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CANADIAN LITERATURE

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Winter, 1963

SALUTE TO A. J. M. SMITH

Articles

BY A. J. M. SMITH, EARLE BIRNEY, MILTON WILSON, ROY FULLER, MARILYN DAVIES, ALVIN LEE, WILLIAM TOYE

Reviews

BY WILFRED WATSON, ALBERT TUCKER, INGLIS F. BELL, HUGO MCPHERSON, MARGARET LAURENCE, E. M. MANDEL, PHYLLIS WEBB AND OTHERS

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contributors

EARLE BIRNEY, poet and novelist, whose *Turvey* will shortly be reprinted in the New Canadian Library, is at present abroad on a Canada Council Fellowship which has been taking him through Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe, lecturing on Canadian literature.

ROY FULLER is one of the better poets whose work first began to appear in England during the latter 1930's. The recent appearance of his *Collected Poems* was a major event in the London literary world, revealing Fuller as one of the most consistently good poets of our time.

MILTON WILSON, a regular contributor to *Tamarack Review, University of Toronto Quarterly* and *Canadian Literature,* is Managing Editor of the *Canadian Forum.* He is at present on a study year in England.

A. J. M. SMITH, whom we salute in this issue of *Canadian Literature,* needs no further introduction than that provided in the following pages.

MARILYN DAVIES, who teaches English at the University of Western Ontario, is the author of a study of the French Canadian novelist Marie-Clair Blais which was published in *Tamarack Review.*

ALVIN LEE, who is a member of the Department of English at McMaster University, first presented the paper of which his essay on James Reaney is a modified version, to the meeting of the Humanities Association in June 1962. Pressure on space has unfortunately forced us to print his long study in two parts, of which the second will appear in *Canadian Literature* No. 16.

WILLIAM TOYE is past-president of the Society of Typographic Designers of Canada, and Production Manager and Editor of Children's Books for Oxford University Press. He is himself an author, *The St. Lawrence* being his best-known book.

WILFRED WATSON, author of *Friday's Child,* is a poetic dramatist of considerable standing. His *Cockcrow and the Gulls* was produced last year by the Studio Theatre in Edmonton, and his *Corporal Adam* will shortly be produced in Toronto.

ALBERT TUCKER is a historian who has taught at Harvard and the University of Illinois and is now a member of the Department of History at the University of Western Ontario. Apart from his past contributions to *Canadian Literature,* he has also written for the *University of Toronto Quarterly* and the *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science.*

INGLIS F. BELL, who has edited the Annual Checklist of Canadian Literature in this magazine since its inception, is the author of a number of bibliographical works, former editor of the *B.C. Library Quarterly* and Circulation Manager of *Canadian Literature.*

editorial

SMITH'S HUNDRED

THIS ISSUE of *Canadian Literature* is in part a celebration occasioned by the publication of the *Collected Poems* of A. J. M. Smith[1], one of Canada's important writers and, since the 1930's, a poet of international repute. It is an act of homage, but just as much a conversation in which various writers, including the poet himself, express their views on his achievement; as becomes evident, it is an achievement by no means confined to the hundred poems which Smith at this time has chosen to represent him. Earle Birney, who has known A. J. M. Smith ever since the early days of the renaissance of Canadian poetry during our generation, speaks of his virtues as a leader in a literary movement and as an anthologist who has used his trade to help shape the Canadian literary consciousness. The distinguished English poet Roy Fuller who, like the editor of this magazine, appeared beside A. J. M. Smith in the English poetry magazines of the 1930's (*New Verse* and *Twentieth Century Verse*), takes up the thread again and examines Smith's poetic achievement as a whole. The critic Milton Wilson, of a younger generation, considers the relation between Smith the critic and Smith the poet. And A. J. M. himself, contributing two new poems, talks of his own work and how it has come into being.

There is little we would add editorially to a group of opinions which appears to us satisfyingly cohesive. But we must at least say that in deciding to pay this kind of tribute to Smith we were moved not merely by our view of the excellence of his poems (here we agree with Roy Fuller that they form one of the distinguished collections of the century), but also by his insistence on high and rigorous standards in appreciating the writers of our country, an insistence which created the situation where a magazine like *Canadian Literature* could not only have a critical function to perform but could also find the means to perform it.

[1] A. J. M. SMITH. *Collected Poems.* Oxford. $3.25.

A. J. M. S.

Earle Birney

IT WAS NOT MY GOOD LUCK to be a fellow-undergraduate with Arthur Smith. In the same early twenties I too was one of a small group of Canadian students reading Pound and Yeats and Eliot, casting a cold eye on the Maple Leaf school, and hoping for a New Canadian Poetry. But U.B.C., lately emerged from McGill College, was yet no McGill, Vancouver no Montreal. We lacked not only a literary magazine, but the ability to start one. A. J. M. Smith and F. R. Scott, with Klein and Kennedy, were in the milieu and of the calibre to create the still memorable *Fortnightly Review*. Short-lived, it yet existed long enough to launch some of the best poets to write in Canada in this century, and eventually to influence, by stimulus or reaction, most of what poetry has succeeded it in the country.

Such effects were by no means immediate. It is a measure of the isolation between east and west in Canada in the twenties that we at U.B.C. were unaware of the existence of the *Fortnightly Review* until we were graduated and it was defunct. It was only through the pages of the *Canadian Forum*, and later, in Smith's *News of the Phoenix* and the first books of Scott, Klein and Livesay, that we in the west had the proof that the metaphysical and the symbolical could not only grow in English-Canadian soil but develop within it their own strains. Such of Smith's poems as "The Archer", "A Hyacinth for Edith", and "The Plot against Proteus" were, of course, no more independent of European traditions than had been the verses of Carman and Roberts which had bored us in high school; but the traditions were now contemporary, free of the colonial time-lag, tough and demanding, while the evidence of originality in their absorption was plain. Smith and his fellows spoke to us not as sentimental eastern regionalists or

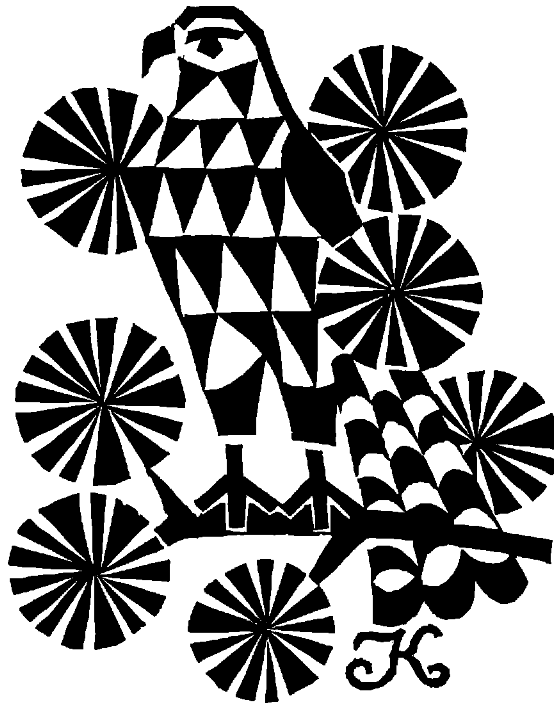
as glib Canadian nationalists but as free and hard-thinking citizens in that world of international culture with which we had great need and great desire to be identified.

As it turned out, Smith was to prove less fertile a poet than most, and, though he was to continue to set us all high standards when he did publish, his dominance was elsewhere. What happened was not merely the absorption of his energies into the profession of teaching literature (one far less friendly to the creation of it than most people outside the universities realize) ; it was perhaps a conscious turning from creative towards critical leadership. He became our first anthologist of professional stature, and he is still essentially without a rival as such, however limited some now feel his judgements have come to be in relation to the newest generation of poets. He was the first of our critics whose opinions were based both on a close, sympathetic reading of the corpus of Canadian writing from its beginnings, and on a sophisticated awareness of contemporary critical ideas in the larger society of Europe and the United States. As a consequence he has been both historian and shaper of our literature, perceptive in discovering new talents, courageous in reassessing established ones. His anthologies, and the incisive editorializings contained in them, have not only cut away much of the deadfall cluttering our literary woods; they have let us see what trees still stood with sap in them.

In many of these judgements, as in his own poetry, one is aware of an important dichotomy. Crawford's "Malcolm's Katie", which he rescued from neglect is, he wrote, the first poem before E. J. Pratt "that can be really called Canadian, because its language and its imagery, the sensibility it reveals and the vision it embodies, is indigenously northern and western." Here it is evident that though contemporary internationalism gave Smith his critical standards, the impulse to evaluate, like his own impulse to create, came from his sensitivity to what was unique in the Canadian experience. Even when he felt it was nothing more, Canadian literature has always interested him as "a record of life in the new circumstances of a northern transplantation," and he is most inclined to praise technical brilliance when it is used to achieve "a more intense and accurate expression of sensibility" to this very northernness. In Smith both regionalism and Canadianism have not been so much abjured as transcended.

It is a process which has widened and deepened with his latest anthology, *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*. Here he has not only come to critical terms with the poetry of French Canada, the other of our two literary Solitudes; he has also, for the first time in Canadian anthologizing, wedded them. If it is a shotgun

marriage, it may still turn out to be a fruitful one. And it is a ceremony most emblematic of Arthur Smith's consistent purpose, to discover and encourage whatever uniqueness in the Canadian pattern, either "Canadian" or "cosmopolitan", may be worth the world's attention. The world so far may have attended to us very little; but what little it has we have owed largely to the sensitivity and the persistence of A. J. M. Smith.



A POET OF THE CENTURY

Roy Fuller

TO ONE WHO, as I did, passed his poetic youth in the thirties, the few poems of A. J. M. Smith that appeared in the English little magazines of the day will have the memorableness and inevitability of nursery rhymes:

> The bellow of good Master Bull
> Astoundeth gentil cow
> That standeth in the meadow cool
> Where cuckoo singeth now.

And:

> After the gratifyingly large
> number of converts had been given receipts
> the meeting adjourned to the social hall
> for sexual intercourse (dancing) and eats

And:

> Nobody said Apples for nearly a minute —
> I thought I should die.
> Finally, though, the second sardine
> from the end, on the left,
> converted a try.

I do not think in those days that I realized that he was not an English poet. Indeed, so brief and clever and "contemporary" and stylistically various were the poems, that perhaps I imagined him (aided by the name, which rescued itself from blatant pseudonymity merely by the incongruous amateur cricketer's initials) a composite poet (like the undergraduates who composed the Oxford "group" poem) or the *alter ego* of the magazines' editors themselves (as Geoffrey Grigson of *New Verse* used to masquerade as the exotic "Martin Boldero"). I was not, therefore, particularly conscious of his eventual virtual disappearance from the English literary scene.

Of course, with the passage of time I (and I use the pronoun as standing for other English verse readers also) came to know of A. J. M. Smith's nationality and of his outstanding place in Canadian literature, but the knowledge was fragmentary and mostly at second-hand. I think I am right in saying that neither of his collections of poetry (*News of the Phoenix* and *A Sort of Ecstasy*) was published in England: certainly they are not in the London Library. Accordingly, most of the one hundred poems in the *Collected Poems* were new to me, and reading them has made me aware for the first time of the proper nature and stature of his poetry.

The first thing to be remarked is that, like Wordsworth, Smith has obscured his progress as a poet by arranging the collection subjectwise, not chronologically. The book is divided into five sections, the opening poem of each nicely chosen to announce the section's mood or theme. Though one's chief curiosity about a poet who has reached the stage of his collected poems thus remains unsatisfied, it seems to me that the shape of the book comes off completely. Smith is above all a clever, literary and fastidious poet, and what, looked at over the years, might have seemed too fragmentary or eclectic in his work, is given by this arrangement a cumulative and intellectually stimulating effect. This is seen very clearly in Part 2, a section of "imagist" poems. We take these more as evidence of the poet's interest in the scrupulous finding of accurate words for the accurate observation of nature than, as might easily have been, a manifestation of the somewhat stale *zeitgeist* emanating from the *vers libre*, no initial capitals, period of Flint, H.D. and the rest.

Nevertheless, we are bound eventually to ask ourselves about Smith's stylistic origins and the effect on him of his times. I think it is highly significant that by date of birth he comes between (say) Edmund Blunden and Cecil Day Lewis. That is to say, he was too young to have served in the First World War and rather too old to have been shaken by the Auden revolution. In fact, 1902 was one of a few injudicious years round the start of the century for an English poet to choose to be born in. Indeed, the outstanding "name" of that lustrum is, like Smith, a "colonial", Roy Campbell (b. 1901) — and he went round the stylistic pitfalls of his time by infusing a galvanic vigour into quite traditional means (getting himself overvalued in the process). Another poet, Michael Roberts (b. 1902), though acting as *entrepreneur* of the new poetry of the thirties, was in his own work condemned mainly to pastiche. It is interesting also to think of Smith in conjunction with Edgell Rickword (b. 1898), whose brilliant career as a poet scarcely survived into the thirties at all.

Against this background, then, Smith's *Collected Poems* are all the finer an achievement. Not to have remained bogged down by either strict traditional forms of "strict" *vers libre*, not to have been daunted by the new-found social concerns of the poetry of the thirties, nor to have collapsed with their collapse — these are manifestations of character and intellect that must, I think, be taken into account in assessing the volume.

Of course, I have been conceiving of Smith as an English poet and I think this is right, though he has spent almost all his life in the Western Hemisphere and has clearly learnt much from his contemporaries in the United States. But he plainly takes his place in the gap between Blunden and Day Lewis rather than in that between (say) Hart Crane and Richard Eberhart. And, again, this is being complimentary about his poetic nature, for it cannot have been easy to commute spiritually between Canada and some metropolitan source of style and idea.

With all this in mind even the aspects of Smith's work that I find least satisfactory take on a necessitous quality. The poems influenced by Yeats, for instance, are perhaps somewhat of a mistake, but one sees that for so bookish (I do not use the term pejoratively) a writer the themes of human love, the making of paraphraseable statements, and so forth, were a most useful discipline — far better than that which might been more congenially provided by some less forthright American poet. Then, too, though we may feel now that the poem of anecdotal clarity but obfuscated significance does not entirely withstand the passage of time, I guess that Smith's writing of such pieces enabled him to move from his rather bloodless and formalistic early imagism to the often remarkably universal statements of his later verse. I find (though I realize I may be alone in this) his charm less excusable. It is a native quality, though it is also shown in his choice of poets for translation (Gautier and Prévert, for example: he is a dazzling translator and has obviously used this exercise from time to time to keep himself going as a poet).

However, it would be ludicrously ungenerous not to emphasize that there are passages of enviable force and skill even in the most wayward anecdote ("This cracked walrus skin that stinks/Of the rank sweat of a mermaid's thighs") or whimsical fancy:

> I wandered in a little wood, and there
> I met a shepherdess. So fair
> She seemed, I dreamed
> She were a moonbeam, a fountain, or a star.

My opening quotations revealed a little of Smith's talent for comedy and satire. Such pieces seem to me to stand up very well to what most ravages work of this nature — the passing of the occasion and the forgetting of their allusions. Even matters which I imagine are unexportably Canadian communicate a sharp glint of their significance. But Smith's wit (in the broadest sense) — the epigrammatic statement, the paring away of inessentials (and above all his verse is extraordinarily gnomic) — extends to all his work, even the most serious and seriously felt. The high-water mark of this book is its last section, on death — but such a theme does not mean for Smith, as it would for many poets, the portentous, the high-falutin, strain, sentimentality, self-pity. The wry view of the world, the retrained and precise use of epithet, the masterly technique, continue. In some of these poems ("Prothalamium", "The Two Sides of a Drum", "The Bird", "On Knowing *Nothing*", "My Death" "Epitaph" — and the last poem of the previous section, "The Bridegroom") Smith achieves the force and clarity which throughout the more ambitious poems of the rest of the volume we have been concerned with might not be quite within his scope. A few are lyrics in the classic tradition: the one that starts thus, for example:

> Breast-bone and ribs enmesh
> A bird in a cage,
> Covered for the night with flesh
> To still his rage . . .

Others, more remarkable, contain a less impersonal realization of these high themes:

> No matter: each must read the truth himself,
> Or, reading it, reads nothing to the point.
> Now these are me, whose thought is mine, and hers,
> Who are alone here in this narrow room —
> Tree fumbling pane, bell tolling,
> Ceiling dripping and the plaster falling,
> And Death, the voluptuous, calling.

All help in the end to put this collection, despite its spareness, among the most distinguished, I believe, of the century.

SECOND AND THIRD THOUGHTS ABOUT SMITH

Milton Wilson

According to T. S. Eliot, we learn to distrust the favourite poets of our adolescence. To this custom he attributes some of his uneasy feeling about Shelley. As an adolescent, I couldn't have cared less about Shelley, but my favourite Canadian poet was called Smith. I encountered him in that invaluable anthology *New Provinces*, which, at the beginning of the war, virtually *was* contemporary Canadian poetry to someone who, like me, had only recently discovered that it actually existed. But I don't attribute my second thoughts about Smith mainly to premature exposure: I just started to read his criticism.

I read it looking for the wrong things and distracted by the Smith legend already growing up around his "difficult, lonely music". Much of his terminology struck me as deriving from an Eliot either misunderstood or vulgarized, and I attributed an exaggerated importance to Smith's minor habits of speech. Take "classical", for example, which is really more of a Smith legend than a favourite Smith term, and which he generally replaces with such supposed equivalents as "austere", "disciplined", "concise", etc. T. S. Eliot let us know in an unguarded moment that his critical ideals were classical, but he never claimed that the term had much application to his own poems, or to those of his leading contemporaries. Indeed, he took pains to deny it. But Smith seemed to find the classical role congenial and even possible, although he can hardly be blamed for the extremes to which Pacey has taken him in it, any more than for Collin's earlier attempt to turn him into a "spiritual athlete" or desperate mystic. Certainly you don't have to talk to Smith for long to realize that he relishes the thought of being odd classical man out in a society of romantics, and, from the jacket blurb of his *Collected Poems*, we once again learn, presumably with the author's sanction, that he knows how to be "austerely classic" in his own graceful way. It's something of a let-down to discover how merely Parnassian or decadent or imagistic

his classicism can be. Smith's less diffuse Medusa (in "For Healing") isn't that different from Swinburne's, his Hellenic swallows from H.D.'s, or even his Pan from Carman's. It is tempting (as I discovered in reviewing Smith's second collection of poems eight years ago) to resign this particular legend to the limbo of Auden's Oxford:

> And through the quads dogmatic words rang clear:
> "Good poetry is classic and austere."

More obtrusive and far less legendary in the Smith terminology is "metaphysical" and all the phrases that Eliot (himself the heir to a long line of nineteenth-century critical formulas, as Frank Kermode points out) has taught us to trail along behind it: the "disparate experience", "passion and thought" or "sense and intellect", "fused" into a "unified sensibility". It hardly seems to matter whether Smith is writing a jacket blurb on John Glassco, analyzing Ronald Hambledon's "Sockeye Salmon", improvising on Margaret Avison, addressing a conference of librarians on contemporary Canadian literature in general, reviewing *Towards the Last Spike*, or introducing Alfred Bailey's work by telling us how well his "learning" is "fused" with his "sensibility and feeling": the same formula automatically recurs. Indeed, it is so persistently and widely applied that in the end one balks at trying to understand what he means by Anne Wilkinson's "metaphysical romanticism" as much as by Wilfred Watson's "classical precision of form".

But how relevant are my second thoughts? Do unskilful classification and a perfunctory terminology really stand in the way of Smith's critical achievement? Not, I think, if we recognize where his real and remarkable virtues as a critic lie and refuse to demand what he has no intention of giving in the first place. Smith's key terms and classifications are useful only because, having provided something of the sort, he can then feel free to exercise his best talents elsewhere. The distinction between the natives and the cosmopolitans, on which Smith hung the organization of much of the first edition of *A Book of Canadian Poetry*, has in the latest edition been silently dropped, with no loss to the virtues of a difficult task finely carried out. He is lucky to have discovered, and been encouraged to take on, the rôle for which his critical skills best suit him. He seems born to be an anthologizer, not of familiar, well-stocked and well-combed fields, but of virgin territory; he is happily doomed to exercise his finely perceptive and carefully developed faculty of choice on the dubious, the unpromising, the untried and the provincial, and by his example to show his readers that such choice is both pos-

sible and necessary. Before Smith, Canadian anthologies were either uncritical appendages to national aspiration or simply of "the vacuum cleaner type" (as a reviewer has remarked of a recent example). Here are Smith's own words in 1939, when he was just starting to work on *A Book of Canadian Poetry.* "Discrimination has never been an essential part of a Canadian anthologist's equipment. Enthusiasm, industry, sympathy, yes; but taste, no." In the successive editions of the *Book* and in the more recent *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse,* he has given us a model of discrimination and scrupulous choice, which is salutary even for those whose preferences are very different from his. Smith offers no hard-won aesthetic principles, no freshly cleaned critical concepts, no brilliant arguments to inevitable conclusions; but one cannot read his Canadian anthologies (introduction and critical apparatus included) without responding to the firm, delicately sharpened, continuous pressures of a mind exercising its powers on materials which he finds half-alien and grudging in their Victorian beginnings, and perhaps equally alien, if a good deal richer, in their post-war ends, but which he manages somehow to coerce into satisfying the personal demands that he started with. I respond to the same process in his best essays and reviews, like the recent one on D. C. Scott in *Canadian Literature* and on Margaret Avison in the *Tamarack Review.* In reading the Scott essay, once I have repressed a few gestures of annoyance at the old surface habits (there is far too much invocation of that most delusive of standards, the "accurate image"), I can experience with great pleasure and profit his untwisting and discriminating and reweaving of the threads of Scott's sensibility, his finely selected anthology of quotations, and his convincing sympathy with a poetic mind whose qualities, I realize with something of a shock, are very like his own. He is equally discriminating on the diction and imagery of Margaret Avison, with whose centrifugal poetics and subordination of poem written to poem writing (she has almost no sense of authorial "natural piety"), he can have very little in common at all, although, of course, he manages to feel steady by invoking the "fusion" of "sensation and thought" in her "undissociated sensibility".

