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WRITERS ON THE PRAIRIES

Articles

BY NORMAN SHRIVE, WILLIAM H. NEW,
ADRIEN THERIO, A. T. ELDER

Reviews

BY GEORGE WOODCOCK, MARGARET STOBIE, E. W. MANDEL,
DAVID M. HAYNE, DAVID WATMOUGH, EDITH FOWKE,
ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH, AND OTHERS

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NORMAN SHRIVE, who has already written for *Canadian Literature* on the literary fame of Pauline Johnson, is preparing a book on the poet Charles Mair. A second article on Mair by Mr. Shrive will appear shortly in our pages.

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editorial

A SPECTRE IS HAUNTING CANADA

THESE REMARKS stem from the disturbing recent history of Pierre Berton's dismissal from the staff of *Maclean's Magazine*. If Berton had been sacked from *Maclean's* on the grounds of the quality of his writing, one would have assumed that the editors were fulfilling their legitimate selective function. But Berton was not dismissed because he was thought a poor writer. He was dismissed because, in an article actually passed for publication by the editors of the magazine, he expressed rather pungently certain views on current hypocrisies regarding sex which offended those people who for various motives — including both prejudice and profit — try to limit what other Canadians shall be allowed to read, hear and see.

Berton's case is not isolated. At almost the same time Robert Thompson, leader of the Social Credit Party, stood up in the House of Commons and asked for action against Max Ferguson (alias Old Rawhide) on the grounds that his radio show was "undermining our national morals" and that it threatened in some undefined way the security of our social order. A few weeks earlier the *Quest* television programme, based on a selection from the British satirical revue, "The Establishment", brought a series of frenzied protests from individuals and groups. An Anglican clergyman in Ontario called for heads to roll. "I challenge the Members of Parliament," he said, "to demand quick disposal of those senior officials of the C.B.C. responsible for such programmes. They have no excuse." The particular aspect of the *Quest* programme that annoyed the reverend gentleman and many other viewers was a satirical impersonation of the Queen as public speaker. To cap the record with a citation from the press, the Vancouver *Province* on June 5th linked Berton's dismissal, of which it evidently approved, with the controversy over television programmes like *Quest*, in an editorial which began with these words:

> In the firing of writer Pierre Berton from Maclean's Magazine many Canadians must see a notable example of the difference between private enterprise and public ownership. The reaction of the magazine's customers to the disgusting material Berton was publishing in Maclean's had its effect. But the reaction of the public to similarly disgusting TV programmes presented to the nation by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation had no effect whatever.

In this comment the *Province* uses the emotive word *disgusting* without attempting to state what in its view arouses disgust; in trying to stir up feelings rather than provoke thought, this is typical of such attacks. It also talks in vague terms of "the reaction of the public" without telling us who "the public" in this case may be. To that point I shall return.

These three incidents, in which disapproving readers, listeners and viewers attempted to impose an unofficial censorship — and in the case of *Maclean's* succeeded — came within a few weeks of each other. They achieved prominence either because they involved well-known personalities like Berton and Ferguson or because they involved the C.B.C., a familiar target of attack. Less publicity has been given to the persistent attempts of individuals and organizations to interfere with the freedom of publication in its various forms, such as the recurrent campaigns to "clean up" the bookstalls and to prevent so-called "objectionable" books from being made available in public libraries.

Perhaps Mrs. Grundy has always had a home in many Canadian hearts, but nowadays her presence seems uncomfortably evident in the form of a continual pressure to restrict the freedom of opinion and expression, a pressure that is dangerous precisely because its nature and its limits are ill-defined. Official censorship, bad as it is, at least proceeds by law, and cases can be argued in the courts with the possibility of appeal, so that in the end manifestly foolish judgments, like that which banned *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, are sometimes reversed. The unofficial censorship presided over by Mrs. Grundy is defined not by law but by such intangible elements as emotion and prejudice. Its advocates begin from personal distaste, and seek to deprive others of what *they* find offensive. When reasons are produced they usually fall into one of two categories. Where the work condemned has an element of social or political satire, the objector bases his case on public order; its mockery can sap the foundations of society by destroying reverence for institutions hallowed by custom. Where sex enters the question, the would-be censors are liable to fall back on the hoary old argument of the corruption of the young.

The first kind of objection completely misses the purpose of satire — to expose

and laugh away the pretences and complacencies which in themselves can rot a society away. Satire is part of the healthy functioning of a mature society that can look at itself ironically, and no institution or public figure — even the royal family — can claim legitimate immunity from this salutary process. As for the argument on the corruption of the young, that was disposed of three hundred years ago by a Christian poet, John Milton, in *Areopagitica*.

But possibly the most disquieting aspect of contemporary Canadian Grundyism is the difficulty of telling how far it spreads. A single man with an axe to grind can and sometimes does create panic by a determined campaign of letter-writing and telephoning. And twenty devoted bigots can raise enough noise, individually and through organizations, to suggest that battalions are behind them. It is the impossibility of assessing the following of these self-styled spokesmen of the public that makes them seem so frightening to publishers and broadcasting administrators. In the *Province* editorial which I have quoted, the vague statement about the reaction of "the public" to current TV programmes calls up the idea of a multitude of angry voices. In fact, the voices are numbered not in thousands or even hundreds, but in dozens; in the British Columbian region, despite the shouting and the fury, the C.B.C. received 44 protests by phone and mail against the controversial *Quest* programme on "The Establishment". It is the amount of unexpressed feeling which these 44 vocal men and women represent that looms so ominously and so indefinably. Is it real and substantial? Or is it just a paper tiger? What *does* the public feel? Too often it is only the voices of the bigots that speak out, and in the silence around them they are loud enough to start the chain reaction that first scares publishers and administrators, in turn creates insecurity among editors and producers, and in the end threatens the integrity of the individual writer or artist.

If Mrs. Grundy wins, part of the blame will lie with those of us who believe in freedom of choice, in the liberty of opinion and expression, yet never speak up to defend it. The reason for this comparative silence of the supporters of artistic freedom is obvious; they are often creative people whose lives are fully occupied, while the bigots are usually drawn from the ranks of the frustrated and the unsatisfied. But the hands of the bigots are strengthened whenever their opponents fail to voice approval of an intellectually or artistically daring piece of work or fail to make a counter attack when the ban-the-book squads get to work. Let us make our voices heard. We alone can exorcise the spectre that is haunting Canada, the spectre of Mrs. Grundy.

POET AND POLITICS:

Charles Mair at Red River

Norman Shrive

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHARLES MAIR in the development of Canada and of her literature is today almost unknown. Some Canadian historians, of course, have remembered him — perhaps only too well — as a controversial figure in a controversial event: the Riel uprising of 1869-70. But their accounts, both fair and prejudiced, of the part he played in that historical episode are concerned with only a few months of a life that lasted nearly ninety years, and he has been depicted, therefore, in a very limited context. On the other hand Canadian literary scholars have ignored him altogether or have dismissed him condescendingly, preferring to name Roberts, Carman, Lampman and Scott as their "Confederation Poets," despite the fact that none of these more famous figures was over the age of seven in 1867 or published anything until almost fifteen years after that date. But Charles Mair not only gave Canada what was regarded in 1868 as its first significant collection of verse; he also, unlike Roberts and Carman, retained faith, however dim at times, in his country's future, and, unlike Lampman, lived long enough to see that faith justified. He offers to the Canadian literary historian, in fact, an ideal illustration of the struggle of post-Confederation letters for survival and recognition.

For even when Mair is revealed as a precious fool and a bad poet he provides a singularly striking parallel to the cross-currents of aspiration and frustration, of success and failure, of even tragedy, that marked that struggle. His life gives us a tableau of some of the most significant aspects of Canadian history — of pioneering in the Ottawa Valley, of the Canada First movement in politics, of both Riel rebellions, of the opening up of the West. His writings and the influences behind them reveal the cultural climate in which he lived — more particularly,

the way in which nationalism and its judgments intruded into literary matters, not only in the nineteenth century but also in a much later period. Because Mair and his work were so closely associated with the political and cultural development of Canada, there is little wonder that journalist Bernard McEvoy could call him a "marvel of miscellaneousness" who had "the knack of carrying a load of versatility," or that the late Lorne Pierce could describe Mair's life as "a thrilling romance" and his work as part of "the structure of our national life." Or, perhaps, that Louis Riel could find him "a barely civilized" Upper Canadian who found amusement in "uttering follies to the world."

Unfortunately for Mair the published commentaries about his career have been both few in number and limited in value. John Garvin's supposedly authoritative biographical essay in the *Master-Works of Canadian Authors* edition is ludicrous in its bias and pretentiousness, its critical posturing and unscholarly inaccuracies. And the articles on Mair in newspapers and periodicals are of the "popular" type: in them he is invariably depicted as a "great singer of Canadian Literature" or as a "saviour of Canada's nationhood." The suspicions stimulated by such apotheosizing are confirmed of course when one reads those social and political histories that have included Mair in their scope; for in these works he is revealed as a quite different figure. Part of this contrast is often explainable by personal and commercial prejudices (J. J. Hargrave's *Red River*), by religious intolerance (R. E. Lamb's *Thunder in the North*), or by journalistic indulgence to popular taste and by distortion of historical evidence (Joseph Kinsey Howard's *Strange Empire*). But an unattractive Mair is also to be found in works of scholarly excellence such as W. L. Morton's *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal* and G. F. Stanley's *The Birth of Western Canada*; unfortunately once again for Mair, however, the objectives of these latter studies have not warranted more than a rather abstracted interpretation of his role as a literary figure at Red River.

A MORE DETAILED EXAMINATION of Mair that must still remain selective in emphasis would begin, nevertheless, with Red River in 1868-70; for better or for worse, his reputation and subsequent career depended largely upon his actions at that time. How he got on the trail to Fort Garry in the first place is a theme worthy of that writer he himself most esteemed, Sir Walter Scott, but since the melodramatic details have already been tortuously exploited by Garvin[1] it is unnecessary and undesirable to repeat them here. Suf-

ficient it is to note that a trip to Ottawa in May, 1868, to see his first book, *Dreamland and Other Poems*, through the press led Mair to the Canada First Association, then to the attention of the Honourable William Macdougall, the Minister of Public Works and ardent proponent of North-West expansion, and then not to Kingston and Queen's to resume medical studies but to Fort Garry, ostensibly as paymaster of a Government road party. "At once we saw the opportunity," said fellow Canada Firster George T. Denison, "of doing some good work towards helping on the acquisition of the territory."[2] And William A. Foster, another member of the group, promised to arrange with George Brown of the *Globe* that Mair should be the paper's North-West correspondent and therefore the advocate of the western policy that Brown had in common with Macdougall.

The appointment was a last-minute decision by Macdougall, and because the road-party had left days before, Mair's departure was a hasty one. But he began the adventure as best he could. In his pocket he had a letter of introduction from his friend, the Reverend Aeneas Macdonell Dawson of the Cathedral of the City of Ottawa, to the Right Reverend Monsignor Taché, Bishop of St. Boniface, in which Dawson emphasized that "Mr. Mair's great abilities have commended him to the notice of the leading people" of Ottawa, and that, although "Mr. Mair is not precisely of our communion . . . Dr. Pusey himself does not surpass him in respect for Catholics."[3] And when he reached Toronto Mair took advantage of a stop-over, as his expense account reveals — "revolver and ammunition, $15.25" — to prepare himself even further for the eventualities of the West.

The letters that Mair wrote to his brothers in Perth, Ontario — letters immediately given to the Perth *Courier* and subsequently copied by the Toronto *Globe* and other papers — provide a detailed record of his trip to Fort Garry as well as considerable critical comment on the land and peoples he encountered on the way. The letters in fact are so full of information and are so enthusiastic about the greatness of the new land that with certain exceptions they were almost certainly intended not for private reading but for newspaper publication as a form of "immigration literature."

From Toronto he travelled, as did all who wished to get to Red River in less than a month, by rail to Chicago, and thence by a combination of water, rail and road to Fort Abercrombie, North Dakota, where he hoped to overtake superintendent John Snow and his party. The trip under the best of conditions could be only an arduous one, but Mair, either because of youthful enthusiasm or because of his patriotic obligation, reveals in his reports little if any sense of hardship. Petty annoyances are not mentioned or are treated humorously, and the

more obvious deprivations concomitant with travel through a primitive West are either understated or are exploited as intrinsic to the romance of the great new land. The letters in fact continually emphasize the ease and comfort that the new settler would experience once he had left his Ontario town or farm. In the *Globe* of December 27 Mair reported that after three days on the train to Chicago and LaCrosse, he journeyed by "immense steamer" up the Mississippi to St. Paul — "a splendid two days' sail" made constantly enjoyable by "magnificent and striking" scenery. A further 170 miles by rail brought him to St. Cloud "in time to attend Judge Donnelly's political meeting"; and "four splendid horses, changed every fifteen miles" pulled his stage-coach to Sauk Centre, seventy miles farther west. There, "after great difficulty" (which he does not detail) and "valuable fact! only on account of being a Mason," he obtained a driver to take him to Abercrombie, "where I found Mr. Snow, the Surveyor, waiting for me."

Mair and Snow then travelled together the 250 miles to Fort Garry, this time by a horse and buggy bought by the latter at St. Paul and with "every luxury, even *condensed milk*, an admirable thing." The record of this part of the journey (Perth *Courier*, January 14, 1869) reads like a idyllic travelogue:

> No description of mine can convey to you an idea of the vastness and solitary grandeur of these prairies. Sometimes for a whole day you will drive through a perfect ocean of luxurious grasses now yellow and decaying, and perhaps the next day your tracks will be through an immense expanse of inky soil where the prairie fires have consumed the herbage. The prairies are a dead level, and the traveller drifts along in a sort of a dream between earth and sky over roads as solid and even as marble . . . .

Mair and Snow reached the edge of the Red River settlement one evening in late October just in time to hear "the convent bells of St. Boniface sounding sweetly over the water " (*Globe*, December 27, 1868) and within a few minutes had registered at "Dutch George" Emerling's hotel.

But Mair's stay at Emerling's was brief, for he lost little time in finding his Queen's College friend, John Schultz; and for the few days prior to his leaving with Snow to set up road headquarters at Oak Point, thirty miles to the east, he lived with Schultz at the latter's combined medical dispensary and trading store. There is no extant correspondence between Mair and Schultz prior to 1869, and it is therefore difficult to determine whether or not Mair had more than superficial knowledge about Schultz's standing in the Red River settlement. This point is of some importance because historians have emphasized the "error" committed

by Mair and other "Canadians" in intimately associating themselves with Schultz. To Mair especially, however, such association was not an "error". If he was aware before he arrived at Red River that Schultz was extremely unpopular among the great majority of the settlement, it must be concluded that he would have discounted such an attitude as being unreasonable and short-sighted, for Schultz represented to Mair an *avant-coureur* and agent in Red River not only of his own theories on North-West expansion, but also of those of the Minister of Public Works and of the Canadian Government itself.

Dr. John Christian Schultz had had a stormy career at Red River since his arrival there in 1861. Perhaps he had never really intended to practise medicine, for within a year he had established a lucrative fur trade and a thriving general store. In 1865 he had acquired control of the settlement's only newspaper, *The Nor' Wester*, and had continued with ever-increasing frankness the policy on which that paper had been founded — the necessity for ending Hudson's Bay rule and for opening the country to settlement. Because of this and other factors, by 1868 he had emerged as the most notorious figure in the settlement. In 1864 he had been instrumental in forming a Masonic Lodge; in 1867 he had married a Miss Anne Farquharson just in time to prevent her conversion to Roman Catholicism; and in early 1868, after refusal to pay a debt in favour of his half-brother and partner, Henry McKenney, he had to be taken to jail by force. In this affair, even his release was dramatic. No sooner had he been carried off by carriole than his bride of a few months "forthwith caused all the doors and windows to be barred and secured with nails and spikes, so as to guard the shop against a fresh entry on the part of the Sheriff." Then,

> towards one o'clock on the Saturday morning about fifteen persons, among whom was Mrs. Schultz, forcibly entered the prison where Schultz was confined, overpowered the constables on duty, and, breaking open the door leading to his cell, liberated him. This done, the party adjourned along with him to his house, where report says "they made a night of it."[4]

The special *Nor' Wester* of the following day not only presented Schultz's side of the story but also took the occasion to point up the complete incapacity of the Hudson's Bay Company as both a judicial and executive authority.

Schultz is one of the ambiguous personalities of Red River history. He obviously had many qualities of the natural leader: he was strikingly handsome, of great physical strength, aggressive, ambitious, decisive and intelligent. He was also known as a man of kindness and reserve, even of scholarship; articles he wrote on

Red River botany had been recognized by the Royal Botanical Society of Canada and those on primitive western fortifications and on the Eskimo later led to his election to the Royal Society of Canada. Certainly among his devoted "Canadian party" associates he was an almost archetypal figure of the national patriot and champion against tyranny. Professor W. L. Morton fairly conceded: "He sincerely sought to develop the North-West; he saw its possibilities with the vision of the statesman as well as the eye of the speculator."[5] Schultz's enemies and many other historians, however, saw not the visionary statesman but only the arrogant speculator. The *métis* and the Roman Catholic clergy disliked his Masonic Protestantism and feared his bold expansionist policies; the Hudson's Bay Company resented his abusive vilification of its authority; and those traders and colonists of the settlement who opposed the transfer of the Territory to Canada found it easy to distrust him as a selfish, unscrupulous adventurer.

Mair's immediate association with Schultz at Red River was not in itself a matter of resentment to the anti-"Canadian" group. He himself records the warmth of welcome extended to him by representatives of both the main factions: "We had a very pleasant stay at Fort Garry and received all sorts of entertainment," he reported (*Globe*, December 27, 1868); "they live like princes here"—even to the extent of "nuts of all kinds, coffee, port and sherry, brandy punch and cigars, concluding with whist until four o'clock a.m." And at the home of Alexander Begg, an anti-"Canadian" free trader, he was offered "hospitalities to my heart's content" (*Globe*, January 4, 1869).

But such initial relationships were soon put to test. Mair and Snow made their headquarters in a log and mud hut at Oak Point and prepared to build their road; by Christmas the former's intimacy with Schultz and his support of the "Canadian party" had become obvious enough to cause resentment where previously there had been friendly acceptance. Begg, no longer the hospitable host, wrote that both the road officials "severed the confidence . . . by their joining hands with this ultra and dangerous party." The activities of the road-party itself were also a matter of concern, particularly to the *métis*. Actually, the Canadian Government had as yet no right to construct a road over what was still the territory of the Hudson's Bay Company, although some justification for the project did exist in the oral permission Snow had received from Governor Mactavish. And to those *métis* and settlers who were suffering famine following a grasshopper plague of the previous summer, the announced intention of the road-party to provide money and provisions in return for work was more than welcome. But the first trees were hardly felled when news of trouble was reported back to Fort

Garry. The relief programme had proved a disappointment: fewer men than expected were hired, and these few (about forty) claimed their wages were low. In addition was the more serious charge, according to J. J. Hargrave, "that Messrs. Snow and Mair were purchasing from the Indians portions of land to which the actual occupants laid a pre-emption claim." The actual occupants were *métis* and such was their indignation that "Mr. Mair was brought to Fort Garry under compulsion of an excited crowd of French half-breeds who required he should forthwith quit the country, as he was, in their opinion a man likely to create mischief."[7] Governor Mactavish intervened, however, and "after some altercation" Mair was permitted to return to work. Snow was not quite so fortunate. For having sold liquor to the same Indians he was fined ten pounds in Petty Court and later accused by Riel of trying "to seize the best lands of the *métis* . . . at Oak Point."[8]

Because of the welter of conflicting evidence and bias it is difficult to determine the truth of these charges. Hargrave, nephew and secretary of Governor Mactavish and no supporter of Mair, admits that the episode that he himself reports was the result of a misunderstanding about payment for work on the road. The Mair Papers include "private vouchers" from Mair to Alexander Begg for considerable quantities of brandy and gin, but such transactions between a trader and the paymaster of a road-party would hardly be unusual. Snow's sale of liquor was proved; but surely it is irresponsible to state blandly, as Joseph Kinsey Howard does, that "Snow started dickering with the Indians for property . . . and one of his favorite mediums of exchange was whiskey."[9] Professor Morton suggests instead that there may have been "some *treating* of Indians to induce them to tolerate the claim-staking."[10] In any case these irritations might have been forgotten or pardoned if they had not been aggravated by Mair himself, not only by his association with Schultz, but also by what Begg described as his "preaching a doctrine sufficient of itself to cause distrust in the minds of the Red River people."[11]

THIS "DOCTRINE" was contained in the supposedly private letters Mair's brothers gave to the newspapers and in those Mair himself later sent when he was appointed special correspondent. The young poet (*Dreamland* appeared in the bookshops while Mair was en route to Red River) either did not realize that his commentary would cause "distrust", or was indifferent to such

a consequence. His correspondence indicates that he saw himself as a professional writer from the east with a responsibility both to his own newly-acquired reputation as a man of letters and to his special appointment as a Governmental agent. And certainly his reports in the newspapers contain some of the most vivid descriptive prose ever written in Canada. It is effortlessly fluent, revealing the same sensitivity to sights and sounds that mark the better lines of *Dreamland* (Mair's notebooks give ample evidence of his propensity to jot down whatever interested him at a particular time). The letters are lengthy — in some cases over 2,500 words — but they are consistently stimulating. A description of the prairie may be followed by historical or even geological comment. That of a "genuine out west political meeting" includes the humorous "tall tales" related by the speakers and the earthy, sarcastic observations of their listeners. And pictures of the river steamers, the mule-trains, the Red River carts, of the Indians, the half-breeds, the white settlers, are all made more vivid by interpolated accounts of incidents and events that may befall the frontier traveller or immigrant. It is when Mair's depictions seem exaggerated, a little too lush, even though always maintaining a tone of sincerity, that the reader is reminded that the letters were written not for their own sake nor, as Hargrave innocently — or ironically — suggested, "to vary the monotony of existence in the backwoods,"[12] but to convince Canadians of the desirability of settlement in the North-West and of the great possibilities of Canada's future. "So far as I have yet seen," Mair informed his readers (*Globe*, January 4, 1869),

> the country is *great* — inexhaustible — inconceivably rich. Farming here is a pleasure — there is no toil in it, and all who do farm are comfortable, and some wealthy. What do you think of a farmer within a bowshot of here, being worth seven or eight thousand pounds sterling, and selling to the Hudson's Bay Company last week £5,000 stg. worth of cattle: a man who came from Lower Canada nineteen years ago, not worth sixpence?

