Memory rushed in and, stricken, I watched her as though I had done it.



# LITERATURE AND THE PRESS

*Tony Emery*

LOUIS DUDEK. *Literature and the Press: A History of Printing, Printed Media and Their Relation to Literature*. Ryerson Press and Contact Press. \$5.00.

MR. DUDEK'S BOOK, according to the "blurb" on its not very attractive dust jacket, "covers half a score of special fields of interest brought together by the main question: What is the effect of the Industrial Revolution in Printing on permanent literature and literary standards?" One of the reasons why it is a disappointing book is that the author is so busy pursuing his "special fields of interest" that he does not attack the main question until he has reached the tenth of fifteen chapters.

The book rests shakily on three premises that seem to me to be demonstrably false: One, that "since 1800, the Industrial Revolution in Printing, far more overwhelming in its effects [than Gutenberg's invention of printing from moveable types], in fact the true determinant of our present culture, has been virtually neglected." Two, that "literature has been practically pushed out of existence by the mass magazines." Three, that "today the best writing is to be found in small magazines which are not even known to the majority of the reading public." It might also be added that a book which paints such a grim picture of the plight of literature, and which is so concerned for the future of the "best writing", might have found space somewhere for a definition of these important terms, or, in default of that, some examples.

What the reader is offered instead is a grimly detailed survey of improvements in printing, papermaking and newspaper production along with a trio of essays devoted to Dickens, Thackeray and Carlyle respectively, on the somewhat specious grounds that they are "archetypal figures" whose fate "is also the fate of many, less distinguished or more notorious, wearing a different cut of clothes." Dickens illustrates the case of the gifted author partly corrupted by "the tyranny of cash"; Thackeray represents the less gifted writer, almost wholly corrupted by the same vile taint; and Carlyle stands for the writer of integrity, whose great creative works cannot find a publisher.

The historian will not find the historical half of the book very rewarding. A turgid mass of facts and figures is only relieved by some conclusions that are either obvious ("The discovery of the electrotpe came in the 1840's. It is an invention associated with the development of electricity and electrical power.") or questionable (as when the author confuses population figures for England and Wales with those for the British Isles) or misleading (as in the use of "still" in the following: "After World War I Lord Northcliffe demanded a seat for himself at the Peace Conference . . . though Lloyd George was still able to refuse him.")



It is difficult to accept the assertion that freedom of the press in England dates from the end of the seventeenth century. Indeed, the author realizes this later, and has to produce something else called the "liberation of the press" to explain developments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He is frequently more concerned to point out what should have happened in history than to find out what did happen. It is difficult not to laugh when one reads: "the publications of Charles Knight and the S.D.U.K. tried with too much moral seriousness to direct reading habits by offering biography, natural history, and mechanical curiosities to people whose interest required open discussion of politics (trade unionism, machine breaking, strikes, democratic government) and the social issues of religion, and perhaps birth control." That

"perhaps" is a master touch. Clearly Mr. Dudek is not in touch with the climate of opinion in England in 1832—or at any other time for that matter. Is it possible to agree with him that the "Tatler and Bystander" is an example of a "general popular magazine" which is "less specialized in class appeal" than "The Queen"?

As to his central thesis, that the publisher, caught in the twin toils of the "money-profit motive" and the necessity of using the gigantic machinery thrust on him by the Industrial Revolution in Printing, is forced to print trash for a garbage-hungry public, it is perhaps only necessary to point out that poets, philosophers, novelists, and political economists still somehow find their way into print at a rate that baffles the imagination. It is undeniable that the majority of the books that pour annually from the presses every

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year are worthless, but I find it difficult to believe in Mr. Dudek's starving genius, the "consciously non-popular" writer. I am sure that anybody who can write a good book, no matter how unorthodox the view it bodies forth, will find a publisher. And if the writer cannot write, surely it is better for him to soldier on in what Mr. Dudek refers to cosily as "little mags" until he can learn to turn a readable sentence.

Mr. Dudek himself writes remarkably badly, if I may say so. He is a master of the non sequitur, many of which are too lengthy to reproduce in a review. Here is a delightful "tabloid" example: "Although Thackeray was a giant six-foot-four in height, he had an intuitive understanding of feminine character." The punctuation throughout is as precarious as the grammar. If I may misquote Ezra Pound, for whom I share Mr. Dudek's admiration, I should like to point out that prose must be at least as carefully written as some poetry. And if one must have so many footnotes—518, count 'em!—in 238 pages, they should be read carefully enough to catch errors like "revelant" "Tottle's Miscellany" and "Ford

Madox Heuffer".

That life is difficult in the twentieth century for the creative artist is an undeniable fact. No writer can hope to live in Canada on the proceeds of his work, it is true. The problem, in my view, will not be solved by a retreat into the catacombs of self-praise and self-pity provided by the little magazines, but by a more courageous effort on the part of the writers to find a public with whom they can communicate. To do this they will first have to learn to write. For too many of today's intuitive geniuses the labour is not worth the candle: they prefer to whine and strike heroic attitudes. They must find it very difficult to maintain their pessimism in the face of the evidence provided by the so-called "Paperback Revolution", which Mr. Dudek sweeps under the carpet on the grounds that it is as yet too soon to assess its impact. Too soon, after a quarter of a century? I should have thought it would have provided a more rewarding starting-point for this study than Gutenberg and the lives of Dickens, Thackeray and Carlyle.