Smith, then, is a critic who stands or falls by purity of perception alone. He has a critical sense so fine (to adapt Eliot's famous remark on James) that it is incapable of being violated by an idea or even the lack of one. Far from being an intellectual critic, or (as he would no doubt prefer) a "unified" or "whole" one, he shows what can be done, and perhaps can only be done, by sharpening taste at the expense of its critical companions. But he shows this not only in writing criticism. As I read the *Collected Poems* which Oxford has just given us, I

realize, as I never did before, just how all-of-a-piece, as well as how varied, Smith's work really is. "Metaphysical poetry and pure poetry are what I stand for," he has insisted. One may be justly dubious about his "metaphysical" qualities, but he is as pure a poet as he is a critic.

THE HUNDRED POEMS in this new collection come from thirty years of work. It contains every poem but one from *News of the Phoenix* (38) and *A Sort of Ecstasy* (22). The others (40) do include a few early, uncollected pieces, of which the longest and most interesting is "Three Phases of Punch", ninety per cent unchanged since its last appearance (as "Varia") in the *London Aphrodite* of April, 1929; but most of them, to the best of my knowledge, are the latest Smith. It is surely no longer necessary to waste time refuting the silliest of all the Smith legends: that his taste has stultified his invention and narrowed his range, that he has spent thirty years husbanding a minimum of creativity for a minimum of purposes. So I won't try to make a comprehensive survey of his long-sustained, inventive, and remarkably varied output, which is certainly equal in range to that of any Canadian poet of his generation. Instead, I would prefer simply to watch the Smith "purity" at work in a few characteristic places, concentrating on what he does to other poets (the tributes, parodies, pastiches and translations), where the continuity of his poetry and criticism is likely to be most apparent, and pursuing the argument into adjacent areas wherever it seems useful.

The tributes are inseparable from the parodies, the parodies from the pastiches, and the pastiches from the translations. There must be at least twenty poems which belong somewhere within this continuity of categories, beginning with the ode to Yeats and the praise of Jay Macpherson at one end, followed by the revisioning of Vaughan and the *reductio ad absurdum* of George Johnston, moving through the glazed, wooden hyacinth for Edith Sitwell, the variations on Anne Wilkinson and the love song in Tom Moore tempo, continuing with the souvenir of the twenties, the Jacobean prothalamium and the lyric to a Catullan Anthea, and reaching at last the Gautier and Mallarmé translations at the other end. I cannot possibly think that Smith's translations are not as good English poems as the originals are French ones. In fact, what *could* be better than his version of "Brigadier"? And the high spirits of some of these pastiches are enough to convince even the most hidebound primitive that literature which claims to

forswear precedent has no monopoly on vitality. What is more to my point, the process of discrimination and selection responsible for the anthologies and for the Scott and Avison essays can here be seen most clearly at work — in the lively redistorting mirror he provides for George Johnston, Tom Moore or Edith Sitwell, and in the more sober ecstasy that he filters through Anne Wilkinson or Henry Vaughan.

The Smith purity shows at its best in the admirable Vaughan poem, which is worth saving for the last. It works less convincingly on Yeats, as the somewhat faded intensities of the "Ode on the Death of W. B. Yeats" demonstrate. The obvious comparison is with Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats". Smith shares some Auden mannerisms, particularly in the handling of epithets (see the third stanza), but the nature of his poem is very different. Auden's rich, diffuse, sectional elegy tries to include a great deal — intellectual, political, psychological, aesthetic — not only of Yeats but of the world in which Yeats died, and of course he ruminates and draws a moral or two. Smith's Yeats, however, is purified of almost everything except a few basic images. But, instead of distilling the essence of a great poet (as the Vaughan tribute does), the "Ode" succeeds only in reducing a great poet to the level of his own clichés.

> A wild swan spreads his fanatic wing.
> Ancestralled energy of blood and power
> Beats in his sinewy breast. . . .
> The swan leaps singing into the cold air . . .
> . . . crying
> To the tumultuous throng
> Of the sky his cold and passionate song.

Even if it were one of Yeats's most convincing poses that Smith has taken over, one could still detect something of the stock response at work here. In another Smith poem, "On Reading an Anthology of Popular Poetry", we are told how

> The old eternal frog
> In the throat that comes
> With the words *mother, sweetheart, dog*
> Excites and then numbs.

In reading early Smith, I feel the same way about the word *cold.*

Fortunately, the *Collected Poems* allows the reader to put Smith's more ascetic mannerisms in perspective. The poet may protest too much, he may risk succumbing to a formula, he may even seem to imagine that he can escape from a soft cliché by exchanging it for a hard one, but his talent is too rich to allow

doctrinaire confinement. The angularities of "The Lonely Land" do have their important share in Smith's "sort of ecstasy", but his sensibility achieves its fullest release when the crisp, clear, cold, smooth, hard, pointed, austere, lonely, etc. (I choose my list of adjectives from "To Hold a Poem") is complemented by the shimmer and fluctuation, the flash and fade, which Smith has helped us to perceive in D. C. Scott. "The Fountain", "Nightfall" and (especially) "The Circle" are more fully characteristic of Smith than "Swift Current" or "In the Wilderness" or even "The Lonely Land" itself.

If the Smith brand of purity works better in the Vaughan poem than it did in the Yeats, it is perhaps because in the former so much potential impurity is held in willing suspension.

> Homesick? and yet your country Walks
> Were heaven'd for you. Such bright stalks
> Of grasses! such pure Green!

The gently puzzled and at first only half-comprehending tone in which Smith presents Vaughan's combination of homesickness for eternity with sensitiveness to the divinity of his place of exile (his peculiarly ungnostic gnosticism) is fully absorbed into a concentration and refinement of Vaughan's sensibility and idiom (Smith's extract of Vaughan — and a wonderful distillation it turns out to be), while the religious paradox

> (Yet thou art Homesick! to be gone
> From all this brave Distraction
> Wouldst seal thine ear, nail down thine eye; . . .
> Thou art content to beg a pall,
> Glad to be Nothing, to be all.)

seems in the end so transparent as almost to be purified of religious meaning. But what the Smith purification of Vaughan makes only half-apparent (Vaughan, after all, is a pretty special case) is unmistakable if one sets Smith beside "that preacher in a cloud from Paul's", his favourite Donne, from whom our basic concept of a metaphysical poet must necessarily come. Smith obviously lacks the sheer argumentativeness, the sequential pressure of intellectual give and take, the involvement in conceptual definition and differentiation which gives Donne so much of his flavour. What he possesses are such things as the intellectual high spirits of the superb "What Casey Jones Said to the Medium" or the forceful syntactic logic of poems like "The Archer", "To a Young Poet", "The Flesh

Repudiates the Bone" and a good many others. I choose one short enough to quote.

This flesh repudiates the bone
    With such dissolving force,
In such a tumult to be gone,
    Such longing for divorce,
As leaves the livid mind no choice
    But to conclude at last
That all this energy and poise
    Were but designed to cast
A richer flower from the earth
    Surrounding its decay,
And like a child whose fretful mirth
    Can find no constant play,
Bring one more transient form to birth
    And fling the old away.

If one must use the terminology of the sacred wood, then what Smith gives us is less like Eliot's required fusion of thought and emotion than like his "emotional equivalent of thought". And if one can't resist a seventeenth-century title, there's always "cavalier" ready for the taking. But the temptation had better be resisted. Having watched Smith refuse to be contained by his own formulas, I can hardly expect him to be contained by mine. "The plot against Proteus" can be left to other hands: "when you have him, call." In the meantime, the continuous liveliness of texture in these *Collected Poems* keep rousing my prejudices — for and against. My third thoughts about Smith are unlikely to be my last.

TWO POEMS

A. J. M. Smith

IN THE CHURCHYARD AT SOUTH DURHAM, QUEBEC

Circa 1840

Underneath this grassy mound
Sleeps one who for a while
Walked by our side on common ground
    A country mile.

Her thoughts were with the fair,
The happy and the wise;
She seemed to breathe the purer air
    Of Paradise.

Tread softly: tenderness and grace,
High promise and sweet trust
Perfume this quiet place
    And sacred dust.

WALKING IN A FIELD, LOOKING DOWN AND SEEING A WHITE VIOLET

Threading
the ragged edges
of meadowgrass
and avid arches
of tendrils
and torn leaves
and straws
of last year's grass
and strings
of crass cornwisps
windwafted
from last year's
sheaves

the eye

plays Jackstraws
to disentangle
the skywhite skyblue
first shy white shoot
of a white violet
lifting a graygreen stalk
out of the welter
of leafgreen grassgreen
folded over the old
grayblack earth's
mothermilky
breast

A SELF-REVIEW

A. J. M. Smith

As a poet I am not the sort unenviously described in the lines beginning

> Though he lift his voice in a great O
> And his arms in a great Y.

When I write a poem I try to know what I am doing — at least with respect to craft. Luck is needed too, of course, and luck is unpredictable. All I know about it is that it has to be earned. Everything beneath the surface of technique remains obscure. It is this subterranean world, now that this book is out of my hands, I shall try to explore in these very tentative notes.

I remember a paradox of the psychology pundits: "How can I know what I think till I see what I say?" To apply this to the poet we need more verbs: *feel, fear, hope, love, hate* — an infinite series whose sum is *am* or *be*; so the question becomes for me "How do I know who I am till I hear what I write?"

> How all men wrongly death to dignify
> Conspire, I tell

Sounds differently from "I tell how all men conspire to dignify death wrongly", and expresses (or is) a different person. One can understand, then, that it is with a good deal of trepidation that I look into the handsome volume, as into a magnifying mirror, that is a credit at least to Mr. William Toye, the typographer and designer, and Mr. Theo Dimson, who drew the beautiful black and red Phoenix.

SOME PEOPLE may think it presumptuous to call a book of only a hundred short, mainly lyrical pieces of verse *Collected Poems* — but actually that is exactly what it is. Though I have a file full of verses in every stage of gestation from mere spawn to almost finished (that is, nearly *right*) poems, those in the book are all that I want to let out of my hands now, as being beyond my power to improve. Of these hundred, a few were written when I was an undergraduate and published in journals as different as *The McGill Fortnightly Review* and *The Dial*. And a few were written just the other day. Which is which would be hard to tell. Many of the poems, though started long ago and some of them printed in an unsatisfactory version, were not corrected or really finished (that is, not written) until years later — in one or two cases until I was correcting page proofs last summer. The second to last line of *Far West*, for example, as it stands now was a happy afterthought[1], which not only intensified the accuracy of the experience but got rid of a miserable echo of Cummings that had troubled my conscience ever since the poem was first published in England in the late thirties. The second couplet of the last stanza of *The Fountain* had never seemed quite inevitable, but many hours working over it in proof finally got it right — or at least I think so. Anyway, for better or worse, it remains, and now the third time round, the poem is written at last.

A really new poem, though made out of some very old sketches, is *The Two Birds*. Working on the page proofs I became dissatisfied with a piece of technically accomplished and rather emotionally enervating word-music that second thoughts told me ought to be dropped. (*The Circle* and *Nightfall* were about all the traffic would bear of that sort.) Almost by chance I came on a batch of old *McGill Fortnightly Reviews* stacked away in the attic. Looking through them I found a long forgotten poem called *Something Apart*. It was awkward, clumsy, and undigested. There were some good lines in it but also some very trite phrases and hazy images. There was also one brief bit that had been taken over and worked into *The Lonely Land*. But the poem consisted of three stanzas of seven lines each; and that was exactly the dimensions of the piece I wanted a substitute for. So I started to work on the rediscovered sketches. I put a new ribbon in my typewriter, got a batch of typewriting paper and a couple of soft pencils, and started in. Suddenly my imagination caught fire, and all the vague clichés of the

[1] The last two lines of *Far West* now run thus:

As the cowboys ride their skintight stallions
Over the barbarous hills of California.

thing began to drop away. I was able to organize it, tighten it, work out a development and bring it to a satisfying and unexpected close. The last lines had been particularly weak and sentimental. They told how the raucous bird was "something apart" — you have guessed it! — "from the sorrow in my heart". But now everything was changed — the title, which awakens a curiosity which is not satisfied until the last line (though a clue is dropped in the middle line of the middle stanza, "a voice as twisted as mine"); the image of the heart as a second foul bird; the "gold sun's winding stair" of the second stanza; and, last of all to be written, the title and the first word of the poem, *So*, to suggest an antecedent unspecified source of the bitterness, remorse, and self-disgust that the complete poem finally expresses. Unspecified, of course, because irrelevant — "another story", hinted at perhaps in the "Who is that bitter king? It is not I" of the first poem in the book and the reference to "this savory fatness" in *On Knowing "Nothing"*, one of the last. And here perhaps, with luck, will be the source of poems yet to be written.

You will see from all this that I do not believe in progress in the ordinary sense of the word. The more recent poems in this collection are neither "better" nor "worse" than the earlier, and what differences there are depend on the genre or the occasion, not on the time of writing. Such development as has occurred took place before the poem was printed. If the development was not marked enough then the piece remains in the notebook or file. The different voices and different modes called for by the different occasions should not obscure the underlying unity pervading even the most apparently different poems. *Ballade un peu Banale* is in one tone, *Good Friday* and *Canticle of St. John* are in another; but each is equally serious, and each modifies the others. The same is true of (say) *The Offices of the First and the Second Hour* and *Song Made in Lieu of Many Ornaments*, the first a programme of asceticism and the second a playful but not frivolous treatment of the Pauline doctrine of holy matrimony. I agree with Geoffrey Grigson that there is no essential difference between an epic and a limerick. "You cannot suppose a divine or an inspired origin for one against a secular or rational origin for the other." Each must be equally well written; each must be as good as its author can make it. That is the function of the poet with respect to his poems. He is a craftsman, and for a great part of the time he is a conscious craftsman. It is only in the essential climactic moment (or hour) that the Muse takes over and the work goes on one cannot say how or why.

My POEMS ARE NOT, I think, autobiographical, subjective, or personal in the obvious and perhaps superficial sense. None of them is revery, confession, or direct self-expression. They are fiction, drama, art; sometimes pastiche, sometimes burlesque, and sometimes respectful parody; pictures of possible attitudes explored in turn; butterflies, moths, or beetles pinned wriggling — some of them, I hope — on the page or screen for your, and my, inspection. The "I" of the poem, the protagonist of its tragedy or the clown of its pantomime, is not me. As Rimbaud said, *Je est un autre*, I is another.

"Indeed?" I can hear you explain. "Then who *is* this collector of butterflies and bugs you have been describing? Your emblem ought to be the chameleon or mole, not the Phoenix or swan."

You have a point all right. And it's an important one. It goes to the heart of the general problem of the role of personality, conscious and unconscious, in artistic creation — the problem, indeed, of personal responsibility. As a poet (no philosopher or moralist) I can only touch upon it lightly and indirectly — as in the poem *Poor Innocent*:

> It is a gentle natural (is it I?) who
> Visits timidly the big world of
> The heart, &c.

The question is answered (or not answered) in the denouement of the little metaphysical comedy that is so well suited to the dynamics of the Italian sonnet:

> *Back to your kennel, varlet! Fool, you rave!*
> *Unbind that seaweed, throw away that shell!*

The controlling mind, the critical shaping faculty of the rational consciousness sends the tremulous instinctive and sensuous fancy packing.

It is this rather bossy intelligence which chooses what is to be expressed, considers how, and judges the final outcome. But what a lot escapes it — or cajoles it, or fools it! It did not choose the images, the metaphors, the sensations, or the sounds that chime and clash in the consonants and vowels — though it did eventually approve them. What or who was it, indeed, that suffered a sea-change so it could breathe in a world

> Where salt translucency's green branches bear
> This sea-rose, a lost mermaid, whose cold cave,
> Left lightness now, the lapping seatides lave
> At base of Okeanos' twisted stair

or watched

> what time the seamew sets
> Her course by stars among the smoky tides
> Entangled?

I do not know. Where *do* the images of a writer come from? From experience, I suppose. But not — in my case at least — from experience as emotion, and not remembered (that is, not *consciously* remembered) in tranquillity or otherwise. When, for instance, did I look up at an "icicle sharp kaleidoscopic white sky" or see "birds like dark starlight twinkle in the sky"? When did I gaze on "the gold sun's winding stair" in the deep pinewoods or see "the green hills caked with ice" under a bloodshot moon? I don't know when, but I must have, waking or in dream, and the experience sank into the depths of the Self to be dredged up heaven knows how long afterwards.

I do remember — not any one specific moment, but as in a dream many times, always at evening or in the early morning, the swallows skimming over the rapids by the old mill at Laval-sur-le-Lac near Saint Eustache where we used to go for the summer when I was a child. I remember August 4th, 1914, there, and I remember helping to search for the body of a young man drowned in the rapids. And so the swallows, associated with loneliness and death by water, swerve into one or two of the more intimate of the poems and become a source of simile and metaphor. But why *crisp* should seem to be an obsessive word and *love* more than once evoke stinging whips I do not know.

LET US RETURN to the known world of the consciousness. Irony and wit are intentional, and I note that there is one device of irony that I have seemed to find particularly congenial. This is ironic understatement or anti-climax, the intentional and rather insulting drop into bathos. This can be dangerous when turned upon oneself; ironic self-depreciation can be too easily taken by others as sober literal truth. But when turned against the knaves and fools who are the traditional targets of classical satire it can be very effective. I find a number of instances of it, however, whose intention or effect is less certain. I will try to take one or two of them apart to see how they work. This may perhaps help the reader to know why he thinks them good or bad.

In the following lines from *Bird and Flower* the destructive criticism is concentrated in the bathos of the last word:

> Some holy men so love their cells they make
> Their four gray walls the whole damned stinking world
> And God comes in and fills it *easily*.

The paradox here is in the statement that God should find anything easy or (by implication therefore) hard. What we have actually is an inverted hyperbole calculated to emphasize how small and mean is the monastic world of the "holy" men who blaspheme the world of natural love. Only for them, not for the poet and the particular woman he is writing about, is the world a damned and stinking world.

There is a similar paradoxical misapplication of a limiting adverbial idea to the infinity of God in the comic poem *Ballade un peu Banale* where in order to take the virgin cow to heaven Christ is described as having to make use of "some miraculous device." This sort of thing is found, without irony, in many primitive Christian paintings. I find another application (this time without any pejorative intention) of a similarly incongruous or limiting epithet on the lines *To Henry Vaughan*

> Lifting the rapt soul out of Time
> Into a *long* Eternity.

As applied to the infinite duration of Eternity *long* is understatement and bathos. Its purpose, however, is not to be ironic at the expense of the naïveté of Henry Vaughan. Far from it. The poem is a genuine tribute to a wholly admirable poet and seer. The purpose of the figure is to convey as sharply as possible the identification of time and eternity (see also *The Two Sides of a Drum*) in the mind of Vaughan as a mystic.

> Where Heaven is now, and still to be.

I think this gets across for the reader who is sympathetic to Vaughan or to Christian or Platonic ideas. For one who is not (and the present writer is sometimes one such reader and sometimes the other) the effect of irony does come through after all, and gently indicates the noble futility of Vaughan's magnificent piety.

A couple of other instances of this device will emphasize how characteristic it seems to be. From *Noctambule*

> Reality at two removes, and mouse and moon
> *Successful.*

Merely successful, not triumphant or victorious or right or good, so that even mouse and moon (as well as lion and sun) suffer from the deprivation that it is the main business of the poem to lament.

And in *The Common Man*:

> At first he thought this helped him when he tried
> To tell who told the truth, who plainly lied.

The hyperbole in the idea that it is a matter of great difficulty to tell who *plainly* lied is the concisest way of suggesting the confusion of values in the modern world of political propaganda, mass media brainwashing, and cold-war bilge. Though this poem was written in the mid forties it has got truer every decade and is another version of the ironic series of events outlined in the angry political poems on the threat of nuclear suicide.

IT IS OBVIOUS that there is much here that is consciously contrived; much too whose author, a greater poet might say, is in eternity. How good either is, it is not for me to say. I hope every reader of this piece will buy the book and judge for himself.

THE BIRD OF HEAVENLY AIRS

Thematic Strains in Douglas Le Pan's Poetry

Marilyn Davies

If T. S. ELIOT'S THEORY is valid — "that genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood"[1] — then Douglas Le Pan is one of Canada's most "genuine" poets. A merely casual reading of either *The Wounded Prince*[2] or *The Net and the Sword*[3] leaves the reader feeling that he has experienced the immense grandeur and tragedy of human existence, and a study of Mr. Le Pan's poetry moves one to believe — with the historian Arnold Toynbee — that in this world are some privileged few who attain to sublime heights of universal compassion, and that in the translation of that compassion into deliberate action, is an intense suffering and martyrdom that rivals the anguish of a Christ crucified.

The conjunction of the name of the poet Le Pan, with that of the historian Toynbee, is not incidental. It is rather the theme of this exposition that an understanding of many of the ideas which underlie Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History*,[4] will lead to a fuller understanding and appreciation of the poetry of Douglas Le Pan.