Beyond Red River is the prairie (*Globe*, May 28, 1869):

> There the awful solitude opens upon the sight and swells into an ocean, and the eye wanders over the "silent space" of the West. The man must be corrupt as death who, unaccustomed, can look unmoved upon this august material presence, this calm unutterable vastness. Man is a grasshopper here — a mere insect, making way between the enormous discs of heaven and earth.

Portage la Prairie, is not just a thriving settlement; it is really a *portal*, through which will flow "the unspeakable blessings of free government and civilization."

It is there that the Canadian "for the first time clearly recognizes the significance and inevitable grandeur of his country's future." Far behind him "are his glorious old native Province[s],[13] the unsullied freedom of the North, the generous and untiring breed of men;" before him "stretches through immeasurable distance the larger and lovelier Canada — the path of empire and the garden of the world."

The letters seemed to justify the high hopes of Macdougall and Mair's Canada First friends when they had urged him to open "the sealed book" of Rupert's Land. The Toronto *Globe* of June 11, 1869, remarked that "the greatest interest has been manifested in every section of Ontario in the letters . . . from Mr. Charles Mair," and emphasized with some specificity Mair's call for settlers. "We hope to see," it said, "a new Upper Canada in the North-West Territory — a new Upper Canada in its well-regulated society and government — in its education, morality and religion." Denison wrote Mair (March 10, 1869) of his pleasure in reading "such good accounts . . . of the great North-West," and added characteristically that "together we Men of the North . . . will be able to teach the Yankees that we will be as our ancestors always have been, the dominant race." But such bold confidence might have been somewhat qualified if Denison had known that his friend's ardently nationalistic journalism had a few weeks before caused him to undergo a most humiliating experience.

The *Globe*s containing the first two or three of Mair's letters began arriving in the settlement some time in January, 1869. To a people already tense over recent events and the implications of the approaching transfer the letters were little short of sensational. Their glowing accounts of the possibilities of the West were in themselves enough, as Begg states, to cause "distrust" among the settlers and natives; but certain passages of a more personal nature infuriated them. The *métis*, said Mair (*Globe*, December 14, 1868), "are a harmless obsequious set of men and will, I believe, be very useful here when the country gets filled up." But they are "a strange class," he continued (*Globe*, December 27, 1868); "they will do anything but farm, will drive ox-trains four hundred miles — go out on the buffalo hunt — fish — do anything but farm." The *métis*, indeed, said Mair — and this annoyed many settlers receiving or awaiting assistance as a result of the famine — "are the only people here who are starving;" of the rest, "not one of them requires relief other than seed wheat which they are quite able to pay for." But to add to this impression of a lazy, self-indulgent *métis* and to that of himself as a rather superior being viewing the lower orders with disdain was one especially offensive passage in the *Globe* of January 4, 1869:

> After putting up at the Dutchman's hotel . . . I went over and stayed at Dr. Schultz's after a few days. The change was comfortable, I assure you, from the racket of a motley crowd of half-breeds, playing billiards and drinking, to the quiet and solid comfort of a home. I was invited to a dinner-party at Beffs [sic], where were the Governor's brother-in-law, a wealthy merchant here, Isabister [sic] and other Nor' Westers. Altogether, I received hospitalities to my heart's content, and I left the place thoroughly pleased with most that I had met. There are jealousies and heart-burnings, however. Many wealthy people are married to half-breed women, who, having no coat of arms but a "totem" to look back to, make up for the deficiency by biting at the backs of their "white" sisters. The white sisters fall back upon their whiteness, whilst the husbands meet each other with desperate courtesies and hospitalities, with a view to filthy lucre in the background.

MAIR SURELY NEVER INTENDED that such lines would be made public and had hoped his brothers would use greater discretion in giving them to the papers. He later defended them as reflecting "the usual freedom and flippancy of a private letter to a friend," and himself as a victim of "an unpardonable indiscretion" that "allowed the letter to be published *verbatim*." He sincerely regretted the letter's appearing in print, for he "had received much kindness in Red River, and certainly bore no feelings of dislike or ill-will to anyone. But political and monopolist antagonisms ran high, and . . . this letter . . . , amongst sensible people, at any other time would have only provoked a smile" (Saskatchewan *Herald*, March 15, 1880).

The good folk of Red River, however, were not amused. Hargrave records that one of the first to react was "Dutch George" Emerling, who "threatened that should the author of these philippics ever enter the house he had maligned, he should be expelled." Much more severe was the anger of the Red River ladies:

> One lady pulled the poet's nose, while another used her fingers rudely about his ears. A third confining herself to words, said his letters would be productive of serious mischief by circulating doubts about the reality of the destitution, of which they gave an account highly calculated to mislead and to paralyse the efforts being made to raise money abroad for the relief of the suffering poor.[14]

The scene of the settlement post office, as recorded by Abbé Georges Dugas, the Roman Catholic director of St. Boniface College, was even more violent:

> Mair, having committed the indelicacy of writing, in the Ontario papers, some words offensive to the women of Winnipeg, underwent the humiliation of being

horse-whipped in the town post-office, by the wife of one of the most notable citizens, Mrs. Bannatyne. She asked the clerk of the store in which the post-office was located to let her know when Mair came at his regular time on Saturday at four o'clock in the afternoon, when the store was full of people. Daniel Mulligan, the clerk, seeing Mair coming, ran to tell Mrs. Bannatyne. She quickly threw a shawl on her head and arrived like a bomb at the post-office; she held a large whip in her hand. Without hesitating, she seized him by the nose, and administered five or six strokes of the whip to his body: "There," she told him, "you see how the women of Red River treat those who insult them."

The scene lasted only half a minute. But it seemed long to Mair who hastened to leave, daring neither to speak nor retaliate. That evening the episode was known throughout the district.[15]

The unfortunate affair made Mair the object of all the resentment that the majority of the populace felt for the "Canadian" party. A "French gentleman" wrote to his friend Hargrave: "The indignation against Mr. Mair is going on furiously."[16] According to another witness it was so great "that he was ordered to leave the territory," but through the intervention of Governor Mactavish he was allowed to return and remain "after apologizing to the leading half-breeds and promising that he would write no more letters of such a nature."[17] This latter report probably inspired Joseph Kinsey Howard's glibly inaccurate comment that Mair "apologized abjectly, abandoned journalism, and thereafter confined himself to epic verse."[18]

Mair's enemies made certain that their impressions of his early conduct at Red River would never be forgotten. Hargrave, Begg and Dugas were not only antagonistic participants or spectators in the events of this time and afterwards; they were also, to varying degrees of proficiency, journalists, and some of their works have become basic documents. Begg in particular carried on a form of literary harassment, and among his many writings is what is considered the first historical novel of the North-West, *Dot-It-Down*,[19] a smugly naïve and rather clumsy satire in which Mair plays a notorious role and for which — by his propensity for note-taking — he even provides the title. As Begg describes "Dot", he is a bumptious and cocksure young man constantly trying to impress the modest, hospitable Red River settlers with his social and literary prowess. He is also depicted as a would-be gallant, too free with both wine and ladies. As a result Dot's friends are soon only "Cool" (Schultz) and "Sharp" (Snow); but after several brushes with the law and the righteous folk of Red River — one is over claim-staking — these three are reduced to utter disgrace and leave the settlement. "Ah! Canada, how your champions suffered for your sake! Ah! Canada,

how you have also suffered by their deeds." Sharp becomes the proprietor of "a third-rate boarding house" in St. Paul; Cool disappears to some other community where "assuredly there was trouble in store for them," and Dot,

> the unfortunate correspondent, found to his cost that he had got into bad company, and felt that he was consequently a loser by the connection. His land speculations were frustrated by the action of the settlers in the matter. His expenses while in Red River had been enormous, through his extravagance, and he found that he possessed few friends on account of his untruthful letters to Canada. He, therefore, decided to follow in the footsteps of Cool; and it is to be hoped when he reached Canada he tried to make some reparation for the evil he did while in Red River.[20]

How much of *Dot-It-Down* can be accepted as a realistic depiction of personalities and events at Red River is difficult to determine. Begg certainly deviates from fact when he disposes of his villains: Mair, Schultz and Snow were to play even more dramatic roles in the near future. His characters and situations, although they may have historical basis, are mainly caricatures — Begg did not have the skill to make them any other. Unfortunately for Mair, however, his friends in the East have helped to confirm the impression that Begg created. Fellow Canada Firster, R. G. Haliburton, reviewing *Dreamland* (Halifax *Daily Reporter*, July 13, 1869) refers to him "as brimful of fun and frolic as a schoolboy . . . as if cricket or croquet, boating and flirting, were more likely to be engrossing his thoughts, than the quiet mysteries of nature." The correspondence of Foster and of Henry J. Morgan (the other founding member of the Canada First group) contains more than one reference to the frivolity of a rather dubious quality that enlivened their evenings when Mair was with them in Ottawa. "Speaking of girls," wrote Morgan (April 4, 1869), "reminds me that information has reached here of a little mishap on your part with a little feminine Nor'Wester. Haliburton and I had a good laugh over it, but the elderly gentlemen frown dreadfully, and say all sorts of things against you." These eastern friends treated Mair's adventures with the good humour and tolerance that common interests and distance could allow, and they sympathized with Mair in his self-imposed banishment. As Denison said (March 29, 1868): "I do not doubt that you are lonely enough out there, and you ought to have some friends — white folks — with you. It is not right you should be entirely alone among those wretched, half starved half-breeds."

FROM MAIR HIMSELF there is little even to be guessed concerning the charges against him. The liquor vouchers in the Mair Papers are doubtful evidence; other documents are similarly ambiguous. Three days after John Garrioch of Portage la Prairie had reported that there was "a perfect misunderstanding" between Mair and the Indians over what land "they would allow immigrants to occupy" (June 18, 1869), Mair wrote to Macdougall that he had applied "a modest pressure" upon the Indians by "pointing out their insignificant numbers compared with the incoming multitude and the obvious necessity, hence, of acting friendly and honestly."[21] In the same letter, however, he decries the methods used by certain landseekers and advises Macdougall that one of the greatest problems will be "to devise a method of distributing Indian annuities in such a manner that they shall be of real service to the recipients and not find their way into the pocket of the rum-seller as soon as paid." The only indication of Mair's personal acquisition of land is a quit claim deed between himself and one Charles Demerais, with Schultz as witness, by which he bought a thousand square chains of property at Portage for eighty pounds sterling — a quite reasonable price.

The memory, certainly, of his humiliation at the post office was to haunt Mair for many years. Ten years after the event an official of the Hudson's Bay Company recalled it during a newspaper-letter controversy with him. Of the Reverend Georges Dugas, when his *Histoire Veridique* appeared in 1905, Mair wrote to Denison: "[He] impales your humble friend as the *Advocatus Diaboli*."[22] And in a letter of 1911 from a relative in New Zealand, a significant comment — "I saw . . . a Judge Mair had been horsewhipped at Prince Rupert, I think; surely he is not one of our Mairs" — is underlined, undoubtedly by Mair, in red pencil.[27]

Whatever his feelings may have been on those occasions, during the first months of 1869 Mair must have felt beleaguered by friend and foe alike. For despite the good-natured levity of his Canada First cohorts, there was another friend whose whole future depended upon the manner in which the transfer of the territory was effected and who had to view Mair's conduct from a perspective different from that of Denison and company. This was the Honourable William Macdougall, who on June 13, 1869, wrote to his paymaster-*cum*-correspondent:

> I regret to have heard some rumours, which upon enquiry I found too true, that prevent me from doing all I had intended in your case. I need not be more precise, but you will at once admit — your own good sense will tell you — that full confidence cannot be placed in one who sometimes forgets himself, and what

is due to those who become answerable for his conduct. I hope for the best. Your future is in your hands. You have talents and genius of a high order — don't follow bad examples, or the end will be like theirs. I write you as a friend who is willing and may be able to do you service, but not if you become your own enemy.

There was also another correspondent, but one who obviously did not write "as a friend," and who expressed his opinion publicly in the pages of the Montreal *Nouveau Monde* of February 25, 1869:

Red River, February 1, 1869.

Mr. Editor:

Please be so good as to give me a little space in the columns of your journal, in order that I too may write of Red River.

I cannot resist that desire since I have read the enormities which a journal of Upper Canada, the *Globe*, has just uttered, in publishing a letter of a certain Mr. Mair, who arrived in Red River last fall. This gentleman, an English Canadian, is, it is said, gifted in making verses; if such is the fact I should advise him strongly to cultivate his talent, for in that way his writings would make up in rhyme for what they lack in reason.

Scarcely a month after his arrival in this country, Mr. Mair desired to describe it and its inhabitants. He succeeded rather like the navigator who, passing by a league from the coast, wrote in his log: "The people of this country seemed to us to be well disposed . . . ."

I know some men who have more than two weeks' experience and who say the opposite to this gentleman. He says finally: *the city of Portage la Prairie is destined to become one of the most important in the country: however, I shall not speak to you of it until I have seen it.*

And why not? You speak of a great many other things that you have not had time to see or know; that would be worth as much as the remainder of your letter; as much as the scarcely courteous terms, I will even say barely civilized, which you use in speaking of the ladies of the country, who certainly by all reports are equal to the ladies of your country.

Be it said in passing, Mr. Mair, if we had only you as specimen of civilized men, we should not have a very high idea of them. If I wished to amuse myself by wielding the pen as you do for the sole pleasure of uttering follies to the world, I should have some amusing things to say on your account . . . .

L. R.

The editor of *Le Nouveau Monde* noted that the letter had been written "by a half-breed . . . rightly indignant of the stupidities which a certain Mr. Mair" had published. If "L.R." was "almost certainly"[24] Louis Riel, he would later

have an opportunity to show his indignation in a much more forceful and personal manner.

But that is part of another story, one that is more familiar to Canadians because of its tragi-comic elements of bravado and bloodshed, because of its central importance in their history. Not so well known is how a minor versifier from a small village in the Ottawa Valley provided significant material for its opening paragraphs. For Charles Mair, less than a year after he had journeyed to Ottawa with his manuscript of *Dreamland*, a work intended to sound a key-note of a new, unified nation, had by his pen, ironically, helped to create a situation of potential danger to Confederation itself. This Upper Canadian had brought to the West the attitudes and prejudices that had been formed over a period of thirty years and then sharpened by his alliance with a particularly aggressive group of other Upper Canadians; one of them, Macdougall, was even a "Father of Confederation." In Ontario such pro-British, Protestant attitudes and prejudices could flourish with little or no opposition. In the melting pot of the new West they were almost bound to provoke conflict.

Notes

[1] *Master-Works of Canadian Literature*, Vol. XIV (Toronto: Radisson Society, 1926).

[2] *The Struggle for Imperial Unity* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1909), pp. 13-14.

[3] Queen's University Library, Mair Papers, October 6, 1868. All subsequent references to Mair's correspondence and papers, unless otherwise indicated, are from this source.

[4] J. J. Hargrave, *Red River* (Montreal: John Lovell, 1871), p. 426.

[5] *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1956), p. 22.

[6] *The Creation of Manitoba* (Toronto: Hovey, 1871), pp. 20-21.

[7] *Red River*, p. 458.

[8] Morton, *Begg's Journal*, Document XXVII, "Memoir of Louis Riel," p. 528.

[9] *Strange Empire*, p. 87.

[10] *Begg's Journal*, p. 528, n. 5.

[11] *The Creation of Manitoba*, p. 41.

[12] *Red River*, p. 451.

[13] Thus Mair corrected his own copy of the *Globe*; but it is highly likely that his letter read simply "Province," as the newspaper had it.

[14] *Red River*, p. 456.

[15] *Histoire Veridique des Faits qui ont préparé le mouvement des Métis à la Rivière Rouge en 1869* (Montreal: Librairie Beauchemin, 1905), p. 27. The quotation is translated from the French of Dugas.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 455.

[17] Thomas Spence, deposition, Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties in the North-West Territory in 1869-70, Canada, *Journals of the House of Commons*, VIII, app. 6, 133.

[18] *Strange Empire*, p. 86.

[19] *A Story of Life in the North-West* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose, 1871).

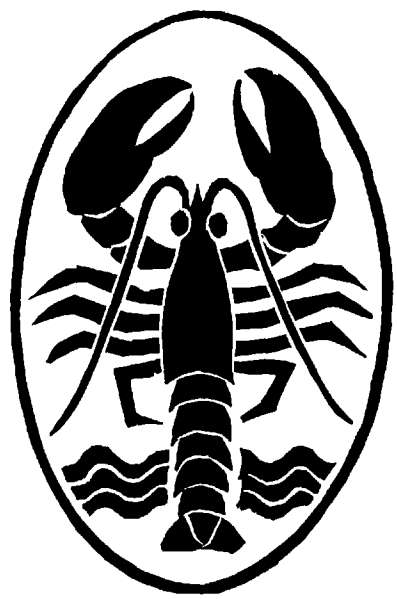
[20] Pp. 354-6.

[21] Public Archives of Canada, Public Works Files, ser. 98, subj. 429, June 21, 1869.

[22] *Ibid.*, Denison Papers, 5148, June 2, 1905.

[23] Ethel Harrington to Mair, December 20, 1911. Mair did become a Justice of the Peace in Prince *Albert*.

[24] Morton, *Begg's Journal*, p. 399, n. 2. The translation of the letter and the original appear on pp. 399-402 and pp. 567-9, respectively.



A FEELING OF COMPLETION

Aspects of W. O. Mitchell

William H. New

"WHEN I BECAME A MAN," wrote Saint Paul to the Corinthians, "I put away childish things." In context, this exchange of childish for mature behaviour is related specifically to man's perception of God, but the question of human growth and development, of man's relationship with time during his mortal existence, is one that varies with each society's estimation of what constitutes appropriate reaction and behaviour in childhood and in maturity. The transition itself is many-sided, and when it is recorded in written literature or in folk traditions, it takes on different forms and emphasizes various concepts. In his two novels, *The Kite* and *Who Has Seen the Wind*, W. O. Mitchell makes use of this transition as a means to consider man's awareness of time and perception of reality during his life's span on earth. The two novels explore these questions, however, from different points of view. Though one is an artistic success while the other falls short of this, part of their interest lies in the extent to which they complement each other, and an examination of the intent, method, and accomplishment of the two works leads to a clearer understanding of the questions that Mitchell asks about life and of the answers that he postulates.

Mitchell's first novel, *Who Has Seen the Wind*, is the success. It is a study of the development involved in a boy's increasing conscious awareness of abstraction, a study of Brian O'Connal's transition from the perfection of sensitive childhood, through conflict, to a balance that is achieved in early maturity. In *The Kite*, which fails largely because of technical difficulties, Keith Maclean is parallel to Brian in many respects, but the author is concerned less with the growth of a child than with the effect of continuing awareness of time on an old man, Daddy Sherry, and the late awareness of the truth of emotional abstractions that comes to the apparently mature David Lang.

Brian O'Connal's growth begins in perfection. He is a child, complete in his own environment, when *Who Has Seen the Wind* opens; he meets existence from an awareness of self and by sense perception of the material things around him. For the actual growth to take place, however, this state of harmonious innocence must be disrupted, and it is, by the conflict that is aroused in Brian as he is brought into contact with death. An examination of each of the six death scenes in the novel will demonstrate Brian's changing reactions — his growth — and the extent to which he transcends age in developing to maturity.

Before he encounters death for the first time, Brian is given a dog for a pet, to serve as a diversion from the incipient jealousy he feels towards his younger brother Bobbie and to counteract the fantasy world of R. W. God which he invents to escape the imagined tyranny of his grandmother. When the dog is taken from him because it annoyed the grandmother, Brian seeks another pet in a baby pigeon and inadvertently kills it in his attempt to love. Because death deprived him of the pet he wanted, he cries, and drying tears stain his face when he seeks explanatory knowledge from his father, asking " 'Why does it happen to things?' " [cf. Keith Maclean: " 'Why does stuff have to die?' "] But not till the bird's body ("just like dirt, he thought, like prairie dirt that wasn't alive at all") was placed in the prairie was Brian "aware of a sudden relief"; not till then was "the sadness . . . lifted from him". Immediately following this first contact with death, however, he is reunited with the dog, and he then experiences a "soft explosion of feeling. It was one of completion and of culmination." The sought-after knowledge concerning the abstract is forgotten in the immediacy of the child's egocentric world. "The boy was aware that the yard was not still. Every grass-blade and leaf and flower seemed to be breathing, or perhaps, whispering — something *to him* — something *for him*." (Italics mine.) His world is complete; the truth he knows begins and ends in himself, in sense perception. It is only disturbed when emotion is kindled in him by contact with the implied complements of life and death, with the abstracts that youth does not and cannot comprehend.