## MOUNTAIN MAN MYTHOLOGY

HOWARD O'HAGAN. *Tay John*. S. J. Reginald  
Saunders. \$4.95.

TAY JOHN, Tête Jaune, Yellowhead. Tay John is all the Shuswap tongue could make of Tête Jaune, the name given by French-Canadian trappers to the yellow-haired halfbreed who was regarded by his tribe as the leader who would one day restore them to the fruitful times of their past. Yellowhead he was dubbed by the story's narrator. And the story is set largely in the Yellowhead country. But this elaborate pattern of coincidence is not coincidence at all, for Mr. O'Hagan has found in the story of Tay John the elements of legend, and in legend, coincidence does not exist: we are witness rather to an inevitable order of events.

Certainly the life of Tay John as we are given to understand it has a legendary quality: he turned away from his tribe to seek the white civilization, and when he found it, was as much an alien as he had been among the Shuswap who revered him. According to the author, he was of great physical strength and courage, and held a powerful sexual fascination for the white women with whom he came in contact. Here are the persistent themes of the modern "legend"; the outsider, disdain for the punishment of the flesh (he chops off a hand to barter it for a horse he badly wants), and

the joyless discovery of the need for woman. Yet with all the requisites, the legend remains an artifice and the story rarely attains the power to move. Legend, a joining of the wonderful with shared experience, requires altogether less sophistication to produce and to receive than our society contains, and *Tay John* is a very sophisticated book: the result is an element of straining for an unfelt truth.

The strain is felt in the rhetoric of the opening lines: "The time of this in its beginning, in men's time, is 1880 in the summer, and its place is the Athabaska valley, near its head in the mountains, and along the other waters falling into it, and beyond them a bit, over Yellowhead Pass to the westward, where the Fraser, rising in a lake, flows through wilderness and canyon down to the Pacific." Mr. O'Hagan adopts a number of different styles in the telling of this story, quite properly, as it is seen from different angles, but in each of them, the strain, the consciousness of verbal elaboration, is an irritating presence between ourselves and the story, and in the end we are always brought round to the author saying, "Here is myth in the making." From the Olympian detachment of the quoted paragraph he moves to a telling of how Red Rorty, the putative father of Tay John, came to the Shuswap, and as we get closer to the Indians, the style takes on longer rhythms and assumes a verbal simplicity which has moments, for all its lapses into a pseudo-King-James-Version-English, of power.

It may be that in the wordy Irishman who takes over the telling of the story Mr. O'Hagan has caught the accents of a type, the garrulous trapper, alone with his windy formulations for months at a time ("Then we cry, we of the West, we

Westerners, we who have come here to sit below the mountains—for your Westerner is not only the man born here, blind, unknowing, dropped by his mother upon the ground, but also one who came with his eyes open, passing other lands upon the way—Give us new earth, we cry . . .”) Notwithstanding, Jack Denham is an unsatisfactory pivot for the story, and it is difficult to escape the feeling that he exists to throw Tay John out of focus rather than to place him in focus. Unfair to the author’s intention, perhaps, but this in the effect. Ultimately, the legendary character is seen to have lived a life only dimly understood by others, and perhaps by himself as well; and legend, whatever the mystery it enshrines, is never dim.

Still, there are recognitions of the tragic possibilities of Tay John, and at the end, there remains a last haunting image, of Tay John seen by another trapper in the middle of a frozen lake, in a blizzard, pulling a toboggan to which he had tied his pregnant wife, a European woman:



She was sitting up, her back toward Tay John. One eye was open. The other closed. ‘It was like she winked at me,’ Blackie said. ‘Her mouth was open too, just a little, enough so that I thought perhaps she said something I didn’t hear. Then I saw snow in her mouth. It was chock-full of snow. One of her hands was dragging in the snow by the toboggan. It made a furrow of its own. She was dead.’

GEORGE ROBERTSON

## BAGGY-PANTS RHETORIC

IRVING LAYTON. *The Swinging Flesh*. McClelland & Stewart. Cloth, \$4.50. Paper, \$2.65.

“IT SEEMS TO ME,” Irving Layton writes in his Foreword to *The Swinging Flesh*, “the Wordsworthian phrase ‘emotion recollected in tranquillity’ is more applicable to prose than to poetry.” If this is Mr. Layton dwelling within the body of his work, it certainly must seem so, for the ten stories offered in *The Swinging Flesh* generate a great calm, a tranquillity for sure, like the unexpected sight of satiety following a spate of concerted cathartic weeping. But where is the emotion? The Foreword speaks of our vanity, egotism, malice and guilt, and rages on with such a passion of itself that complexly contradictory images boil to the surface to congeal before the eye in affectingly ugly and malformed concepts; the stories murmur quietly of appearances, awareness of self, the distraction of circumstance, and the shadows we all call meanings, and are peopled by illusions that move in a continuum of non-engagement, dropping masks briefly in

the closing paragraphs to reveal faces, real live faces. But whose faces? And why here? And how? These are questions not answered by the Foreword, for that was largely a matter of word games, nor by the stories themselves, which seem to be all beginnings, until they suddenly end, and have no middles to speak of at all. The strangely passive stories are followed by forty-three poems, and certainly they are far more likely as linear descendants of the Foreword than the stories, both in their verve and their rhetoric. For ultimately, despite the Foreword's protestations of love for Truth, it is rhetoric that is Irving Layton's passion; his verse delights in the sound of its own voice.