Much of Mr. Le Pan's poetry concerns itself with the heroic, that is, with those rare personalities who actively respond to the challenge which a life lived *for* humanity brings. Thus, "to dive for a nimbus on the sea-floor," says this poet, "calls for a plucky steeplejack," a "dolphin-hearted journeyman," or even "daring's virtuoso" (*NS*, p. 34). And it is the destiny of these courageous and creative individuals to show the way for the masses of humanity: the "bleary hordes . . . afraid to wake" to a nimbus clutched in a hero's hand; the pale sophisticate who leers a set grin over his "weather-beaten mask," so that he not only "sees everything" but "has the air of having seen it all before," as described in *Image of*

Silenus (*WP*, p. 36). This mass-man of the grey flannel mind, haloed in his "man-made twilight," has all but lost the capacity to marvel at "the great blue heron" who is:

> unmistakeably a wonder,
> Unmistakeably blue among the indistinguishable limbs and boughs.

This heron, "a great bird/With wings stretched wide as love", also the "stranger" in *The Nimbus* who will "plunder the mind's aerial cages," and the "bird of heavenly airs" who is *The Wounded Prince* — these are the precious few, the singular beings who freely and dynamically take up all the challenges in living; who *seek* a face to face encounter with life's realities, no matter how bitter; and who *crave* personal involvement rather than escape. These are the dedicated few who live and die for their ideals. Such is the controlling motif which touches much of Le Pan's poetry.

Something of this heroic approach to living may be found, too, in Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History.* In fact, to touch upon some of this historian's views may help to illuminate, for the reader, the particular sort of heroism with which Mr. Le Pan is concerned.

Near the beginning of Chapter Five Toynbee says: "an encounter between two superhuman personalities is the plot of some of the greatest dramas that the human imagination has conceived" (p. 60). One of the central themes of Toynbee's philosophy of history rests in this word "encounter". In his terms, an encounter is a response to a challenge. Where society is confronted by problems, "the presentation of each problem is a challenge to undergo an ordeal" (p. 62), for out of encounter comes creation. Laying stress upon *individual* response to challenge, Toynbee quotes the following passage by Henri Bergson to amplify his theme:

> Just as men of genius have been found to push back the bounds of human intelligence . . . so there have arisen privileged souls who have felt themselves related to all souls . . . and have addressed themselves to humanity in general in an élan of love. The apparition of each of these souls has been like the creation of a new species composed of one unique individual (p. 212).

It is this sort of willing commitment which informs Mr. Le Pan's heroes. In his *Portrait of a Young Man* (*WP*, p. 7), says Le Pan, "He, like Ulysses, his own thongs commanded." In *Lines for a Combatant* (*NS*, p. 23) he speaks of "the fruition that blooms around elected action." In the same poem the concept of selfless dedication is emphasized:

having made my peace from brittleness,
To the air committed ambition, expectation,
My soul, even, that flickers above me fitfully
I wait here in the olive-grove . . ."to die,
To die so long as it is in the light."

This theme is more concentrated and more graphically portrayed in the poem *The Net and the Sword* (*NS*, p. 20).

Who could dispute his choice
That in the nets and toils of violence
Strangled his leafing voice
Enforced his own compassionate heart to silence,
Hunted no more to find the untangling word
And took a short, straight sword?

Here, the ancient Roman arena symbolically represents the modern battlefield. Of the two gladiators, one holds the net which entangles — this signifies the complexities of warfare where all is "littered/And looped with telephone wires, tank-traps, mine fields,/Twining about . . . ." The second gladiator in this encounter is the young soldier who, with clear-eyed purpose, *chooses* to be entangled in this mesh of war by taking up a "short, straight sword". The very bluntness of Le Pan's expression stresses the lad's immaculate decision. He consciously steels himself for combat by stifling his "compassionate heart to silence". He no longer seeks escape by an "untangling word" that could detach him from the world's problems. Rather, with single-purposed "eyes thrust concentrated and austere", he freely elects "among the sun's bright retinue" to die. In dedicating himself at least to a partial fulfilment of peace, he hopes for a new growth of civilization. Certainly, he himself does not expect to put an end to war — "to strike the vitals of the knotted cloud" — but he knows that his "smooth as silk ferocity" translated into action will cut away some of the ropes in the web of war and "at least let in the sun", a symbol of enlightenment and growth. Toynbee, who also stresses individual response to social challenge, may cast further light on the complexity of Mr. Le Pan's poetry when he states in his philosophy of history that essentially the *part,* not the *whole*, is at stake; yet, adds Toynbee, "the chances and changes to which the part is exposed cannot conceivably leave the whole unaffected" (p. 65). Each man then, may choose his dynamic role in the vast amphitheatre of the world.

On the other hand, in *Finale* (*WP*, p. 34), Mr. Le Pan depicts several forms

of insular existence: "the spy . . . living in a perpetual cellar", "the criminal, working at night", and "even the lovers living on their island". But, says Le Pan, this attempt to cut oneself off from the ordinary life of society cannot long continue, for "always the path leads back". Somewhere, somehow, contact with society is made, even against the escapist's will. His return may seem to offer no more than "dust, heat, noise" — but out of this the creative genius will fashion a new world. It may be enlightening to recall, at this point, Toynbee's theory that non-detachment from the affairs of the world is a positive humane principle, as opposed to that of escapism or isolationism which repudiates humanity. Still, Toynbee does uphold a principle of *temporary* withdrawal and return. The creative personality may withdraw from society in order "to realize powers within himself which might have remained dormant if he had not been released for the time being from his social toils and trammels" (p. 217). Such privileged personalities, following the path of mysticism pass first out of action into ecstasy but, unlike the Buddhist mystic, they do not remain in a state of abstract contemplation — of Nirvana — but rather pass once more out of ecstasy into action on a newer and higher level. Or, as Mr. Le Pan puts it, once returned from the escapist world of "the long voluptuous silence", that world which hears its "bird-calls issuing from the arras of a dream", the individual must face again the world of "steel-bright necessity". Here, says Le Pan, the creative person operates on

those notes
That sound so improbable, to weld a music like a
school-boy's song,
Out of those metals to hammer, to conquer, the
new and strenuous song.

A slight variation of the same theme is evident in *Canoe-Trip* (*WP*, p. 13). Here, a brief escape to the woods and streams of northern Canada results in

crooked nerves made straight,
The fracture cured no doctor could correct.
The hand and mind, reknit, stand whole for work.

Once the person is re-animated, says the author, "content, we face again the complex task". This return to creative activity seems to follow a sort of spiritual transfiguration which, in Toynbee's words "transcends the earthly life of man without ceasing to include it" (p. 439). The idea of a "transcendent" being in fierce contact with earthly reality is depicted in Le Pan's poem *Angels and Artificers* (*WP*, p. 30). Here, "the fiery artificers" work to create a perfect civilization,

> Hammering it into curious shapes, annealing, burnishing,
> Intent about the smithy, blowing it to a pitch
> Of their quick zeal. Their breath was ardent, flickering
> A Pentecost that played about the senseless mass
> And conquered it. But like a lover.

The comparison of the breath of these creative individuals to a "Pentecost" suggests the Christian concept of a spiritually transforming love which informed Christ's disciples with a desire to serve mankind. Toynbee expresses this love-service idea in the following words: "the faculty which we shall think of first as being common to man and God will be one which the philosophers wish to mortify and that is the faculty of love" (p. 530). Further on he says: "the terminus is the Kingdom of God; and this omnipresent Kingdom calls for service from its citizens on Earth here and now" (p. 531). The awareness that love bears a heavy burden in its total commitment to one's fellow man is expressed by Le Pan in *Elegy in the Romagna* (*NS*, p. 47).

> Their cries are mine,
> Their miseries thrill through my impoverished nerves,
> People the dungeon of my bowels with fancies.

Toynbee goes so far as to state that such a selflessly creative love operates in strain and tension which involves suffering and even a Christ-like martyrdom. Similarly, referring to *A Fallen Prophet* (*WP*, p. 32) Le Pan declares:

> Pain was your vocation and achievement,
> The restless sea your anthemed citadel.
> But when the waters have gone over you,
> Flashing shines still your dying, ransomed gift.

In *Image of Silenus* (*WP*, p. 36), when the superficial mask opens to reveal the hidden "figures of desire" we see that,

> . . . other figures, neither gold nor silver,
> Tell of the ultimate wish to do and suffer.

In *Reconnaissance in Early Light* (*NS*, p. 16) the young officer in command is described as one of these transfigured leaders of men,

> His gaze alone is unperplexed,
> He sips from this thin air some sacred word.

Through all his veins the sacrament of danger,
Discovering secret fires, runs riot.

Again, it is the wounded prince who endures a terrible humiliation from the stupid indifference of the mass man wasting in oceans of sludge. So, too, the great heron with wings "stretched wide as love" symbolizes the crucifixion of those rare and marvellous prophets in every age who are "killed" by the unfeeling, unvisionary mob. It is for such reasons that Le Pan pleads, in *The Nimbus* (*NS*, p. 34):

Stranger, reconquer the source of feeling
For an anxious people's sake.

THERE IS GREAT NOBILITY of mind and character in a man who dedicates himself to the betterment of civilization; but this borrows a touch of the sublime when one realizes that this uncompromising, total dedication, is for an ideal which at best is a hazardous risk, with the odds stacked impressively against success. In conveying this spirit of daring involved in such a venture, Toynbee interprets the words of Faust to Mephistopheles after their pledge is made: "in attempting this I am aware that I am leaving safety behind me. Yet, for the sake of the possibility of achievement, I will take the risk of a fall and destruction" (pp. 64-65). The historian also refers to the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden as the result of a similar risk: "the Fall, in response to the temptation to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, symbolizes the acceptance of a challenge to abandon this achieved integration and to venture upon a fresh differentiation out of which a fresh integration may — or may not — arise" (p. 65). The combination of tragedy and grandeur in these statements is truly overwhelming. How heroic is he who stakes his all on so perilous a speculation! There is moving pathos in the suffering of one such dedicated soul in Le Pan's poem, *One of the Regiment* (*WP*, p. 26).

No past, no future
That he can imagine. The fiery fracture
Has snapped that armour off and left his bare
Inflexible, dark frown to pluck and stare
For some suspected rumour that the brightness sheds
Above the fruit-trees and the peasants' heads

> In this serene, consuming lustrousness
> Where trumpet-tongues have died, and all success.

This theme is also emphasized in *Lines for a Combatant* (*NS*, p. 23).

> Apprehension of an improbable event
> . . . .
> Has offered my marrow and the gristle in my eye
> To speculation.

The soldier's "speculation" is that a

> fruition that blows around elected action
> Will cultivate the barbarous heavens with thin scions
> Of a blossoming fiction.

A negative expression of this theme is seen in the paltry puppet-minds of those images of Silenus who lament in their blind despair, "*What if the promise were puffs of air?*" and who come to *believe* that the bird which they *actually saw* was "only a blue mirage" (*WP*, p. 36).

It is a cause for wonder, how any individual — transfigured or not — could wager so much, against so tremendous a risk. Toynbee suggests that the response of genius is possible because it seeks what is universal and eternal, rather than what is local and particular; and furthermore, that this is rendered possible by an awakened sense of the unity of all things. He says, "the painfully perturbing dissolution of familiar forms, which suggests to weaker spirits that the ultimate reality is nothing but a chaos, may reveal to a steadier and more spiritual vision the truth that the flickering film of the phenomenal world is an illusion which cannot obscure the eternal unity that lies beneath it" (p. 495). Such a unity, "broadens and deepens as the vision expands from the unity of mankind, through the unity of the cosmos, to embrace the unity of God" (p. 431). Le Pan interprets the unity of mankind beautifully in his poem, *Field of Battle* (*NS*, p. 31), where the soldier integrates the humane purpose of his life in a crumbling world, to that of Christ crucified.

> Estranged from me — but yet you are not strange,
> I see humanity as the wound you bear
> Cleft in your side and mine uniting us.

At times there occurs an awareness of the temporary disruption of unity in the cosmos, as in Le Pan's *Elegy in the Romagna* (*NS*, p. 57) where the poet takes

a lesson from a painfully industrious spider.

> Still the slow spider weaves.
> And so make to trial. To imitate the spider,
> From our unravelled tissues,
> To spin an intellectual thread, no more
> Mercurial nor more pure than this so precious crew,
> That mounting, mounting, breaking, respun, as
> thin
> As starlight, perhaps at last might clasp the
> upper air
> And there restore relation and identity.

But it is in *Tuscan Villa* (*NS*, p. 7) that war, chaos, and destruction are seen as a veritable *part* of the total unity. Le Pan speaks of that perpetual human fire that one moment in history builds castles and at another, burns castles. The soldier, "too tightly closed in a luxury of flame", fails to see or understand that his life-giving role shares in an almost sacramental beauty. Then too, the deep awareness of the unity of everything in God is focussed in the same poem. Here, during a lull in battle, the author surveys the physical signs of the destruction of a civilization, a destruction which he has helped to "create", and yet he is moved to say:

> Surely this is not out of God's grace,
> Where soldiers and a dying tower are lapped in peace.

So much for those heroes who meet life's challenge in dedicated, personal encounter. There are also those who fail to respond either to the challenge of environment, or to the challenge from within. In *Elegy in the Romagna* (*NS*, p. 47) Le Pan depicts the other soldiers around him who fail to see the unity in chaos, and so cannot perfectly adjust to their environment.

> Strand after strand I hear
> Phrase after phrase blown one way by the
> muffled wind.
> And so the air is peopled. One breathes, "I've
> seen too much."
> Another, "Let me be lucky and be killed."

The failure to respond to the challenge from within is best seen in *Image of Silenus* (*WP*, p. 36). Here, the "inner city, the city of phantoms" behind the mask, is the unseen, inner man where all the potentialities, all the aspirations of a human being have been denied fruition. These human beings of miniature heroics exist,

debased, in a world of wishful thinking. The inhabitants of their minds are only "the shrunken figures of desire"; they are unreal in so far as they represent vicarious living never to be realized in the objective world.

> The runner here is always first to break the tape,
> The infant Hercules compels the snake,
> The surgeon cuts the flesh to an exquisite thinness,
> The climber stands triumphant over Everest.

This is non-fulfilment: a sick feasting upon ephemeral fancies and anaemic hopes. These are the mass men, "animal, inarticulate", who — merely existing in a mechanical and materialistic civilization — "are souls underground, buried under miles of brick" in "the real and suffering city" to be seen from any "railway viaduct".

> They are rows of jostling seeds,
> Planted too close, unlikely to come to maturity.

They guard their nonentity, their death and despair, by that "guiling glass", the "invisible barrier" of unmoved, inanimate faces where, sophisticated, "the mask grins again". It is one of Toynbee's theories that "in the Macrocosm growth reveals itself as a progressive mastery over the external environment; in the Microcosm as a progressive self-determination or self-articulation" (p. 189). Thus, if there is no articulation, there is no growth; there is only

> A ground swell continually making for the shores of speech
> And never arriving.

There is only stagnation and spiritual death. An image of Silenus.

The stagnation of the individual mind in Le Pan's *Image of Silenus* is magnified in *Tuscan Villa* (*NS*, p. 7) to encompass the aridity of an entire society. The villa itself is the symbol of the decadence of an opulent culture. Its paralytic stupor is vividly depicted in the second stanza where it is

> now too old, too torpid
> To care. Explosions seep through the thick walls as rumours.
> What little is left of the villa's heart beats slow,
> Integuments hardening inwards, all orifices
> Closing. Daydreaming towards its end.

Insularity from events in the external world is an unmistakeable sign of that stasis which Toynbee considers in his concept of the breakdown of civilization. This phenomenon occurs when a civilization is still alive, but does not grow. It rather

lives on the memory of some attainment in the past. It is an arid civilization caught in a moment of stasis. Toynbee, too, has this to say: "a civilization that has become the victim of a successful intrusion has already in fact broken down internally and is no longer in a state of growth" (p. 245). Mr. Le Pan, in *Tuscan Villa*, expresses his consciousness of the internal decay of a society when he questions:

> Was there some vileness lurking understairs,
> Infection curled in the bud before it flowered,
> That brought this dreadful cleansing on the house?

The answer is given in the succeeding lines.

> And in the bowels of the house clot deadly humours,
> The surfeit of garlanded years kept locked in the dark,
> Furs, faience, crystal, silver, jewels,
> A fistula soon to be broken in exquisite riot.
> Death, finally. The dark cornucopia
> Where the patron past dropped treasure lavishly,
> Is corrupted by its own confined effulgence.

Thus, the death of a whole society is a form of suicide. Still time, historicity, motion in life, according to Mr. Le Pan, is cyclical. A continuous pattern of death and resurrection establishes itself as the underlying unity in the life of individuals, of nations, and even of entire civilizations. The laying waste of Tuscan Italy at different times in history, whether by Hun, Visigoth, or Canadian, is all one in Mr. Le Pan's sweeping view. It is a "dreadful cleansing" of internal decay, a necessary and almost sacramental purification in the human situation. A similar tone of optimism can be found in Toynbee's philosophy of history for specific reasons which may help clarify our understanding of Mr. Le Pan's comprehensive view of life. To Toynbee it is *not inevitable* that a civilization will disintegrate, for growth depends on whether "the divine spark of creative power is still alive" (p. 254) in inspired individuals or minority groups; then "breakdown" may not occur. Rather, it is more inevitable that, once the old culture disintegrates, a new society will be born. Such a confidence in creation out of decay threads its way as a thematic motif throughout Mr. Le Pan's poetry. Consider, for example, the prophetic final stanza of *Tuscan Villa*:

> Winds veer
> And the weathervane veers
> And the instruments are packed away.

But the crown with diaphanous veils
Of fire
Over the tower
And the trampled fields prevails
And will prevail that far-off day
When other towers are circled with mild birds.

Beneath the cyclic disturbance from peace to war, and from decay to regeneration — as symbolized in the veering winds — is an eternal harmony which "prevails" now (though obscurely concealed behind a veil of chaotic war), and "will prevail that far-off day" when peace will crown the world again. The creative evolution of society moves steadily forward so long as there is a "wounded prince", a "bird of heavenly airs" who, though

Impaled, sings on;
Will not disown its fettering crest and crown;

So that what never could be dreamt of has been made.

THIS POET, LE PAN, is by choice a passionate pilgrim through his world, and his poetry bespeaks a man unafraid of passion in a literary era marked by much cold and chromium-plated verse which, one fears, is far too often assembled by the century's mechanical brides. Mr. Le Pan may well feel alien in an age "without a mythology" since he possesses so dynamic and purposeful a myth himself. Perhaps this is partly why his poetry is unique, for in a very real sense these poems represent that land which only "the passionate man must travel". The true humanist, the individual *engagé*, is rare in any age, and precious. Mr. Le Pan is no Silenus (*WP*, p. 36). He will not gather protectively about him a goat's hide as Adam did, his second skin. Nor will he carry the sophisticate's "weather-beaten mask" before his face: the blasé, insensitive "mask that sees everything,/That has the air of having seen it all before", the mask which denies man's human sense of wonder; the mask whose

strained grin has been rivered by marks of rain
Since first it was set up in the garden; it is not so bright now
As when it left the hands of the makers.

This is the mask of the common man which only occasionally and "unaccountably

opens" to reveal an "ill-assorted choir": Dionysus, Christopher, Francis, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hamlet, and Oedipus. These are vicariously worshipped midgets, captive aspirations imprisoned in the mass-man's mind but never brought to fruition. Therefore, they are "not heroic, filling all the sky" like the "great bird/ With wings stretched wide as love". They are "miniatures rather, toys in a toy shop window". This ravaged mask of Silenus hides the "inner city" of man's mind. It is merely a "city of phantoms".

Mr. Le Pan, then, is no Silenus. He is, however, "like one of the images of Silenus" in the way in which Alcibiades used that figure to describe Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*.[5] It is, in fact, from this classic that Le Pan draws the title and epigraph for his poem, *Image of Silenus*. Evidently part of this Canadian poet's function is to reveal, like Socrates, what Alcibiades calls "the wants of those who have need of gods and mysteries" (p. 177), and this, according to Le Pan, in a country which lacks a mythology. Perhaps it is significant that Douglas Le Pan often portrays stasis of mind as Canadian muskeg or "palsied swamp" (*NS*, p. 34), not as desert. Again, as Alcibiades said of Socrates, his very "words are like the images of Silenus which open" (p. 184), and, "he who opens . . . and sees what is within will find . . . words which have a meaning to them . . . of the widest comprehension . . ." (p.185). Alcibiades adds, "when I opened him, and looked within at his serious purpose, I saw in him divine and golden images of . . . fascinating beauty . . ." (p. 178). In experiencing rightly the richly textured poetry of Mr. Le Pan, the reader may respond in much the same way as Alcibiades to Socrates. He may sense too, the power of "poetic incarnation" whereby "word", somehow, has become "flesh", and poetry itself an expression of love for humanity.

One might well borrow Mr. Le Pan's words from *The Nimbus* (*NS*, p. 34) to indicate that in his own poetic way he comes "With the nimbus in [his] fist," and swims

> from the foundered sunburst's roar
> With lost treasure on his back.

NOTES

[1] T. S. Eliot, quoted by F. R. Leavis in *New Bearings in English Literature* (London, 1950), n. 1, p. 112.

[2] Douglas Le Pan, *The Wounded Prince* (London, 1948); hereafter cited in the text as *WP*.

[3] Douglas Le Pan, *The Net and the Sword* (Toronto, 1953); hereafter cited in the text as *NS*.

[4] Citations from Toynbee in the text are to *A Study of History,* abridged edition of vols. I-VI by D. C. Somervell (Oxford, 1947).

[5] Citations from Plato's *Symposium* refer to the text in *The Portable Plato*, ed. by Scott Buchanan (New York, 1948).