The feeling of completion alters in character as Brian grows older, however, for with growth and experience comes an intimation that beyond the private world is a social world and beyond that another, a universal world, wherein Absolute Truth and Basic Reality can be known. But certainty still eludes him.

> The barest breath of a wind stirred at his face, and its caress was part of the strange enchantment too. Within him something was opening, releasing shyly as the petals of a flower open, with such gradualness that he was hardly aware of it. . . . He was

> filled with breathlessness and expectancy, as though he were going to be given something, as though he were about to find something.

But though the feeling is intermittent, it carries, by the time Brian encounters the second death, a tremendous impact. Brian, Art, Fat, and Bobbie at this time go to the prairie to drown gophers, but when Art begins to torture an animal by pulling its tail off, Brian

> realized with a start that an excitement, akin to the feeling that had moved him so often, was beginning to tremble within him. His knees felt weak with it; the Young Ben could cause it too. The Young Ben was part of it.

Indeed, the very old Young Ben, who was "born growed up", springs into action at this moment, killing the gopher with "one merciful squeeze" and clawing Art in a violent retributive attack.

Uninhibited and primitive, the Young Ben is a personified eternal in the novel; one with the prairie, he is a sort of incarnate life-urge that in microcosm and in physical terms demonstrates in his attack on Art the potent retributive violence that knowledge of not having acted justly can wreak upon the spirit and mind — the conscience, or the childhood memory of perfect order — of man. Art, who repeated tearfully " 'I didn't do anything to *him*' ", did realize that he was "doing something" to Life: which, however, amounts to the same thing. Bobbie's reaction in this situation is the child's reaction of crying, but Brian's, characteristically, is introspection.

> The feeling was in Brian now, fierce — uncontrollably so, with wild and unbidden power, with a new, frightening quality. . . . Prairie's awful, thought Brian, and in his mind there loomed vaguely fearful images of a still and brooding spirit, a quiescent power unsmiling from everlasting to everlasting. . . . The Young Ben was part of all this.

In introducing characters such as the Young Ben or Saint Sammy, who are in some ways the most vividly drawn of all the people in the book, Mitchell runs the danger of letting his focus shift from the central development. Such a shift occurs in *The Kite* and weakens that book, but in *Who Has Seen the Wind* the focus is fortunately sustained, and because of this, the author achieves a remarkable insight into the operation of his central character's mind. Though much of this novel deals with characters other than Brian O'Connal, Brian's growth to responsibility always remains central, and the various successful and unsuccessful adaptations that the minor characters make in their respective situations of conflict,

reflect upon this central growth. Svarich, for example, fails to accept his Ukrainian identity; Hislop fails to accept the existence of opposition in his church and merely resigns. Sean, Digby, and Miss Thompson, however, come to take responsible positions in their own spheres; they act positively to solve the conflict in which they find themselves, and yet they are able at the same time to accept what they cannot control. Brian, therefore, has both examples before him. Also before him are the vividly-drawn Saint Sammy and Young Ben with their strange adaptive abilities, but even they remain minor figures, because they, too, serve to contribute to an understanding of the emotional sensitivity of Brian himself.

After Brian has encountered death for the second time, this sensitivity brings him to a vague awareness of a difference between death inevitable and death avoidable and of the bond of life that joins all mortal creatures. He must then come to a realization that in life there is deformity, but that this can be lived wih and even loved. His first reaction to such deformity is one of shock. "The feeling", when he looks at a dead two-headed calf, for example, "was fierce in Brian as he stared down . . . ; he felt as though he were on a tightrope high in the air. . . . It was wrong!" His judgment is based on the still vivid recollection of completion — of perfect order — but the very recognition of deformity leads to a movement away from the complete awareness of this perfection, and the feeling "lacked the sharper quality of the other times." The knowledge of perfection decreases, therefore, to the extent that the knowledge of departure from perfection (deformity) increases.

Later in the novel Brian becomes aware that the deformities men recognize are those that differentiate physical realities from earthly norms, but that some deviations from those norms do not necessitate correction in order that human love can be expressed toward them. On Sean's farm he looks down at a pet runt pig and considers:

> It would always be a runt, he decided, a shivery runt. It had no twist to its tail; it never would have. The world was a funny place. He loved his runt pig that wasn't good for anything. Ab was fussy about Noreen, the snuffiest cow in the herd, with her wheezing and sneezing and coughing. Before Annie's eyes had been straightened he had . . . [loved her too].
>
> Brian knew then.

But by loving what exists on earth, man moves imperceptibly further and further from instinctive love of antecedent perfection. By consciously becoming aware of love *per se*, as of death, he is becoming increasingly aware of conceptual and emotional abstractions which sensory perception cannot explain.

To the deaths which he has heretofore encountered, Brian has been largely able to maintain an objective attitude. Even towards the baby pigeon, the love expressed was in infancy as well as the child who loved. With growth and with acquaintance with the love object, however, comes a more fully developed emotion, and when that is disturbed, as in the case of the fourth death when Brian's dog Jappy is killed under the wheels of a dray, the boy's reaction is as profound as it is subjective. Though he "looked as though he were going to cry", he does not. Though filled with memories of the dog's life, he also "remembers the stiffness of the body, the turned head, the filmed eyes. He knew that a lifeless thing was under the earth. *His* dog was dead." [Italics mine]. With this personal deprivation comes also a knowledge of personal mortality, and the feeling of completion, once so strong, is lost.

> Somewhere within Brian something was gone; ever since the accident it had been leaving him as the sand of an hourglass threads away grain by tiny grain. Now there was an emptiness that wasn't to be believed.

IT IS AT THIS STAGE that *The Kite* can be again considered, for the reader knows of David Lang's childhood completeness only by inference from his loss of it. As a boy, David had anticipated a day of kite-flying with Lon Burke, only to be disappointed by lack of space, by bad weather, and finally by Lon's heart attack, at which time David loses the kite:

> as he walked towards home, the late guilt he felt could not overcome his sense of irreparable loss, mortal loss too great for tears. It would never soar for him. . . . While he had been fruitlessly searching for his kite, Lon had died.

David tries to fill the void he has now encountered by taking Lon's "explosion-pills", by experiencing as it were "explosions of feeling", and knowledge of the pills "soothed and reminded him of when he used to suck his thumb, though he hadn't done that for years." But this is an unsatisfactory solution, for it is in effect an attempt to regress to a stage of childhood that he had already left behind, and so after the pills are used up, the emptiness returns, partly because David has been using another's remedy, partly because in attempting to achieve a reversal of time, he is attempting that which is impossible.

The "other sort of legacy from Lon", however, was the encyclopaedia, and by

immersing himself in knowledge, David can grow intellectually and after some time accept adult occupations in journalism and in the television industry. But these do not complete him; "In a way it was as though he were being requested to die — as himself." What he lacks he lost when he never flew the kite: the elasticity, the acrobatics, that would allow him emotional maturity, that would give him an awareness of life whereby he could realize that social participation does not necessarily mean concomitant death of individuality. His visit to Daddy Sherry is the growth of this awareness.

David does not know what he is looking for when he first heads to Shelby; nor does he understand Mr. Dalgliesh when the latter says, " 'I suppose all of us at one time or another have had something to do with Daddy that's — well especially between ourselves and — and Daddy.' " Like the Young Ben, Daddy Sherry is more in the novel than an individual character; like the Young Ben, too, he is a sort of incarnation of a life urge. " 'He *is* excitement'," says Harry Richardson; " 'The life force sparkles more through him,' the minister suggested"; and after some time in Shelby, David himself realizes that Daddy "had been too immersed in living to build historical significance out of his days." He too has to have an individual contact with Daddy, with life; he too must find, in living, the completeness that has only been known before in his childhood lack of awareness of anything that might disturb the apparent immortality of the immediately perceived world. David is of course attempting to write and complete a story, but the completion he needs and of which he becomes aware in the old man, is bound with the other need for completion at an emotional level; "the cross-willed old human had completely won him, and somehow — if Daddy were to die now — their relationship would have failed to complete itself."

David's contact with Daddy is the central relationship in *The Kite*, and the growth that occurs through this relationship is David's, not Daddy's. The danger of shift of focus, however, that had been circumvented in the case of the Young Ben and Saint Sammy in *Who Has Seen the Wind*, recurs here with results that weaken this novel. Structurally and thematically, Daddy Sherry is a minor figure, but the vividness with which he is drawn and the frequency with which he appears in the novel combine to draw attention away from David Lang. Neither character is sufficiently created to take a central position therefore, and the novel suffers from the resultant lack of an insight into human behaviour comparable to that achieved in the depiction of Brian O'Connal.

To achieve in *The Kite* the focus he desires, Mitchell has set up reflector patterns in the subplots comparable to those in *Who Has Seen the Wind*; he depicts

a series of relationships with Daddy on the part of the Shelby townspeople that should act as reflectors or commentaries on the central interaction. Unfortunately this device fails in operation. Because Daddy figures prominently in each case, and because David himself remains relatively passive during the recounted anecdotes, the focus shifts to Daddy, and David's centrality is concomitantly diminished. Daddy, however, remains a constant throughout the book, albeit a constant vitality; he does not change. It is David who suffers the development and who discovers the "answer", achieving completion, at the end of the book and at the end of his stay in Shelby.

Like David Lang, Brian O'Connal, too, must move from childhood completion through emptiness to a new completion. The "explosions of feeling" which he has felt before his "emptiness" do momentarily return after Jappy's death and before his own final glimpse of the nature of reality. A visit to Saint Sammy on the prairie, who mystically in age can know (to his own satisfaction) the "majesty of His glory" and "the greatness of His work" stirs up the feeling once more, but this time "coloured with sickening guilt". In his development, Brian, again like David, has been acquiring knowledge, but when that knowledge deals grossly with the physical facts of birth and life and death, it "spoils" the inherent knowledge of immortality. Brian is in conflict with experience, and more often than not,

> it was as though he listened to the drearing wind and in the spread darkness of the prairie night was being drained of his very self. He was trying to hold together something within himself, that the wind demanded and was relentlessly leaching from him.

At this stage in Brian's development, his father succumbs to hepatitis and dies, and Brian is forced again on a highly personal level to recognize the inevitability of death — this, however, the death of a human being. Moving as he has been from childish reaction in emotional situations (the tears of deprivation) towards more verbal response, Brian "did not feel like crying" at the death of his father. Tears of relief come only when he realizes responsibility for others and a direction to take during his own life: his mother "needed him now". Aware of death, he is maturing; aware of some inevitabilities, he begins to accept what he cannot control; and some years later his grandmother MacMurray's expected death "did not come with the shocking impact."

Brian's "growing sense of responsibility" accompanies the growth of this awareness; expressed towards all around him, it is a manifestation of his increasingly

competent and humanistic attempts to rectify the unjust and the improperly controlled in that part of his environment over which he has influence. But as the growth takes place, the feeling disappears, and Brian would wonder "with regret, that he never had a return of the old excitement since he had heard the meadow lark sing to him the day of his father's funeral." The egocentric world becomes a sociocentric one with Brian outward-oriented, a transition which culminates in his desire to be a "dirt doctor", in his laying plans for his own future in terms of living in the physical and the social world.

Still seeking certainty in his new rôle, Brian meets Digby and Palmer in the harness shop and puzzles at the adult difficulties of Berkeleyan philosophy. Digby's first impression that Brian was "not old enough" to understand, that his approach to understanding would be through the child's sense perception of material things, is changed when Brian abruptly tells him: " 'I don't get the feeling any more. I — don't think I will — get it any more.' " At this point Digby makes the judgment which I assume is crucial to the novel. He

> was struck by something more than familiar in the serious eyes under the broad band of the toque with its red pom. . . . That was it — the look upon Brian's face — the same expression that had puzzled him on the Young Ben's: maturity in spite of the formlessness of childish features, wisdom without years. 'Intimations of Immortality,' he thought.
>
> 'Perhaps,' said Digby to Brian, 'you've grown up.'

And yet Brian is certainly different from the Young Ben. Western society defines maturity as responsibility to the social world, as the leaving of petulant childishness for emotional restraint at least in recurring situations, and Brian comes to this, in spite of his years, whereas the Young Ben does not. But for that matter, few of the adult characters in the novel achieve maturity to the extent Brian has done. Bent Candy in his greed and the Abercrombies and Mr. Powelly in their desire for revenge furnish ready examples of pettiness and petulance despite their adult years. Their world, like the child's world, is built around themselves, and basing their actions on material values, they can neither appreciate breadth of mind nor express valid and deep emotion. But the Young Ben and Saint Sammy, though socially immature to the extent that they, too, live for themselves, do possess a maturity of a different kind. Unlike Bent Candy or Mrs. Abercrombie and although their methods of appreciation remain those of sensory perception, their values are non-material. By reason of their primitive awareness of life and death and existence, by their uninhibited passion, by their

oneness with the prairie, they have achieved apparently instinctively the egocentric "maturity" of contact with the timeless and immortal.

Brian, however, gives promise of coming to a contact with the Absolute which is comparable to this, but of course his methods will differ. The approach of the Young Ben and Saint Sammy to eternal truths is from a material, a physical point of view. They see the Eternal through the senses, by running *with* the prairie wind and watching coloured butterflies and collecting broken glass and labels, and their appreciation of beauty and truth is as if by instinct, whereas Brian's changed approach, his socially mature approach, is not through sense perception but rather through the more abstract routes of emotion and conscious intellect. Staring out at the prairie when he is twelve, he muses:

> It had something to do with dying; it had something to do with being born. Loving something and being hungry were with it too. He knew that much now. . . . Some day, he thought, perhaps when he was older than he was now, he would know; he would find out completely and for good. He would be satisfied. . . . Some day. The thing could not hide from him forever.

But the day of rebirth to oneness with the perfect and immortal would be a day of death to the physical and mortal, a cycle of existence that is reflected in Mitchell's recurrent imagery of light and dark, summer and winter, growth and decay and new growth.

The realization of the nature of this cycle would bring Brian to the state of awareness — an intellectual awareness — that Digby himself has achieved. Brian does not in the novel come to full knowledge and understanding of the "realities of birth, hunger, satiety, eternity, death". For him are only glimpses, only foretastes of the final order — or perhaps only recollections of early childhood — in Mitchell's terms: "moments of fleeting vision". Maturity involves moving *from* childhood, however, and to acceptance of the responsibilities of a social world. Brian, in achieving the degree of maturity beyond his child's years that Digby recognizes as "growing up", chooses a way of life which is balanced between the isolating extremes of material crassness and private mysticism. And yet he preserves in curiosity and breadth of vision the sympathetic state of mind that will allow at once both acknowledgment of human interdependence and an adult-grown contemplation of the mysteries of existence that activate the world in which he lives. This is the maturity that will allow the new completeness — leading a full life — to replace satisfactorily for the period of mortal existence the old, the childlike awareness of a different order.

DAVID LANG and Keith Maclean and Daddy Sherry are seen in their period of mortal existence, too, and at the end of *The Kite* David realizes that it is Daddy's "awareness of his own mortality" that supplies the completion he needs to live his own life fully. David already has intellect, but as Donald Finlay has told him, intellect by itself is insufficient:

> ". . . intuition is nearer to life than intellect — or science . . . That's why we have the arts, isn't it?"
>
> "I suppose."
>
> "It's one of the reasons I'm a minister."
>
> "Just what do you mean by living fully?"
>
> "Expressing your whole potentiality — taking advantage of every bit of elasticity life offers and stretching it to your profit. . . . Liberty — freedom."

But freedom does not mean indulgence of appetite, nor does it mean disregard of all but the self. Daddy Sherry, for example, has led a full life, has taken advantage of its elasticity, and though in his age he is at times cantankerous, he remains loyal to his ideals (Ramrod Parsons) in spite of the opportunity to turn Paradise Valley to personal material gain. He stays concerned, too, for his family (Helen and Keith), but, as the doctor notes, " 'he steps at will into the past — might even be a form of adjustment for him. His personality may have lost some of its elasticity.' "

Daddy's life, which in Helen's words " 'didn't encourage conformity — it gave him a chance to resist imprint' ", has therefore been a continual expression of individuality within the framework of a given environment. Because it has expressed the potentiality of the man, it has brought him happiness — an awareness of growth and an expectation of the future that will not allow him to die in the spring season. Having achieved the completeness of a full life, Daddy no longer fears death, just as the child, who is unaware of death, also has no fear of it — but different, because the mature approach is a conscious one. No longer fearing death, he must still continue to live fully, however, for once he consciously lets time live for him — once he allows his actions to be governed by the clock — he loses the attunement with immortality that allows him to continue to live. Hence he can say to Keith Maclean:

> "Get to ninety-five an' you're immortal agin — jist as immortal as you are right now — settin' there ten years old on the front my porch step. . . ."

The one does not know death, and the other does not fear it and can therefore destroy time by destroying the clock on his one hundred and eleventh birthday. Unlike the others at the Daddy Sherry celebration, Daddy himself cannot partake in any "propitiation of the god of mortality". He recognizes it, and that suffices.

At these celebrations, however, David Lang achieves a new completion of his own, for here he at last recognizes the necessary relationship between the individual and the realities of life and death. Limbo — surrender to the negating power of time — is a kind of death-in-life for the journalist in him, but elasticity of self within his own environment, in place and in time, will allow immortality and let the artist in him create. Recognition of this also allows him to anticipate a full future — out of limbo — with Helen and Keith Maclean.

BOTH DAVID LANG and Brian O'Connal, then, undergo a process of growth and development that results in their increased awareness of realities beyond the physical. But though their situations are in a sense complementary — the sensitive boy balancing emotion with intellect and the man in limbo balancing intellect with emotion — the two novels that explore these situations differ markedly.

In *Canadian Literature* No. 14, Patricia Barclay quotes W. O. Mitchell as saying: "When I wrote *Who Has Seen the Wind*, I didn't have an answer. It was just a question, which is a perfectly fine reason for writing a novel. In *The Kite*, there is an answer. . . ." The answer in *The Kite*, however, which should have become apparent through the situation itself, is made so explicit by the end of the book as to weaken the effect of the central symbol:

> Now he knew what it was that Daddy had for him — the astonishingly simple thing the old man had to say — and had said through the hundred and eleven years of his life — between the personal deeds of his birth and his death, knowing always that the string was thin — that it could be dropped — that it could be snapped. He had lived always with the awareness of his own mortality.

But *Who Has Seen the Wind* approaches the question merely from a different point of view, and the same answer is implicit here in the development that takes place in the novel itself.

The flaws which weaken *The Kite* do not, however, prevent an appreciation of the concepts that Mitchell attempts to convey. David Lang's intellectually

competent approach to living recognizes the truth of there being life in art; only when he tempers his objectivity with emotional intuitiveness, however, can he recognize also that there is art in life. His contact with the forces of life when he visits Daddy Sherry in Shelby allows him at last to see the short period of mortal existence as a continuum that does not "arrive at anything" or "echo anything" except what the individual makes of it. If he orients physical reality towards the self only or if he reacts only intellectually towards life, he deprives himself of values that are inherent in more abiding relationships; and if he indulges in emotion only, he again lives in a world populated by self alone. Only by the balance of objective reason and judgment with subjective concern and contemplation can he enjoy the fullness that mortal existence offers. Brian O'Connal's development is also one that brings him to an awareness of the possibilities in mortal life. His maturation takes him from unimpeded emotional indulgence when confronted with death to a balance beyond his child's years that allows him to recognize intellectually the inevitability of death and yet to appreciate through his emotional sensibility the abiding expressions of transcendent perfection. Here, in *Who Has Seen the Wind*, the answer to Mitchell's question is more subtly revealed; partly because of this, and partly because of the novel's unity, its insight, and its world of suggestion, it manifests the strength of certain artistry.

LE JOURNALISME AU CANADA FRANCAIS

Adrien Therio

C'EST UN TRUISME de dire que la littérature canadienne est née du journalisme. C'est tout à fait dans l'ordre des choses. Un pays colonial et par surcroit une colonie qui passe aux mains d'étrangers ne peut se permettre d'évoleur, sur le plan intellectuel et littéraire, comme l'ont fait les vieux pays. Un peu remis de la guerre de la conquète, après 1760, les Français du Canada pensèrent d'abord à vivre, non à s'exprimer dans des livres. Mais il ne leur fallut pas longtemps pour se rendre compte que s'ils voulaient vraiment demeurer Français en terre d'Amérique, il leur faudrait défendre leurs droits. C'est pour défendre ces droits que le *Canadien* vit le jour au commencement du dix-neuvième siècle.

Le premier journal publié au Canada fut *La Gazette de Québec* (1764), d'information surtout politique, rédigé en anglais et en français. Puis, par ordre chronologique, la *Gazette du commerce et littéraire* (1778) qui s'appela la *Gazette Littéraire* après quelques numéros, fondée par un Français, Fleury Mesplet; la *Gazette de Montréal* (1785) et le *Courrier de Québec* (1788). Ces trois derniers journaux, tout comme la *Gazette de Québec*, étaient rédigées en anglais et en français, et sauf la *Gazette Littéraire*, avaient été mis sur pieds par les Anglais qui montraient peu d'ardeur à défendre les intérêts des Canadiens de langue française. Il faut se rappeler aussi qu'avant la constitution de 1791, il fallait une permission spéciale pour imprimer les nouvelles du jour. Jusqu'en 1806, nos journaux se contentèrent de publier de brefs rapports des séances de la chambre. Il n'était pas question de critiquer le gouvernement. D'ailleurs, deux de ces quatre journaux seulement eurent une carrière assez longue. Le *Courrier de Québec* ne fut publié qu'une fois et la *Gazette Littéraire* ne dura qu'un an.