Voyeur, voyez! The moisture of her delicate  
instep  
Is a pool of love  
Into which sheathed in candy paper  
Anaesthetized politicians drop from the skys.

It is a contagious delight. Mr. Layton is fun to read, he goads you to laughter, like it or not, and it appears that he wants you to like it, for when he is close to sending you away mad, he plays the clown,

Because I love you better  
than artichokes and candles in the dark,  
I shall speak to them.

and sometimes he retreats completely,

From cement bags, dear Ilya,  
Is poured our common future:  
A neutral dust with no hue.

The Foreword proclaims Poet as Prophet and Layton as Poet, but though what follows at first seems to be an apocalyptic vision, it turns out to be the rhetoric of the proclamation, extended. Leaping the stories, the rhetoric reappears in the verse, and much of what seems at first to be unique imagery turns

out to be recurrent conceits and favorite turns of phrase. Well, if rhetoric is to be the instrument, and we are given verse that is more period than poetry, at least the rhetoric is exuberant; if our time has made rhetoric a barren instrument of communication, then Mr. Layton's use of rhetoric as the clown's flower that squirts your eye as you bend to smell it is a present contribution to the saving of our language from its slide into numb meaninglessness.

Some of the verse of *The Swinging Flesh* is openly and conscientiously ludicrous (as "Why I Don't Make Love To The First Lady"), some wears the sombre clown face of the mock visionary, the charlatan evangelist who tempts you in, picks the pocket of your vulnerability, and then immediately shows you his trick with a sudden imagist twist ("I Know The Dark And Hovering Moth"), and some ("Keine Lazarovitch") are sudden reversals, the clown suddenly stripped of blinking nose and cosmetic tear, and looking back at us from the mirror.

And having come this far with the verse, we find ourselves at the stories, which are not really stories at all, but statements, expressions of the stance of clown in front of the mirror at the end of his turn; all ten of them project this image, and those of them that are closest to being stories ("A Plausible Story", for example) allow you to see how the clown face comes off, bit by bit, before the final confrontation.

Foreword, stories, verse, fifty-four performances in baggy-pants rhetoric—any good performer takes a bad turn and makes a sour joke once in a while, and so does Irving Layton, but, to say it again, he is fun to watch, like it or not.

BARRIE HALE

## MYTH INTO MAN

CHARLES E. ISRAEL. *Rizpah*. Macmillan. \$4.95.

HISTORICAL NOVELS are often blood-and-thunder pieces, Maverick in toga or Paladin in pantaloons. *Rizpah*, set in the tumultuous days of Saul and David, could have been another, with the Philistines taking their time-honoured role as the bad guys and the prophet Samuel trumpeting like the *shofar*. Charles Israel has not chosen this easily popular way. Here we find no villains or heroes, in the traditional sense, although violence itself is the shadow that falls across the entire story, while the stubborn ability of humans to keep on living and caring what happens to others takes on a kind of heroic quality.

Rizpah is fifteen when her family and suitor are killed by Philistine raiders. She is carried off to Askelon, where she becomes the concubine of the suave and wealthy Torash, finally accompanying him to the wars against the Israelites. The raw and badly armed Hebrews win an unexpected victory, and Rizpah is brought to Saul, the brawny and forthright farmer who has been anointed by Samuel as King of Israel. Saul becomes Rizpah's one real love; she stays with him through his battles with the Philistines, his terrible bouts of madness, his rejection by Samuel and his final bitter contest with David. Rizpah is perhaps a little too beautiful, intelligent and loving to be entirely believable, but she comes stirringly to life in the last splendid scenes of the book, when she is mourning her children.

Saul, David and Samuel all take on a

remarkable reality as the author attempts to clothe with fallible humanity the stiffened bones of legend. David is not presented as the boy wonder who matures into the prototype of the wise king. We see him as intensely perceptive, competent, capable of great affection, but torn always between loyalty to Saul and his own ruthless ambition. Saul himself is pictured as a blunt and humourless man, thrust into a kingship he never sought and struggling massively to rule well. His incipient madness is brought on by Samuel's appalling order from Jahveh that the Israelites must destroy every living creature in Amalek, and by the prophet's subsequent denunciation of Saul for having spared the Amalek king.