A TURN TO THE STAGE

Reaney's Dramatic Verse: Part I

Alvin Lee

THIS ESSAY OFFERS a description of the major writings of James Reaney, in an attempt to show something of his development as a verse dramatist. Until recently, Mr. Reaney, now thirty-six years old, was known primarily as a poet and as a writer of short stories. He is the author of a volume of poems entitled *The Red Heart* (1949), in which a youthful poet emerges as "an exile from the paradise of childhood". Nine years later he published *A Suit of Nettles* (1958), a long cyclical poem of satirical intention. His many other poems, published in various places, include a chapbook, *Twelve Letters to a Small Town* (1962), in which Stratford, Ontario, is described in a series of poetic reminiscences. Mr. Reaney's short stories are in several publications; there is a very funny one, "The Bully", in the World's Classics volume of *Canadian Short Stories* edited by Robert Weaver. Most important of all, for our present purposes, Mr. Reaney has in the last four years written several dramatic works: the libretto for a chamber opera (*Night-Blooming Cereus*), *A One Man Masque*, and three comedies (*The Killdeer, The Sun and The Moon, The Easter Egg*).

Since *The Red Heart* sets forth, in its rather uneven but powerfully imagistic way, several of the human figures, situations, and themes which later dominate the dramas, it is important to establish at this point something of the character of this germinal work.

The world of *The Red Heart* is clearly imagined; it is palpable, immediate, confining, and so far as it has an actual geographical location, it is a farm near Stratford, Ontario, or, in one cycle of poems, the larger area of the Great Lakes system. Urban Ontario, and the world beyond, are dimly apprehended mysteries perhaps to be explored in the future, after escape from "this dull township/ Where fashion, thought and wit/Never penetrate". Most of the forty-two poems

are set in an old farmhouse, or in the garden, fields, and lanes immediately outside. Such a setting might have been idyllically pastoral, with happy family life, easy work, games, singing, and the beauties of nature much in evidence, but *The Red Heart* makes only vestigial use of an unspoiled pastoral ideal. The farmhouse is lonely and haunted, almost totally empty of human companionship, inhabited by an unhappy, imaginative child and by pink and blue wallpaper, banisters, staircases, mouseholes, wardrobes, closets, and a clock which "with ice-tones . . . strikes". Outside, in the humdrum green summertime, plump ripe plums hang, or fall from their tree's green heaven, like dead stars rushing to a winter sea. Spring must come to this garden, and summer clearly does, because plums do ripen and hollyhocks blossom, but there is little sense of nature in all her changing moods, especially her lighter ones. Autumn, dead gardens, lanes of leafless trees, dead leaves "languageless with frost", and winter — these are the seasonal symbols which quickly succeed any marks of a more benevolent or vital natural order. This is a world abandoned by Adonis, kept alive only by the beating of a child's red heart and by the emergence of a poetic consciousness.

The figure of the child varies considerably from poem to poem. At times it is "he", at times "she"; occasionally it is even "we", but most often "I", which probably suggests at least a rough analogy, if no easy equation, with the poet's own early life. The age of the protagonist ranges, not chronologically so far as the organization of the book is concerned, from the unborn state to young adulthood. But youth has a way of aging quickly in *The Red Heart*; as soon as there is even a rudimentary consciousness, the child is aware of time and death. In "Dark Lagoon" an infant has just come from the foetal world where the mother's heart was the distant tick-tocking of the chisel that would one day carve his name on a monument. The baby is still very young, but the poet describing him is rather old-mannish, prematurely disillusioned with the world of human experience. He has lived long enough to hear

> The cry of "Eenie, meenie, minie, moe",
> By which children choose a loser in a game,
> And by which Fate seems to choose
> Which children shall be which:
> One-eyed, wilful, hare-lipped, lame,
> Poor, orphans, idiots, or rich.

In *The Red Heart* fate has chosen several ways of making children losers. The figure of the orphan recurs several times, and two poems are given over entirely

to its perspective. In "The English Orphan's Monologue" an angry, resentful hired girl, who feels herself enslaved on the farm where she works, sits by the stove in the evenings plotting her revenge, with a sadistic glee worthy of one of Browning's obsessed characters. She plans to get pregnant by the son Harry and get them both thrown out, a policy which might well continue the ugly problem described in a similar poem, "The Orphanage". Here the plain white, "cretinous" faces of children in yellow dresses peer through gray orphanage windows, thinking about the lust of the "young men who play hockey in winter" and "crawl over ghastly women" in the summer: "We are the answers/To those equations/In ditches and round-shouldered cars." But from such unions springs life, and therefore the possibility of all the dirty tricks an adult world can play on a child. The sense of deep offence at the sexuality of men and women, a theme which runs through much of the book, stems from the wretchedness of the child's experiences, all of which, of course, would have been impossible had he never been born.

On the whole the adult world comes off very badly in *The Red Heart.* When the child is not miserable in his isolation, he is haunted by a stepmother, or by some other figure of oppression and cruelty. In one poem he comes across an old woman who wants to buy his tonsils and fingers, so that with them she may mend the curry-combs she uses on two great black hounds and on a great black horse; he apparently escapes from this threat only to meet a sly fox in his den, "as charming and good-mannered/As the President of France,/But his kitchen-floor he's scrubbing/With a tub of blood." Children's blood, no doubt. Teachers in school are cold and authoritarian. There is also a rich man, giggling, in his luxuries and in the accoutrements of art, at the appalling working conditions of the proletariat:

> Well . . . is it not all very beautiful?
> As you stand hungry in the rain
> Just look to what heights you too may attain.

God is just as bad, known only to the small boy as the one who will send a bear to eat him up if he swears.

There are two exceptions to these tyrannical adults. In "Pink and White Hollyhocks" pre-Raphaelite ladies, the blossoms on the green hollyhock spires, ascend intensely from July to September to the topmost rooms of their towers, and there lie down with their lovers, having blown out the pink lamps forever. The "dear fat mother" of the Katzenjammer Kids in the comics keeps only "fairly good guard" over the fat pies she bakes, thus showing that she at least resists the blue

Captain and the orange Inspector who notice the Kids only to spank them: "Oh, the blue skies of that funny paper weather!"

One might expect that a youthful world so seriously and continuously threatened as this would result in the writing of elegy, in a lament for a lost happiness; but Mr. Reaney, in his lyric phase, does not write elegy, even as now in his dramatic phase (if one may use these expressions), he does not write tragedy. There would seem to be several reasons for this. Already in The *Red Heart* there has developed considerable ironic detachment, which contrasts with the accompanying lyric sense of shock and longing following a premature loss of innocence. Irony is the death of elegy, because elegy requires a strong belief in ideals, in a faith that something better did once exist. The detachment is evident in the few poems he puts in the mouth of someone else, and also in that quite large group in which the attention is focussed on a third person or object. Several pieces are dialogues rather than lyrics, and dialogue objectifies, sets the artist at a distance, or out of the matter altogether. Even in the first-person lyrics, that is the majority of the poems, there is almost no self-pity; the situation described may be pathetic to the reader, but the victim has more interesting ways of fighting than simply bemoaning his personal fate. And since these ways generate several kinds of conflict, out of which drama later appears, it is important to note them before passing on.

The most elaborate compensation the child has for the deprivation of human love is a rich life of fantasy, some of it liberating but some of it simply an extension of horror already realized. In "The Clouds," the child sees a cloudy sky, metaphorically, as the wallpaper of a bedroom; out of this identification come others, fanciful and filled with interest for a child's imagination. But then he wakes from his reverie, and the poem ends on the disappointing thought, "They were only clouds". The longing for the metaphorical identification remains, however, the desire that the fantasies be true: "What are the clouds that sail by so slow . . . ./If not that fancied wallpaper . . . ?" This is all innocent enough, but there are other poems filled with macabre imaginings. In "Dream within Dream" first he saw himself riding with a demon who ate human hair, then he woke up and killed a man, next he pushed a woman over a cliff, then he choked a vivacious gentleman, and finally he stabbed a girl.

> Each time the face of the man became
> More like my father's face;
> And that of the woman, of course,
> Began to seem like my mother's,

As if I could have slain my parents
For that foul deed that struck
Me out of chaos, out of nothing.

The destructive fantasy, as a means of hitting back, is a theme which runs throughout the book. It may be treated playfully, as in "The Sundogs"; these animals of the Sun take puppyish delight in bringing the storms which will drown the crickets, set the killdeer birds crying, send shingles flying, and press the oats to the ground. In "Suns and Planets" the artist looks for the "thick autumn time" when a great wind will pluck Venus and Mars and grey Pluto like fruit to the ground. One of the children in *The Red Heart* wonders why he traces the letter A on a window-sill, because *his* name contains no A; he wonders why his mother looks at him so sadly, why his father stares, and why both flowers and weed avoid his fingers. When his feet become hooves and make his shoes pinch he does not let on, lest he be shot for a monster.

He wondered why he more and more
Dreamed of eclipses of the sun,
Of sunsets, ruined towns and zeppelins,
And especially inverted, upside down churches.

Not until later does he learn that he is Antichrist.

To strike back is one possibility. To become an inanimate object, for instance a top on a string, is another possibility; then, after crazy spinning periods, one could have long intervals of peaceful rest. One can also withdraw into the past, regress, refuse to go on; this theme is especially persistent in Mr. Reaney's writings and is perhaps best illustrated in *The Red Heart* by the conclusion of a retrospective poem, "The School Globe". Wandering about alone in an empty schoolroom, the adolescent sees a faded globe as a parcel of his past childhood, a period of his life to which he would gladly return:

if someone in authority
Were here, I'd say
Give me this old world back
Whose husk I clasp
And I'll give you in exchange
The great sad real one
That's filled
Not with a child's remembered and pleasant skies
But with blood, pus, horror, death, stepmothers, and lies.

The meditative nostalgia of this piece is as close to elegy as we come, and the lines just quoted are a fit statement in miniature of the kind of existence struggled with in *The Killdeer*, *The Sun and the Moon*, and *The Easter Egg*. Through all his wanderings and experiences though, the bearer of the red heart has one overriding, if futile, wish:

> wherever I go,
> Wherever I wander
> I never find
> What I should like to find;
> For example, a mother and father
> Who loved me dearly
> And loved each other so,
> And brothers and sisters with whom,
> In the summer, I'd play hide-and-go-seek
> And in the winter, in the snow,
> Fox-and-goose week after week.
> Instead I must forever run
> Down lanes of leafless trees
> Beneath a Chinese-faced sun;
> Must forsaken and forlorn go
> Unwanted and stepmotherishly haunted
> Beneath the moon as white as snow.

Failing in the search for a family, the red heart turns away from this world altogether and for a time becomes mistress of a golden lover, the Sun. The Sun, though, is eternal, and its cycle cannot be contained in the blood-filled dungeon of a human heart; like an autumn leaf from its branch the heart falls from life and the gold prisoner flies away. In the title poem of the book the question is asked, "Who shall pick the sun/From the tree of Eternity?" and the answer comes back, "It seems that no one can." The result is destruction for all things in the mutable world.

Each reaction of the child to the world of experience — fantasies, pleasant or macabre, vengeful striking back, metamorphosis into a top or something inanimate, withdrawal into the past, continuing the search for family, or aspiration towards the order of eternity — each of these reactions leads to a dead end, to the gray grave where all shall be trampled. Throughout it all runs the horror of the dark sensuality which brings the baby into the world. It is, then, a mark of the ambiguity of this early volume, that the one remaining possibility, one which emerges fitfully throughout and more insistently towards the end, is the love of

man and woman. At times its treatment is ironic and closely associated with themes of death. In "A Fantasy and a Moral" a young woman with ballooning breasts is wafted mysteriously to a demon lover who, unknown to her, impregnates her with a poisonous child:

> So love, though measured breath by breath,
> May seem like walking in a summer dream,
> Visiting nowhere but pleasant places;
> So love does often lead a filthy way to Death.

A more romantic view of love appears, in enigmatic form, in "A Riddle":

> We need no gloves,
> Our hands englove each other.
> We need no scarves,
> Our arms that purpose serve.
> We need no trousers,
> No overcoats, no hats,
> Ourselves do clothe each other
> Fully against all cold, wind and rain.
> What are we
> Who need no raiment
> Nor the help of weavers, hatters,
> Tailors, milliners, stitchers, glovers,
> To whom no winter matters?
> Answer: A pair of very loving lovers.

It is, however, in the poem entitled "To My Love" that one can see opening up most clearly the dimension which, in the plays, is to be set against those childhood attitudes we have been considering. By the age of twenty-one the poet has "devoured all substance", but he must not die until he "tries on" love.

> Though I've devoured all substance
> In twenty-one years,
> I shall not, must not die
> Until, my Love,
> Like a fantastic white glove
> You my hand
> (Each finger for a special sense)
> Tries on
> Then dig my grave
> For I am ripe
> For senseless, languageless lifelessness.

The Red Heart is a book of beginnings, of attempts to handle large matters,

both poetic and existential. At times it is ironic and playful and at times it achieves a poignant beauty not easily forgotten. Above all it is filled with inventiveness and experimentation, with a willingness to strike out new and palpable images or unusual rhythms. If the result is irregular at times, and it is, this is because Mr. Reaney at this point has not yet achieved the close synthesis of emotion and intellect which is one of the really extraordinary things about his recent writings. In 1958, when he published *A Suit of Nettles*, the sartorial activity of "trying on" new experiences was left to the central goose character, Branwell, while the very knowing and sophisticated poet made use of literary and intellectual resources almost completely foreign to him nine years earlier.

It is not my purpose here to consider *A Suit of Nettles* at any length, primarily because it does not seem to me to be as immediately relevant to the plays as does the earlier work. It does represent an enormously disciplined imaginative effort, and the social or cultural reference of its satirical themes leads naturally to the communal interests set forth in the comedies. Two or three of the central characters also are very important. The tragic hero, if one can use such a term about a goose who can't quite become a swan, has been made to look ridiculous by a pretty goose who has rejected his love; in this sense, Branwell is about one step further on the road to adult experience than the speaker in *The Red Heart*. *A Suit of Nettles* is a decisively cyclical poem, each of its twelve pastoral eclogues being concerned with one month of the year. The main theme is that of sterility versus fertility and the scope is meant to take in "all the intellectual institutions of the age". The same irony which let the gods stay dead in *The Red Heart* now becomes militant, changes to satire, and sets forth visionary alternatives to the land of upturned privies. The purpose is to fertilize a dead land, by beating it with the Punch's stick of satire until the phallos blossoms, and until the "life and heart and mind-line" of the barnyard society have been thoroughly anatomized.

A mechanical clock ticked relentlessly through *The Red Heart*, in accordance with the idea that life is simply an awakening into death; time passes no less relentlessly in *A Suit of Nettles* and most of the geese are sacrificed for Christmas dinners at the end. Twelve months earlier Branwell, even though plunged in lover's melancholy, rejected a friend's invitation to embrace a Platonic idealistic

love and thus transcend all sensual life: "the heart-of-vampire sexual eye of ooze". For Branwell the land to which this friend beckoned was "A round concrete continent of snows"; what he himself wanted was "offspring summerson autumnman winterage", the whole natural life of man, the "world's hot middle" rather than a "round cold sea" of sterility. His tragedy is not that his desires are wrong; simply that death has come so swiftly that almost none of his ambitions have been fulfilled. He would gladly go back into the barnyard because he "can't see a path that leads between one's Head & one's body". Branwell can't, but his faithful female friend, Effie, can. Throughout the poem Effie has been cheerful, generous, full of inner music, and possessed of a strong belief in an after-life. For her self-sacrifice is no problem, because she believes it foolish to "Cling to this cramped stupid goosehouse world"; her desire is to throw off the suit of nettles of self and become the swan she is meant to be. For Effie life inside the ring, to which Branwell clings, is life inside "a crazed prison of despair", and she urges him to go willingly with her into the world of the unspoiled pastoral. This is the world thought impossible to achieve in *The Red Heart,* and it is the one to which *Night Blooming Cereus* and the comedies lead.

There were two other compositions before a straight stage play emerged, the libretto for the chamber opera, *Night-Blooming Cereus*, and, what is in some ways a companion piece, *A One Man Masque*. The opera was done in collaboration with the Toronto composer, John Beckwith, and has already become somewhat familiar to a fairly wide audience. Commissioned by the C.B.C., it was first performed on a Wednesday Night radio broadcast early in 1959, and was staged, along with the masque, a little over a year later in Hart House Theatre. Ettore Mazzoleni conducted both performances and Pamela Terry directed the stage version. The libretto is subtle and sophisticated in execution, but its impact is simple and direct somewhat in the manner of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*; the music, as I recall it from two hearings, is almost always apt — groping, mocking, active, melancholy, or triumphant — as the words require.

I do not propose to discuss this opera and the masque in detail — this has been done just recently by Mr. Reaney in *Canadian Literature* — but their structural and thematic relationship to what goes before and to what comes after needs to be traced. *Night-Blooming Cereus* is unashamedly romantic. Its theme is one of human loneliness, appropriately symbolized by the Night-Blooming Cereus whose flower appears only once in a century (actually a Cereus blossoms much oftener, but that is unimportant). The time of the action is a Saturday night in late March and the setting is the village of Shakespeare, Ontario. Old Mrs. Brown,

the protagonist, is described as one who "could easily take care of granaries" or "plant and harvest a whole farmful of crops", but who has to be content with the window-sill of a two-room cottage and "no harvest except a heart and mind filled with the delight of watching and waiting". The great disappointment of her life is that years ago her only daughter ran away to get married and never returned. As we see her at her simple household tasks — eating, washing up, sweeping, rocking, sewing, and singing a hymn at her little organ — the theme of loneliness is given strong expression.

The simple plot, developed in three scenes, brings about the union of Mrs. Brown with her daughter's daughter, Alice, come to ask of the old woman forgiveness for the long-lost girl who has recently died. Before this union takes place, however, four other people have become involved; they are the old woman's guests, invited to witness the opening of the Cereus. As they wait, still unintroduced to Alice, whom Mrs. Brown thinks a ghost, each reveals something fundamental about himself or herself. There are Mrs. Wool, the local switchboard operator, Ben, the storekeeper's son, and Barbara Croft, the village orphan. Mr. Orchard, the fourth and last arrival, unlike the others is revealed as complete in himself and therefore as somewhat mysterious. It is he who prepares the group spiritually for the miracle which takes place at the end. On the most obvious level, the representational one, Mr. Orchard is a gardener and a neighbour, but he quickly takes on connotations of a fertility spirit as he hands out packets of seeds from his plantation up at Sunfish Lake. As described by the librettist, this visitor "knows the mysteries of the writing in the hand, the fire in the branch, the dark lake in the head, the Saviour in the thigh." The invited guests together form an abstract pattern: two older people of different sexes, apparently contented with their lives, and two younger people, very discontented, also of different sexes.

As the group drink tea together, the roaring of a midnight train shatters their conversation and then passes into the distance. The Connecticut clock signals the beginning of Sunday. At this point the mechanical tick-tocking world of actuality and human frustration is mysteriously left behind and the little community in the cottage experience a moment of revelation:

> The clock stopped striking. Beside it stood a huge book, Mrs. Brown's Bible. It too was a sort of stove, a harmonium, a clock and a thunderous train and in it the whole world burned and did not, spoke and did not.

A hymn is sung ("Oh sweet bird sing now/Of my soul's new spring"), Mrs. Brown and Alice are quickly united, and the flower begins to open, each member

of the group seeing in it what he needs to see — a father and mother, a blacksmith's shop, a flower opening, the meaning of working in the earth, happiness and joy. The structure is completed by the singing of a chorale: "When I behold/All this glory/Then I am bold/To cross Jordan . . ./To call on God . . ./To end my story". Effie's vision triumphs.

The companion piece, *A One Man Masque*, takes a different route to the same revelation. Performed by the author himself in Hart House, and later on C.B.C. television by Jeremy Wilkin, the masque could be described as an anatomy of human corruption. In it the darker vision of *The Red Heart* and *A Suit of Nettles* returns to lay bare, in a series of stage images, a definition of human life in which the filthy road to death theme sets in stark relief the few flashes of human beauty. As the actor moves about among a motley array of props, the main ones being a cradle and a coffin, he recites sixteen monologues which contain the verbal substance of the masque. A selection includes the following: a baby who has just rescued the diamond of his mind from rats in his mother's womb; a principal of a boys' school whose interest in the boys is not academic; A Saint Hilda's girl reflecting on the annual erotic dating rituals of Trinity and Saint Hilda's; a golden foundling child, taken in and loved by the poet, only to become a prostitute; a hag, called Granny Crack, wandering over country roads, having long ago earned the name of "the burdock girl" for her role as a pigsty Venus. There are others, in this dissolution of the human form, but the most depraved is the last, a dwarf, who catalogues his achievements. Sold by his father, he became a court jester, and his jests, in their cruelty, have far outdone the jests of Lear's Fool. He has turned the young queen mad with lust, has created a Cain-Abel situation between the princes, has destroyed the servants' faith in angels, has degraded the swineherd, frustrated the elopement of the princess, and filled the court with lust. He has even set the four elements at war with each other and as a final annihilation of all created harmonies he had the minstrel's tongue cut off. Now the castle is empty, inside out, and he lives alone among the ruins, "the compressed cause of everything". He crawls into a manger, props up the dead queen's body, and calls for some shepherds to adore:

> To the curious observant baby
> The humble and the royal bow
> Hush a bye my baby do, for see
> That spider on your mother's brow.

If *A One Man Masque* ended there with this parody of the Nativity, one might

well conclude that its sole purpose was to shock. But Mr. Reaney is writing satire and this means that his aim is moral, redemptive, as is the case with all serious satire. To take apart a rotting body is the work of a ghoul, unless some rational purpose is operating. The masque ends with Milton's Holy Ghost bird searching over an empty sea until it finds the cradle beside the coffin. It rescues the cradle, kneels beside it as a shepherd, and says:

> I push the shore and kingdom to you,
> O winter walk with seed pod ditch:
> I touch them to the floating child
> And lo! Cities and gardens, shepherds and smiths.