Le vrai journalisme canadien commence avec *Le Canadien*, fondé en 1806 par Pierre Bédard qui avait à ses côtés comme collaborateurs D.-B. Viger, F. Blanchet, J.-T. Taschereau et quelques autres mécènes qui contribuèrent autant de leur

argent que de leur plume à cette oeuvre qu'ils jugeaient nécessaire. Il faut noter que l'année précédente, soit en 1805, un autre journal, anglais celui-là, le *Mercury* avait été fondé à Québec et ne se gênait pas pour répéter que la province de Québec était encore beaucoup trop française et qu'il fallait se hâter de l'angliciser. C'est en partie pour répondre à cette feuille que le *Canadien* parut. Même si les éditoriaux de ce journal n'étaient pas signés, le ton était trop osé pour le gouvernement du temps, et en 1810 tous les principaux collaborateurs furent arrêtés et mis en prison. Fleury Mesplet avait donné l'exemple qui avait lui-même goûté de la prison pour avoir voulu se mêler de parler religion. La tradition ne devait pas se perdre. La plupart de nos journalistes d'envergure iront faire un jour ou l'autre leur tour en prison.

Le *Canadien* reparut pendant quelque temps en 1819, mais c'est en 1820, avec Flavien Vallerand qu'il entreprend la deuxième étape de sa vie qui devait se terminer cette fois en 1825. C'est pendant cette deuxième étape, en 1822, qu'Etienne Parent en devient le rédacteur. Mais c'est en 1831 que renait pour de bon le *Canadien*, sous l'impulsion de Parent, qui avait réussi dans l'entre-temps à faire son droit. Le journal a pour devise: *Nos Institutions, notre langue et nos lois*. C'est à ce moment que s'engage vraiment la lutte entre le parti anglais et le parti français, au sujet de la langue française, des écoles françaises, de la constitution, de la représentation canadienne-française à l'Assemblée et surtout du gouvernement responsable. Parent s'est de plus intéressé à l'éducation, au commerce et à l'industrie. Un des premiers chez nous, il a conseillé aux Canadiens de se mêler à la vie économique du pays. Un des premiers aussi, il a réclamé "l'instruction obligatoire pour tous les enfants". Etienne Parent n'était peut-être pas un fin styliste mais sa prose garde encore aujourd-hui une certaine distinction. On peut sourire en parcourant certaines de ses conférences où il essaie de jouer au grand philosophe, mais ceci ne diminue en rien son mérite comme journaliste de combat. Sa prose sobre et claire, son talent de polémiste nous permettent de relire ses articles sans impatience.

Avant que ne paraissent d'autres journaux de combat, mentionnons-en trois qui voulurent donner plus de place aux arts, aux lettres et aux sciences: le *Spectateur*, fondé en 1813, l'*Aurore* en 1815, et l'*Aurore des Canadas* en 1817. Michel Bibaud eut l'audace dans l'*Aurore des Canadas* de publier à côté de textes d'auteurs classiques les poèmes et les chansons des premiers bardes canadiens.

La *Minerve* toute dévouée aux intérêts du parti conservateur vit le jour en 1826. Elle était propriété de L. Duvernay. Ce journal eut une influence profonde sur les destinées du pays et plusieurs collaborateurs de marque l'illustrèrent, au

nombre desquels on peut remarquer Gérin-Lajoie, Oscar Dunn, A. Decelles et R. Bellemarre. Elle s'était donné pour but de défendre les intérêts canadiens en politique et dès son premier numéro louait le système représentatif qui "a couvert l'Amérique de nouveaux Etats composés de citoyens honnêtes et libres . . ." Elle aussi insiste sur l'instruction et ses bienfaits. Avec la *Minerve* était né le premier journal de couleur politique.

Un des journaux les plus populaires de l'époque et que peu de gens connaissent aujourd'hui fut sans doute le *Fantasque* qui, fondé en 1837, mourut à différentes reprises pour renaître à l'heure où l'on s'y attendait le moins. Le grand responsable de ce journal humoristique, celui qui le rédigeait du commencement à la fin, était Napoléon Aubin, un Suisse émigré au Canada en 1834. Si nous voulons trouver de l'humour dans nos lettres, c'est dans le journalisme qu'il faut l'aller chercher. Napoléon Aubin est le premier de nos journalistes à savoir manier l'ironie. Il s'en est pris à plusieurs politiciens du temps, à tous nos travers. Ce qu'il faut savoir surtout, c'est que le *Fantasque* malgré son ton léger, ses sautes d'humeur pas toujours sérieuses, a eu une très grande influence dans son temps, principalement pendant les troubles de 1837-38. Grand admirateur de Napoléon, Aubin devait l'être aussi de Papineau. Il le fut peut-être un peu trop, car à son tour, il connut les honneurs de la prison. Il y resta deux mois. Mais ce n'était pas pour faire peur à notre homme. Aubin trouvait toujours le tour de faire renaître son journal. Et les Québécois s'en délectaient. Aubin ne s'en est pas tenu au *Fantasque*. Il a fondé et rédigé aussi le *Castor*, le *Canadien Indépendant*, et il a été collaborateur *au Canadien*, à la *Tribune* et au *Pays*. En résumé, Napoléon Aubin a été le fondateur de la petite presse au Canada français et autant par sa fine ironie que par son patriotisme, mérite d'être mieux connu.

Voici maintenant un ennemi de Papineau: Joseph-Edouard Cauchon. Après avoir fait son droit, Cauchon était entré comme assistant-directeur au *Canadien*, alors dirigé par Etienne Parent. Cauchon ne pratiqua pas le droit mais il pratique la politique et le journalisme. Il fut tour à tour, député, ministre, président du sénat, président de la Compagnie du Chemin de fer du Nord, et même lieutenant-gouverneur du Manitoba en 1877. Il a poursuivi sa carrière politique en même temps que sa carrière de journaliste. Désireux, dans ce domaine, de voler de ses propres ailes, il fonda en 1842, de concert avec un beau-frère, Augustin Côté, le *Journal de Québec*, une feuille qui devait par la suite prendre de l'importance, à cause justement du ton emporté de son directeur. Cauchon s'en est pris à tout le monde et ses colères ont été parfois terribles. Il n'a pas craint en maintes occasions de se contredire. C'est ainsi qu'il écrivit une brochure pour prouver que la

confédération n'était pas une chose possible et que quelques années plus tard, il en écrivit une autre pour prouver le contraire. Dans ses polémiques, il usait parfois de termes assez grossiers, mais il avait souvent de l'esprit. Cauchon est une des figures les plus originales que le journalisme canadien ait produit.

Une autre figure imposante de cette période est Louis-A. Dessaules, qui fut d'abord collaborateur de l'*Avenir,* journal qui avait été fondé en 1847 par un groupe de jeunes gens à l'esprit libéral. L'âme de ce journal fut pendant longtemps celui qu'on a appelé l'*enfant terrible,* Eric Dorion. Faisons ici un effort pour nous remettre un peu dans l'esprit du temps. Les troubles de 37-38 n'étaient pas encore apaisés. Papineau était devenu un hèros national. Et Papineau a été l'âme dirigeante du libéralisme qui envahit le pays à ce moment-là. Des journaux se fondèrent à Québec comme à Montréal pour défendre les idées libérales de Papineau et de ses disciples, au nombre desquels, il y eut l'*Avenir,* le *Pays,* le *Journal de Québec* et même la *Patrie* fondée en 1854. Ce fut ce qu'on a appelé l'ère du rougisme et qui conduisit les tenants de l'école à fonder l'*Institut Canadien* d'illustre mémoire. Du côté conservateur, il y avait la *Minerve, le Courrier du Canada* et plus tard la *Presse.* Ce libéralisme à outrance devint presque aussitôt de l'anti-cléricalisme à outrance. Louis-A. Dessaules qui fut un des fondateurs de l'*Institut Canadien* et en fut le président pendant plusieurs années, est l'un des piliers de cette école libérale. Après avoir collaboré à l'*Avenir,* il prit la direction du *Pays,* journal qui avait été fondé en 1852 pour rallier certains esprits libéraux qui ne voulaient plus suivre l'*Avenir.* Ce fut une époque florissante en polémiques. L'*Avenir* proposait 21 réformes, parmi lesquelles il y avait l'abolition de la dîme, l'annexion aux Etats-Unis et la sécularisation des réserves du clergé. Le *Pays* pour sa part présentait 29 propositions dès son premier numéro. En voici quelques unes: abolition du prétendu gouvernement responsable, abolition du Conseil Législatif, séparation de l'Eglise et de l'Etat, abolition des pensions payées par l'Etat, annexion aux Etats-Unis, réforme de l'éducation, etc. Louis-A. Dessaules s'est battu avec une ardeur de croisé pour faire triompher les idées libérales de son école, ou plutôt de son *Institut.* Certains de ses articles nous donnent une assez juste idée de la fureur anti-cléricale du temps. Dessaules a certainement bien mérité du *Pays* et de l'*Institut Canadien,* mais si les idées qu'il a défendues nous intéressent encore aujourd'hui, il faut ajouter que son style n'était pas à la hauteur de la tâche. Dessaules écrivait aussi mal que faire se peut.

On ne peut passer sous silence, pendant la mème période, deux journalistes qui ont eu une certaine influence sur leur milieu, même s'ils n'appartenaient pas au groupe libéral: Hector Fabre et Oscar Dunn. Le premier a commencé sa carrière

à l'*Ordre* qui représentait le libéralisme modéré à côté de l'autre à l'emporte-pièce, pour entrer en 1863 à la rédaction du *Canadien* et fonder enfin, en 1869, l'*Evénement*. Hector Fabre avait de l'esprit et c'est dans ce journal qu'il a déployé toutes les ressources de sa verve et de son ironie. C'est là aussi qu'il prit plaisir à attaquer un de ses adversaires préférés: Joseph-Edouard Cauchon. On oublie peut-être trop que l'*Evénement* de Québec a été pendant plusieurs années un journal très populaire et recherché, grâce à son directeur Hector Fabre. On n'oserait pas classer Fabre dans la galerie des grands journalistes, mais il mérite une place d'honneur parmi nos bons journalistes. Il écrivait bien et quelques uns de ses articles sont encore d'actualité. Quand à Oscar Dunn, il fut rédacteur au *Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe* et c'est là qu'il attire d'abord l'attention par ses éditoriaux. Il passa ensuite à la *Minerve* et s'y fit également remarquer par son écriture et le ton sobre de ses polémiques. Mentionnons encore L.-O. David qui fut l'un des fondateurs de l'*Opinion Publique*, en 1870, et qui eut son heure de gloire. M. David s'est taillé dans le temps une réputation enviable et son nom peut rester associé à ceux de Fabre, Dunn et Arthur Buies.

L'arrivée d'Arthur Buies sur la scène marque une date importante dans l'histoire du journalisme canadien-français. Après avoir étudié quelques années en France, Buies rentra au pays, se fit avocat et se livra ensuite au journalisme avec une ardeur peu commune. Revenu d'Europe avec des idées ultra-libérales, il entreprit d'éclairer le peuple canadien qui vivait encore dans les ténèbres de l'ignorance. Il fonda pour propager ses idées *La Lanterne*, à l'instar de *La Lanterne* de Rochefort, puis l'*Indépendant* et le *Réveil*. C'est avec *La Lanterne* qu'il s'est fait une réputation de polémiste violent. Il prit part à la querelle qui opposait l'*Institut Canadien* et Mgr Bourget et n'y alla pas de main morte. L'Archevêque de Montréal et le clergé en général furent plus d'une fois les cibles de ce franc-tireur. Mais Buies savait écrire. On l'a souvent comparé à Rochefort et à Paul-Louis Courrier et il faut admettre que le disciple canadien n'était pas indigne de ses maîtres français. Buies s'est illustré comme polémiste, mais aussi comme chroniqueur. On retrouve dans ses chroniques quelques phrases lourdes, mais certaines de ces pages peuvent encore figurer dans une anthologie. Buies avait aussi beaucoup d'esprit, ce qui n'est pas un tort pour un journaliste. Cet esprit l'a servi et desservi, mais en dépit des réserves qu'on peut faire à son égard, il reste un de nos grands journalistes canadiens.

Il n'est peut-être pas mauvais, après Arthur Buies, de parler de Jules-Paul Tardivel qui s'est fait, à peu près dans le même temps, le champion de la presse catholique et ultramontaine. Tardivel a fondé la *Vérité*, à Québec, en 1881. Alors

que Buies se faisait le champion du libéralisme, Tardivel entreprit une sorte de campagne de purification du peuple canadien. Il prêcha, comme il est dit dans l'Evangile, à temps et à contre-temps, et pourchassa les ennemis de l'Eglise avec des élans de néophyte. Il s'est de plus intéressé à l'éducation et à la langue française. Il publia une brochure intitulée: *La Langue française au Canada* qui fut répandue avec les bénédictions de presque tous les évêques et archevêques du Canada. Il en veut aux anglicismes, mais il défend avec brio la langue paysanne et ses archaismes. Malgré les exagérations de son directeur, la *Vérité* garde encore une place importante parmi nos meilleurs journaux.

Pour terminer cette période, mentionnons Israel Tarte qui fut directeur du *Canadien* d'abord et de la *Patrie* ensuite, et qui écrivit des articles assez violents contre la politique de Laurier. Tarte avait moins d'envergure que Tardivel et Buies, mais sa prose se lisait sans difficulté.

Nous entrons maintenant dans la période contemporaine avec Olivar Asselin, Jules Fournier et Henri Bourassa. Ces trois journalistes ont illustré la période de nationalisme intense des années 1900-1920. C'est Olivar Asselin qui a été le fondateur de la ligue nationaliste en 1903. Il lui fallait un journal pour défendre ses idées. Il fonda le *Nationaliste* en 1904. Avec Jules Fournier qui était passé par la *Presse* et le *Canada* avant d'arriver au *Nationaliste*, Asselin a fait campagne après campagne pour défendre la politique de la Ligue qui s'accordait assez bien avec celle de Bourassa, en politique fédérale d'abord, provinciale ensuite. Le *Nationaliste* soutint à ce moment-là des luttes épiques contre le gouvernement Laurier à Ottawa d'une part, et le gouvernement Gouin à Québec d'autre part. Les polémiques furent si rudes que Fournier et Asselin connurent eux aussi la prison. Mais comme ils n'y séjournèrent jamais en même temps, le *Nationaliste* survécut.

Bourassa préférait avoir son propre porte-parole et fonda le *Devoir* en 1910. Asselin et Fournier y entrèrent comme collaborateurs mais en sortient au bout de quelques mois. Habitués d'avoir leurs coudées franches, ils ne pouvaient accepter de se plier à une discipline étrangère. Le *Nationaliste* continua sa carrière jusqu'en 1922, mais après le départ d'Asselin et Fournier en 1910, c'est le *Devoir* qui devint le véritable organe des nationalistes militants. On ne saurait trop insister sur l'importance du *Devoir* dans notre vie nationale. Il a été et reste encore, malgré certaines tendances politiques passagères bien compréhensibles, un journal indépendant. Bourassa s'adjoignit, à la rédaction, des journalistes comme Omer

Héroux qui s'est fait le champion des minorités françaises au Canada, et Georges Pelletier qui y signa d'excellents éditoriaux et succéda à son maître à la direction du journal. L'influence du *Devoir* s'est fait sentir dans tous les domaines de notre vie politique, économique, sociale, religieuse et littéraire.

La carrière d'Asselin et de Fournier ne s'est pourtant pas arrêtée avec leur expérience au *Devoir*. Après avoir collaboré quelque temps à la *Patrie*, Fournier fondait l'*Action*, le journal le plus littéraire et le mieux écrit que nous ayons eu au Canada. Ses polémiques furent moins retentissantes, mais les critiques littéraires qu'il publia dans cet hebdomadaire firent connaître un nouvel aspect de son talent. A n'en pas douter, Fournier reste l'une des plus belles intelligences qui aient illustré le journalisme canadien. Malheureusement, il mourut à trente-trois ans, au moment où d'autres commencent leur carrière.

Asselin, pour sa part, revint au journalisme avec l'*Ordre*. Il s'était entouré de journalistes de réelle valeur tels que Georges Langlois, Jean-Marie Nadeau, Albert Pelletier, Valdombre et Berthelot Brunet. Rendons hommage en passant à ce dernier qui fut un humoriste comme nous en eûmes peu au Canada et qui avait, en sus, beaucoup de talent. Mais l'*Ordre* quitta l'arène après que l'archevêque de Québec en eut déconseillé la lecture. Asselin cependant n'avait pas dit son dernier mot. Il fonda encore la *Renaissance* qui ne fit pas long feu et passa enfin au *Canada* pour servir un maître qu'il avait combattu pendant longtemps. Même au *Canada*, Asselin eut soin de conserver une indépendance à peu près complète.

Asselin eut beaucoup d'influence sur la jeunesse et les écrivains de son temps. Il a prêché toute sa vie l'amour de la langue française et du travail bien fait. Il a exhorté les Canadiens français à retourner aux sources de l'esprit français. Ses idées avancées le firent passer à certains moments, tout comme Fournier d'ailleurs, pour anti-clérical. Force nous est d'admettre aujourd'hui que ce n'était là que calomnies. Olivar Asselin est la figure la plus illustre du journalisme canadien. Par son style autant que par sa pensée, il a été l'inspirateur de plus d'une génération.

Un disciple d'Asselin, Jean-Charles Harvey entreprit de suivre les traces du maître et fonda le *Jour* qui n'a jamais été vu d'un bon oeil par les catholiques de droite. Harvey a quand même montré beaucoup de courage et il mérite une place d'honneur dans la galerie de nos journalistes. Ses phrases ne sont pas toujours aussi coulantes qu'on le souhaiterait, mais il a écrit, certains jours, des articles remarquables. Lui aussi d'ailleurs avait su s'entourer de travailleurs compétents. Mentionnons Charles Doyon, le père Carmel Brouillard, Emile-Charles Hamel et Henri Tranquille.

La *Patrie* (1854), journal libéral à l'origine, a eu aussi dans notre vie nationale une certaine influence. Cette influence se fit sentir d'abord dans les années qui suivirent la fondation de l'*Institut Canadien*, et plus tard, avec Louis Francoeur, dont la mort à 46 ans fut un deuil national. Francoeur devait redorer le blason du journal par des chroniques brillantes et une interprétation des événements dont il avait seul le tour. Eustache Letellier de Saint-Juste prit sa succession.

Enfin le *Canada* a été pendant une cinquantaine d'années un journal important au Canada français. Avant Olivar Asselin, on y avait vu des journalistes de valeur. Edmond Turcotte remplaça Asselin et continua son oeuvre avec un certain brio. Ce journal a eu la chance d'avoir des chroniqueurs de la trempe de René Garneau dont la prose était excellente et de Jean Le Moyne qui alliait à un style très personnel une pensée religieuse élevée qui dérangeait un peu les façons de voir de nos catholiques bien-pensants.

Il faut aussi faire mention de quelques journalistes qui ont réussi à se faire un nom dans divers journaux. Roger Duhamel a commencé de publier ses chroniques littéraires dans le *Devoir*. Il a collaboré à plusieurs journaux par la suite et sa prose a toujours été égale à elle-même. Duhamel a été pendant longtemps un chef de file parmi nos intellectuels avec Victor Barbeau qui a peut-être fait moins de journalisme, mais a réussi à s'imposer comme styliste et penseur. Valdombre a publié des articles un peu partout. Il a fondé des cahiers qui ont eu une grande vogue et il a utilisé la radio pour mieux se faire entendre. Enfin, Fernand Denis, au *Petit Journal*, s'est acquis une bonne réputation.

Parmi les journaux de province qui, de nos jours, tiennent une place de choix dans cette nomenclature, il y a d'abord le *Droit* d'Ottawa qui a été fondé pour défendre les droits des minorités françaises de l'Ontario. Toute une pléiade de journalistes s'y sont fait la main. Les plus connus sont probablement Camille l'Heureux et Guy Sylvestre. Le *Nouvelliste* de Trois-Rivières est un journal soigné et dont l'information est juste. C'est un des seuls journaux de province à posséder une page littéraire avec l'*Echo du Bas Saint-Laurent* de Rimouski, et l'*Action* (hier encore l'*Action Catholique*) de Québec. Le *Soleil*, le journal le plus important de Québec, a mis bien du temps à comprendre que les arts et les lettres intéressaient les lecteurs. Il vient tout juste d'inaugurer une page à cette intention.

Les journaux les plus importants au pays à l'heure actuelle sont sans doute le *Devoir* et la *Presse*. Le *Devoir* a perdu depuis quelques années des journalistes de valeur, tels que Jean-Marc Léger qui y a fait des reportages remarquables sur la situation internationale et Gilles Marcotte qui s'est occupé pendant quelques années de la chronique littéraire. Mais Gilles Marcotte continue son travail à la

Presse. Il y a encore au *Devoir* des hommes de talent, comme son directeur, Gérard Filion qui ne soigne pas toujours sa langue, mais qui n'écrit jamais pour rien dire; il y a aussi André Laurendeau qui suit de près tous les événements de notre vie nationale et les interprète avec beaucoup d'intelligence. André Laurendeau ne fait jamais de grandes colères, mais il réussit, peut-être même à cause de sa pondération et de sa distinction, à tenir tête à des adversaires bien en place.

La *Presse* n'a pas toujours été aussi soignée qu'elle l'est aujourd'hui. Elle a été pendant longtemps un journal de piètre information. C'est Jean-Louis Gagnon, grand voyageur et journaliste d'envergure, qui a pour ainsi dire nettoyé la maison et refait sa toilette. Mais Jean-Louis Gagnon s'est lancé dans une nouvelle aventure avec le *Nouveau-Journal*, aventure qui n'a pas duré un an mais qui a soulevé beaucoup d'enthousiasme. Il a été remplacé par un autre journaliste de caractère, Gérard Pelletier. Ce dernier a continué de réorganiser la maison, et son écriture nerveuse jointe à son talent de polémiste ardent en font un des meilleurs éditorialistes du Canada français. En outre, la *Presse* garde à son service depuis longtemps des critiques comme Jean Béraud et Marcel Valois qui connaissent à fond leur métier.