In Saul's relationship with David, we are shown two men who value one another deeply but who are driven inexorably apart by circumstances, by fear and ambitions, until each retreats into the wilderness of his own hatred. Yet both would have had it otherwise. These implications are certainly to be found, if we care to look, in the First and Second Books of Samuel, in Saul's last heartbroken appeal, "Return, my son David. ." or in David's elegy for Saul, "How are the mighty fallen. ." But many of us, Jewish and Christian alike, have been too long accustomed to the flat images of tradition—David is the eternal conquering hero; Saul is, at best, mad, or at worst, wicked. The sorrows of men become obscured, and from time to time we need to have them brought freshly to our awareness.

The prophet Samuel is portrayed convincingly as a man obsessed with his duty to Jahveh. He is a frightening character, frightening because he is so genuine, because he believes so implicitly that his

sometimes-preposterous commands spring from a divine and not-to-be-disputed source, frightening because he is born into every age and time.

Goliath, the evil giant to so many generations, is movingly described as having grown to manhood in the cramped slums of Askelon. "Until the Army had liberated him and made his freakish size an object of admiration. Standing here now between the stalemated legions of two nations must have been the proudest instant of his life." Many of the novel's interpretations, like this one, ring so true that they seem to be discoveries rather than inventions.

The people in *Rizpah* are drawn consistently, one feels, in terms of their own concepts. Thus we see Jahveh through their eyes as a tribal deity, fully as blood-thirsty as Dagon and Astarte of the Philistines. Soothsayers, healers, prophecies, burnt offerings, taboos—all were taken for granted, and the author weaves them into the story in a similar natural manner, with no enlightened apologies or anthropologist's excited emphasis.

The book is, I think, rather too long; the numerous campaigns tend to become tedious. But there is a great deal else, for those who are interested in the rendering of myth into man.

MARGARET LAURENCE

## PHYSICIAN OF COS

WILDER PENFIELD. *The Torch*. Little, Brown.  
\$5.00.

DR. PENFIELD'S PROTAGONIST, Hippocrates, finds his purpose in much the way that the actual Hippocrates must once

have done; and pursues it throughout this novel, pursues it in the face of ignorance, superstition, and gossip, very much like that encountered, as far as the author's exhaustive research can disclose, by the Greek physician or *asclepiad* who practised on the island of Cos in the fifth century B.C.

Twenty-three pages of notes at the back of the book testify to Dr. Penfield's painstaking investigation; notes gathered from histories and archaeological texts, and from his own field-work, carried out on Cos and the neighbouring coast of south-west Asia Minor. He follows his sources so closely that on occasion the character Hippocrates speaks within double quotation marks; the second set indicating a direct abstract from the Hippocratic writings. Where history is silent, Dr. Penfield supplies plausible speech and action for his central character.

Hippocrates and the background against which he moves are the two plausible creations of the novel. The other characters seldom come alive; they are there to manipulate or—more often—to be manipulated by the great physician; the neurotic wife, her timorous and pompous husband, her dull-witted but decent son; sardonic Euryphon, the *asclepiad* from nearby Cnidia, Daphne, his vibrant, lovely daughter, Buto, the simian pugilist; all of these have their skeleton existence in the plot, but, long before the end, their bones are simmered down to stock. The story itself lacks tension, for the happy ending is visible from the first third of the novel; and despite a climax which owes something to Greek tragedy, containing as it does four violent deaths, the only interest lies in the chapters in which Dr. Penfield, feeling no doubt that the plot can go hang for a

while, brings Hippocrates and his disciples together under the plane tree for symposiums on euthanasia, abortion, and the treatment of epilepsy.

I must admit—perhaps I didn't read the notes carefully enough—that I found it difficult on occasion to decide whether the opinions being expressed were those of Hippocrates the man or of Dr. Penfield. The latter is a distinguished surgeon and neurologist, and no doubt found it difficult and even undesirable to remain entirely mute on controversial medical matters.

Euthanasia is discussed when Empedocles, physician, philosopher, poet and mystic, comes to Cos in search of a cure for his spinal tumour. No cure is forthcoming; but Hippocrates refuses to end the old man's suffering:

Our task . . . is to save life, not to end it. The gods may snip the thread of life at will, perhaps. But if physicians should take up the shears, where would it all end?

This is not the only opinion Dr. Penfield offers, however; he has the young Dexippus exclaim, "If we created our own gods, then why must we obey them? And why should you not give Empedocles the poison he wants?" I cannot think that the author provides a satisfactory answer to Dexippus, although in the novel the young man is content to hear that the Greek-made gods represent different aspects of an eternal god. But who *has* provided an adequate answer? Dr. Penfield perhaps does not presume to, but is content to furnish his readers with well-presented questions.

While questions like these are being asked, *The Torch* is good reading; when the customs of Hippocrates' contemporaries are being described and made to seem an integral part of the life of men,

it is good reading; when the pedestrian plot and insipid characters limp into action, it isn't.

DAVID BROMIGE

## JAPANESE FLOWERS, AUTUMN VISTAS

RALPH GUSTAFSON. *Rivers among Rocks*. McClelland & Stewart. Cloth, \$3.00. Paper, \$1.50.

ALDEN A. NOWLAN. *Under the Ice*. Ryerson. \$2.75.