Satire makes its moral norms clear. Here it is a question of creative work and civilization set against perversity and destruction. The Masque ends in the same place structurally as does *Night-Blooming Cereus*, with a vision of divine creativity, but to get there it goes a different road, through the kingdom of shadows and death.

BOOK DESIGN IN CANADA

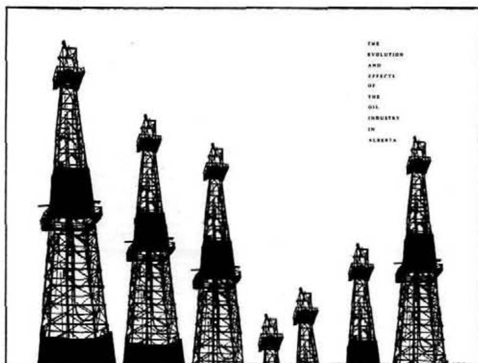
William Toye

ANYONE WHO TAKES an interest in Canadian books will have noticed that they look better than they used to and that their appearance — their design — is often referred to in the reviews (at least in Toronto). It has become something to be mentioned, and not only by reviewers but by almost everyone else, especially if it is the author you are talking to, for it provides an easy subject for comment and obscures the fact that you haven't read the book and don't intend to. Authors themselves are gratified by this interest; it is only human to feel that a superlative looking package reflects favourably on the contents, and authors are only human. Then there are the annual well-publicized typography shows to focus further attention on the non-literary aspect of a book. They consider books as objects of design and isolate their handsomest elements, just as though the reason for it all — the author's words that lie behind the arresting jacket, the handsome binding, the clever display lines, the type and drawings and paper — were of secondary value. When I join others in gazing solemnly at the latest exhibition of our best designs in print, I keep expecting to hear someone say over my shoulder, "Who gives a damn?" and I ponder a suitable reply. I have done my little bit in fostering what may be thought a blown-up interest in book-design, pulling it out of the context of the whole book; furthermore, I design myself; yet I also help to *publish* books, and in publishing the first and last things must be the author's words. I know what the cynical viewer in my fantasy means, but I am convinced that the sneer would be undeserved. Reviewers who notice

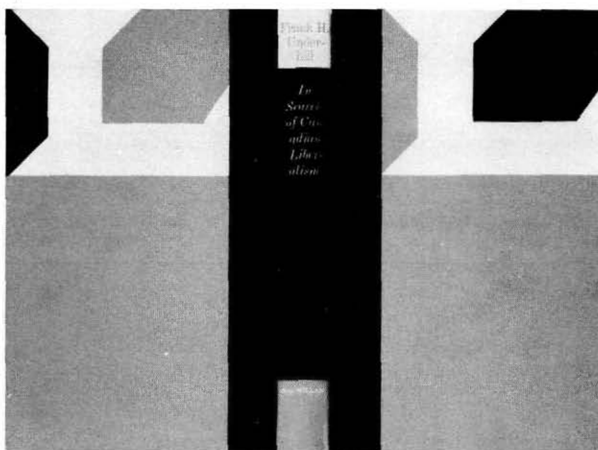
good design and authors who prize it are perfectly correct to do so; publishers who provide for it are responsible and wise; shows that celebrate it are salutary; the average reader who notices it and talks about it is exercising a natural aesthetic sense and is also taking one step towards comprehending the book as a whole, if its outward form can be thought of as an allusive invitation to read. When the design of books is considered out of context, made an arty, fashionable subject of interest for its own sake, it can be boring and sterile. But the fact remains that the designer is in a position to serve the written word profoundly; first of all by making it legible, giving it the proper type face, length of line, leading, and margins, and handling the type meticulously. By using imagination, taste, and craftsmanship, he can also put every aspect of the physical book in perfect accord with the work itself, and even heighten its meaning. Whether this is done or not done, whether it is done well or badly, is surely of some importance.

Of course the very nature of a book implies the need for design, and great gifts have been lavished on its appearance from the days of the *incunabula*. Even those unknowing people who produce the ugliest books are designers in a sense: they make decisions about page size, type etc. that give their books form. As long as books are made they will have to be designed — planned in detail to produce some kind of harmony — and their design will have an effect on them, and on the reader as well, conscious or unconscious, pleasing or otherwise. It is inescapable.

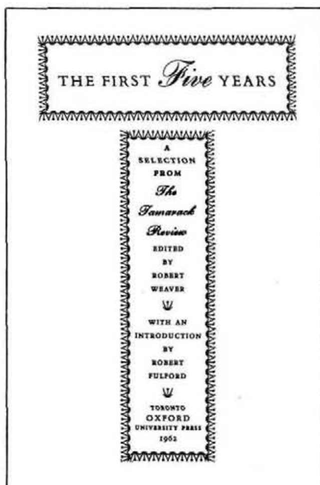
The movement to have Canadian books designed by people with training and skill was begun in the middle fifties by several English designers who had recently come to Toronto and eventually joined with Allan Fleming, who had been doing some jackets and cases for Macmillan's, and Carl Dair to form The Society of Typographic Designers of Canada. (Mostly through its annual exhibitions which it co-sponsors with the Rolland Paper Company of Canada, the TDC has forwarded the cause of Canadian book design ever since then.) While a few Canadian publishers had the odd book designed outside the firm, most books up to this time were conceived and produced by editors who had acquainted themselves with the various structural requirements of the book but lacked a knowledge of type. As they were editors first, it would have been surprising if they had had anything more than a groping sense of how to achieve graphic effects and the taste to choose between good and bad. They were vaguely aware of the conventional style of English book-designing and frequently and amateurishly used this as their guide; often, in the press of work, they left such things as choice of type and display to the printer. So it is not to be wondered at that the books produced



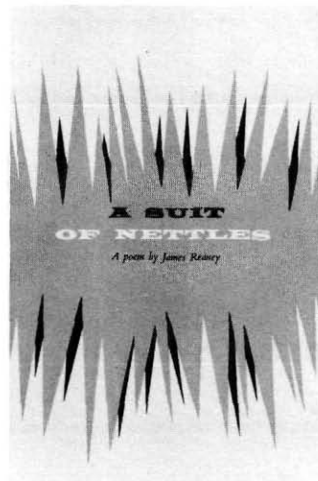
(left)
Half-title spread/
FRANK NEWFELD/
Dynamic Decade/
McClelland & Stewart
(right)
Title page/ROBERT REID/
The private press of
Reid & Tanabe



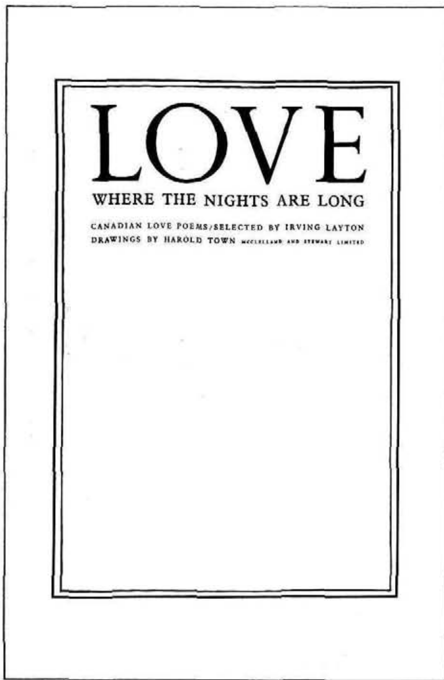
Case/FRANK DAVIES/*In Search of Canadian Liberalism/*
Macmillan.



Title page/WILLIAM TOYE/
Oxford.



Jacket/ALLAN FLEMING/
Macmillan.

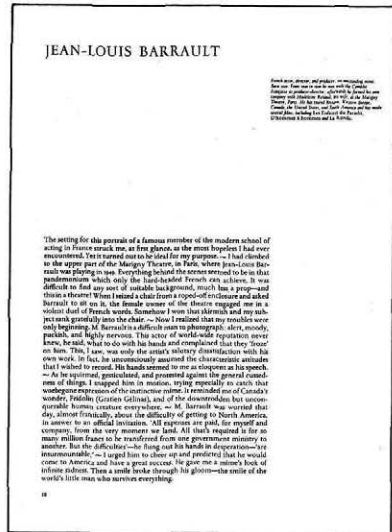


LOVE

WHERE THE NIGHTS ARE LONG

CANADIAN LOVE POEMS/SELECTED BY IRVING LAYTON
DRAWINGS BY HAROLD TOWN MCCLELLAND AND STEWART LIMITED

Title page/FRANK NEWFELD/
McClelland & Stewart.



JEAN-LOUIS BARRAULT

The setting for this portrait of a famous member of the modern school of acting in France struck me, at first glance, as the most hopeless I had ever encountered. Yet it turned out to be ideal for my purpose. ~ I had climbed to the upper part of the Marigny Theatre, in Paris, where Jean-Louis Barrault was playing in 1949. Everything behind the scenes seemed to be in that pandemonium which only the hard-headed French can achieve. It was difficult to find any sort of suitable background, much less a prop—and this in a theatre! When I seized a chair from a roped-off enclosure and asked Barrault to sit on it, the female owner of the theatre engaged me in a violent duel of French words. Somehow I won that skirmish and my subject sank gratefully into the chair. ~ Now I realized that my troubles were only beginning. M. Barrault is a difficult man to photograph: alert, moody, puckish, and highly nervous. This actor of world-wide reputation never knew, he said, what to do with his hands and complained that they 'froze' on him. This, I saw, was only the artist's salutary dissatisfaction with his own work. In fact, he unconsciously assumed the characteristic attitudes that I wished to record. His hands seemed to me as eloquent as his speech. ~ As he squirmed, gesticulated, and protested against the general cussedness of things, I snapped him in motion, trying especially to catch that woebegone expression of the instinctive mime. It reminded me of Canada's wonder, Fridolin (Gratien Gélinas), and of the downtrodden but unconquerable human creature everywhere. ~ M. Barrault was worried that day, almost frantically, about the difficulty of getting to North America, in answer to an official invitation. 'All expenses are paid, for myself and company, from the very moment we land. All that's required is for so many million francs to be transferred from one government ministry to another. But the difficulties'—he flung out his hands in desperation—'are insurmountable.' ~ I urged him to cheer up and predicted that he would come to America and have a great success. He gave me a mime's look of infinite sadness. Then a smile broke through his gloom—the smile of the world's little man who survives everything.

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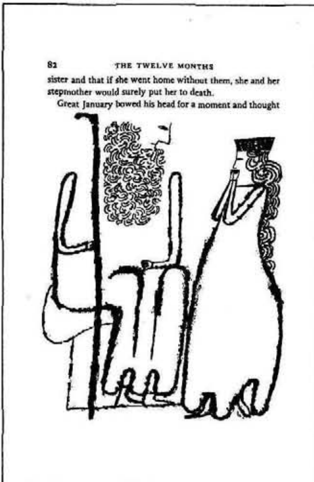
Text page/PAUL ARTHUR/*Portraits of Greatness*/University of Toronto Press.

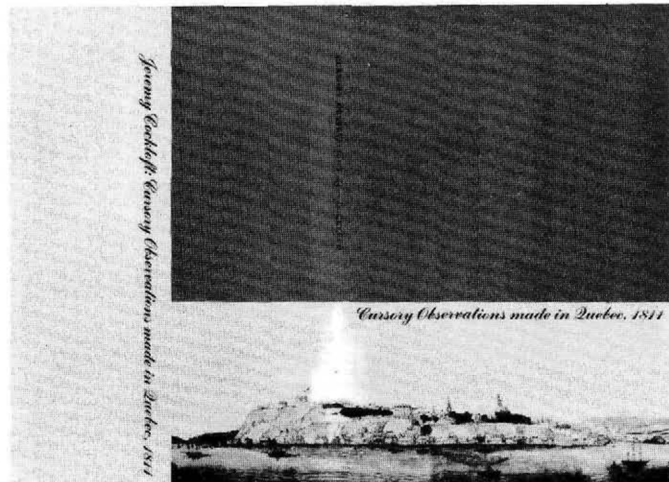


82 THE TWELVE MONTHS

sister and that if she went home without them, she and her stepmother would surely put her to death.

Great January bowed his head for a moment and thought

Drawing by THEO DIMSON/
The Sunken City/Oxford.



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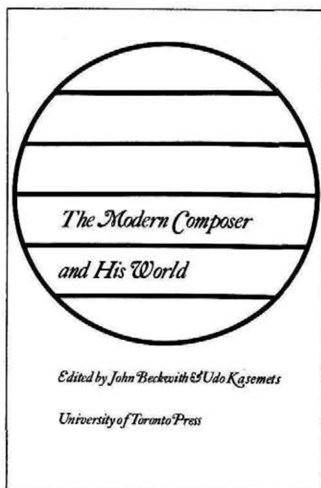
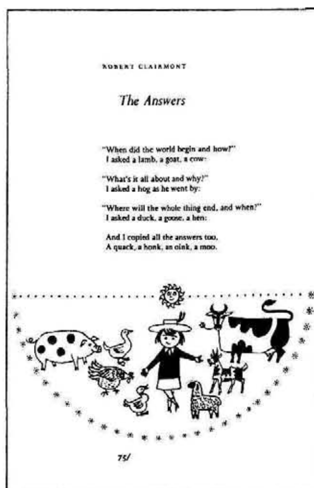




ROBERT CLAIRMONT

The Answers

"When did the world begin and how?"
I asked a lamb, a goat, a cow:

"What's it all about and why?"
I asked a hog as he went by:

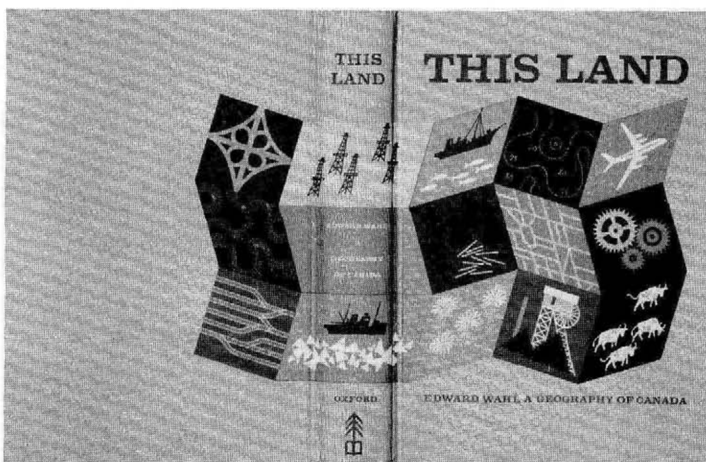
"Where will the whole thing end, and when?"
I asked a duck, a goose, a hen:

And I copied all the answers too,
A quack, a honk, an oink, a moo.

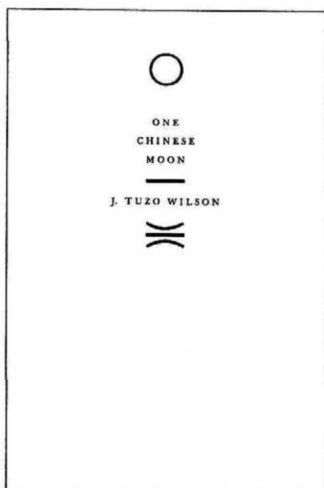
75/

(left)
Jacket/
HAROLD KURSCHENSKA/
University of
Toronto Press.

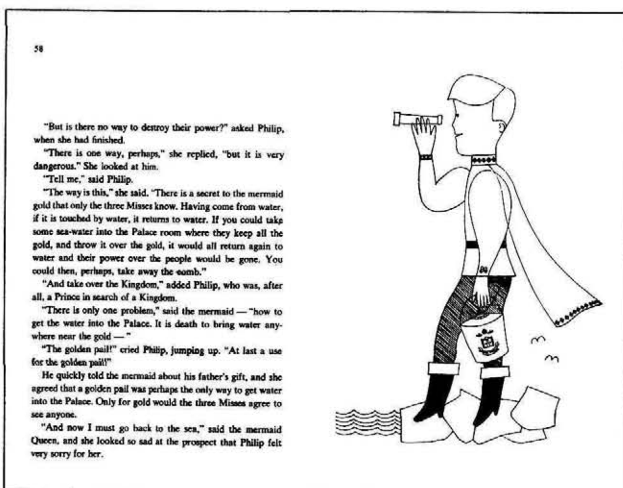
(right)
Drawing & text page/
FRANK NEWFELD/
Your Poetry Book 5/
Gage.



Case/HANS KLEEFELD/*Oxford*



Title page/ARNOLD ROCKMAN/
Longmans.



58

"But is there no way to destroy their power?" asked Philip, when she had finished.

"There is one way, perhaps," she replied, "but it is very dangerous." She looked at him.

"Tell me," said Philip.

"The way is this," she said. "There is a secret to the mermaid gold that only the three Misses know. Having come from water, if it is touched by water, it returns to water. If you could take some sea-water into the Palace room where they keep all the gold, and throw it over the gold, it would all return again to water and their power over the people would be gone. You could then, perhaps, take away the comb."

"And take over the Kingdom," added Philip, who was, after all, a Prince in search of a Kingdom.

"There is only one problem," said the mermaid — "how to get the water into the Palace. It is death to bring water anywhere near the gold — "

"The golden pail!" cried Philip, jumping up. "At last a use for the golden pail!"

He quickly told the mermaid about his father's gift, and she agreed that a golden pail was perhaps the only way to get water into the Palace. Only for gold would the three Misses agree to see anyone.

"And now I must go back to the sea," said the mermaid Queen, and she looked so sad at the prospect that Philip felt very sorry for her.

Drawing by ARNAUD MAGGS,
text-spread by ARNOLD ROCKMAN/*Nunnybags*/Gage.

in this way, usually the result of several people's thinking, were scrappy and gauche — unprofessional, in other words. And indifferently produced, for without sufficient guidance in matters of typesetting, choice of paper, machining, and binding, printers and binders gave less than their best.

Sometimes designers in reminiscent mood like to recall among themselves how they came to philistine Toronto and put book publishers and printers on the rails where design and production were concerned. But at least the publishers had the sense to take them up — after a little diffidence and hesitation — and give them a chance to exercise their craft freely, and to increase their skill (for however much these designers improved on current native work, their own attainments were far below the level they are at today). It was the beginning of a time of expansion in Canadian publishing, when the growing number of books being published created a need for getting them produced more efficiently and in a style that would make them distinctive in a lively competitive market. Not only did this coming together of publisher and designer happen at the right moment; it was fateful, and since then neither has looked back.

Now the few designers who practised in the middle fifties have multiplied and their own competition among themselves (not overt) stimulates the work of all. In contrast to the two or three publishers who occasionally and experimentally had a design job done outside the office, today virtually every Canadian firm that does original publishing has most or all of its books designed by a free-lance professional or by a qualified designer within the firm. At the judging for the first typography show in 1958, a large number of books were so ill-conceived they were thrown out after a few seconds' riffling. At the judging for Typography '62,[1] only two or three books were given this summary treatment; all the others — and the submissions were numerous — demanded thoughtful examination before the best were chosen. Finally, discussion of Canadian book design has evolved from didactic preachments on first principles and how they were flouted into appraisals of superior accomplishment, or opinions ventured on how a body of interesting though uneven work can be made even better. No one doubts that there is still room for improvement. But it is a relief now to deal with the work of craftsmen who draw on training and imagination, not with amateurs whose realm is the accidental.

Perhaps some fragmentary impression of the work of the leading book designers in English-Canadian publishing will give an idea of what is being done today

[1] It is hoped that this exhibition, which has already been shown in Montreal, Quebec, and Toronto, will visit Vancouver.

and provide more background to the field. (The fine graphic designers in French Canada have not yet had much to do with books.) I shall discuss them alphabetically.

PAUL ARTHUR asserted himself as a home-grown typographer of promise while he was still in university in the forties when he designed the format of the Indian File poetry series for McClelland & Stewart, and of course with his famous magazine *Here & Now*. Then he spent several years working for the Graphis Press, and in Zurich the fresh clean waters of Swiss typography washed over him and brought about a kind of designer's rebirth. He came home with the best methods of the Swiss at his command, a reliable versatility, great assurance — especially with the large-format, de luxe book — yet retained something of his own, an English orientation, that keeps his most successful work from being completely derivative. He is responsible for the fine catalogues of the National Gallery collection (University of Toronto Press), but his masterly production of Karsh's *Portraits of Greatness* (also University of Toronto) is probably his best and shows a strong design that is truly handsome — entirely fitting to the contents — and a firm adherence to those production standards that make for the immaculate book, though perhaps his Dutch printers should share the credit for this.

FRANK DAVIES attended art schools in England and specialized in illustration before starting to design books. Most of his book work in Canada has been for Macmillan. His *Collected Poems of E. J. Pratt* — with its elongated, unadorned text so appropriate to the poems, and the inspired case with titles handwritten by Pratt — is probably one of the soundest Canadian book designs, only slightly weakened by the drabness of its exterior colours. Davies' ability to suggest the four-square plainness of some of our creative writers is shown also in his text-pages for *Morley Callaghan's Short Stories*. He sometimes slips into colourlessness, though his graphics can be effectively bold, as on the jacket and case of Underhill's *In Search of Canadian Liberalism* where the letter L is a forceful decoration and hardly seems to have come from the same person who designed the patchy jacket for *Brown of "The Globe"*.