Les journalistes dont la voix est la plus écoutée, à l'heure actuelle, semblent être André Laurendeau, Jean-Louis Gagnon et Gérard Pelletier, auxquels il faudrait peut-être ajouter Pierre-Elliott Trudeau qui ne collabore à aucun journal, mais qui publie des articles dans *Cité Libre* et ailleurs qui sont très remarqués.

Quelle différence y a-t-il entre le journalisme d'aujourd'hui et le journalisme d'hier? Le journalisme est devenu depuis quelques années une profession au Canada français. Ceci a eu beaucoup d'influence sur la valeur de l'information. Un grand nombre de nos journalistes, à l'heure actuelle, sont des gens cultivés et plusieurs d'entre eux écrivent bien. Il y en eut aussi dans le passé qui savaient manier la langue, mais ils faisaient plutôt d'exception. Quand à la matière traitée, elle ne diffère peut-être pas tellement, si on tient compte du temps et de l'histoire. Au dix-neuvième siècle, on parlait de l'Union des Canadas, de la confédération des provinces, des Métis de l'Ouest, d'autonomie provinciale et de pots-de-vin, des difficultés scolaires des minorités françaises du pays, de la trop grande influence du clergé dans plusieurs domaines, notamment dans l'éducation, de l'instruction gratuite et obligatoire, de la création d'une université à Montréal, comme succursale de Laval, d'un drapeau national, d'une loterie nationale, de cercles d'étude, de fermes expérimentales, d'efforts de guerre, du cours classique où il faudrait mettre plus de sciences exactes et naturelles, de notre langue qui dégénérait au point de n'être plus reconnaissable; on discutait de graves questions

économiques et sociales; on craignait le communisme et le socialisme à peu près également. Y a-t-il beaucoup de différence avec les sujets d'importance qui retiennent les journalistes d'aujourd'hui? Sans doute, nous avons évolué et les sujets d'actualité, que ce soit en politique, en économie, en sociologie, en éducation, en matières religieuses, sont traités avec plus de savoir-faire. Mais nous sommes liés à une tradition et cette tradition obligera encore longtemps nos meilleurs journaux à combattre pour la défense de nos droits et le redressement de notre vie nationale. N'est-ce pas d'ailleurs le devoir de tout journal qui se respecte?

WESTERN PANORAMA

Settings and Themes in Robert J. C. Stead

A. T. Elder

THOUGH THE NOVELS of Robert J. C. Stead have received some notice from the historians of Canadian literature, especially in Edward McCourt's *The Canadian West in Fiction*, no study has yet examined the entire range of Stead's novels on Western themes. Yet the full import of these novels is best revealed by considering them as parts of a single body of writing on the West. Considered individually, they seem chiefly remarkable for their flaws; considered *in toto*, with special attention to their settings and themes, they reveal a breadth of achievement not obvious in the single novels and a seriousness of purpose often obscured by the too-favourable view of the prairie environment, the occasionally weak characterization of major figures, and the runaway plots of the individual novels.

Stead's difficulty with plots is nowhere more evident than in his first novel, *The Bail Jumper*. Ray Burton, a store clerk unjustly accused of robbing a safe to which only he and his employer, Mr. Gardiner, have keys, had to contend not only with Gardiner, who is secretly trying to ruin him, but also with an obvious villain, Hiram Riles, a miserly bad-tempered farmer, and with two private detectives — one a female — who are searching for the missing money. If this had been Stead's only novel, it would scarcely warrant a second look. As the first of seven, it merits some attention, especially since it takes place in Plainville, Manitoba, and the Alberta foothills, the principal settings of the later novels, and suggests most of Stead's major themes.

Plainville is not specifically located in *The Bail Jumper*, but in *The Homesteaders* is placed east of Turtle Mountain, the approximate location of Cart-

wright, Manitoba, to which Stead, at the age of two, travelled with his family in 1882, the year in which the settling of the Plainville area begins in *The Homesteaders*. In this second novel, published in 1916, two years after *The Bail Jumper*, we find references to some of the characters who appear in the first, including John Burton, the father of the hero of *The Bail Jumper*, and meet again the two villains of the earlier novel, Hiram Riles and Mr. Gardiner, who are also the villains of the second. Stead's last two novels, *The Smoking Flax* (1924) and *Grain* (1926), are also laid in the Plainville area, largely during and following the first world war. There is much more overlapping of characters and plots in this second pair of novels, but little connection with the early books, though, as reference is made to Sempter and Burton's general store, there is a slight link with Ray Burton in *The Bail Jumper*, who, in that novel's conclusion, agrees to manage the store owned by Mr. Sempter. Stead's other favourite setting, the foothills of Alberta, appears in the latter part of *The Homesteaders* and in *The Cow Puncher* and *Dennison Grant*, as well as in *The Bail Jumper*.

One can only begin to suggest the detail with which Stead presents his history of Plainville. Its beginnings are seen in *The Homesteaders* in the account of Harris's trek northward by sleigh from Emerson in 1882, his selection of a quarter-section and building of a sod hut, and the early development of the area as more settlers appear. The account to this point emphasizes the coöperation of the new community in the face of hardships. The changed attitude of the farmers as they achieve prosperity is the main theme of *The Homesteaders*; to present it, Stead, having barely established his settlers, skips twenty-five years to 1907. And, since the desire for new land and greater wealth leads John Harris westward and away from Plainville, we must turn for a fuller account of the community in these years to the story of Gander's growing up in *Grain*. Gander is born and raised in the house of poplar logs built by his father, Jackson Stake. At the age of five he goes to the country school, "a room of four walls and a ceiling, with a door in the east, windows in the north, and blackboards above the wainscoting on the west and south", where he learns to play Pom, Pom, Pull-away and "Drowndin' Out Gophers", and absorbs as little as possible of learning. Gander's real interest is in farming, so that by the time he is ten he is driving a two-horse team on a mower, not long after, a four-horse team on a binder, and soon is aspiring to operate a steam thresher.

The coming of war to Plainville is described in *Grain*. In 1914, when Gander is eighteen, his father finally builds the house he has been promising his wife for so many years.

> First a carpet, which cost him eleven dollars . . .; then . . . a parlor suite with birch mahogany arms and brightly patterned upholstery and crimson furbelows that hung close to the carpet, and a rocking chair with springs that squeaked . . .; then a polished oak centre table on legs as spindly as those of a young calf, on which to set photographs and Minnie's copy of "Songs of a Sourdough" . . . .

This year also brings the telephone and the automobile, "that cost two cents a mile for gasoline an' the rest o' your bank roll for incidentals". Stirring as these events are, they are soon accepted in the excitement of the approaching war. On the day of its outbreak Gander and Jackson Stake drive to Plainville, to find its streets "lined with buggies and motor cars; the livery stables full; every hitching post occupied". Even the Stakes, both unused to displaying emotion, are smitten with war-fever and cheer a gang of youths parading an effigy of the Kaiser into the Roseland Emporium to demand a sauerkraut cocktail. While the Germans are forcing their way across the Yser, Gander takes over the operation of Bill Powers's steam thresher, throttling the forces impelling him to war by working fourteen hours a day on the farm. Though touched occasionally by the war on his infrequent trips to Plainville, he is more interested in the new forms of power than in world events, hanging about the grain elevators, fascinated by their gasoline engines. That year Jackson Stake buys his first Ford car, which prosperity replaces with a Dodge. *Grain* concentrates on the effect of the first World War on Gander, but we see as well its impact on the whole community: the recruiting of men, the news of the first casualties, the rise in the price of wheat, the efforts — not for money — to grow more grain, the end of the war, and the return of the veterans.

Grain pays little attention to the rural life of Manitoba following the war, but this part of Plainville's history is filled out in *The Smoking Flax*. Some elements in the picture are unchanged: the school Cal Beach's adopted son Reed attends is that to which Gander went, and the upholstered chair in Jackson Stake's parlour is the same that added glory to the new house in *Grain*; but many changes are evident. Plainville itself with its double row of cars on Main Street has changed greatly from the settlement that Ray Burton knew. It is still a makeshift community, but one with a growing social sense: "To the first generation of pioneers the farm-hand is preferred above the bank clerk; to the second, the bank clerk is preferred, a little, above the farm-hand; in the third, collars and cuffs are in the saddle."

There Plainville is left at the pinnacle of its pre-World-War-II development. We see that no strict chronological sequence is followed in the novels; indeed,

there is much leaping about in and overlapping of time. Obviously, then, Stead did not intend a connected history of more than forty years in the life of a Manitoba farming community or a saga of the people of that community. Rather, having created the setting in his first novel, he retained it as a convenience and provided only the slenderest links between the early and later pairs of novels. Nevertheless, though Stead's interest in the development of Plainville is only incidental to the telling of his stories, these four novels give a rather complete picture of the growth of a Manitoba farming community up to and following World War I.

THAT STEAD could have dealt with Plainville in the stagnant thirties is doubtful, for he gloried in expansion. He had found another scene of rapid development in the foothill country of Alberta. Again we are introduced to this setting in *The Bail Jumper*, as Burton flees from Plainville to escape punishment for the crime he has not committed. He eventually reaches the open ranges of the foothills where, hired to raise grain in ranch country, he is conscious of and sympathetic to the cowboys' conviction of their superiority to him:

> He envied them their wild free life, their rides over the limitless plains, their "leave and liking to shout," while he sharpened the binder knives and tacked new slats on the canvases, and made fly-blankets for the horses out of twine sacks.

Attracted as Stead is by the free life of the range — its spell is acknowledged in the openings of *The Cow Puncher* and *Dennison Grant* as well as in *The Bail Jumper* — he is more thrilled by the prospect of a settled and developed country. That he would prefer an orderly development is obvious from his description of the western boom in *The Cow Puncher*:

> The thing grew upon itself. It was like a fire starting slowly in the still prairie grass, which by its own heat creates a breeze that in turn gives birth to a gale that whips it forth in uncontrollable fury. Houses went up, blocks of them, streets of them, miles of them, but they could not keep pace with the demand, for every builder of a house must have a roof to sleep under. And there were streets to build; streets to grade and fill and pave; ditches to dig and sidewalks to lay and wires to string. And more houses had to be built for the men who paved streets and dug ditches and laid sidewalks and strung wires. And more stores and more hotels and more churches and more schools and more places of amusement were needed. And the fire fed on its own fury and spread to lengths undreamed by those who first set the match to the dry grass.

Not content to present the mere physical evidence of the West's explosive growth, Stead is also interested in the psychological effects of the boom. John Harris, in *The Homesteaders*, is a conservative all his life, but in the heady atmosphere of Alberta, "where the successful man was the man who dared to throw discretion to the winds and take the chance", he eagerly surrenders to the gambling spirit of the new land. He is not alone in his consequent sufferings. Dave Elden, in *The Cow Puncher*, a man of some principles who has risen from cowboy to millionaire real estate promoter, finds himself involved in "the thing" and helpless to extricate himself or his victims. Yet, in these accounts of an empty land filling with settlers, of cow towns exploding into cities, Stead finds satisfaction in the many who are not mere speculators. Ray Burton, viewing an orderly crowd assembled to file on homesteads that will be open for entry in two days' time, finds men "gathered from the corners of the globe and waiting patiently through night and day, through heat and cold, through wind and rain, through any trial and any hazard for the God-sent privilege, born of a new country, of calling the land beneath their feet their own." These hopeful settlers, whose household goods and effects were piled in great heaps in the railroad yards, represented the real promise of the West to come.

A major interest in Stead's novels, then, is their account of the West's development in the years between 1882 and the middle twenties. The novels laid in the foothills cover a shorter interval than the four Plainville novels, but they concentrate on the exciting period of the boom preceding the first world war — the years, incidentally, when Stead was living in High River and Calgary. The remaining novel, *Neighbours* (1922), laid in Saskatchewan north of Regina just after the beginning of the century, describes the efforts of two Eastern couples to establish themselves on homesteads, and serves to amplify the account of the settlers in the opening chapters of *The Homesteaders*.

Although Stead has been praised by all his critics for his realism, a reading of his seven novels proves that it is a limited realism. The details are accurate, but carefully selected, and despite occasional references to the hardship of life on the prairies, the privations of the settlers are submerged in a generally buoyant tone:

> It was a life of hard, persistent work — of loneliness, privation, and hardship. But it was also a life of courage, of health, of resourcefulness, of a wild, exhilarating freedom found only in God's open spaces.

Neighbours, to take an extreme example, presents a Saskatchewan prairie almost devoid of wind, dust, drought, hail, grasshoppers, mosquitoes, blazing heat and

freezing cold, yet this is the book in which the idyllic strain which runs throughout the novels finds its most lyrical expression.

> My earliest recollection links back to a grey stone house by a road entering a little Ontario town. Across the road was a mill-pond, and across the mill-pond was a mill. . . . Beside the mill was a water-wheel, . . . which, on sunshiny days, sprayed a mist of jewels into the river beneath with the prodigality of a fairy prince.
>
> My father['s] . . . days were full of the labor of the mill, but his evenings and the early, sun-bright summer mornings belonged to his tiny farm at the border of the town. We had two cows, a pig or two, some apple and cherry trees, and little fields of corn and clover.

These opening words of the narrator, Frank Hall, in *Neighbours*, set the tone maintained throughout the novel as Frank with his sister, Marjorie, and Jack Lane with his sister, Jean, locate their homesteads, sharing a treed coulee watered by a running stream; turn the first sod on the boundless prairie, and work out their obvious destinies under the equally boundless sky. Jean becomes a prairie Lucy, whose idealism contrasts with the practicality of Marjorie, who recognizes from the outset the necessity of marriage between the pairs of brother and sister. Stead achieves a triumph in his handling of the relations between the two couples in love living in isolation in neighbouring shacks on the Saskatchewan prairie; the reader is left convinced that the couples are as innocent in their thoughts as Keats's Madeline. The plot, chiefly concerned with the difficulties preventing the marriage of Frank and Jean, reaches its conclusion as Jean emerges from the prairie pool, clad in a bathing suit, to accept her lover. The level prairie, unrolling to the horizon on all sides of the lonely shacks, supplies the isolation necessary to the idyll.

The idyllic note so evident in *Neighbours* is associated in the other novels with characters either close to nature or living in the simple economy of the pioneer settler or rancher. It touches the description of ranch life in *The Cow Puncher* and *Dennison Grant* and appears also in the account of the early settling of the Harrises in the Plainville area and Beulah Harris's retreat to the Arthur's ranch in *The Homesteaders*. It appears, too, in the carefree, roving life of Cal Beach and his sister's son in *The Smoking Flax* and in the lakeside retreat to which Cal retires to write articles on sociology after his marriage to Minnie Stake. It is present as well in *The Bail Jumper* in Burton's flight to the McKay ranch.

Although Stead views with evident nostalgia the arduous but uncomplicated life of the pioner, he is interested as well in the stresses that develop in the settler's

life when his days are no longer filled by necessary labour and when he becomes more dependent on the services of others. The appearance of these stresses accompanies a thread of social criticism which runs through Stead's novels. In *The Bail Jumper*, it is limited to passing comment on the sharp practices of merchants and their equally resourceful customers, on the advantages taken of farmers by grain companies, on the weaknesses of the law, and on the timidity of churches faced with a question of conscience. It is more central to *The Homesteaders* and *The Cow Puncher* as Stead attacks man's greed in his treatment of the Western boom. It is very prominent in *Dennison Grant*, involving an exposition of unorthodox economic doctrine, but in the later novels the evils of society are seen from a sociological rather than an economic point of view.

Stead's concern about these evils is first clearly revealed in a minor theme of *The Homesteaders* that explores the discontent of women on the farm. Mary Harris, willing to labour long hours to establish the farm, finds that even after she and her husband have become prosperous life remains for her a wearing grind. She complains to her daughter, Beulah:

> Here I've slaved and saved until I'm an — an old woman, and what better are we for it? We've better things to eat and more things to wear and a bigger house to keep clean, and your father thinks we ought to be satisfied. But he isn't satisfied himself. . . . He knows our life isn't complete, and he thinks more money will complete it. All the experience of twenty years hasn't taught him any better.

Mrs. Stake, in *Grain*, does not get her long-promised new house until she is about forty-five — "and farmers' wives are sometimes old at forty-five" — and even then, after Minnie has left her to attend high school and business college, she carries on alone her multitudinous duties. Only an outsider, Cal Beach, a graduate in sociology, realizes her crushing burden and sets out to help her by using gasoline power to run the cream separator and the washing machine and to pump water.

Cal Beach becomes concerned as well about the problems of the farm labourer and of children leaving the farm. Earlier, in *The Homesteaders*, Stead lays the blame for the exodus from the farm in part on the farmer himself, who desires "something better" for his children.

> It is a peculiarity of the agriculturist that, among all professions, he holds his own in the worst repute. As a class he has educated himself to believe that everybody else makes an easy living off the farmer, and, much as he may revile the present generation for doing so, he is anxious that his children should join the good picking.

The problem of the farmer's son is treated both in *The Smoking Flax* and *Grain*, largely through Jackson Stake Jr., who leaves because his father refuses to agree that his son, as much as the hired man, is entitled to a wage. The problem of the farm labourer is faced by Cal Beach when he wishes to marry Minnie Stake and realizes that though he is working hard and earning what is called "good wages" he cannot afford to marry.

The problems of the farmer's son and the hired man are at least in part economic, but the farm wife faces a broader problem that concerns Stead in almost all his novels: the need in farm life for an expanded horizon.

As with most of Stead's themes, we first encounter this, somewhat crudely expressed, in *The Bail Jumper*. It appears in the opening chapter as Ray Burton, at the supper break in the square dance, recites "The Nautilis", to which only Myrtle Vane, a cultured Eastern visitor, responds. Myrtle Vane is an apostle of broader horizons; her text, the masterpieces of English literature; her principal convert, the Barnardo boy. To him, after exposure to her influence, "there were greater things in life than cows, and gardens, and fields of wheat; and in a dim way these things of which he had not so much as guessed were opening to his astonished vision."

Myrtle Vane is only the first of a number of cultured Easterners who help to raise the eyes of Westerners beyond the boundaries of their farms. However, the Western women are more conscious than the men of the need for something in life beyond acres and barns. Beulah Harris, in *The Homesteaders*, frequently feels a gap in her existence: "She was not unhappy, but a dull sense of loss oppressed her — a sense that the world was very rich and very beautiful, and that she was feasting neither on its richness nor its beauty." This sense of a defect in farm life is shared by Jean Lane in *Neighbours* and Minnie Stake in *The Smoking Flax*. Jean's need to have something beyond farm life is an integral part of the plot as her search leads her to imagine herself in love with Spoof, the remittance man, and to refuse to marry her lover from childhood, Frank Hall, until he remedies his defects. Not until Jean refuses him, however, does Frank turn to Byron, Gibbon, Shakespeare, Whitman, Burke, and Burns:

> At first I had to drive myself to it, but presently I began to be carried away in the spirit in the new world which was opening before me. With joy I noted, suddenly, that I had forced my boundaries far beyond the corner stakes of Fourteen, beyond even the prairies, the continent, the times in which we live. My mind, from sluggishly hibernating for the winter, became a dynamo of activity. . . . I was so filled with thoughts that I threatened to burst.

Though Jean is at first suspicious of Frank's demonstrations of his new breadth of outlook, as the reader may well be, she is finally satisfied. Minnie Stake, more fortunate than Jean, falls in love with Cal Beach who recognizes the farmers' lack of vision. Minnie does not, however, share his hope of bringing about a permanent change in the Western way of life: "They haven't a glimpse, and so they're content. I had a glimpse, and it drove me from the farm. You have a glimpse, and it's making you do wonderful things - . . . if only they'd last!" Beach's purpose is nothing less than to "bring order into the chaos of farm labor, . . . [to] touch with one glimpse of beauty the sordidness which was expressed by 'forty dollars a month and found', . . . [to] awaken to spiritual consciousness the physical life of which the Stake farmstead was typical. . . ."

Stead's belief in the farmer's need for an expanded horizon helps to account for the ending of *Grain*, which Professor McCourt is unable to accept. Gander's decision to go East may not be consistent with his character as it is presented up to this point, but his awakening to the need for a broader life is something that Stead believes ought to come to every Western farmer. Indeed, the ending is not so inconsistent as it seems at first glance, since Gander's second love, next to farming, is machines. More difficult to explain, is the interest taken by Jerry Chansley, the Eastern girl, in making Gander's escape possible. Jerry, in fact, remains little more than a mouthpiece for Stead's ideas: "That is what you lack here, Gander. You don't see enough people. New people give you new ideas, and make life more worth living. . . . They draw you out." Her effect upon Gander, prior to this speech, has been precisely of the kind she has described, though not precisely in a way that she would welcome, since Gander has been busily imagining how he would rescue her if the car turned over.