RALPH GUSTAFSON and Alden Nowlan are very different in their approaches to life and to poetry. Gustafson is elegant, literary and exquisitely devoted to detail. His kind of poetic awareness cannot be separated from education and culture. It is also the product of serene periods of leisure and reflection. In this sense it is social poetry, but very much tied to the kind of public life in which only a few people can participate.

It is hard to imagine how and what Gustafson would write without the influence of concerts, books, paintings, travel and the mediation of his lively and interesting mind. One cannot picture him—as one does Alden Nowlan—as a poet captured by a group of primitive hunters, killing animals along with other men, or chopping down trees beside them. Nor can one easily picture Gustafson's reaction when confronted with some of the grosser cruelties of this world. No, I am wrong; his approach would be ironic, integrated and compassionately rational. Yet somehow these cruelties could never be big issues with Gustafson, and this is a limitation.



It is pointless to condemn a poet for what he is not and to complain about the realities he misses. When Gustafson drops his role as a travel photographer (as in the Preludes), or concert-goer, or art gallery viewer, or Japanese flower arranger—as in the short poems, “Quebec Night” and “The Blue Lake”, and becomes most himself, he is verbally astringent, intellectually passionate, emotionally tender, and burns with a cool steady glow. “The Disquisition” is one of his finest poems.

Wherefore one person lives  
Until he is alive:  
No poetry's in the head:  
As none written until read.

And further in the same poem:

Now one looks back  
The sorrow is the lack  
Of a merry heart, nor the death . . .  
The words without use.

On the personal side, Gustafson's several love poems with their down-drawing rhythms mark a new richness and expansion in his feeling. In “The Little Elderly Lady Visits” he has written a poem so light, so charming, and so complete that it will inevitably be anthologized. But it is impossible to do justice to any poet in so brief a review—especially to one who is as complex and subtle and technically accomplished as Gustafson. The production of his book, designed and illustrated by Frank Newfeld, with its delightful end pages and its handsome type, mark what I hope is to be a new phase in Canadian book publishing.

Alden Nowlan's work would have benefited by a more elegant format. But perhaps this plain little blue book, his first in hard covers after two chap-books, is expressive of the immediacy and direct-

ness—and also of the awkwardness—of a very gifted and original poet.

Nowlan does not write about literature or philosophy or civilization or mankind in general. Being impatient with details, he is no Japanese flower arranger. His history is the present, so he is no myth-maker. It is the image which obsesses Nowlan, and the impact of experience on his own and other lives. He writes out of his isolated chip-on-the-shoulder Maritime culture, out of the New Brunswick rivers and woods. His mind is full of long autumnal vistas, the loneliness of the north country, the cruel violence, and the terrible emotional waste and loss. Nowlan doesn't know yet how to handle his reactions to violence, waste and loss, and in this book he handles them with alternate excesses of love and hate.

One can certainly imagine Alden Nowlan rising like a phoenix out of the



romantic conflict created by being both participator and observer, caught in the struggle between loving what one is and where one lives, and hating it. This is the poetry of personal emancipation, and therefore inevitable. One could speculate that Nowlan's kind of poetry is also the poetry of native emancipation; one struggles with the bitterness, the isolation, the geography, the long winters of disappointment, and in the meantime one is telling the story of that isolation, that geography, and of all those mean, repressed, impoverished and beloved people.

Which is all to the good. Nowlan has the important gifts of the poet as singer and story-teller. He is a superb image maker. But he has one very serious shortcoming: his poems are felt through and experienced up to a point, but few of the issues he raises in a poem are ever honestly resolved. A poem like "Nancy", for instance, begins almost perfectly.

Nancy was the smoking tines  
the distant strawstack's blaze at night  
when from my window all the dark  
closed darker on that light.  
Nancy was the cool beneath  
the bridge where we were forty thieves.  
Cars went over, gravel came down  
Nancy was this: and please  
Show me what Nancy is, I said,  
the part that can never be me.

But to this deep, to this endless, to this dark question, Nowlan gives the shoddy, vulgar and completely inadequate answer:

And Nancy naked was Nancy clothed  
in denser mystery.

But not all the poems are so spoiled. One at least ends completely satisfyingly.

And in a dream I saw the meek bequeathed  
Their deep and narrow heritage of earth.

MIRIAM WADDINGTON

## MULTIPLE PROVOCATION

*Explorations in Communication*, edited by  
Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan.  
S. J. Reginald Saunders. \$4.00.

THE OCCASIONAL JOURNAL *Explorations*, financed by the Ford Foundation and the *Toronto Telegram* and edited by Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan, both of the University of Toronto, ran for nine issues. It was probably the most lavish and imaginative journal ever to come out of Canada. The stock response to it always included *stimulating* and *provocative*; in academic circles at least one also heard that much of it was nonsense ("although there are good solid things by people like Northrop Frye, of course"), that it was full of inconsistencies, and that the money would have been better spent on something sound—like the *University of Toronto Quarterly*.