HAROLD KURSCHENSKA, a Canadian by birth, is largely self-taught and has had some experience as a printer. His flair for design and his skill with type give many of the books he does for the University of Toronto Press a strong typographic look that is handsomely modern. Two of his best are *A People and Their Faith* and *The University as Publisher*. His weak title page and case for the otherwise excellent *In Search of Greatness* by Karsh is an example of how his taste sometimes falters. (If I harp on taste, it's because it is essential to the serious designer

and is the missing factor in much that is being done today.) Nevertheless he is becoming an accomplished craftsman and will doubtless achieve a wide reputation. He and his colleague ANTJE LINGNER — whose work is more uneven, for though usually graceful in basic design, it is often insipid in the colour and character of the decoration — and the University Printing Department keep to a steadily improving standard for enlightened craftsmanship in book production, as a university press should.

The most prolific book designer in Canada, FRANK NEWFELD, was trained in England, and brings to his work a background of training and practice as painter, engraver, illustrator, typographer, student printer, teacher, and lately as art director of McClelland & Stewart. I think of him not just as a book designer but as an illustrator-designer. Not only does he illustrate or decorate and do the jacket artwork for most of his books himself, but his handling of type, white space, and decoration bespeaks the painter's eye for pattern, colour, and texture; he also has a fine imaginative inventiveness. This last gift exists alongside an ability to produce undecorated work that is beautifully disciplined and simple (see Eccles: *Frontenac*). But there is a conflict sometimes when his artistic facility and exuberant ideas overpower the basic book, which is essentially a conservative thing. When the two harmonize, however, and he keeps his cleverness in check, then a rich, satisfying job results, as in Mowat's *Coppermine Journey*, Hanson's *Dynamic Decade*, and in the quietly appropriate, meticulous designs for the eighteenth-century *History of Emily Montague* and Klein's religious novel *The Second Scroll*, both in the New Canadian Library paperback series. Newfeld's output for McClelland & Stewart — many successes and, inevitably, some failures, all injecting variety, colour, and liveliness into the stream of otherwise fairly sober Canadian books — is too large for me to do even a few titles justice here. But I must mention the series of poetry books that designer, publisher, paper-maker, and printer have collaborated on to make volumes of high production quality and decorative appeal at no extra cost to the buyer. Gustafson's *River Among Rocks* is probably the best. Its unusual feature is an abstraction of water and rocks printed on transparent paper and inserted in the front to suggest the depth and movement of water — a gimmick, perhaps, but one that does not interfere with the text and adds immeasurably to the atmosphere of the book. The typography is faultless and the production commendable. Cohen's *The Spice Box of Earth* is in the same class. Its vigorous drawings have annoyed some poets who feel they encroach too much on the written word. Four type ornaments too many give the impression that *they* were used excessively, but to me the drawings

punctuate the poems and contain some of their own character. Are the drawings to be criticized because they are so strong? And should poetry never have evocative art work? No to both questions I would say. The latest volume in this series, Daniells' *The Chequered Shade*, has a beautiful jacket and an ingenious effect on the case made by covering the cloth with striped crash. Perhaps one of the most difficult tests Newfeld has ever had as a designer was imposed by Irving Layton's anthology *Love Where the Nights are Long* in its sixty-five dollar edition. Its page size is 12 by 18 inches. (It's a coffee-table book, someone has said; all it needs is legs.) It has an original etching by Harold Town as frontispiece and other Town drawings — some elegantly sensual, others wispily insignificant — scattered throughout. Assuming there was good reason for such a jumbo book (the poems? surely not; the etching? it belongs on a wall), the handling of the outsize title and text pages is superb. A monumental display of Newfeld the master typographer and of Town the matchless draughtsman, it has one flaw: book and drawings are not in visual harmony. Still it is a splendidly grandiose volume to come from a Canadian publisher, and may very well fetch several times its present price before it is forgotten.

ROBERT R. REID practises in Vancouver completely detached from the flurries and forced intimacy of designers in Toronto, and he has remained his own man in everything, working with marked success to realize his ideal of the well-made book that is an amalgam of good materials well handled and strong, conservative design. He rigorously refuses to let design proclaim itself in a kind of duet with the text — a failing that besets some of his eastern colleagues. And his work reflects a disposition that is probably indispensable for the producer of books that make a claim to lasting effectiveness —he is a booklover: underlying everything he does is an attention to mechanical details that preclude the kind of breakdowns (too transparent paper, say, or shoddy cloth and stamping) that inflict themselves on the rest of us, as well as a pervasive respect for the author and his work and for the reader. The basic typographic design of *Canadian Literature* shows his skill and taste. Most of his books that I have seen were produced privately by himself and his wife Felicity in small numbers, and reflect a richness of materials and a fineness of design that set them apart as volumes for the bibliophile. (*Gold* is one splendid example.) But two of his books done for McClelland & Stewart and Macmillan and printed in Vancouver — *B.C.: A Centennial Anthology* and Margaret Ormsby's *History of British Columbia* — show him carrying his painstaking efforts to provide the most appropriate, readable, and pleasing format into the commercial field. I think the history is the

better of the two; this and the striking curiosa he has printed privately suggest that it is books on the Canadian past that he responds to most happily; I wish more of our histories could be designed by him. When you acquaint yourself with Reid's work you feel that he should be enabled to pass on his knowledge and ideals to students, and it is good to know that he has been doing this, and, unwittingly perhaps, shaping what Carl Dair calls hopefully a British Columbia school of typography.

ARNOLD ROCKMAN, born in England, was mostly self-trained in Canada. His work for Longmans and Gage shows intelligence, imagination, inventiveness, and courage to try new things; all it lacks is discipline. Few of his books stand up as complete design units, right in every detail. (Tuzo Wilson's *One Chinese Moon* does — it is excellent — and his handling of the voluminous *Source-book of Canadian History* is also noteworthy. Both are Longmans books.) He is an impulsive designer who lacks the patience to blend his ideas or to winnow them until the book at hand is a carefully integrated whole; it is as though there were a split in his design personality between the intellectual who is passionately interested in the written word regardless of how it looks, and the designer who can't resist drawing on his graphic ingenuity to embroider the basic text with frills. But he brings a fine modern vision to his designs and has a vigorous talent.

LESLIE SMART has a background as a printer, a teacher of printing, and an embryo designer in England, and his book designs, most of which have been done for Macmillan, are characterized by a minimum of decoration and a dependence on type forms for his effects. His books are uneven: though always readable and tidy, some are weak in their display matter. When he uses the simplest means of display and layout his work can be strong, clean, and quietly tasteful: see *Cursory Observations* (Oxford), the jacket of Massey's *Speaking of Canada*, and Ethel Wilson's *Mrs. Golightly*. But ungainly type effects crop up when he departs from this simplicity, or when he has an abundance of copy to style, as on the title pages of *Quebec 1759* and *The New City*. His handling of MacLennan's *Seven Rivers of Canada* is pleasing, with a fine case and jacket and good styling inside, except that the two-colour title-page design wants to be centred and the inside margins are too narrow.

Finally there is my own work. I am self-trained, without the advantage of a printing or art school background. My aim has been to use the full resources of type to maximum effect in producing strong-looking books that are not only appropriate but are completely and permanently pleasing to the most critical eye. I have not yet done this. For better or for worse, restraint is one of my watch-

words; I sometimes make mistakes in judgment and still show signs of uncertainty. I suppose my best-known design was for *The St. Lawrence* whose extended prelims came in for most comment. I wanted to establish the topography of the river at the very beginning of the book, and it seemed a good idea to use a sequence of pages as though they were one wide page; the style of Leo Rampen's drawing of the river was suggested by a fold-out map in an 1860 travel guide from Niagara to Quebec. Of my recent book designs, *The First Five Years: A Selection from The Tamarack Review* is the one that satisfies me most at this moment.

I must conclude this summary of designers by referring only briefly to other names in the field. CARL DAIR does not design many books, but his *Karsh and Fisher See Canada* (Allen) is notable for combining photographs and text handsomely. ALLAN FLEMING, one of the finest graphic designers on the continent, did Reaney's *A Suit of Nettles* (Macmillan) in 1958, to me a favourite Canadian book design. The unattractive books produced for years by the Ryerson Press are now giving way to more skilful and prepossessing designs under the supervision of ARTHUR STEVEN, whose own work so far seems at its best in jackets and cases. TAKAO TANABE of Vancouver designed *A Quality of Halves* among other distinguished books for the Klanak Press. ISOBEL WALKER has overseen, or done herself, some pleasant things for Clarke Irwin, whose least successful book designs have always tended to be weak but never ugly. ARNAUD MAGG'S *Annual* of the Art Directors Club of Toronto (1961 — McClelland & Stewart) has original touches that are stunning in their simplicity. Illustration for children's books, which could do with a short article of its own, is a special skill, and Maggs is one of our few graphic artists who do original and memorable work in this field (his *Nunnybags* for Gage is outstanding), along with THEO DIMSON (*The Sunken City* for Oxford); LEO RAMPEN (*Canada's Story in Song* for Gage; *Swann & Daphne* for Oxford); and FRANK NEWFELD (*Your Poetry Book:5* for Gage; *The Princess of Tomboso* for Oxford). Two artists who have thus far concerned themselves only with the exterior of the book should be mentioned for their arresting text-book cases: ROLF HARDER (*The Methods of Science* for Clarke Irwin) and HANS KLEEFELD (*This Land* for Oxford).

CANADIAN BOOK DESIGNERS have done few things that could not be improved upon. But whatever their faults of over- or under-design, the

majority of our books suggest imaginative planning of some sort. The volume of publishing in the United States and Britain is of course very much bigger, but considering this, the number of commonplace, cheap-looking (though high-priced) books produced there is huge; the superbly designed ones are few. The Fifty Best Books catalogue of the American Institute of Graphic Arts annually bemoans the very things we used to complain about ourselves: ignorance of basic design principles and poor production standards. (From the 1961 Jury Report: "The argument that the economies of book publishing do not allow sufficient time for *good* design was disproved by the many books [on which] someone had expanded much effort to make bad.") Given the interest in design of our publishers, the strivings of our designers, illustrators, and printers, and the number of books that are receiving the best attention of all, the situation here is a healthy one. The possibility that Canadian design may eventually rank with the world's best is not by any means remote.

But we try not to think of that. It is the book at hand that commands our attention — the challenge of taking these words, those conditions and materials, and adding something of the mind to create a thing that serves its purpose honestly and leaves nothing to be desired in the way of visual rightness. With every new book this objective is live and fresh — though usually, in the end, it seems maddeningly unattainable.

review articles

AN INDIGENOUS WORLD

Wilfred Watson

JAMES REANEY. *The Killdeer & other Plays.* MacMillan. $4.75.

TAKEN ALONG WITH his *The Red Heart, The Suit of Nettles* and the recently produced play, *The Easter Egg,* this new book of plays tempts one to suppose that in James Reaney Canada has found its first *major* poet — if by this term we mean a writer who can create a world that is entirely his own, that is indigenous, and that compels us to want to enter it, because it supplies something lacking in the country or milieu producing it. Mr. Reaney has the power to create such a world, and the world he does create, though it invites comparisons with Dickens, Kafka and Charles Addams, is genuinely Canadian and his own. Yet it is always more important than any of his particular excursions into it, whether as lyric, narrative, or dramatic poet, and perhaps this is why we often hear critics speak of him in a condescending way, as if his merit existed despite our misgivings about his craft as dramatist or poet. Very important too is the way in which Mr. Reaney supplies us with something Canadian we have lacked; and it is this supplying of our deficiencies which distinguishes him from poets like Earle Birney, or Irving Layton, or even from novelists like Morley Callaghan or Hugh MacLennan. These writers often force us to look most sharply at the world about us, but they do not to any great extent build something new on unmistakably Canadian soil. Of this world that Reaney creates, *The Red Heart* gave us a first glimpse, and *The Suit of Nettles* procured us a longer perspective if an oblique one. The importance of *The Killdeer and other Plays* is that here we have full entrance into a land which we have only seen by lightning flashes or in a Spenserian twilight.

Full daylight still reveals a Charles Addams-ish world. But Reaney's terrain of *The Killdeer* is pelted with images of such reality that there is danger we may suppose he does no more than give us a deformed vision of rural Ontario. Ontario is perhaps its metaphor; still, as with all good metaphor, the real significance lies in the linking of dissimilar entities. We admit there is melodrama:

MR. MANATEE
One day the only man who could have
hanged me
Died and ever since I have been designing
Swings, devising trapdoors and tying knots.

HARRY

It took you half an hour to do that last one
In Toronto. Where was all your craft there?

MR. MANATEE

The fool! He wouldn't give in to the rope.
Like a woman giving birth — you must
relax.
I'm the doctor who delivers your immortal
soul.
Like a greasy burlap moth it flutters out.
. . . This young woman —
She'll swing into it like a bird.

Here in *The Killdeer* a midwife-hangman sees his victims as birds. Mrs. Budge sees herself and Mrs. Gardner (Harry's mother who has helped Mr. Manatee to the hanging he gloats about in prospect) as a "pair of old hens in the barnyard" — here is the base of the triangle but its apex points to the world of the killdeer, which is neither Ontario nor melodrama-land, but some other place. In fact, it is the world of *The Red Heart*, of a

dead red mistress
Whose sweet rooms and dungeons
Now swarmed and whirred with decay.

And it is the world of the "April Eclogue" of *The Suit of Nettles*:

I speak I speak of the arable earth,
Black sow goddess huge with birth;
Cry cry killdeers in her field.

Perhaps none — certainly not all of its inhabitants are clearly seen in full complexity. Mrs. Gardner looks like an Ontario farmer's wife. Mrs. Shade, the abortionist-blackmailer of *The Sun and the Moon*, looks like Grand Guignol, but neither Mrs. Gardner nor Mrs. Shade can prevent us from the realization that where they actually exist is a third place, a new Canadian world, where the poetry of Eli Mandel could pass for common speech — "I have seen by the light of her burning texts/how the indifferent blood drips"; and so could the poetry of Roy Daniells — "Too many bastards always on the make . . ." I am suggesting that James Reaney has annexed territory worth two Ontarios.

Since his first book, Mr. Reaney's endeavour has always been to appear artless — this seeming neglect of art which conceals art is an important ingredient of his widespread appeal. Thus in the *Killdeer* as well as in *The Sun and the Moon* we are not aware at any time of a striving for theatre effects. We may even feel that drama form has been neglected — until we realize that all the time the playwright has been bending the theatre to his purposes. His theatre technique we can see plainly in *One-man Masque*. Reaney invests cradle, chair, carriage, cup and saucer, bed, rocking chair with the comment of poetry — the elaboration of properties by verse is the core of his theatre. But theatre form is *bilingual* — the language of the actor's voice is counterpointed against the language of his body. Verse must speak as verse and it must specify the actor's gesture; it must not only interpret but incite. At present Mr. Reaney seems content to leave the second language of the theatre to his director. Certainly he has been very well served so far by Pamela Terry. But it seems not unlikely that in the future he will concern himself more with theatre form, since he manages so admirably, when the occasion prompts, the things it can do — for example, the brown paper outlines of the bridegroom and best man in *The Killdeer*, who, Rebecca, the bride-to-be, tells us

. . . laid themselves down after their bath
last night
On big sheets of brown paper and chalked
out
Each other's outline.

The Killdeer and other Plays is an exceedingly readable book; in fact, one soon forgets one is reading plays and finds oneself held by the suspense of the story. Yet this book contains more sheer poetry than many Canadian poets have written in a lifetime. This book should be a boon to Canadian literature courses both because it is compellingly readable, and because it is a sort of key to Reaney's other work, especially the somewhat cryptic *Suit of Nettles*. But what is especially to be hoped is that it will make available these plays to theatre producers, and that they will be soon and frequently produced.

POPULAR AND MISTRUSTED

Albert Tucker

CHESTER NEW, *The Life of Henry Brougham to 1830*. Oxford University Press. $7.50.

THE HISTORIAN must always be interested in biography. It is a form of study in which he often develops most clearly his concern with the particular and the unique rather than the symbolic and the abstract in human affairs. Through the individual he may also be able to focus the broader intellectual and social currents of a period. Some of the best historical writing in Canada has been in biographical form, though Canadian historians have shown a parochial tendency to be preoccupied with Canadian figures and Canadian history. The late Chester New was unusual. More than thirty years ago, in 1929, he published a biography of Lord Durham which is still the most scholarly and comprehensive study of that figure and the great part which he played both in English political reform and in Canadian legislative independence. At that time, when New was already forty-seven, he had become interested in Lord Brougham and had begun his research for a second biographical study, entirely in English history. It was thirty years in the making but the conception of biographical writing remains the same here as described in the preface to his study of Durham: "I have conceived the task of the biographer as simply to set the stage and permit the central figure, his colleagues, friends, and opponents, to speak and act for themselves."

Inevitably, what resulted is an historian's biography, a work of thorough research and painstaking objectivity. Brougham is placed so deeply within the context of public issues and humanitarian causes that his private life remains as anonymous as the personality of his biographer. So scrupulous was Professor New that he was able to publish only one volume before his death, covering Brougham's career to 1830 when the

latter still had thirty-eight years to live, for Brougham lived to the age of ninety.

It was, in fact, his physical stamina which helped to make him unique. Few figures of nineteenth-century England compare with Brougham in eloquence, industry, and courage. Macaulay wrote of him in 1830: "He is, next to the King, the most popular man in England. There is no other man whose entrance into any town . . . would be so certain to be with huzzaing and taking off of horses." Brougham belongs among those few and remarkable self-made men who forced their way up into the class-circle of English nineteenth-century politics. Like Canning, Disraeli, and Joseph Chamberlain, he found it difficult to adhere to rigid party lines. Once committed he remained outspoken and alone, forcing the pace of reform and antagonizing the cautious and respectful party followers. Like the other three, he was ambitious and egocentric and his public causes were hard to distinguish from his personal ambitions. Politically, Brougham was the least successful of the group. He had to depend for election on aristocratic owners of patronage boroughs and he was too suspect among the Whig leaders to be provided with safe seats. Not until 1830 did his popularity reap its reward in his election for Yorkshire, and even then he was too mistrusted to receive any Cabinet office which would give him a decisive voice. He was induced to become Lord Chancellor and leader in the House of Lords, and never became prime minister. It should be noted, however, that Canning and Disraeli achieved that office largely by accident, Chamberlain never did, and

MARCH TO SARATOGA

General Burgoyne and the American Campaign, 1777

BY HARRISON BIRD

General "Gentleman Johnny" Burgoyne and his British Expeditionary Force swept down from Canada with the aim of splitting the rebellious American colonies in two along the classic invasion route of the Champlain-Hudson Valley. How this army—the best-equipped foreign army ever to appear on American soil—advanced, and how, through its own miscalculations and the colonists' resourcefulness, it was brought down to defeat, is the theme of this book. The story is told with drama and colour, the battles are vividly recreated, and the major figures on both sides of the struggle come alive—especially "Johnny" Burgoyne.

$7.75

Oxford

if we add Winston Churchill to the same group, the point might be illustrated further that in English politics the man of singular ability and individuality has won the highest power rather by contingency than by acceptance or trust.

Professor New firmly believed that Brougham's popularity was well-founded in his dedication to humanitarian causes and his remarkable facility in the written and spoken word. Born in Edinburgh in 1778, attending its university from 1792-96, his mind was nurtured in a society which took its natural science so broadly that no social or moral problem seemed beyond solution. It was a society of intellectual confidence among very young men which included besides Brougham, Francis Jeffrey, George Birkbeck, Henry Cockburn, and Francis Horner. Brougham was president of the Speculative Society by the time he was twenty-one and had already written three papers for the Royal Society. In 1802, with Jeffrey and Sidney Smith he helped to found the *Edinburgh Review* and began the first number with six articles by himself. Thereafter, until 1830, hardly an issue was published that did not include three or more articles by Brougham. Professor New traced them all and listed them in an appendix to this volume. Their writing was remunerative for Brougham and the *Review* in turn depended on his capacity to meet deadlines. Indeed, the success and the character of the *Edinburgh Review* owed more to Brougham than to anyone else. For the first seven years his contributions adhered to the original policy of no political bias. When he moved to London in 1804, though he became a barrister, he concentrated on politics and this activity spilled over into his writing. In 1809 his political journalism turned the *Edinburgh Review* into a decidedly Whig journal. He used it "to serve the great cause which he led, particularly the anti-slavery movement, popular education, and law reform. . . ."

One of the truly outstanding features of this book is the detail and fairness with which these causes are discussed. Each receives a separate essay based on Professor New's exhaustive manuscript research. The effect of this approach is often tedious and sometimes superfluous but it makes Brougham understood in a more profound way than ever before. He consistently opposed the slave trade and was responsible for tightening the law against it in 1811. He defended Leigh Hunt in the latter's resistance to flogging in the army. The Orders in Council against trade with Europe were repealed in 1811 because of Brougham's stand on Parliament, and he led the way in abolishing the income tax in 1816. He took the initiative in forming the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and the Mechanics' Institutes in the twenties, and he was one of the dominant figures behind the establishment of the University of London. But he never joined the Radicals or the Benthamites and both groups attacked him as an equivocator, a man who would sacrifice principle for immediate political advantage. He was not doctrinaire enough to accept their programme of universal suffrage and annual parliaments, neither of which had a chance of being carried. His liberalism had its roots "in the revolt of his youth against the tyranny of exclusion in Scotland, in the hatred of oligarchy that was then burned into his soul, and in his own sympathy with the French Revolution." It was a liberalism

that stressed opportunity, merit, work, utility, and education. They were all middle-class virtues to which Brougham was not simply dedicated as to a cause but which he could not help expressing if he was to fulfil his own personality with integrity. Professor New might have made more clear that this is why Brougham had such confidence and energy. When he successfully defended Queen Caroline in 1820 in the divorce proceedings brought on by George IV and the Tories, Brougham was well aware that he was playing a role which must appeal to the middle classes. They saw the Queen not as she was but as a woman persecuted by a corrupt monarch and a closed aristocracy. Brougham never fooled himself that the Queen was an injured woman but defending her was part of his game to court middle-class popularity and so carry the Whigs to a wider basis of support. His victory "gave the liberal Whigs the upper hand within the party, and made it much easier for them to pass the Reform Bill in 1832."