The little we learn of Jerry Chansley suggests that if Stead had developed her character she would have turned out to hold unconventional, but by no means loose, opinions. It is Polly Lester, the girl detective in *The Bail Jumper*, who suggests the basic attitude of Stead's heroines: ". . . I am not a woman as other women are. I defy traditions; I defy conventions. I claim the right God gave me to live my life as I will, where I will, how I will, with whom I will." Though Stead's heroines usually observe the moral conventions, Zen Transley in *Dennison Grant* is willing to break with them to the extent of taking up her romance with Grant after she is married. The others do not go so far. Beulah Harris, the runaway daughter in *The Homesteaders*, quits her family to seek freedom with the Arthurs family in the foothills. Minnie Stake, in *The Smoking Flax* and *Grain*, insists on staying alone with Cal Beach on a Saskatchewan homestead while she

nurses Reed Beach, who is ill with typhoid. Reenie Hardy, a refined Eastern girl in *The Cow Puncher*, finds on the Elden ranch a world where "conventions had been swept away, and it was correct to live, and to live!" On returning East, she disposes of her mother's choice of suitor in an unusual way. Having gone with him to the theatre, she returns with dishevelled hair and flushed checks to walk unsteadily across her mother's room. When her mother anxiously inquires if she is ill, Irene replies that she is drunk and angrily rejects the soothing suggestion that she has only had too much champagne:

> Mother! I have had too much champagne, but not as much as that precious Carlton of yours had planned for. I just wanted to see how despicable he was, and I floated down the stream with him as far as I dared. But just as the current got too swift I struck for shore. Oh, we made a scene, all right, but nobody knew me there, so the family name is safe, and you can rest in peace. I called a taxi and when he tried to follow me in I slapped him and kicked him. Kicked him, mother. Dreadfully undignified, wasn't it? . . . And that's what you want me to marry, in place of a man!

Though Stead's heroines often express themselves melodramatically, one ought not to ignore their "thrust for freedom".

IT IS A PARADOX in Stead's novels that the Easterners who seek so earnestly to open the minds of Westerners are contemptuous of the conventions of the East that has produced them, and all find in the West a freedom that attracts them. Dennison Grant is foremost among these refugees from the staid East, and the book in which he appears provides the largest gallery of unconventional people. Zen Transley is only one of these, for Phyllis Bruce, Grant's secretary in the East, in her first conversation with her new employer, immediately wins his respect with a statement that marks her as the Stella to his Swift:

> The position I want to make clear is this: I don't admit that because I work for you I belong to a lower order of the human family. . . , and . . that, aside from the giving of faithful service, I am under any obligation to you. I give you my labor, worth so much; you pay me; we're square. If we can accept that as an understanding I'm ready to begin work now; if not, I'm going out to look for another job.

Grant himself, upon his return to the West after the war, is "happy in his escape from the tragic routine of being decently civilized. . . ." His primary function in

the novel is to expound his economic doctrines, which he does to Zen — as Professor McCourt complains — even under the blaze of a full moon on the open prairie after he has rescued her from death in a prairie fire. He then explains why he had left his father's prosperous firm, founded on the profits of a lucky investment in land, to come West:

> I told him that I didn't believe that any man had a right to money unless he earned it in return for service given to society, and I said that as society had to supply the money, society should determine the amount. I confessed that I was a little hazy about how that was to be carried out, but I insisted that the principle was right.

Notwithstanding his view of wealth, when his father and brother are killed in an accident, Grant accepts the duty of returning East to carry on the family business until with the outbreak of war he winds up the concern in order to fight. In spite of the emotional scene in which Grant informs his staff of his intentions, painful reading for one acquainted with the aftermath of the war, his actions and words are in keeping with his character and beliefs. Upon returning to find that his riches have increased in the interval, he determines to put the money to work in a utopian scheme for settling returned soldiers on the land. Grant summarizes his "Big Idea" in this way:

> I propose to form a company and buy a large block of land, cut it up into farms, build houses and community centres, and put returned men and their families on these farms, under the direction of specialists in agriculture. I shall break up the rectangular survey of the West for something with humanizing possibilities; I mean to supplant it with a system of survey which will permit of settlement in groups . . . where I shall instal all the modern conveniences of the city . . . . Our statesmen are never done lamenting that population continues to flow from the country to the city, but the only way to stop that flow is to make the country the more attractive of the two.

Though Professor McCourt objects to the mixture of "social doctrine with romantic adventure" in *Dennison Grant*, it is the social doctrine, along with Grant's unconventionality, that makes the book something better than popular romance. The weakness lies less in the mixture than in Stead's failure to make Grant a convincing figure and to make the economic theme intrinsic to the plot. Grant's speeches are invariably stodgy, and he is at times merely eccentric, as when with rough lumber he converts the living room of his city apartment in the East into a replica of the interior of his ranchland shack. However, those

who object to *Dennison Grant* may read a version called *Zen of the Y.D.*, published in England by Hodder and Stoughton, from which all economic theory and eccentricity have been cut. This version, by manipulation of the plot, makes possible the marriage of Grant and Zen Transley. The changed ending provides a more satisfactory tying up of events in the novel, but I am convinced that anyone who reads the two versions will prefer the uncut, for the second is popular romance and nothing more.

The outcome of the plot of *Dennison Grant* is determined not by Grant's unorthodox economic theories but by a moral principle that could be basic to Grant's thinking in economics, though this connection is not made by the author. Towards the end of the novel, when Grant and Zen Transley are on the verge of destroying her marriage, Zen leaves her son with Grant for the night while she sees her husband off on a trip. When a tremendous thunderstorm sweeps out of the mountains and the boy wakes, Grant soothes him and, comforting the boy, recognizes the wrongness of his intention of destroying Zen's marriage and the necessity of renouncing her for the boy's sake. Soon after Grant has made this decision, Zen arrives, having driven through the storm from town, to announce that she had reached the same conclusion.

This theme of self-sacrifice receives its most elaborate development in the preceding novel, *The Cow Puncher*. Lack of space forbids a full explanation of its working out in the novel, but Elden, in the course of events, is persuaded that forgiveness and service should be part of his creed. His service takes the form of serving his country, and his dying words, uttered in Flanders, reflect both his earlier belief that the innocent always suffer and his later that one must be ready to sacrifice oneself:

> . . . I said it was the innocent thing that got caught. Perhaps I was right. But perhaps it's best to get caught. Not for the getting caught, but for the — the compensations. It's the innocent men that are getting killed. And perhaps it's best. Perhaps there are compensations worth while.

Stead pursues the same theme in *The Smoking Flax* and *Grain*. In the first of these, it is once more associated with the need for forgiveness implicit in the text from which the title comes: " bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." In this novel Cal Beach gives up his chance for happiness married to Minnie Stake in order to protect Reed, illegitimate son of his sister and Minnie's elder brother. These events, which appear again in the later novel *Grain*, help to account for Gander's rather improbable decision to go East.

When Minnie explains to Gander that Cal ran away to protect Reed, Gander, on the verge of winning the love of Jo Klaus, the wife of an invalid war veteran, perceives that to preserve the honour of the Stake family he too must run away. Thus the working out of this theme in *Grain*, complicated somewhat by the inclusion of events from *The Smoking Flax* that help to lead to his decision, serves to explain in part the otherwise unlikely flight of Gander from the farm.

The reader of any single novel by Stead, with the possible exception of *Grain*, may not perceive through the multiplicity of incident the seriousness of the author's intention. Or, having learned that Stead was a publicity agent for colonization during the years in which his novels were being written, he may conclude that the author, in presenting so favourable a view of Western life, was merely fulfilling his other role in society. Yet such a judgment would be extremely unfair, for though the books were written by a publicity man and seem to have been directed at the popular taste, they are not invariably optimistic. Indeed, they frequently have rather unhappy endings: John Harris in *The Homesteaders* suffers a serious financial loss, Dave Elden dies in battle, Dennison Grant is not allowed to win romantic Zen, and Gander is forced to forego the pursuit of his childhood sweetheart. What is more, the major figures in the novels, whatever the weaknesses in their characterizations, are by no means the conventional heroes and heroines of popular fiction. In addition, though Steed may moderate the physical harshness of the prairie environment, he stresses in all his novels the intellectual dearth in and the aesthetic drabness of prairie life. And, in spite of the limitations already noted, the novels still succeed very well in imparting the atmosphere of the times about which they are written. Above all, however, Stead's themes are usually critical of society and consistently serious.

review articles

THE ENEMY AS MAN

George Woodcock

The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, ed. W. K. Rose. Ryerson. $13.75.

"THINGS HAVE COME to an awful pass here: if I don't do something to break out of the net, I shall end my days in a Toronto flophouse." So, in September, 1941, wrote one of the great painters and writers of our age, Percy Wyndham Lewis. Lewis's life in Canada is one of the more melancholy episodes of our literary history. It produced a strange tragic novel, *Self-Condemned,* which Canadians — perhaps from a sense of guilty discomfort—have tended to ignore. And, in the recently published selection of Lewis's correspondence, it is represented by a long sequence of mainly embittered letters which etch out in darkest tones the trials of a literary exile trapped in wartime Toronto.

The Letters of Wyndham Lewis contain, of course, a great deal more than the record of those lost years of The Enemy at Bay. For one thing, they lift a disguise, or perhaps rather a series of disguises.

In his life Lewis tended to be a man of masks. There is a masklike quality about much of his painting, and even about his view of the nature of art, which he seemed often to see as the mask without a face. As the hero of *Tarr* remarked: "This is another condition of art: *to have no inside,* nothing you cannot *see.* Instead, then, of being something impelled like an independent machine by a little egotistic fire inside, it lives soullessly and deadly in its frontal lines and masses."

But if the truth of art might somehow, for Lewis, lie in the still mask that is its own justification, masked humanity was its negative opposite; Lewis's satirical fiction was mainly concerned with stripping the masks from a series of loathsome hollow men and women, purveyors of fake art and bogus philosophies, beings so empty within their outer shells as "to pose the whole problem of *the real* and of its various mixtures and miscegenations with its opposite, right up to the negative pole of absolute imposture."

Yet the artist who savagely tore away masks was himself masked in such *personae* as The Enemy and The Tyro. For all their forthright condemnations and extravagant opinionatedness, even Lewis's literary polemics had a curiously depersonalised quality; their passion was almost wholly intellectual. And when he

ventured into autobiography in 1937 with *Blasting and Bombardiering*, he was still in effect hiding himself behind his roles. He boasted: "I am a novelist, painter, sculptor, draughtsman, critic, politician, journalist, essayist, pamphleteer, all rolled into one, like one of those portmanteau-men of the Italian Renaissance." This was all true, but it significantly presented the man as the mere suitcase for his own disguises.

Behind the manifold artist, behind The Enemy, behind the productions of that cold and furious genius which lacked the facile talent to please, Lewis resolutely hid his inner, personal self. This is why the publication of his letters is an event of great literary importance, since it not merely publicly illuminates for the first time the character of the man whom T. S. Eliot called "the greatest prose master of my generation", but also places him among his peers. The history of a half-century of British movements, from the Vorticism which Lewis founded to the Social Realism he despised, is enriched by these documents of the life and thoughts of a man who was in the heart of a hundred literary and artistic battles; the correspondences, often lifelong, with writers like Eliot, Pound and Read illuminate the significant ways in which the literary outlook of the English-speaking world changed in the early years of the present century; the many and often aggrieved letters to publishers show the difficulties which one of the most important but least "popular" writers of our time experienced in even getting his work into print. And, most important, a person appears instead of a *persona*. We see Lewis as he was; as a boy devoted to his mother and hating his irresponsible rip of a father; as a petulant man who fought over imagined ills and maintained long friendships. We see him in enthusiastic youth in the London and Paris world of art and letters, loudly defending and inventing causes. We see him as an old man of seventy concerned to save his youth's companion Pound from the consequences of his own folly, and at the same time spending a vast amount of time and impatience over the works of an unknown Vancouver writer, David Kahma, with whom he established an extraordinary epistolary relationship. We see him, last of all, going with stoic courage into the dark room of his blindness, and living his final years in full and resigned knowledge of the deadly tumour that grew within his skull until it killed him. The masks have been shed, and, in a volume that is always alive and interesting, and often unexpectedly moving, we meet at last the man within the Enemy.

Lewis's associations with Canada weave a curious and oddly persistent pattern into his life and into this volume. He was born, if not on Canadian soil, at least in Canadian waters, when his father's yacht was berthed at Amherst, Nova Scotia. During the First World War he was extricated from the front lines to serve as a Canadian-paid war artist in connection with Beaverbrook's plan for decorating the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. The day before World War II was declared Lewis sailed for America; he was, as he carefully explained to Eric Kennington, a sick man well over military age. After a disillusioning year in New York, where he discovered that his celebrity was not of the kind that could bring him even a modest living in the American literary world, he was forced by United States immigration regulations to move north to Toronto, and there he found himself

trapped by economic circumstances; English currency regulations would not allow him to send home for the money to pay his passage back, and his Canadian earnings never gave him a sufficient surplus for the fare.

The first days in Canada were at least encouraging. Lewis moved into an apartment hotel at 14 dollars a week — the old Tudor which, in *Self-Condemned,* he changed into the fantastic Blundell that was transformed by fire and water into a palace of ice. At first "an interim dwelling", after nearly three years it became a prison to Lewis and his wife. In the beginning, though he found Toronto "a mournful Scottish version of America", he had enough luck, with C.B.C. talks, a small contract with Ryerson, some drawings, to believe he was on the up grade.

> After the winter of my discontent in the long and chilly shadow of that statue of liberty, I feel as if I had come up out of a coalmine or a dungeon into the fresh air again.

Within a year Canada had become "this blasted country" and Toronto "this godforsaken city". Lewis's income declined, so that at times he and his wife were on the verge of starvation, living from hand to mouth. "The supernatural, in the form of *luck* as we say, has been present: we have been miraculously fed and sheltered." His hopes of academic posts in either Canada or the United States came to nothing, and in March, 1942, he was writing to Leonard Brockington:

> I have no idea in what direction it would be best to look. Some ill-paid, half-time job would be the ideal, in which I was left half my time free for my usual work, of writing

and painting — though a 48 hour week would be okay with me.

The lack of a real intellectual milieu troubled Lewis, with his London and Paris background, as much as the lack of money. The University of Toronto almost ignored him, and what literary world there was in Toronto during the war years seems to have acted as if he were not present; Lorne Pierce, who was generous to him, and Douglas Le Pan are the only Canadian literary names that appear in his letters during the "Tudor period" as he called it. Finally, in the summer of 1943, a tiny Catholic college, Assumption at Kingston, gave him a poorly paid but welcome teaching post. There he encountered Marshall McLuhan, who went to a great deal of trouble to help him. After Lewis finally got away from Canada in 1945, he kept up with some of the friends he had made there, McLuhan and Kahma, while a Canadian scholar, Hugh Kenner, wrote one of the first good critical books on his work.

But on the whole the hospitality of Canada was shamefully scanty. Lewis, given to a degree of paranoia, interpreted his situation as the result of Anglophobia and of the resentment of mediocrities in high position towards their intellectual betters. I suspect the neglect was in fact due partly to sheer ignorance, and partly to the political unfashionableness of Lewis's views at a time when the Canadian literati were still in the pink age that had already passed away in Britain. I hope — though I am not quite sure — that we have gone a long way since then, for Lewis's letters, like *Self-Condemned*, make uncomfortable reading in their record of what once happened in Canada to a great writer and painter.

DOCUMENT IN DISILLUSION

Margaret Stobie

ROBERT HARLOW. *Royal Murdoch*. Macmillan. $3.95.

Royal Murdoch is a novel worth noting. And it is so in spite of the fact that it is about so many things that the reader's mind is awhirl by the time he finishes it. It is about the sudden middle-ageing of the West, marriage and the individual, the Canadian identity, the conflict between generations, the Indian-White racial problem, living and dying, and a particular and unusual family. With so many themes jostling for position in the two hundred and fifty pages, it is to Mr. Harlow's credit that he achieves as much coherence as there is.

The novel is set in Linden, one of the grey little towns, points on the railroad, where men's dreams died and women learned to endure. Like its first generation, Linden is middle-aged. Its creator, now eighty, is dying, and its teen-agers

are possessed of a dull viciousness.

We are shown the last two weeks in the life of Royal Murdoch, on whose original holding the town has grown. His wife Emma summons the members of their divided family: James and Ruby, their children; and Roger LaPointe, Royal's foster-son, the child of his dead Indian mistress, Yvonne. All three are middle-aged. The other member of the household is the Murdoch maid, Mary Ann, an eighteen-year-old Indian girl from the nearby reservation. At the end of the first week of the uneasy death-watch, Mary Ann is raped, almost casually, by three boys of the town. This viciousness unites and clarifies the Murdoch family. It forces Royal and Emma to forego their habitual antagonism, as they hold the last of their annual garden parties and, united, face the outside world and quell the gossip. The following day, as Royal dies, Emma's mind gives way and reverts to the early days with Yvonne (she cannot free herself from the past); James is fatally injured in a fall from an oil-rig (he is not worthy to follow in his footsteps); Ruby and Roger go off together in search of a new life; and Mary Ann, having been accepted and protected by the family as one of them, is left in charge of the house. It is a happy ending, symbolically speaking.

Symbolism is rampant. It is in Royal Murdoch's name, and in the fact that as mayor of the town he ruled it like "a Scottish laird entertaining the villagers from beyond his keep." It is in the cottage in which he lived for thirty years with his Indian mistress and her son, in the big house which he built for his consort and their children in which he dies, and in the field between the two dwellings. The field of twenty acres is variously referred to as the moat separating the two parts of his life, as his only real home, as his kingdom, and as the man himself, his inner identity, existing between the two poles of his being — good and evil, love and duty, Indian and White, nature and civilization, and so forth. Royal Murdoch, the field and the two houses obviously, if somewhat foggily, have to do with a national image.

It is partly because of Mr. Harlow's preoccupation with symbols that the characters themselves are not clear. James, Ruby, and Roger all have moments of intelligence, but for the most part they act and speak like twenty-year-olds. They all seem to be the same age as Mary Ann. Even Royal is unclear. His last conscious act before he dies is to ask Emma to repeat the one happy moment of their marriage that he can remember — to sit beside his bed and tell him the story of Rapunzel. The impression that we are left with is that what this man had wanted all along was a mother. I doubt if that is the implication that Mr. Harlow intended. Emma says at one moment, "It's hard to picture yourself in all dimensions at once," but one has the uneasy feeling that it is Mr. Harlow who cannot see these people in all dimensions at once, that the author himself does not know them, or at any rate that he has not made up his mind about them.

But when we brush aside the rococo imagery and the disjointed characters, we find Mr. Harlow concerned with a matter of some moment to us. It has to do with the pioneer whose acts dwarf the lives of his successors ("He was a builder, not a caretaker"), and with the successors, the caretakers, who must live with the muddle that has been created. I

think the reason for the lack of focus in the novel is that Mr. Harlow cannot decide where his sympathies lie. But what he can and does do is to examine the muddle, the grey little town.

On this level, Mr. Harlow's novel has much in common with American novels of the 1920's and 30's, when the Great Disillusion swept across the United States, and writers like Dos Passos, Sinclair Lewis, Faulkner, Steinbeck began to probe the unloveliness, both physical and moral, of the cities, towns, and villages of the land of hope and glory. A similar disenchantment with the Golden West has become immediate to us, and since it is part of our lives, we too must probe it. Roger says of Royal Murdoch, "The man has done nothing to deserve such a grisly end. He has worked, built." The sense of bitter failure is something more important than a small boy's crying because there is no Santa Claus. It raises the question of what men do with a new place, new hope, a new start. Are the dreams inevitably defeated? And possibly more important, why did the dry rot set in before there was any maturing? Mr. Harlow does not offer answers to these questions, but that is not his job. He does set about to pose them.

His method is through a careful observation of things: streets, houses, rooms, furnishings, faces, shapes, clothes, objects. It is, of course, the method of the documentary, and here, I think, is where Mr. Harlow's considerable ability lies. While other aspects of the book lack focus, in his choice of the facts and the objects which he examines, Mr. Harlow presents a very definite point of view and a judgement. He writes in a curiously slow-paced prose. Even in lists of things, where usually the tempo quickens, here it does not: "a store, a hotel, a whorehouse." Yet it is the very deliberateness, the careful turning over of objects and musing upon them, the inexorable accumulation of facts, that create the texture, the density, the complexity of the life of the town. The result is that by the end of the book, in spite of the confusion, the reader feels that this is impressive work. That is why I said that the novel is worth noting.

INTERNAL RESONANCES

E. W. Mandel

RAYMOND SOUSTER. *A Local Pride.* Contact Press. $2.00.

RAYMOND SOUSTER must be counted among the most significant contemporary Canadian poets, though the reasons why are not so clear. One does have to reckon with the sheer bulk of his work — eleven volumes and hundreds of poems in something over thirteen years — but bulk, after all, is only bulk. More important, perhaps, is the range of Souster's activities: it's really a carefully cultivated legend that he languishes neglected and forlorn in academic Toronto; his

contacts, in fact, are international, his influence profound. But while this kind of professionalism may be an index to a poet's impact on his contemporaries, it has to be regarded as extra-poetic. The puzzle we come back to again and again is the nature of his poetry and whether some of the extraordinary claims that have been made for his accomplishment are justifiable. The normal view, as I understand it, is that Souster's poetry, extraordinarily direct in its social and personal comment, is to be valued for its intensity, accuracy, and sincerity. But I think some question can be raised about the accuracy of his vision, the "common experience" with which he supposedly concerns himself. My own feeling is that he is not a realist at all. Reading him, I find myself thinking of poets who seem totally unlike him, Rilke, say, or Wallace Stevens; anyhow, one whose poetic world is totally self-contained, echoing to the winged sounds of necessary angels.