Given the ideas of the editors, such reactions were predictable. *Stimulating* and *provocative* merely meant that the readers had been made uneasy, but that "there might be something—not much, mind you—buried in it all." They also meant that the ideas were startling but could not be easily or totally refuted. As the introduction to this anthology of articles from the journal says:

*Explorations* explored the grammars of such languages as print, the newspaper format and television. It argued that revolutions in the packaging and distribution of ideas and feelings modified not only human relations but also sensibilities. It further argued that we are largely ignorant of literacy's role in shaping Western man, and equally unaware of the role of electronic media in shaping modern values. Literacy's vested interests were so deep that literacy itself was never examined. And the current elec-

tronic revolution is already so pervasive that we have difficulty in stepping outside of it and scrutinizing it objectively.

The articles ranged from sober analyses of such relatively unconsidered means of communication as the tactile and the kinesic, through anthropological discussions based on the rather dubious Whorf hypothesis that linguistic structure conditions reality, to the inaccurate meanderings through the bawdy of Kinsey's bibliographer G. Legman. And dotted throughout were the infuriating, blithely confident, deliberately provoking, frequently inconsistent dicta of the editors. But it was the editors' work that gave the journal its *raison d'être*, its life, and in the long run, I think, what will be of lasting value. They repeatedly forced the reader—print-bound as far as they were concerned—to consider the structure of print, of radio, of television, of film, of information itself.

The anthology, regrettably, does not have the flair of the journal, use of varied typography, illustration, colour. One has only to compare McLuhan's "Classroom Without Walls" in the anthology and in *Explorations 7* to see how much is lost in the sober book. In the journal, set out as a kind of free verse and utilizing several types, the article is much more convincing. (An observation that merely substantiates one of McLuhan's points.)

But if the anthology lacks the visual impact of the journal, it still has a great deal to offer: Lawrence Frank on tactile communication; Stephen Gilman on "Time and Tense in Spanish Epic Poetry", Suzuki on "Buddhist Symbolism", Frye on "The Language of Poetry",—and S. Giedion, Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, Fernand Léger, S. E. Hyman, David Riesman, Dorothy Lee, Robert Graves,

W. R. Rodgers, Gilbert Seldes, and H. J. Chaytor, and six articles by the editors.

And one keeps coming back to the editors. They nag at the mind, irritate the reason, and leave one with worms of doubt—about oneself, them, books, radio, television, history, the present. Rejecting what they call the linearity, the developing argument, of the book, they sprinkle their work with the outrageous statements of poets. "Gutenberg made all history *simultaneous*" says McLuhan. Elsewhere: "The professoriat has turned its back on culture for two hundred years because the high culture of technological society is popular culture . . ." "The Russians are impotent to shape technological culture because of their inwardness and grimness." And Carpenter counterpoints: ". . . the only time anyone smiles on TV is in commercials." ". . . the book was ideally suited for discussing evolution and progress. Both belonged, almost exclusively, to book culture." But if one gets past one's own prejudice in favour of print, and rationality, it becomes clear that the editors are tackling some of our most important issues and presuppositions.

In a short review of an anthology it is impossible to debate any article in detail. I should like, however, to enter two reservations about the whole set of ideas presented. Too often, I think, the journal—and consequently the anthology—assumes that the structure of American press, radio, film, television is in fact the structure of the media themselves. Secondly, I suspect that sometimes the editors confuse the method of analysis with the material being analysed. The alphabet segments and imposes linearity, it is true, but the spoken word remains the same. Bad teaching, dictionaries, and print may foster the illusion of "one word

—one meaning” but words in speech are as usefully multivalued as ever.

All in all, however, even with adrenalin pounding through the blood, we must be thankful for such a journal; and since issues of it are now collectors' items, we must be happy to have the anthology. It is stimulating, provocative,—and provoking.

R. J. BAKER

## CANADIAN REBEL

*The Selected Writings of William Lyon Mackenzie.* Edited by Margaret Fairley. Oxford. \$6.50.

EDITORS HAVE PLAYED a prominent part in Canada's public life. With Howe, Brown, Ryerson, and Dafoe, William Lyon Mackenzie holds a well-deserved place in the front ranks. Recently, his reputation has been enhanced by several important studies, uniquely by this latest contribution to the literature of Mackenzie. Margaret Fairley's anthology is based on Mackenzie's pre-Rebellion writings, published here for the first time since their original appearance in his newspapers, in the public records, and in his private correspondence. Mackenzie has at last found what he most needed: a sympathetic, intelligent, and informed editor of his own productions.

Mackenzie's restless spirit and wide-ranging interests would have caught a weasel asleep. Certainly, they invited disorder, prolixity, and mortality in his writings. Despite the passage of years and a firm corralling by Margaret Fairley, however, Mackenzie's vigour and flame shine through the pages of this handsome edi-

tion. Ink and fire flowed through Mackenzie's veins. They gave him an unrelenting passion for discovering the whole truth and an unfortunate urge to convey it *all* to his readers. One looks in vain in these pages for some hint of the calculating public reserve and taciturnity of his illustrious grandson. Mackenzie held the highest standards of journalistic and personal probity. He undoubtedly owed much to Cobbett, whom he admired greatly, for examples of style, of journalistic enterprise, and for causes (such as the attacks on the Post Office); yet, he condemned Cobbett for his wrong tactics in a right cause in making "statements not always correct as they might be". We find well documented that obsessive search for "factual evidence" that was prompted by his passion and prejudice in public life. Unlike Place, with whom he shared an urge for detail, Mackenzie could not work through agents. Instead, through invective and weight of evidence, he sought to arouse all men at once to accomplish all those things that would "increase the comforts and lessen the misery of the great body of the people".