Success and popularity, however, were not enough to make men follow him. Even reformers were repelled by pathetic flaws in his character. He could not resist shouting his victories, turning confidence to arrogance, and criticism to indiscreet attacks on individuals. His immense energy collapsed from time to time in depression which left him helpless, perhaps a natural reaction to the dominant but lonely political position which he maintained, with no intimate and close relationship to sustain him. These complexities and shades of character are incidental to the biography but their description adds to its distinction.

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268 pages, $5.25

UNIVERSITY OF

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The book will remain a basic work of reference for every student of England in the early ninteenth century. Perhaps no finer tribute is needed to Professor New's scholarship. As a Canadian, however, his achievement is further enhanced by the fact that this is among the two or three major works in the past half century to be published by a native Canadian historian, working in Canada, beyond the subject of Canadian history.

GREEN MEN AND OWLS

Inglis F. Bell

PIERRE BERTON, *The Secret World of Og*. McClelland and Stewart.
FARLEY MOWAT, *Owls in the Family*. Little, Brown.

We may conclude, then, that a child's story must, ideally, be written from the heart and from at least some memory of and contact with childhood..

MARGERY FISHER

THE AUTHORS OF THESE two books are more comparable than the stories they tell. Berton and Mowat share many distinctions, not the least of which is a powerful attraction for hostile criticism and this is not at all unrelated to their appeal to children. However I will leave the reader to explore the Freudian implications of this curious talent and pursue a less exciting common interest but one more pertinent to the review — the happy and nostalgic recollection Berton and Mowat have of their childhood.

Both writers so thoroughly enjoyed their barefoot days that they have never entirely escaped them. They still retain youthful exuberance, curiosity and inventiveness, delight in exaggeration and slapstick humour, love of tall tales and high adventure, and they write their stories in this spirit. Understandably they know children and what they like, and can open doors to adventures credible and entertaining to their young readers. Their stories are credible because the authors wanted to write them — Mowat from the necessity to give permanence to the places, loyalties and experiences of his youth, and Berton from the pleasure of participation with his family in an imaginary adventure. They are entertaining because the authors enjoyed the telling.

Berton's fantasy, like those of Lewis Carroll, grew out of a story told to children and later written down. As in Carroll the listeners are also characters in the story; they begin their adventures by dropping through a hole and descending into an underground world of fantasy. The transition from reality to the imaginary world is smoothly and credibly managed. Pamela, one of the five children in Berton's story, an imaginative dreamer who frequently sees other-world fairies, trolls and elves, is thereby already in contact with the fairy world. When Pamela first sees the little man, sawing a trap door in the Playhouse floor, she

is reading comic-book stories so fantastic that the little man seems quite credible. It is only natural that Pollywog, the baby, who spends his days planning and carrying out "jail breaks" from his crib, playpen and high-chair, should escape through the hole in the Playhouse floor. Predictably the other children, who had been made responsible for watching him "every single minute", quickly follow in pursuit. The whole episode is completely matter-of-fact.

Berton's success in achieving credibility undoubtedly is due in part to the necessity (and challenge) of making the story not only believable to the reader but also in keeping with what his listeners who are also characters in the story, would themselves find credible. In *The Secret World of Og*, as in the better family situation fantasies of this century, everything that happens depends on character. Each child has a distinct, individual and believable personality (based on those of five of the Berton children) and reacts to each situation accordingly. Their adventures are within the scope of their abilities and they realize their aim of returning home with Polly not with the aid of magic but through resourcefulness, courage and commonsense.

Berton, with what appears to be a natural talent for fantasy, also makes the green people and their world perfectly credible. The Secret World has its own order and logic which is never departed from. The Ogs are children playing children's games and quarrelling, like children, over who will be who. Nothing they do is unbelievable once you accept the situation. They engage our sympathy and laughter and therefore our belief too, because of their fears, vanity, ignorance and foolish heroics and because we see our own reflections in their faces. Their possessions are the familiar lost, stolen or cast-off playthings from the children's world above — small ordinary stage properties which make folk tales and fantasies credible. The atmosphere is contemporary North American mish-mash of *Peter Pan*, *Robinson Crusoe*, TV cowboy and comic book mad monster.

A persevering critic familiar with children's classics could unearth many literary precedents to the *Secret World of Og*: the children, like Alice, drop down a hole into a world of fantasy; the family situation is similar to E. Nesbit's *Five Children and It*; the Ogs like the Borrowers steal up from their hidden dwellings and make off with whatever is left lying around and not nailed down; the people and the World of Og are green like the people and Emerald City in the Land of Oz, and Dorothy's dog also accompanies her on her adventures. Nevertheless, the Ogs and their world are a very individual North American conception. The adventures, the characterizations, the atmosphere, and the stage properties are as distinctly regional as those in Anderson's fairy tales or Carrol's *Alice in Wonderland.*

The Secret World of Og and *Owls in the Family* have, on the surface, little in common. One is a fantasy, the other an animal story. Berton's is pure invention, Mowat's personal reminiscences. The characteristics, however, that Berton and Mowat share, catalogued at the beginning of this review, give their stories one major ingredient in common — the verbal wit, situation comedy and simple humour of incongruity that children

enjoy. Berton and his audience never tire of the tomfoolery centred around the Og's language which has only one word, or the comedy of Pollywog the baby, vice-president of the Escaper's Club, working on Grand Escape Plans or the incongruity of the tiny Yukon King believing himself a fierce malemute.

Children will find even more humorous (but not necessarily more interesting) the violent, earthy, farcical adventures of the youthful Mowat and his unusual pets. His story is crammed with situation comedy, practical jokes and boisterous nonsense. The teacher, Mr. Miller, safe after his death-defying leap from the tree, concludes that owls *can* count when the murderous attack by a defiant mother owl results in the total destruction of his carefully constructed "blind"; the T. Eaton Co. pet parade erupts into utter shambles when the judges open the box releasing the "SUrprIS PET", an ancient but venomous-looking rattlesnake; poor unsuspecting Mutt is stalked by the clever, unrelenting Wol, who delights in seizing the dog's tail in his vice-like talons; and humans and animals alike flee in stomach-curdling nausea when the uninvited Wol proudly bears his own lunch to the dining table in the form of a fragrant still-warm skunk.

These hilarious, outlandish, exaggerated incidents presumably would strain the belief of even a ten-year-old. But they do not. Mowat's story achieves a remarkable credibility that leaves his youthful reader chortling in good-humoured affection for the handsome, sportive Wol and his perfect foil, the melancholy, pensive little Weeps. This realism is based upon Mowat's own experience as a practical naturalist who spent a good deal of time observing and enjoying wild life. The incidents themselves, highly coloured though they are, are based on actual fact; as a boy Mowat lived on the outskirts of Saskatoon, owned wild pets of many kinds, two owls included among them. The fact that the owls actually existed provides a firm basis for his believable yarn-spinning. Indeed probably all of the owl's adventures actually did occur in part at least, although Mowat has exaggerated, telescoped, and embroidered for dramatic effect. The uncluttered background, however, of Saskatchewan prairie is authentic, and told in the simple natural language of a youth of Mowat's age and cultural background, the whole effect of *Owls in the Family* appears accurate and believable. The turn that gives an incident its gut-busting humour may be exaggerated but does not damage one's belief in Wol and Weeps. Further, the fact that this is a child's story, told by a child once removed, carries the reader through farcical exaggerated slapstick situations with unquestioning acceptance since this is the normal routine method of children when they are relating humorous incidents to one another.

Mowat writes with sensitivity and sim-

plicity, and with the skill to create in a few words the effects he seeks. His perceptive mind and eye and his enthusiastic interest contribute to his skill as a writer. His area is limited because almost all of his writing is autobiographical, but he relives his experiences so vividly and exuberantly the action rings with an authenticity the reader can't help but enjoy. He has been criticized for overwriting by reviewers of *People of the Deer* and *The Desperate People*, but when writing a humorous book for children, overwriting is not always a disadvantage.

Berton, a skilled journalist, versatile in his range of subject matter, ventures successfully again, in this instance into children's fantasy. His story is dramatic and swift-paced, maintaining suspense by the simple but effective cliff-hanging literary technique employed in serial comics and old serial movies.

Both authors handle dialogue easily and naturally. The children in *Og* are effectively characterized and Wol and Weeps are truly unique. Both authors are sometimes too exuberant and undisciplined in their writing, but since children themselves indulge in fanciful embroidery of factual incident, they will not be disturbed by occasional heavy-handed exaggeration and overstretching. Indeed these faults are only minor criticisms of two books that children will find credible, exciting and hilariously funny.

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PRODIGIES OF GOD AND MAN

GABRIELLE ROY. *The Hidden Mountain,* McClelland & Stewart. $4.50.

IN RECENT CANADIAN FICTION the artist-hero has assumed the same importance that he had in American fiction of the 1850's when the nation was finding its tongue in the work of Hawthorne, Melville and Poe. The hero of Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* is a writer; writers, singer and actors are the storm centres of Robertson Davies' fiction; and Sinclair Ross, Ernest Buckler and Mordecai Richler have all studied the anguish of failed Canadian artists. In a climate where most people huddle cosily in fur-lined pieties, the artist is an outsider. He must somehow face the rigours of his world uncloaked, and — a prophet and prodigy — proclaim its true temperature.

In *The Hidden Mountain* Gabrielle Roy has at length turned to the artist-hero (it was inevitable that she should) but her subject is less the artist's relation to society than the nature of artistic vision. Miss Roy has already sung her songs of experience in *The Tin Flute* and *The Cashier*, and given us her versions of pastoral in *Where Nests the Water Hen* and *Street of Riches.* What she gives us now is the first novel by a Canadian to consider the tension between the artist's creation and God's. In its superb descriptive passages, its limpid moments of soothsaying, and its tender, understated encounters between people, this novel has flashes of great beauty. Unhappily, however, it lacks the coherence and control — the inevitability — which Miss Roy's great theme demands.

The action of *The Hidden Mountain* concerns the odyssey of Pierre, a self-taught painter of mysterious origins who journeys from the bleak upper reaches of the Mackenzie River to its delta; then east across the frozen hinterland of Canada to the heart of Ungava where, in a brief, sub-arctic summer, he discovers a majestic mountain known only to the local Eskimos. Lingering fondly over this wonder, he is caught by winter, and escapes only at the price of killing a gentle caribou, a creature which in some mysterious way typifies a part of his own nature ("their shadows in the moonlight were again strongly mingled, like that of a single exhausted being"; they were like "one single solitary being, the pursued and the pursuer — one").

Having survived this revelation of nature's primitive beauty and terror, Pierre becomes the protegé of a missionary who urges him to study in Paris. But the city, for all its splendour, depresses him; he is overwhelmed by the richness of the Old Masters in the Louvre, yet his northern vision dominates; he recreates in his garret studio the austere atmosphere of a trapper's cabin — the hard truth of "places primitive and undefiled." A young Russian painter, his only friend, tries to persuade Pierre to be content with something less than a complete vision of experience. Ill and shaken, Pierre at last consents to sign his canvases, only to regret immediately this "cowardly surrender". He has no right to sign his "full name": "All this,

all these things, were only preliminaries!" Like the sled dogs of the Arctic, who work well only when hungry, the artist knows a "perpetual hunger". Then, in an ultimate moment of vision Pierre again sees his mountain, not as in nature but humanized, complete. Now at last he has *seen* fully; now, like God, he is a creator, or so he believes.

But this vision (the vision denied of old to Job) does not unlock the final mystery of experience:

> At the center of this blessed independence of the soul, what was at work if not the master of the world, pushing him on toward his own creation?

The paradox of free will and divine omnipotence — of the artist's creation and God's — remains; the artist's hunger, and his anguished journey, are *indeed* perpetual. No canvas is large enough to compass the power and glory of the hidden mountain.

In thought, this study of the artist — God's prodigy — takes us decisively beyond the statement of Gabrielle Roy's earlier work. In technique, *The Hidden Mountain* is equally a departure. For her great theme Miss Roy has chosen the mode of parable, but she is not (as Herman Hesse was in *Siddhartha*) a master of this mode; and Harry Binsse's all-too-literal translation further diminishes the power of her language. Like her artist-hero, Miss Roy wants to express "the very simplest things"; and like him she discovers that "simple truth [is] the most difficult of all to set forth."

The greatest of her formal problems is this: she fears that her episodes of action and conversation will not speak for themselves; instead of simply "rendering" the moment, she is impelled to comment upon its meaning. In addition, she has not found images which grow organically, as they do in Melville and Conrad, to produce a sustained symbolism. There are finely developed rhythms involving trees, rivers, and mountains, but these rhythms do not, finally, produce a coherent pattern; they comment upon the central theme, but they do not unite with it. The Mackenzie River, for example, is seen as a life-current which sweeps Pierre from his obscure origin to a delta village in which he learns that he must renounce such guides and friends as the woman Nina and the trapper Sigurdson. Later, in Paris, he realizes that he cannot light a campfire on the cultivated banks of the Seine. But the contrast between the river of nature and youth, and the river of civilization and experience is not sharply realized. We end, instead (and the translator compounds the difficulty by omitting an important sentence from the original) with the general question: "Do not all rivers of the world belong to all, exist to mingle all, and all to reunite?" The thought is lovely, but its relation to Pierre's isolated quest is not

clear. Miss Roy's symbols, unlike the images of Ishmael's epic whale hunt, do not forge a series of "linked analogies" between nature and the soul. Yet despite this failure in coherence, *The Hidden Mountain* is a rewarding book. Miss Roy's artistic search, like Pierre's, is sensitive, urgent and unremitting.

HUGO MCPHERSON

HOLY TERROR

W. O. MITCHELL. *The Kite.* Macmillan. $3.95.

WHEN DAVID LANG, well-known journalist and TV personality, goes to the Alberta town of Shelby to write an article about a local inhabitant who is an astonishing hundred and eleven years old, he finds that his attempt to unearth the secret of Daddy Sherry's longevity has become an attempt to rediscover himself. Somehow David has taken the wrong turning in life; he has traded his birthright for a mess of newspaper columns and TV appearances; the novel which he longs to write remains unwritten. Through Daddy Sherry, however, and Keith, the little boy who is the old man's dearest friend, David begins to understand the meaning of life. He also falls in love with Helen, Keith's widowed mother, a young woman who is both alluring and reassuringly wholesome. When finally, on Daddy Sherry's birthday, the old man flies the kite that Keith and David have made for him, the light dawns and David sees that the trick is to live with an awareness of one's own morality. You only live once; you must make the most of it. David resolves to pluck up his courage and tell Helen of his love, and also, one presumes, to leave the fleshpots of Toronto forever.

The apparatus of plot in this book appears to me to creak rather rustily, and the attempt to instil deep meaning seems both unfortunate and unnecessary. All these things, however, are almost incidental to the core of the novel. *The Kite* somehow comes off, in my view, despite its familiar cracker-barrel philosophy and the stereotyped nature of its story, because of the character of Daddy Sherry. Mitchell has not, thank goodness, idealized him or made him quaint. The old man can be maddeningly difficult at times, whining petulantly when he does not get his own way. He has spells of morbidity which embarrass the carefully cheery inhabitants of Shelby, such as the time he spent days in choosing his coffin and tombstone. He also has moments of wild exuberance, as when he decides to become an acrobat and terrifies the townsfolk by swinging from the loft of a barn. One aspect of Daddy Sherry which rings especially true is his non-existent sense of history. Events, of course, are never history when they are being lived. What the old man remembers about the Saskatchewan Rebellion is not the issues which were at stake, but the misery and bad food, the unfairness of officers. He recalls Louis Riel not as the fiery-eyed prophet of the Métis but as a man who suffered wretchedly from dysentery in prison. In his more contemplative moments, some of Daddy Sherry's comments seem to strike just the right note and to avoid the falseness of so much homespun wisdom — "Live loose an' soople an' you'll come through without a scratch. Live careful an' you'll break your goddamn neck."

Daddy Sherry seems to me to be quite the best and most complete character

Mitchell has yet created. Because he comes across so well, one cannot help wishing that the other characters were equally alive and the "message" less forced. However, I am grateful for the existence of this one old man, who strikes me as a genuine holy terror.

MARGARET LAURENCE

ANTIC DISPOSITION

RONALD HAMBLETON, *There Goes MacGill.* McClelland & Stewart. $4.00.

APPEARING FIRST AS POET in the 1940's when he published *Unit of Five* Ronald Hambleton has since split into a kind of multifarious literary personality: critic, journalist, interviewer, television and radio performer, documentary-writer, and novelist. Something of this multiplicity of roles was hinted at in the intellectual gyrations of his early poetry and in the comedy of his first novel, *Every Man Is An Island*, and it reflects itself in his latest work, a rogue's novel called *There Goes MacGill.* The form permits an antic disposition which Hambleton puts on with ease and skill and with not a little of the energy needed to burst the seams of the social masquerade to reveal in the face of a fool the other mask of death-in-life.

In form, then, a mélange of satire, symbolism, comedy, and masque, the novel explores its subject in an equally varied tone ranging from bawdy colloquialism to metaphysical allusiveness and in a style ranging from puns and epigrams to looping descriptions and associative image patterns. All this is appropriate to the rogue's quest, here interpreted in a curious way as a search for a life-in-death embrace. Patrick MacGill's voyage to Ireland aboard a Canadian ship of fools (which is also both a ship of death and his own body) puts into conjunction for satiric and visionary comment groups of characters who are all too obviously segments of the Canadian consciousness. Not particularly memorable in themselves, the matrons, lovers, perverts, "squadron-leaders", ping-pong players, boozers, lonely maidens-in-waiting, and mysterious beauties move toward and shrink from the embraces MacGill's activities demand. For like a vulgar Mr. Arcularus, MacGill searches after his own corpse with a relentlessness that shakes this loveless and perverted society as it becomes increasingly aware of his true nature. But it cannot avoid MacGill's apotheosis, a shatteringly violent eruption in the "organized" life of the ship. With almost Jacobean frenzy, we are given a final orgy at a ship's masquerade which becomes a dance-macabre ending with attempted rape, castration, suicide, and MacGill himself, disguised as "Departed Spirits" and crowned with empty whiskey bottles, lying dead in the arms of a Protestant minister.

This double pattern of embrace and quest is counterpointed not only by the interplay of MacGill and the ship's society, but by a second, parallel quest, that of Mr. Peavey, M.A., LL.D., D.D., the sick, Scottish-Presbyterian minister. And it is difficult to avoid the implications of the last hideous scenes of the novel. Who killed Cock Robin? I, said Mr. Peavey, with my puritan bone and marrow; for I am the knife and the grave.

Of course, one has to grant Hambleton his point of view, though to some readers it will seem pointless to go on beating the dead dog year in and year out.

Granted too that the unmasking masked fool infuses vitality into the cabin'd, cribbed, confined life of his world (notably in a *tour de force* of scenes in which the hallucinatory effect of extreme drunkenness is powerfully conveyed), still one feels the pattern of the novel is blatant and much of the imagery contrived. At the level of low comedy, there are some amusing jokes (MacGill crashing a French-Canadian M.P.'s party on the parlour car of a train; the desperate attempts of a sweating ex-squadron-leader to reveal his Lolita-complex to a drunken MacGill watching a sinister attempt at seduction), but there are also pseudo-philosophers like Mr. Kirk cynically posing as a Buddhist, a paper airplane photograph of a faded Christ which refuses to fly off the ship, a bloodied crucifix, and a numinous moonlight scene which embarrassingly transforms rogue to saint. The traumatic conclusion, too, will repel some, but it generates the same sort of morbid energy which one remembers in the scenes of another novelist concerned with the same repressions and explosions, expressed with the same murderous intensity: the ending of *Each Man's Son* or the canoe-flight of *The Watch that Ends the Night.*

In fact, thinking of these scenes, one wonders whether the rogue's novel is not in some peculiar way the strongest line in Canadian fiction. MacGill belongs with Richler's Duddy Kravitz, with Birney's Turvey, with Callaghan's Kip Caley. There's a touch of him in Mitchell's Saint Sammy, and he appears in the role of poet more than once in the work of Layton, Souster, Purdy, and Acorn. One is even tempted to see his original in some aspects of Sam Slick, "the ring-tailed roarer" who loved tall tales and the endless originality of invective. Perhaps the wise-fool, rogue-saint, criminal-innocent is inherent in the nature and quality of the Canadian personality. "There are indeed people who lack a developed persona", remarks Jung, " 'Canadians who know not Europe's sham politeness' — blundering from one social solecism to the next, perfectly harmless and innocent, soulful bores or appealing children, or if they are women, spectral Cassandras dreaded for their tactlessness, eternally misunderstood, never knowing what they are about, always taking forgiveness for granted, blind to the world, hopeless dreamers." Like MacGill they come out of the northern woods journeying toward some impossible Irish heaven where they were born.

E. W. MANDEL

A PROBLEM OF LOVE

DIANE GIGUERE. *Innocence.* McClelland & Stewart. $3.50.