However perverse this view of Souster might seem to be, it at least accounts for the curious fact that, as the volume of his work grows, his vision itself remains static. And how difficult it is to reconcile a static vision of society with the actuality. Enormous changes have taken place in North American society since Souster's first publication in the forties, changes accompanied by a multitude of exciting literary developments. But has Souster's Toronto changed, or his Ontario countryside, or his cast of characters, or the role he has taken up as poet? Perhaps a more acute critic will soon show us the subtle development in Souster's work. But until then, as I read his newest volume, *A Local Pride*, I have to account for my feeling that I have heard and seen all this before. Once again, as in the earlier volumes, we encounter the cripples, drunks, whores, beggars, lovers in corners, shining nudes, sinister insects and beaten animals. Once more we meet the poet himself as plain-dealer, malcontent, proletarian, melancholic, ecstatic sensualist, rogue, and saint. Christmas is still commercialized and Christ lies in the slush of Yonge Street. The memories of the war linger in bitter fragments. In a loveless society men are eunuchs, women objects of use; and beyond exploitation, beyond vulgarity and brutality are the ultimate insults of disease and death. The pattern translates itself easily into social criticism (man as victim of external social tyranny, product of restraint and conformity) and a theory of art (inner vitality) as a healing exposure by the ironically-placed doctor-saint-poet who, seen from the middle-class perspective, is rogue-villain-fool. As

sociology and psychology, this vision is much more impressive in the hands of someone like Layton with his uncanny sense of the ambiguities involved in it. Souster's strength, it seems to me, does not lie in any attempt to cope with a complex society and its impact on human personality, but rather in another direction entirely, in his exploitation of the conventions, the formal elements, of his art.

One of the oldest sayings about poetry, that it strikes the reader as a kind of *déja vu* ("What oft was thought" or "a wording of his own thoughts, almost a remembrance"), clearly has something to do with poetic convention or what in darker modern jargon would be called archetypes. Since we habitually think of convention as applicable mainly to forms and especially to "outmoded" forms, we can easily miss the power of skilfully used convention in a poet whose main pose is "unconventional". The tendency is to think of such a poet as a realist and to measure his achievement in terms of fidelity to experience. But any poetic pose (and especially one that has been maintained so consistently as Souster's) is a convention, and the terms by which it should be measured are not external, but internal, that is, the use made of the convention itself. It seems to me, then, that the greatest pleasure in reading Souster comes from one's sense of an unusual formalism. He works with patterns as stiffly stylized as the figures on an Oriental scroll: a rigid vision of society and nature as a demonic city inhabited by beast-man, harlot, and cripple, surrounded by a scarcely attainable garden where lovers become trees or budding leaves, and flowers turn into gypsies and sirens. Within this landscape, all things are icons or ideograms, so that the appropriate poetic form is the pun, riddle, or puzzle, or a curious version of imagism which defies precise description. One wonders to what extent Souster has been influenced by Cid Corman whose concern (through Pound and the Black Mountain writers) has been increasingly with a kind of pseudo-oriental calligraphy. In any event, the closest I can come to pointing to the imagist technique Souster uses is a comment of Wallace Stevens: "To be at the end of fact is not to be at the beginning of imagination, but it is to be at the end of both." Or as Souster puts roughly the same point in his poem "On a Piece of Birchbark": "You'll have to guess my three words unsaid."

Once we begin to look at Souster's formalism and stop worrying about his realism, we seem to be able to account for the internal resonance of his work, a resonance which seems to me the mark of genuine poetry. It may be no more than the defining pun of his football poem in which the Argonauts' slaughter of an unnamed team spreads a pattern of blood over the entire scene beyond the CNE stadium, even to the Pure Food Building itself; or the wry twist by which the misnamed poet (he's called Bernard by a well-meaning "lady chairman" at a poetry-reading) becomes both saint and dog; or the rude comment on gallery openings in which an abstract of shapes competes unsuccessfully with the "heavenly backdrop" of a female bottom. Like the pun, the riddle echoes with its own internal and unusually grotesque logic, and as I read Souster many of his poems seem to me riddle poems: when is a permanent not a permanent? Why is a canary like a dying man? What do a

child's umbrella and homelessness have in common? A riddle involves what the Opies in their *Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* call verbal duplicity, the kind of duplicity we find in Souster's "City Morgue":

> The brass name-plate on this building
> doesn't look as if it's been polished
> in God knows how many years,
>
> but the street's so badly lighted
> that most of the new arrivals
> can't read it anyway.

As for his imagism, any one of a dozen examples might do: prostitutes as "pale butterflies of night"; a six quart basket which "slowly fills up/ with the white fruits of the snow", or this:

> Porcelain-white
> squat jug
> of your body
>
> slowly lifted
> and upturned....

Doubtless there will be those who will decry the aridity of a formalist approach to a poet whom they regard as one of the few "honest" writers left in the country, and I would grant at once the limitations of the approach. It simply seems to me dictated by Souster's own methods. Doubtless too there will be others who will say it is precisely in his form that he is weakest, indulging as he does in casual and loose diction ("hot, naked, unashamed beauty" or "shivering deliciously" or even the ending of the jug-body poem quoted above which spells out what it is that spills). But what we have to grant him is that within his carefully chosen limits he can skirt those swamps of self-indulgence few writers dare even get close to; and too a mastery of his own way that makes some astonishingly difficult feats look casual and offhand. I think of him as a craftsman. And I would go even further: in the end, I think, he is seeking for a kind of "purity" which will prove tougher than any unenduring joy or ill, something found only "in the last zone of silence" where "a poem writes itself". In a noisy world few writers have the courage to be quiet enough to hear that creative silence. Souster, I think, has the courage.

books in review

A POET'S DIARY

The Journal of Saint-Denys-Garneau, translated by John Glassco, McClelland & Stewart, $2.75.

REVIEWING A TRANSLATION requires that three questions be answered. Did the original work deserve translation? Is this particular rendering a faithful reflection of the sense and spirit of the original? Does the result read well as an English book?

In the present case the original work was the private diary of one of French Canada's major poets, Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau (he wrote his name at least two different ways, although never as in the title above), whose death at the age of thirty-one occurred just twenty years ago. His diary, not intended for publication, was nevertheless published by two of his friends in 1954. The first edition soon went out of print, and a second appeared in 1962. Together with Garneau's poetry (which appeared in a single volume in 1937 and was re-edited in 1949) and his correspondence (soon to be published), the *Journal* reveals to us the intellectual and spiritual quest of a young man whose gifts invite the use of that rare Canadian word, genius. Whether it is read for itself or as a commentary on the poems, the *Journal* is indisputably one of the most influential documents of the one-hundred-and-thirty-year history of French-Canadian literature. It was essential that, sooner or later, it be translated for English-speaking readers.

The *Journal* contains something for nearly everyone. The musician finds here a music lover who can write of Mozart's Symphony No. 40:

> I love it more and more, and above everything else. This perfection of balance and harmony which makes Mozart fail to age by a single day, even less than Beethoven. Perfection remains always young, it is eternal; things grow old through their imperfection, through their particularities which lean on men and times. Even that by which a man precedes his epoch, like the light of a century to come, is often the reason why he ages.

The student of Canadian life meets a strikingly independent observer:

> Can culture be considered from a nationalist point of view? I don't think so. Culture is something essentially human in its aims — it is essentially humanist. To 'form' French-Canadians, that is to say to make them conscious of themselves as such, is perhaps a popular notion, but it lacks all sense. It's even against sense and against nature.

The admirer of Garneau's poems finds in this book a refreshingly outspoken commentary:

> *On a décidé de faire la nuit* is full of a tragic romanticism which can perhaps only fool whoever wants to be fooled. *Fièvre* is unreadable. *Qu'est-ce qu'on peut pour . . .* is a vile piece of padding. *Mains* the same: the exploitation of a minor sensation. In all these I was parading in borrowed peacock's feathers; I was covering up my tracks, an absolute emptiness clothed in brilliancy.

One is tempted to compose a review solely of excerpts from this fascinating book.

The translation of the *Journal* is by John Glassco, who gave us, in *Fiddlehead* (Spring 1958) and in *The Waterloo Review* (Winter 1960), excellent English versions of some of Garneau's poetry, and

in *Tamarack Review* (Summer 1958) a sizeable sample of the present book. Mr. Glassco's translation of the *Journal* also formed the basis of the C.B.C. "Wednesday Night" programme heard on April 3, 1963.

By its faithfulness to the original and by its technical accuracy, Mr. Glassco's version is a remarkable piece of work. Translation is never easy, and the translation of an author like Garneau is extremely demanding. It is evident that the translator has thought long and carefully about nearly every word and that the transfer of sense is almost complete. The rare mistranslations are in detail only: it is not legitimate, for example, to render "transparent" as "translucent" (p. 24) since Garneau's whole theory of symbolism in poetry hangs on the idea of transparency to ultimate reality: "tout ce que l'homme fait est découverte" does not mean "All that man does is discovered (p. 42), any more than "la philosophie qui est découverte" means "the philosophy which is so discovered" (p. 43); "au soleil dorée" is not a combination of a noun and its adjective (p. 44); "enfoncent des coins" is not to be translated "are burrowing" (p. 111), and so on. As is to be expected of a well-qualified translator, there are a few Gallicisms: "And see . . ." p. 45, for "Et voici que"); "Those were ways of conception so opposed!" (p. 24, for "C'étaient des conceptions si opposées!"). Nevertheless, when one has finished pinpointing the flaws, one is left with a real admiration for the translator's painstaking ingenuity; it is unlikely that anybody will give us a better English equivalent of the *Journal* than this one. Indeed even those who can read the *Journal* in French will profit from Mr. Glassco's helpful renderings.

Not only is the transfer of sense and spirit successful, but the resulting text reads well in English. One could wish for a few tiny revisions: the elimination of the tautology "I would like"; more attention to the position of the word "only", invariably misplaced; and a more discriminating use of "which" and "that". But these again are details; the general effect of the English text is a pleasing and stimulating one. It is to be hoped that a great many English-speaking Canadians will read this book, which is, both by the quality of its original and by the ability of its translator, one of the most important English translations in the history of our two Canadian literatures.

It should be added that Mr. Glassco's translation comes to us in a volume that is typographically attractive and free of the numerous misprints of the 1962 French edition. The cover and jacket are novel and arresting, although the figure on the cover clearly owes more to Fidel Castro than to Saint-Denys Garneau.

DAVID M. HAYNE

THE OBSERVING LENS

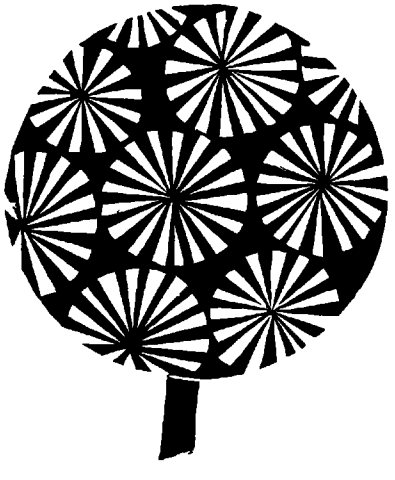
HUGH GARNER. *The Silence on the Shore.* McClelland & Stewart. $5.00.

THE TERM "NOVEL" as a blanket appelation for any piece of extended fiction could not be better exposed, as the clumsy and ineffective thing it is, than when used in the context of such a book as Hugh Garner's *The Silence on the Shore.* For the relationship existing between this tale of life amid the several rooms of a Toronto rooming house, and the work of, let us say, John Updike, is

that between photography and painting.

Mr. Garner's pages brim with the authentic flavours of diurnal minutiae for the characters he has chosen to present, but he observes with the accuracy of the camera and not in that dimension of the distilled imagination which is the prerogative of the true artist working in either words or pigment.

In saying this I am aware that I am in fact making an evaluation: placing *The Silence on the Shore* in the category of journalistic enterprise rather than in the superior one of literary art. But I believe it is only fair to the book to make this distinction and make it emphatically. For judged as creative fiction, in the highest sense of that imprecise term, it fails. While judged within its true genre, and according to the goals and standards we rightly accord to those books which seek to reproduce "life" in faithful detial, it is highly impressive. Indeed, I think it superior to many of its peers, such as the novels of the Londoner Norman Collins, of Claude Mauriac (the journalistic son of an artist father) or of such half-forgotten writers as Bruce Marshall and Cecil Roberts.



Had Hugh Garner not written about Toronto but New York, Paris or London, and had he been writing in the 'twenties or 'thirties, I believe this book would have been a best-seller. As it is, it represents a thoroughly acceptable example of a rather old-fashioned genre which is both effective in its writing and powerful in its ability to disturb the reader.

The technique of plot Mr. Garner has adopted is a proven one. He has placed a group of people under a common roof and then set about exploring their characters and their influences upon one another. In the course of doing this he presents aspects of human degradation that are sufficiently eloquent to force one's eye from the page for momentary respite.

A utility of warning and admonishment legitimately enters his narrative from time to time. For instance, his blow-by-blow account of a man embarking upon an alcoholic binge and the subsequent development of delirium tremens, not only carries the hallmark of truth, but is disturbing enough to do signal service as an AA tract. Or again, his delineation of the perverted and sick mind of a Fundamentalist fanatic is a salutary reminder that some of the profoundest human activities lie but a hair's breadth from some of the foulest.

However, there are times when Mr. Garner refuses the middle-brow, slightly antiquated rôle of yarn-teller that I have designated him, times when he succumbs to the temptation to indulge in a little philosophizing. And when this happens, calamity ensues. Just as it is possible to enjoy a detective story *per se* without bothering much about the depth of characterization, so one can take those

examples where Garner's pen fails to yield anything more than stereotype, in the wake of such offsetting triumphs as his realization of Grace Hill, the rooming house owner. But when explicit moralizing appears one must bring a sterner critical apparatus to bear.

And in the case of *The Silence on the Shore* there is just a little too much straining after seriousness of an aesthetic and metaphysical nature for my peace of mind.

DAVID WATMOUGH

A SHELTERED NEST

PAUL WEST. *I, Said the Sparrow.* Hutchinson. 18/-.

PAUL WEST'S ACCOUNT of his Derbyshire village boyhood is another of the autobiographical books by young men and women — Mr. West is thirty-three — which are now extremely popular in England. To wonder why this particular mode should be so just now is to launch oneself onto the choppy waters of cultural theory: waters on which Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart ride so buoyantly. From that surface one's initial impression is that the "new wave" of autobiography is another reflection of the awakening to consciousness of the English working-class and of the new man's attempt to define himself in a new society. This is an attractively neat explanation of the whole genre and superficially at least of *I, Said the Sparrow.*

The book is the record of the life of a working-class boy in the village of Eckington up to the time he went to grammar school. Then his "world changed". Mr. West describes this life, its physical environment, its ethos and his family's place in it with great energy and with masses of, on the whole, effective detail. His father was a fitter, his mother "the butcher's daughter who was also a schoolteacher and a well-known local pianist." He fixes their place on the social scale with a nice accuracy. "On one side you found the obsequious, the sanctimonious and the pseudo-genteel, on the other the uncouth, the obtuse and the crude. We were somewhere in between." They were between, that is, the lower middle-class and the lower reaches of the working-class represented in the village by the miners. However, as Mr. West suggests in the closing pages of his book, this society has now been replaced by another; the village has become "a village-cum-suburbia now spilling out towards both Chesterfield and Sheffield," while Mr. West, in a phrase that is a little pretentious, is "now familiar with worlds very different from that of the village."

It is this distance that Mr. West himself has travelled from the boy and the society he describes that makes at times for a curious tone that I have noticed in other autobiographical accounts of the same type. At times Mr. West adopts towards his own past experience what I can only call a professorial air; as if he were describing the habits of some aboriginal tribe to a more sophisticated audience of another race with which he now feels himself to be quite at one. It is this tone as much as anything, both in Mr. West's book and in the others like it, that make one hesitate to attach the culture-theory label I mentioned earlier. In any such terms Mr. West's book presents an image of a society in which the working class was still *un*conscious; a society from which he feels

himself now separated by his own educated "grammar school" consciousness. I do not mean to suggest that Mr. West condescends to this society, but that the consciousness that so vividly describes that society is no longer working-class itself. Nor do I think Mr. West is attempting primarily anything so abstract as a definition of himself as new man. His purpose in the book is I think much simpler than that and is suggested in the following passage:

> Deep fishing into childhood is never futile yet never wholly beneficial either, tempting one as it must to inventive hindsight yet, paradoxically, reviving bewilderments immune to that adult chimera, the sense of responsibility. The half-illicit spell of young awareness, all careless alchemy and rebellious retreat, too easily becomes a flood of information. How it *felt* is nearly impossible to establish.

Mr. West is intent simply to recapture the "feel" of a life that ended for him with the entry into grammar school. He does not always succeed, and when he does not he simply lets loose "a flood of information", slang, descriptions of games, magazines, places and so on. Items on this flood occasionally triggered my memory of my own boyhood, but I don't suppose that was Mr. West's intention since it led me away from his book. There is too one part of the book, in which Mr. West quotes his own early poetry and recaptures wartime fantasies, the feeling of which I did not care for at all.

Mr. West succeeds brilliantly however in projecting the "feeling" of his parents, his affection for them, the life of the family and the house in which his parents lived then and still live now. He conveys

well also the boy's attitude towards the miners. They emerge at intervals throughout the book, seen at the cinema, the local fairground, passing down a street, involved in an argument outside a pub. The tone in which they are described is one of secret admiration for their violence. Yet the miners appear as remote from the life of the West family as do the Sitwells, who from nearby Renishaw Hall made periodic visitations on Eckington, as remote as Sheffield (seven miles away), as remote as the war. My final impression was that the Sparrow had grown in a nest quite enviably sheltered.

WILLIAM HALL

HERO WITHOUT MOTIVE

GEORGE WHALLEY. *The Legend of John Hornby.* Macmillan. $6.50.

GEORGE WHALLEY is a scholar of great energy and erudition and *The Legend of John Hornby* gives evidence of a relentlessness not very often encountered in Canadian biography or history.

John Hornby embodied all the qualities necessary to a legendary figure. Thought by some Canadians to be mad, by others to be a wealthy English eccentric, he lived and died in an aura of mystery. He had a paranoiac distrust of man's civilization, and an obsession for the Canadian Arctic. In a letter he once wrote: "It would have been better if I had not come back to civilization but stayed with the savages leading a wild & natural life, able to act on the impulse of the moment, bound to no restrictions."

In systematic order Mr. Whalley follows the track of Hornby, from 1904 when he first ran away from England to start his bizarre career north from Edmonton, till the final tragic but inevitable starvation on the banks of the lonely Thelon River in the long winter of 1926. Mr. Whalley does not skim over the story; if anything, he overloads it with day-to-day documentation, gathering letters, journals, government reports — anything that so much as mentions Jack Hornby.

Mr. Whalley is best as a historian, particularly when he turns his attention to a sweeping description of the prairies and the Northwest Territories at the beginning of this century. But when he turns to a characterization of his hero the writing seems to fade. For the Quixotic, Chaplinesque Hornby, wandering without any apparent reason back and forth across the barren snow, always talking about the book he was going to write, the minerals he was going to carry south, the animal expeditions he was going to lead, would seem to be inaccessible to the historian, faced with the task of trying

to render an unbelievable man believable.

With a matter-of-fact mien, Mr. Whalley follows Hornby through his odd adventuring, and makes available to the Canadian reader the story of a man too little known in this country. In the recounting of Hornby's last agonizing fight for life through a long winter of starvation in an isolated cabin buried by blizzards, Whalley does his best writing, bringing to life an absurd ordeal that would seem to be beyond the normal man's ability to comprehend.

The Legend of John Hornby will sometimes be slow reading for the layman, but the story is so big, the man's experience so disturbing, that the image of John Hornby will stay in the mind for a long time after the book is put away. GEORGE BOWERING

THE THEN GREAT AMPHITRYON

MARJORIE WILKINS CAMPBELL. *McGillivray—Lord of the Northwest.* Clarke Irwin. $6.50.

THE NORTH WEST COMPANY is best known for the discoveries of its three great explorers — Alexander MacKenzie, Simon Fraser, and David Thompson. As an organization, however, its story has been obscured by the prominence of the Hudson's Bay Company in Canadian history. Marjorie Wilkins Campbell has done much to bring to light the facts about the Nor'Westers as a company, first in her book *The North West Company*, and now in *McGillivray — Lord of the Northwest.*

William McGillivray joined the North West Company as an apprentice clerk at the age of nineteen in 1783, through the influence of his uncle, Simon McTavish, the dominant figure of the early years of the company. Twenty years later, on his uncle's death, he succeeded him as the chief partner. Another twenty-two years and McGillivray was dead and the North West Company was no more, having been dissolved into the rival Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. The forty years from 1783 to 1823 saw the Nor'Westers successfully wrest leadership in the fur trade from the Hudson's Bay Company, extend their trade to the Pacific Ocean, grow nepotic, and die in a savage economic, political, legal and even military war with their older rival. It is a dramatic story, well worth searching out and telling again, especially as Mrs. Campbell does it, from fresh sources and with new information.

Having recognized the interest of Mrs. Campbell's topic and the importance of her research, it is a shame to have to express doubts about her use of sources and her presentation. To begin with presentation, here is the first paragraph of McGillivray:

> London had never seemed so dreary. It was the fog, he told himself, February fog that chilled him till he felt colder than he had ever felt in Montreal or in the Indian country of the Canadian Northwest, fog that froze his marrow whenever he went into the street. Spring had never been so reluctant.

If Mrs. Campbell likes to ascribe sympathetic emotions to the weather and to the inanimate background of a character, probably no harm is done. It is only a rather obvious stylistic trick known as the pathetic fallacy. No one is likely to take the fiction seriously.

Perhaps the trick of imagining the feelings of characters on almost every occa-

sion and stating them as known facts is also basically innocent. What professional historians call this fallacy I do not know, but since it deceives only the very naïve, it can be regarded as nothing worse than a condescending attempt at what is thought to be a popular style.