In Mackenzie's Upper Canada, that "great body" was not industrial. Mackenzie was a physiocrat, an eighteenth century *philosophe* in a Scotch Presbyterian's clothing. Politically, he assured John Neilson at one time, he was "in no great hurry for the Elective System"; indeed, he seems to have approved of New York's gubernatorial veto. But he continued to pursue the goal of an elective system. It was the age of the Common Man, to whom Mackenzie was totally devoted. His roots were Jacksonian, but they were also Scotch. He shared with Carlyle a deep debt to Burns, as he acknowledged in "The Constitu-

tion" of February 8, 1837:

I have constantly identified myself with the common people of the country, have earnestly and anxiously sought to raise them higher in the scale of intelligence, and will yet venture to believe with the Ayrshire Ploughman, that instead of encouraging Orange Lodges, Established Priesthoods, close Corporations, and delegated Tyrannies, mankind will become brotherly-minded. What else but this hope could have supported me through the struggles of the last fifteen years?

His roots were homely and rural. Like Joe Howe, he was his own best provincial reporter. We see here his familiarity with township affairs throughout Upper Canada. He made his "Colonial Advocate" a provincial journal and himself a provincial figure. That province, however, extended beyond Upper Canada. There are reports on Quebec's reading-rooms, comparisons of the Quebec and York colleges, pictures of newly-arrived immigrants, of the Quebec theatre, and of the winter boat crews at Levis leaping among the ice-floes of the St. Lawrence. To Mackenzie, Canada was something more than a narrow, English-speaking society in Montreal and about the Lakes. He foresaw the French-English governmental coalitions, and penetrated into the social basis of federalism in Canada long before his fellows.

But Mackenzie's vision stretched beyond the borders of the Canadas and of North America. "The Scene Abroad" gives us Bryonic glimpses of Greece, a eulogy of O'Connell, praise for Edward Irving, a rallying call to Canada's Quakers to declare themselves in politics as did England's Friends. For Restoration France, Mackenzie has this to say:

Established priesthoods; arbitrary monarchs, and the venal throng who bask in the guilty sunshine of their power; government

brokers, bankers and state creditors; ambitious and unprincipled politicians; the proud, the haughty and the overbearing of all countries—these, with few exceptions, will make common cause against the people . . . Grave senators, and princes, titled priests and hireling legislators, . . . say down even as low as Father Strachan at York and his hopeful pupil John Robinson in the palace of *justice* . . . and all their emissaries will be at work under ground, in the dark and midnight hour sowing discord in the people's camp.

Through foreign clippings and comment, Mackenzie repeatedly brought the moral home to the doorstep of his fellow Canadians. His faith in education—particularly in adult education through the public journal—remained his firmest conviction. "We would like to see less apathy, not merely in the government but in the governed". No one did more to overcome that apathy.

Margaret Fairley's anthology suggests that Mackenzie brought to the Upper Canadian scene light as well as heat. Perhaps, however, in practice he brought too much light. Every evil was spotlighted, but the effect at the time was blinding. An anthology must bring greater order to Mackenzie's writings than appeared in the course of his lifetime. With that caution, the reader will find here lively, intelligent observations on an early Canada, seen by a man of great colour, spirit, and purpose. Others have shown us that he was not just a rather comic demagogue. Now we may discover this directly.

ALAN WILSON



## TOLERATION AND ABSOLUTISM

W. J. STANKIEWICZ. *Politics and Religion in Seventeenth-Century France. A Study of Political Ideas from the Monarchomachs to Bayle, as reflected in the Toleration Controversy*. University of Toronto Press. \$6.00.

TWO OF THE MAIN concepts which emerged from the conflicts in France in the 16th. and 17th. centuries were toleration and absolutism. The more obvious appearance of the latter is indicative of the importance of religious controversy in the growth of political ideas. It is this field which Dr. Stankiewicz explores and it is the conflicts which surrounded the Huguenots in which he is primarily interested.

The political idea which was particularly affected by the developments in the concept of toleration was that of sovereignty, and Dr. Stankiewicz gives a detailed picture of how views on the ultimate source of sovereignty reflected the fluctuations in the need for and the acceptance of religious toleration. The development of monarchical and absolutist ideas is traced in conjunction with the history of the Huguenots, showing not only how important it is to relate doctrines to contemporary events, but also the need for political practice to follow political theory. This point is made strongly with reference to the fate of the Huguenot party in the 1620s when it was loudly affirming monarchism, as it continued to do up to 1685, while its actions were of necessity anti-monarchical.