THIS IS ANOTHER of those first novels by a young French Canadian, and it is another good one. I can understand why it should have been published in Paris before being translated: it has the existentialist anguish (whether empirical or doctrinaire the reader may not always be sure). It also has a characteristic of the Sartre school, focussing on sexual intercourse not as romantic passion but as a sordid part of reality; the three central characters of this novel use fornication and adultery either as substitutes for love or as a means of moving toward it. Yet love eludes all three. It eludes M. Moreuil, the professor, perhaps because

he is ugly but more likely because he has been convinced by others that he is not loveable. Jeanne, the aging actress, has the theatrical ability to convince herself that she finds it in each of her affairs. But her illegitimate daughter Céline is sure that Jeanne has never loved any of the men who deserted her.

Céline is the teen-aged heroine of the novel's teen-aged author. Like the heroine of *Mad Shadows*, she has a demonic streak. But *Innocence* takes place in a world much more like the one we live in than the world of *Mad Shadows*. It accepts the Sartrean and Freudian premises; in fact it simply takes them for granted and moves beyond doctrine to investigate the problem of the need to love and be loved.

The novel begins melodramatically enough, with Céline contemplating suicide, but as it gets under way, that urge becomes more explicable and convincing. And it has the virtue of putting all Céline's motives for action beyond the simpler ideals and illusions of adolescence. She looks for no rescuing knight; she knows only her mother, who does not love her but through whom she must find herself. So she focusses on her mother, largely out of aversion and hate, follows her to an assignation, and afterwards impulsively joins mother and lover, M. Moreuil, in a bar. Young daughter and old ugly lover are attracted and enter into an affair. But to state this baldly as a fact gives no notion of the misery of the relation. For M. Moreuil, lust has become a necessary substitute for the love he is hopeless of finding; yet Céline never considers enjoying the sexual act. Her motives for becoming his mistress are connected with the central concern of the novel, her attempt to find a reason for living.

At first she thinks that perhaps she hopes to destroy M. Moreuil, to pull another down "into the abyss" with her. In doing so, she would be accepting her most obvious identity, choosing "to *be* the monster she glimpsed lurking within her — the rejected child, an inexplicable sport of nature." But another side of her wants to live, to find a positive identity. The direction this will take her is back to childhood and a simpler love. She knows her mother cannot give it, but if she can find a father . . . "Could it be that this man — for all his ugliness — had actually aroused her in some way? Might she not have made him a substitute for the father she never had? She had liked the way he held her hand in his, ever since that first contact after their expedition through the wood." Therefore she keeps the relation going, even though M. Moreuil is not strong enough to be satisfactory either as a lover or a father.

But Céline gains strength, and as she does the others weaken. Jeanne's illusion of youth is destroyed when she fails in auditioning for the role of Ophelia. She becomes tormented by the shadow which she had refused to acknowledge in her nature and which now drives her to madness. M. Moreuil is urged by Céline to act out one of the Freudian corollaries of their relation. I shall have to leave each reader to come to terms individually with the end of the novel. But I can say that Miss Giguère deals with a problem of importance for this culturally displaced age — the forms of love that bedevil us and the patterns we trace out in the attempt to find ourselves.

ELLIOTT GOSE

MAGNETIC FIELD

ALFRED PURDY. *Poems for all the Annettes.* Contact Press. $2.00.

AFTER READING ALFRED PURDY'S *Poems for all the Annettes,* I have come to the conclusion that he is one of the few important voices in Canadian poetry today. It has taken me some time to arrive at this verdict because the method in this book is occasionally open to criticism and because the tone of much of Purdy's work is, at first reading, offensive. And deliberately so. In his Ryerson chapbook *The Crafte so Longe to Lerne* (1959), he took up his position in a surprising villanelle: "Embrace, my verse, the language of the age,/Coeval sewers of speech that make a poem/Live argot for the vermifuge of rage." The language of the age, which involves a wide-ranging and often a too arcane vocabulary, and a richness of allusion after the Layton manner are two of the elements comprising the vermifuge for his rage. But these constituents do not in themselves account for the largeness of his work. This comes from a quality of mind. Purdy is at times almost aggressively conceptual ("Mind Process re a Fawcet", "Uncle Fred on Côte des Neiges"), but he is also importantly thoughtful. Out of the trivial, alienating environment in which so many of his poems grow comes a kind of stateliness, a kind of "migawd grandeur" born from the surrounding "verbs that itch like acid, nouns that ache":

> . . . the form is HERE
> has to be
> must be
> As if we were all immortal
> in some way I've not fathomed
> as if all we are
> co-exists in so many forms
> we encounter the entire race
> of men just by being
> alive here
> Ourselves amorous
> ourselves surly
> ourselves smiling
> and immortal as hell . . .

The poem from which these lines are taken, "Archaeology of Snow", appeared to me on first reading an incredibly clumsy, even redundant, work. Closer study produced my present opinion that it is the central poem in the collection. The confusion arose from the extraordinary fragmentation of the piece, but fragmentation, division, time are its subjects. At one point the poem actually threatens to disintegrate, just as the imprint of Anna's buttocks in the snow (she dead, or gone) is in the process of disappearing. But then the poem gathers together again and moves with emotional firmness to its conclusion. The poet, in a passion of insistence, seeks there in the snow evidence of the real/ideal complex, "the form is HERE/has to be", for Anna is moving "in/the sub/-divisions of time." My guess is that Purdy in "Archaeology of Snow" is working, in ironic fashion, from central concepts and lines of Gerard Manley Hopkins, in particular "God's Grandeur" and "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire", where these lines occur: "O pity and indignation! Manshape, that shone/Sheer off, disseveral, a star, death blots black out; nor mark/Is any of him at all so stark/But vastness blurs and time beats level. . . ."

Though Purdy's subject matter may be as mundane as buttocks or debt ("Collecting the Square Root of Minus One") or as obvious as the artificial insemination of cattle ("TV Programme on Sunday"), he never leaves his subject as he found it but sets it free to pursue its

larger intentions. Purdy's weakness now has always been his weakness: clutter. Many of these poems need trimming. In this book, unlike *The Crafte so Longe to Lerne,* the poems are open; he is working in the "field", and the field invites the casual thought, the extra adjective, the self-indulgent deception. The field ought to be magnetic, but it ought not to be too attractive.

PHYLLIS WEBB

"MUSIC WAS MADE, ARISES NOW"

PHYLLIS WEBB. *The Sea is Also a Garden.* Ryerson. $3.80.

I SUPPOSE THERE IS, for each of us, a limit to what the imagination can hold without breaking. And I suppose the importance of a work of art comes partly from its allowing us, held by another's craft, to reach further into human experience than we ourselves could reach. If I speak, as it occurs to me to do, of Phyllis Webb's new book, *The Sea is Also a Garden*, in terms of balance or range or control, I speak of secondary things. The primary thing for me as reader is the experience I can risk because there is in the single poem a craft strong enough to reveal and control, because there is in the book a reflecting and reverberating order and counterpoise.

In this book one poem may seem to comment on another, as "Sitting" may on "Beachcomber" and even on "Plankton nor Perch . . .". More obviously, the clearly matched poems (like "Breaking" and "Making") or the grouped (like "Occasions of Desire" and "A Pardon to My Bones", or "To Friends Who Have Also Considered Suicide" and "The Effigy") work together like strokes of pure colour, the absoluteness and intensity of each poem allowed because the other is absolutely and immediately there too.

It is not at all that these views modify each other. The wry, severe and tender poem, "Bomb Shelter", is concerned with fear of destruction of ourselves, our bodies, our race, our meaning.

> Yes, there will be splinters.
> Yes, there will be cancers
> to split this partial temple.
>
> But, like Saint Sebastian,
> in love with our destruction,
> at least await deliverance.
> from a familiar essence.

And the poem ends with the requirement that we do "more than wait", that though "gill and fin" be underdeveloped

> we must swim dark in phosphorous seas
> with whales and rayfish and amoeba
> with the spinning aqueous plethora
> taste the faults salting down the tide
> and in our nakedness
> and in our peace abide.

This poem stands beside the comedy and wonder of "The Time of Man", which moves from Loren Eisley's statement that "The little toe is attractive to the student of rudimentary and vanishing organs" to this reflection:

> When the adored ones
> pass through the door ("the future
> of no invention can be guaranteed")
> who does not follow them,
> half in love with his tears,
> tickled by the lower brain,
> "the fossil remnant,"
> claws
> scratching at the large

symbolic order,
animal sad, watching the members
fade . . .

The animal sadness at the fading of the members here, the requirement in "Bomb Shelter" that "with undeveloped gill and fin/we must swim dark in phosphorous seas" do not modify each other. They coexist. And each somehow touches and is touched by the title poem. In "Mad Gardener to the Sea" man "dreameth ever back to water". As the line is set, it gives a sense both of retreat and of profound exploration. But the oceans man dreams back to in this poem are "oceans of an unloving dark" and in them grows a coral orchard that cares nothing for the dream or the man.

The final line of this first poem ("*l'homme inconnu et solitaire*") rings through the book. This is the man who loves and lives in a world of creation and destruction, history and politics, old buildings and young mountains. His range is given not only in such natural images as sea and dust, plants and vanishing or undeveloped organs but also in a fragile, hard, civilized image of glass, a "poise of crystal space", an "image for the mind/that if outmoded has its public beauty."

In "The Glass Castle" the mind is to live in and see through. The vision is lonely. The calls one hears are painful and can be answered only by acknowledgement ("I am here. I do not know . . .") and by small instinctive tidyings. The temptation is to break out, or at least to put out the light, to darken the mind, "for the reward of darkness in a glass castle/is starry and full of glory." But the attempt is, if possible, to stay sane, balanced — and still seeing.

In many of these poems, *l'homme inconnu et solitaire* has the freedom that attends our being unknown, the range that is given us by our solitude. There is energy in the humour of some poems, the assertion or tenderness or the singing let-out rhythms of others. In the final, ringing "Poetics Against the Angel of Death", tension has turned to gaiety and balance to choice.

because I want to die
writing Haiku
or, better,
long lines, clean and syllabic as knotted
bamboo. Yes!

H. W. SONTHOFF

CANADIAN COMPETENCE

The First Five Years: A Selection from The Tamarack Review. Ed. Robert Weaver. Oxford. $5.50.

It is a sobering, even shattering experience for someone like myself, who prides himself upon a broad knowledge of current literature (and who has spent the last decade shuttlecocking between London, San Francisco and New York) to pick up an anthology and thoroughly enjoy a great deal of its contents — only to realize that virtually every author whose name appears in it is an unfamiliar one. So much for omniscience! But at least I now have something concrete on which to base my sympathy for the gall Canadians must surely feel when so much distinctive work by so many competent writers remains so persistently unknown both south of the border and across the seas.

My impulse, on reading this collection from *The Tamarack Review,* was to

compare it with those anthologies most fresh in my mind, the selections from *Partisan Review*, *The Chicago Quarterly* and even *Mademoiselle*. But I soon found myself going back several years to the publishing of *The Golden Horizon*, the anthology culled from the pages of Cyril Connolly's British magazine of the war years and immediately after. For it was in that *Horizon* anthology one found a similar comprehensiveness and the refreshing absence of a strict editorial focus that would appear to characterize *The Tamarack Review*.

Nor does the comparison cease to be apt when one has mentioned a similar diversity of content in the two anthologies. Some of the finest writing in *The First Five Years* appears in the travel pieces, which are alive yet civilized at one and the same time. This, too, characterized *Tamarack*'s British predecessor.

At least two of the contributors represented here, Morley Callaghan and Mordecai Richler, state their personal affinity and identification with the American scene, which is rather what one would expect. Yet such quietly humorous and gracious evocations as those of Anne Wilkinson in her "Four Corners of My World" belong not at all to the current American disposition, but seem to me to be very much a Canadian rooting of a branch torn out of Edwardian England.

I might have allowed that this ethos effected by Anne Wilkinson grew exclusively from her own personal background, had I not also come across the descriptions of Leningrad entitled "Ville Superbe, Que Fais-Tu Là?" by Diana Goldsborough, the "English Notes" by

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Millar MacLure (which begins in the somewhat Duchessy fashion: "Yesterday, in the Piccadilly tube station") and Christopher Wanklyn's "Going Tangerine": a lively yet urbane description of Tangiers.

As a matter of fact, these evocations of place, along with George Woodcock's "A Road in The Andes", represent to my mind some of the most satisfying matter in this anthology. Satisfying because there is a distinction of style, a completeness of content (which offsets that inevitable *bittiness* which is the bane of all anthologies) and in several of them, a specifically Canadian yardstick of evaluation which struck me as either quaint or exotic — I cannot decide which.

One is made keenly aware in travelling these pages of the distinctly Jewish contribution to contemporary Canadian letters. The Jewishness of both Richler's story and that of Jack Ludwig entitled "A Woman of Her Age" reaches out beyond the ostensibly Canadian context and makes common cause (in flavour if not entirely in competence) with Jewish writing in the United States and to a lesser but growing extent in today's England. Basic emotions such as anger and laughter imbue the poetry of Phyllis Gotlieb, Eli Mandel, and Irving Layton, just as they do the prose of Richler and Ludwig — qualities largely conspicuous by their absence in the contributions from Canada's *goyim*.

And now for my gripes. The decision not to date the various contributions not only blemishes an otherwise finely produced volume but negates a good deal of the selections. The literary world is never static and both Robert Weaver's interview with Callaghan and Nathan Cohen's with Richler suffer in this anthology by not being pinpointed in time. In both cases they refer to situations which are redundant.

Much of the material in this anthology suggests that small perfection we have rather come to take for granted in mid-century short stories and poems, especially in North America where sheer professionalism seems stronger than in England. But by the time I put the volume down I had grown a little restless, a little disquieted. To put it bluntly — I enjoyed the gravy but where was the meat? I missed, for example the sense of moral upheaval which characterizes some of the best in the sister literatures of the English-speaking world. I was surprised to find nothing of the great Canadian dullness (what a Goncharov could have done for Canada!). And I missed that puritan obsession which I detect in the Canadian voice and perceive in Canadian custom. Where, if not in *The Tamarack Review*, is to be found the literary echo of that moral anguish which sits so heavily upon this semi-Presbyterian realm?

My pulse quickened at the reference to suffering in W. E. Collin's article, "André Langevin And The Problem of Suffering" — but that turned out to be as dull and sterile as the other neo-Teutonic literary appraisal by Milton Wilson, and should have sat with it between the covers of almost any learned journal from the commonwealth of American campuses.

All in all, though, I'll admit this anthology stirred a jaded appetite. Canadian competence is caught in these pages for the world (if it is mindful) to see. In magazine form *Tamarack Review* might be some kind of interior Canadian dialogue, but in this permanent form of

anthology it deserves to be read wherever creativity in English is taken seriously.

DAVID WATMOUGH

GLASSY UNREALITY

D. K. FINDLAY. *Third Act.* Collins. $3.75.
LEO VAUGHAN. *The Jokeman.* Ryerson. $3.95.

TWO RECENT CANADIAN NOVELS, *Third Act,* by D. K. Findlay, and *The Jokeman,* by Leo Vaughan, though disparate in manner, possess a remarkable similarity of import — they are almost completely desolate, for almost without exception the characters they are involved with do not rise from the page to even cardboard dimension, let alone body and soul.

Charlot and Will Blaikie of *Third Act* are *saga* characters, whose lives roughly parallel the Canadian epoch from the Golden Age to the present. Charlot is Old Ottawa, Will is Goodwood, Ontario; he becomes a lawyer and they marry. After Ottawa, the Blaikies are briefly happy in the less sophisticated parochialism of Goodwood, but then they are forced to waste their capital buying out of a scandal not of their own making. They go north, to some small mineral holdings of Will's in Temiskaming and after some years of hardship strike it rich, eventually very rich. Financial, social, and political success notwithstanding, Charlot and Will drift apart, despite three brilliant children. But, after a couple of flings and a forest fire, they are reunited: "The play was not over yet, there was still an act to come . . .", and Charlot "looked forward with relish, she looked forward with gaiety."

The possible source of the relish and gaiety are elusive, for as sentient beings Charlot and Will do not exist. We are *told* many things about their thinking and feelings; faced by the bleakness of their hovel in Temiskaming, Charlot excuses herself and weeps in brave privacy; nearly ruined just as his biggest gamble was about to come through, Will comments wryly, "The mining business is a good place to practise stoicism." But, although they are mannerly, attractive, forbearing, and all the good things we expect from hero and heroine, they are not real; they have no depth or juices.

What *relish* and *gaiety* (or passion and imagination, for that matter) obtain in *Third Act* are fleeting moments of place, not person; cloying resort summers, bleak Temiskaming, suburban failure in Winnipeg — these have a timid life not entirely swept away by Mr. Findlay's concern with keeping his story moving. But finally, *Third Act* is only a framework of a novel; it occupies space, but no time.

Leo Vaughan's *The Jokeman* is for the most part as glassily unreal a novel, but it does suggest some landscapes whose figures attain to a world of continuity and passion. Its protagonist, Archie Bleeker, is a lambent young American working precariously as an instructor of English in an unsavoury London school of language. He does this because he can just manage to get along without getting ahead. Archie hates the idea of getting ahead, but if he doesn't get along he will have to go home, and in America "just by breathing almost, you did pretty well"; he would probably have to take a job in his father's newspaper empire or "some other silly empire". To Archie, London is Regent's Park, the Atlantic is

Walden Pond, and he is Thoreau; from college he retains "a lingering affection for the old hermit". It is impossible to take Archie seriously, but this joshing prattle about him fills the book. He has no face — more, he has no head — but he has what the Blaikies did not have — a few juices — and these save *The Jokeman* from being utter nonsense.

In London, Archie tutors a group of wealthy Somalis who have come to London to attend trade school. The Somalis are at once blandly feudal and haplessly innocent. Archie cannot comprehend them but is involuntarily sympathetic to all their anomalies; he loses his job when their final essays return the appreciation, extolling his diffuse virtues: "Our techer splended fellow."

Archie accepts a job from the Department of Residual Dependencies as a lecturer at the University of Kojast, a Persian principality Britain is eager to dispose of, but no one wants. Kojast is so dreamily unreal a landscape that even Archie seems a landmark in it; it is almost as if Mr. Vaughan has researched every moviecomedy cliché about the Near East, down to the lovably larcenous valet-cook who steals his master blind to the extent that at story's end he is well on the way to being his economic superior. Here are the devious Oriental bureaucrats who will view a crow as a nightingale or a vulture, according to the exigencies of the hour, their coltish offspring, coated with Western malapropisms, the sardonic but dedicated colonial doctor, the amusing grotesqueries of the degenerate European settlement.

Though most of *The Jokeman* takes place in Kojast and a sultry aura of moondream blurs the scenes, unaccountably some of the papier-maché that Archie touches comes to life. Judith Larkin, an English girl whose reputation is built on the silence of men too embarrassed to refute it, an interlude in jail during which a sense of his Anglo-Saxon superiority catches Archie by surprise and shames him — these, like the Somalis, have some depth and echo, but relate structurally to nothing else in this disoriented book.

BARRIE HALE

REPRINTS

THE CONSIDERABLE NUMBER of new books appearing from Canadian presses during recent months makes it impossible to give lengthy attention to all the important reprints. We would like, however, to draw attention to the fact that five more novels have appeared in McClelland & Stewart's New Canadian Library: *Swamp Angel* by Ethel Wilson ($1.25), *They Shall Inherit the Earth* by Morley Callaghan ($1.25), *Each Man's Son* by Hugh MacLennan ($1.25), *White Narcissus* by Raymond Knister ($1.25) and that early Canadian semi-classic, *Roughing It in the Bush* by Susanna Moodie ($1.25). Also in the New Canadian Library's recent titles is *Masks of Poetry* ($1.50), Canadian criticism of Canadian verse collected and presented with an introduction by A. J. M. Smith; it is a worthy companion to his earlier collection in the same series, *Masks of Fiction.*

Other reprints include editions in Pan Books of three of Mazo de la Roche's hardy perennials — *Young Renny, The Whiteoak Brothers* and *Morning at Jalna*, all distributed by British Book Service and published at 85 cents each.

CANADIAN LITERATURE - 1962

A CHECKLIST EDITED BY INGLIS F. BELL

ENGLISH-CANADIAN LITERATURE

compiled by Inglis F. Bell

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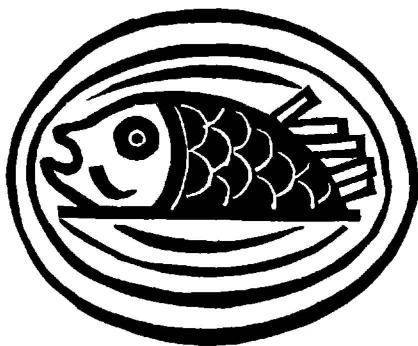

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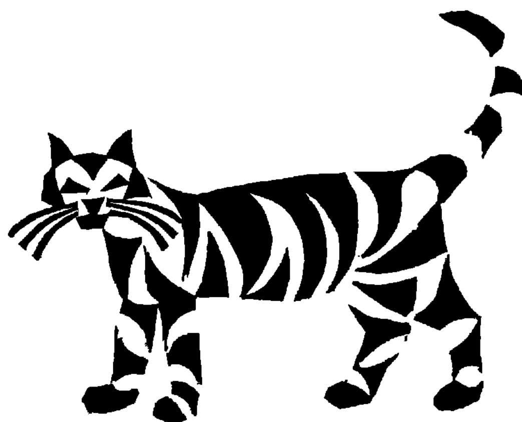

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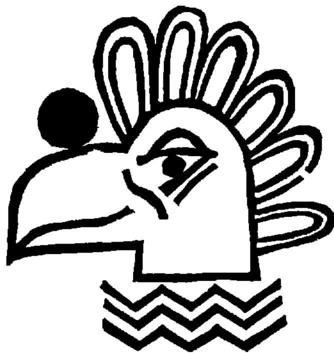

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