The central figure of this study is Cardinal Richelieu whom Dr. Stankiewicz sees as the Machiavellian genius behind a mounting and increasingly overt pres-

sure on the Huguenots. The idea of the 'halcyon' period between 1630 and 1660 when the Huguenots enjoyed religious freedom after being deprived of their political liberties is refuted. Richelieu initiated the policy of underground erosion of the edifice of Nantes motivated by his absolutist ideas and by a "passionate yet restrained intensity imbibed from Father Joseph". Mazarin was the careful pupil of his master and had an "exaggerated reputation for toleration" towards the Huguenots; Louis XIV continued the policy with some hesitations, and prompting from the clergy. Richelieu, like the 16th century *Politiques*, treated toleration as a political expedient rather than an ethical principle; but now it was a very superficial toleration undermined by Richelieu himself. Dr. Stankiewicz succeeds in proving Richelieu's intentions ultimately to stamp out the Huguenots, but is less successful in showing to what extent he carried out this policy before his death. Furthermore little new is brought to light on Richelieu's religious ideas, and although Dr. Stankiewicz admits the domination of political over religious factors in the final Revocation, his attempt to assess Richelieu's involvement in the religious issue, and to seek a link between the attitude of the clergy in the final stages and that of Richelieu is not entirely convincing. The clergy certainly played a large part in the final tragedy and we see in fact a return of a theological approach to toleration, but Richelieu's part in the religious conflict remains a matter of controversy.

Dr. Stankiewicz introduces all the leading political and religious thinkers of the day in France, but his very liberal use of quotations from them has the inevitable effect of making his book difficult to

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read. However the treatment and development of the main thesis is carefully systematic. A selected bibliography is attached, and one could wish that the author had allowed us as complete a glimpse of his secondary sources as he has done of the primary ones. But this is a book which political scientists will welcome as a contribution towards filling a major gap in their field, and historians will find of interest, notably for its view of Richelieu.

MICHAEL MALLET

## BETWIXT AND BETWEEN

R. H. HUBBARD. *An Anthology of Canadian Art*. Oxford. \$5.50.

IN HIS PREFACE to *An Anthology of Canadian Art* R. H. Hubbard explains that ever since his appointment to the National Gallery fifteen years ago, he has cherished the idea of writing a general history of the arts in Canada. Perhaps because he has waited so long, he has tried in the present book to cram too much into too small a space.

What he has produced is a picture book, introduced by a tightly written essay and followed by a series of capsule biographies of major artists. It is clear that he intends the pictures to be the main attraction. Yet to be really meaningful, in so far as painting is concerned at least, illustrations should be in color. However, of the one hundred and thirty-five plates in *An Anthology of Canadian Art* all but fourteen are monochromes, and the fourteen exceptions are not particularly good. One instance of this inade-

quacy will suffice: Dr. Hubbard rates Maurice Cullen's early scenes of Montreal and Quebec "among the best works in all Canadian painting." But the two examples shown are in black and white, even though colour here is vital in order to reveal Cullen's reflection of Impressionism. In his essay Dr. Hubbard's concern to be scholarly, and his urge to reduce everything to digest form, have robbed his style of warmth. All in all, his panorama of three hundred years of Canadian art does not seem very exciting.

Certain shifts in emphasis compared with former writers on Canadian art are evident in Dr. Hubbard's treatment. In the period after Confederation, for instance, Hubbard discerns a strong American influence undetected before, and on the contemporary scene he has dropped half a dozen names considered worthy of mention a scant ten years ago by D. W. Buchanan in *The Growth of Canadian Painting* (Prudence Heward, Edwin Holgate, Paraskeva Clark, Lilian Freiman, Fritz Brandtner, Louis Muhlstock). A serious omission, to my mind, is Gordon Smith.

Dr. Hubbard makes only passing reference to non-European arts in Canada, although he includes one reproduction of a Haida mask and one of an Eskimo carving. Rather than treat so glancingly these two types of sculpture which have received world acclaim, he would have done better to leave them out altogether.

In sum, this book should have been either less or much more: a handy paperback with lots of colour plates, or a definitive work of reference. The latter is what Dr. Hubbard now proposes to write. Let us hope it proves more satisfying.

JOAN LOWNDES



## SHORT REVIEW

AMONG RECENT CANADIAN publications in the French language we particularly welcome the first number of *Archives des Lettres canadiennes*, a new venture of the University of Ottawa. This annual publication sets out with a double task; each year it will cover fairly intensively a defined area of literary history (in 1961 French Canadian literary movements up to 1860 are discussed through their leading trends and personalities) and it will also present an accounting of literary trends in French Canada and to a less extent in English Canada during the preceding year. The range and good scholarship of the first issue suggest that it will

contribute a great deal to the field of studies in Canadian literature.

We have also received the ninth collection of *Ecrits du Canada Français* (480 ouest, rue Lagauchetière, Montréal, 1), a substantial occasional periodical whose latest 300 pages contain two novels, by Gilles Delaunière and André-Pierre Voucher, an excellent essay on Saint-John Perse by Louis-Marcel Raymond, and a lengthy study of the crisis in American trade unionism by Pierre Vadeboncoeur.

G. W.



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# MALCOLM LOWRY (1909-1957)

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