The indulgence of fancy becomes serious when the author seems to be inventing details which could conceivably be demonstrated and for which there might be direct evidence which she alone knows. To illustrate this abuse of the imagination, I must take an example from where I am aware of the evidence. Mrs. Campbell states that after the North West Company was amalgamated into the Hudson's Bay Company, William McGillivray took down David Thompson's map from the wall of Fort William as a souvenir and that it eventually found its way to the Ontario Provincial Archives. How does the author know this? If she has evidence that the Fort William map and the Ontario Archives map are one and the same and that its history is as stated, she ought to make the information public, since it concerns a primary historical document. Actually the documentary evidence, as far as I know it, indicates that the Ontario Archives map came from Thompson's estate and was likely a later map than the one which hung at Fort William.

In a similar offhand manner, Mrs. Campbell refers to the above map as "the first ever drawn of the Northwest as far as the Pacific Ocean", although Alexander Mackenzie had published a map which extended to the Pacific thirteen years earlier. Had Mrs. Campbell taken all the information to be obtained from one of her sources. Dr. J. J. Bigsby's *The Shoe and Canoe*, she would have known that the earlier map was also drawn by Thompson.

Bigsby's book contains a description of a dinner party at William McGillivray's mansion in Montreal, on which Mrs. Campbell draws in some detail. But she omits Bigsby's significant and mildly satirical epithet for McGillivray as a host: "the then great Amphytrion". I think the omission is typical of a certain lack of objectivity towards her hero on Mrs. Campbell's part. She is oblivious to the fact that Molière had a word for him.

Mrs. Campbell states that McGillivray was "largely responsible for the exploration of a quarter of the continent." What she ought to have said is that men associated with McGillivray were responsible for some such amount of discovery and that McGillivray played an organizing role in part of the exploration. It is surely an exaggeration to give McGillivray any significant share, as Mrs. Campbell does, in the accomplishment of Alexander

Mackenzie. Overstatement and romanticization only result in diluting McGillivray's vigour of character, not in heightening his interest and significance.

Mrs. Campbell has written a study of an important but neglected figure. Unfortunately, much of what she says is impossible to verify and may at points be misleading. Taken with caution, her latest book is informative and indicates a valuable area for further research.

V. G. HOPWOOD

SINGERS OF QUEBEC

MARIUS BARBEAU. *Jongleur Songs of Old Quebec.* Ryerson. $8.50.

MARIUS BARBEAU. *Le Rossignol y Chante.* Musée National du Canada. $6.00.

IT IS HARD FOR the public to keep up with Dr. Barbeau's published work for books and articles pour from the pen of Canada's leading folk-lorist at a rate that astounds those of lesser energy and narrower interests. Here we are concerned with his two most recent volumes in one of his several special fields: French-Canadian folk song. The first *Jongleur Songs of Old Quebec,* will be of greater interest to English readers, for its provides translations of the forty-two songs it contains, and the notes are in English. The second, which is entirely in French, is probably of more importance, since its 160 songs form the first instalment of a series designed to provide a representative selection of the whole French-Canadian folk song repertoire.

Jongleur Songs of Old Quebec serves the same purpose as Dr. Barbeau's earlier and long out-of-print volume, *Folk Songs of French Canada* (1925): to give English-Canadians some conception of the richness and variety of the French-Canadian folklore heritage. The songs of the new volume, which were all recorded between 1916 and 1925 from folk singers along the St. Lawrence River, include samples of many different types: old French ballads of knights and ladies, of shepherdesses and soldiers, love songs, songs of girls who want to get married and of those who are married and regret it, songs of the French court which were adapted to the rhythm of the *voyageurs'* paddles, and songs composed by the *habitants* and *coureurs-de-bois* to describe the rustic life of New France.

Included are familiar songs like " À la claire fontaine" and two of the hundred-odd versions of "Trois beaux canards", and unusual ones like the tale of "La Bergére muette" who is healed by the Virgin Mary, and an Acadian version of "The False Knight in the Road" (Child 4), "Où vas-tu, mon petit garçon?"

Of even greater interest than the songs themselves are the detailed notes that accompany them. Into these notes Dr. Barbeau has skilfully woven much background information showing how the songs originated in medieval France and how they formed part of the life and the work of the pioneer settlers of New France. The book includes also a short account of "Discovery of the Folk Songs of French Canada" and an extensive bibliography.

Le Rossignol y Chante takes its title from a line in the familiar "Gailonla, gai le rosier" which Dr. Barbeau included as a tribute to his predecessor, Ernest Gagnon, whose *Chansons populaires du Canada,* published in 1865, was the first important French-Canadian song collection. The book has been divided into eleven sections beginning with "Oiseaux,

messagers d'amour" and ending with "Voyages sur mer et sur terre". Sometimes the songs are grouped by types, as in "La pastourelle" and "Nocturnes et aubades", and sometimes by subject, as in "Princesses emprisonnées dans une tour" and "aventures galantes". The largest section is made up of "Chants religieux et miracles", and particularly interesting are the "Chants historiques".

Those interested in folklore and literature will enjoy noting how the French songs parallel themes they know in other forms: for example, the aubades echo the Shakespearean scene about "The lark, the herald of the morn"; "C'est un docteur bien misérable" is a variant of the Faust legend; and "La courte paille" tells the same story that Thackeray gives in comic form as "Little Billee".

For those who want a general picture of French-Canadian folk songs and their background, *Jongleur Songs of Old Quebec* is highly recommended. For those interested in exploring the breadth of the French-Canadian repertoire, *Le Rossignol y Chante* will be essential reading.

EDITH FOWKE

HOUSE OF WORDS

LOVAT DICKSON. *The House of Words,* Macmillan, $5.50.

NEARLY THIRTY YEARS before Roy Thomson had the idea, a young man called Lovat Dickson left Canada for England to become a publisher. His progress was slower than Thomson's in that he had only brains and burning ambition. Thomson had money.

The slow progress from review editor to partner in Macmillan's — one of the great publishing houses of the world — is our gain. For Lovat Dickson has now recounted that progress in a second volume of autobiography entitled *The House of Words.*

Dickson was a young lecturer at the University of Alberta when he met with an eccentric and wealthy Canadian business man called Hammond who was about to buy *The English Review.* On an impulse, Hammond offered the job of assistant editor to Dickson who, on a similar impulse, took it.

In the event Hammond did not get *The English Review*; Dickson arranged for him to purchase *The Fortnightly.* This he did in 1929, and for three years Lovat Dickson edited it. He was aware, more than the editors of other surviving nineteenth-century magazines, that *The Fortnightly* had lost touch with its twentieth-century readers. So he enlarged and diversified his role by personally buying the *Review of Reviews.*

He also became the English scout for the Macmillan Company of New York. Much as he liked putting together a magazine — indeed two magazines — he became absorbed in the picking out of books. And within another year he had established himself as Lovat Dickson Limited with a colophon designed by Denis Tegetmeier, and a first list that included two best sellers.

From here on *The House of Words* concerns itself with what it is like to be a publisher: the ferreting out of good authors; the careful weighing of merit and commercial feasibility; the estimation of how many should be in a first print order; the careful public relations which can make or break a book.

Just for this *The House of Words* would be interesting and worthwhile, but the authors whom Lovat Dickson col-

lected under his imprint were a curious lot. They included Captain von Rintelen, a German spy who told all; Nis Peterson who drank himself to death before he could duplicate the success of *The Street of the Sandalmakers*; and, the man who made Dickson's first few seasons profitable, Grey Owl. His account of this pseudo-Indian's escapades on the lecture circuit are funny but the scene at Buckingham Palace when George VI asked his daughter to meet a real Red Indian is both hilarious and touching.

In the course of his career, Lovat Dickson has met with many great men of his time and his stories of Sir Osbert Sitwell, Sir John Squire and Charles Morgan are all fresh and amusing. He also gives a neat vignette of one of the great young writers who were lost to England by the war: Richard Hillary.

Lovat Dickson emerges as a man of humour, integrity and unusual personal candour. In addition the reason why he has picked so many winners in his publishing life becomes evident: he can write very well himself. It is no mere businessman who can end a first-rate episode of autobiography with a passage like this:

> It is a pity that we ourselves can never see the promise that others see in us when we are young. Or is it perhaps better that we should not know? Would the intensity slacken if we were assured we were doing well? Now that my own star, after its long sweep across the arc of the sky, is sinking towards the horizon, I want to hail the eager newcomers pressing forward through the ante-room, past me, through the open door beside which I stand. They cannot spare a side glance for me, the veteran. It makes me wonderfully happy that the young are lost in intensity, eagerly pressing forward: a salute from an old publisher to a young one would be lost in their excited chatter. That is as it should be. In the House of Words the voices of the young are what one ought to listen for.

That is the work of a writer. It is worthy of being published by anyone. But while Dickson is still keeping a watch for good books himself, it is no surprise that *The House of Words* is published by Macmillan, his own firm.

ARNOLD EDINBOROUGH

FROZEN DISBELIEF

NICHOLAS MONSARRAT. *The Time Before This.* $3.50.

NICHOLAS MONSARRAT has crossed evangelical religiosity with the gee-whiz school of science fiction, and *The Time Before This* is the issue; it is an ugly child.

Peter Benton, a disassociated young newspaperman, goes to Canada's Far North for the *true* story on this latest of frontiers. Among other things, he finds a messianic old man, called Mr. Shepherd, who spends his time enraging the low life in Bone Lake's only temple, the hotel bar. *I know*, the old man says, *this has all happened before*, and his gesture includes all of Bone Lake, a scabrous boom town created by modern technological legerdemain. Almost nightly, Shepherd is cast out of the temple and nursed home by a slightly soiled, but ascendant, young woman; her name is Mary. Eventually the old man is beaten up — "crucified" — and Peter, involved against his will by Mary, helps him home to his tomb-like room. There, dying, he imparts his knowledge to Peter.

Long ago, Shepherd came upon a great mountain of ice far beyond our present northern frontier; it was an enormous storehouse containing a colossal abundance of foodstuffs, the whole contrived with a technical sophistication unknown to us, and millions of years old. It was guarded by seven corpses, frozen

in attitudes of disbelief and instant death, the last men of an incredibly ancient and advanced civilization that perished by nuclear war. Since finding the storehouse and returning from it, Shepherd has wandered the wilderness trying to rediscover the site and deter civilization from the course of self-destruction. He has succeeded in neither, but before dying converts Peter to his beliefs and appoints him heir to the crusade.

Couched in the terms of a prosaically realistic novel, but clumsily encrusted with symbolic analogues, *The Time Before This* is vitiated both as a novel and a parable. The parable is embodied in the characters, but they lack the vitality to carry its weight. If Mr. Monsarrat sincerely believes that nuclear war is the Hell our civilization is manufacturing for itself, and wants to stop it, then he has done his cause a great disservice.

BARRIE HALE

TOONERVILLE TROLLEY TO TRANSCONTINENTAL

G. R. STEVENS. *Canadian National Railways*: Vol. I, Sixty Years of Trial and Error (1836-1896); Vol. II, Towards the Inevitable (1896-1922). Clarke, Irwin. $16.00.

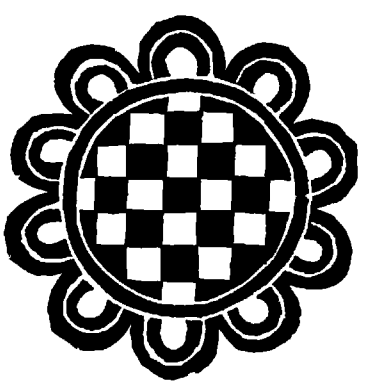
ALL THE EVIDENCE of the last decade or so to the contrary many Canadians still believe that their history is largely a dull tale of rails, tariffs and freight rates. To them the publication of two fat volumes on the history of the hundreds of railways which eventually formed the publicly owned Canadian National Railway will not immediately appeal as an exciting event. Yet it is, for this is a different kind of railway history than any we have had in Canada before, and it makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of our social history. That is not to say that there are no dull patches in Colonel Stevens' more than one thousand pages. Even his literary skill cannot make enthralling reading of all the merger negotiations and financial crises which are an essential part of his story, but with many such episodes he more than manages to do so.

Whether he describes the "puffing billies" of the early portage railways of the 1830's or the twentieth-century giants, Colonel Stevens has a perceptive eye for the physical features of the railways and the country through which they passed. What is rarer is that he never allows the reader to forget the human beings who were employed on the railways, rode on them, and used them, often without knowing it, to shape the material and spiritual fabric of a nation. The book evokes sharply the excitement of the first railway boom in the Canada West of the 1850's when every small town was prepared to risk the upheavals wrought by riotous Irish immigrant construction workers in the hope of becoming a metropolis, and is equally convincing in its portrayal of the mood of bursting optimism at the beginning of "Canada's century".

Except for the more colourful C.P.R. figures, we have known little about the organizers and operators of our transportation systems, for the railroaders themselves have usually been lost behind the mileages and deficits of their companies. Every schoolboy knows that the building of the Intercolonial Railway was a condition of Maritime adherence to Confederation, but he hears little of it thereafter, unless as a warning against the

evils of public ownership of utilities. Incidentally, although Colonel Stevens provides many examples of the most venal corruption in the Intercolonial, he suggests that the railway's weaknesses have often been exaggerated by persons with private enterprise axes to grind. As he shows, the Intercolonial had its victories no less than the C.P.R.; one of its heroes was David Pottinger, who served the company for thirty-six years, first as Superintendent and then as General Manager. Pottinger's determined but only partially successful efforts to limit the worst kinds of patronage as practiced by both political parties, and his achievement in reforming the "loutish behaviour" and irresponsibility of the early employees which often made a journey on the Intercolonial a threat to morality and life, warrants the conclusion that "no railway officer ever deserved better of his country".

Among the many other figures who stand out vividly are Henry Tyler, who became president of the Grand Trunk in 1876, and his General Manager, Joseph Hickson. The imagination and financial audacity of this pair in eliminating competition in Canada through the buying up of branch lines, and in extending themselves into New England and west to Chicago against the bitter opposition of Sir John A. Macdonald, the C.P.R., and the Vanderbilts, made the Grand Trunk one of the most efficient and admired railways of the nineteenth century. The leadership given by Sir Charles Rivers Wilson and C. M. Hays in the "boom-and-bust" years after the turn of the century was powerless to save the Grand Trunk from the effects of the inflationary spiral of the war years as it joined the Grand Trunk Pacific and the Canadian Northern on the road to bankruptcy and the climax of the story in the creation of the Canadian National Railway. The author, like most Canadians then and now, accepts public ownership not as good in principle, but as the least objectionable of the possible solutions to the railway problem.



Historians will be grateful for Colonel Stevens' careful research in the official records of the C.N.R. and in numerous archival collections. To mention only two of his contributions to historical studies—he has added to our knowledge of the Mackenzie and Mann enterprises and has provided new and convincing evidence that Laurier's enthusiasm for a second transcontinental railway owed more to political than to economic inspiration. But it is lamentable that there is no precise documentation of sources; there are only meagre references to secondary works which obviously played a minor part in the preparation of these volumes. While it is true that the author's competent handling of his material inspires confidence and reduces to a minimum the limitations imposed by this lack, the value of his work would have been greatly enhanced by adequate documentation.

MARGARET PRANG

VISION AND WORD

MARIUS BARBEAU. *Cornelius Krieghoff.*
R. H. HUBBARD. *Tom Thomson.*
ALAN JARVIS. *David Milne.*
DONALD W. BUCHANAN. *Alfred Pellan.*
McClelland & Stewart. $1.75 ea.

IN SPITE OF Malraux's optimistic report some years ago, the museum without walls still does not exist. Books containing reproductions of works of art continue to pour from the presses, each presumably intending to add yet another gallery to the world museum figuratively abuilding on our bookshelves. However, it takes scarcely more than the most cursory check to discover that the pictures we are buying in reproduction are not reproductions at all; but are, for the very greatest part, grotesque caricatures of what they purport to imitate, grossly misleading the student of art who wishes to make even the shallowest generalizations from the "facts" which book reproductions offer.

But since we are not yet so mobile that we can flit about from the Louvre to the Hermitage, and then on to the Metropolitan in an hour or so of effort, it is obvious that we still must depend on the device of books to fill in, however inadequately. It also becomes apparent that, in spite of the visual nature of such a thing as painting, the verbal assistance to our education in art continues to be essential.

This brings us to the core of the problem posed by the first four little volumes in the series called *The Gallery of Canadian Art*. The question that the editor must ask is: "If we can afford to print about a dozen pages of words per monograph to go with the reproductions, what would be the most useful, or most interesting, thing we might talk about?" It is related to the age-old dilemma of the critic and commentator of art: what is it that he can say which will add to what the viewer can see with his own eyes? The problem is compounded when what is offered to the viewer is not very much like what is really under scrutiny; namely: the work of art.

By publishing a monograph on Canadian Artist X, the publisher is implying that Canadian Artist X is worth talking about. Perhaps under the limited conditions imposed, this implication is the most important one for the book to support. Thus, the book's *raison d'être* becomes its short, emphatic suggestion that X and his work have been exceptional in their contribution to the history of art and artists in Canada. With this approach, and assuming that each book will be the reader's first essential contact with the artist, we have a basis on which to compare the effectiveness of these four efforts.

Robert Hubbard sets out to discourage us in his first sentence by telling us: "It is over forty years since the death of Tom Thomson, and still we know very little about him." Later on, after sketching out those superficial facts, which he has been able to gather, Hubbard reminds us that, "We know nothing of his personal life." And then, before summing up, as if to clinch the futility of the whole task, he asks: "What sort of man was Thomson?" and then answers, "There is very little first-hand material on which to base a description and form an estimate."

Even Alan Jarvis, who seems to be less hampered by a lack of material in reference to David Milne, is cautious about making certain psychological interpreta-

tions "where documentation is scarce." Nevertheless, after reading the ten or eleven short pages which Jarvis devotes to Milne, one does come away with a sense of having read about a great man. Even without looking at his work, one is somehow convinced that the man was a strong and dedicated artist who deserves to be discussed and to be remembered. "Milne's personality is elusive . . ." says Jarvis; yet he tells us that, "behind his mild exterior there lay an indomitable will bordering on the obsessive which, together with a vein of ruthlessness, drove him to sacrifice everything to painting." This says quite a lot, and, incidentally, encourages one to read on.

On the other hand, the biography of Pellan, the only living artist in the quartet, limps along tediously as presented by Donald W. Buchanan. When a man has lived a life as inconsequential as Buchanan seems to make it, one wonders a bit why he has been singled out. The illustrations, a hodge-podge arranged only more or less chronologically, seem to confirm the artist's lack of uniqueness, a lifetime of conviction-less dabbling in imitation of a variety of early twentieth-century image makers, such as Klee, Lurçat, Picasso, Ernst, Miro, Leger, Kokoschka, Braque, di Chirico, et al.

Cornelius Krieghoff comes off even worse from between the lines of Marius Barbeau's tautology. (Speaking of Louise Gautier Krieghoff, he intones, "Yet it was her fate to stand at the crossroads of destiny.") The words speak of a banal and wooden man, and the illustrations show us banal and wooden pictures. Obviously it is neither Krieghoff the man, nor Krieghoff the artist who is important in Canadian history. The thing that is important — presumably the semi-journalistic record of nineteenth-century Canadian life — has been skimmed over. But without emphasizing the importance the paintings have in the documentation of Canadian history, the reason for the book remains obscure.

ABRAHAM ROGATNICK

SOMETHING TO SAY?

BEULAH GABRIEL SWAYZE. *Father Gabriel's Cloak.*

LORRIE MCLAUGHLIN. *West to the Cariboo.*

ADELAIDE LEITCH. *The Great Canoe.*
Macmillan. $1.50 ea.

C. S. LEWIS says that there are three ways of writing for children. The best consists "in writing a children's story because a children's story is the best art-form for something you have to say". In other words, the author is true to himself. This approach has given us most of the great books in children's literature such as *Treasure Island, The Bastable Family, Jim Davis, Swallows and Amazons, The Three Mullah Mulgars.* The second way is somewhat of a corollary to the first; it is to write a story for an individual child and perhaps produce a *Wind in the Willows,* an *Alice in Won-*

derland. The third way is for a writer to give children what he thinks they want or need; it has little hope of true success. Unfortunately it is the way followed by the writers of Macmillan's new series, Buckskin Books, which consists of realistic stories for children eight to ten, in the "Dick and Jane" tradition, using a thin thread of Canadian pseudo-history as the story line.

Father Gabriel's Cloak by Beulah Garland Swayze, has the classic plot of the white child kidnapped and adopted into an Indian tribe. Marie Lemieux was captured in 1674 at the age of six and was rescued by Tonty six years later. This theme, when handled for older boys and girls, has produced such fine books as Lois Lenski's *Indian Captive* and John Craig's *The Long Return.* In both these books the relationships between the white children and their Indian foster-parents are handled with depth and emotion and the adventures are credible as well as being exciting. *Father Gabriel's Cloak* with its short sentences and oversimplified vocabulary just cannot bear the weight of either the realistic or historical action, to say nothing of the development of character or the opportunities for emotional expression implied in some of the events. "She was a quiet girl, small for her age, and dark. Madame Lemieux had been worried about her that summer. She had had a fever, so they had cut her dark hair close to her head. But by early September she was much better." Somehow it reminds one of: "Take one cup of flour. Add a tablespoon of baking powder. Mix well with a cup of milk."

West to the Cariboo, by Lorrie McLaughlin, tells of two brothers, aged eighteen and twelve, who journey from Queenston, Ontario, to Kamloops to find their gold-prospecting father. The story suggests the exploits of the Overlanders in 1862; it is a long journey to dramatize in 122 pages of large type. The singularly dull story is not helped by the author's continued attempts to indicate the uncouth frontier atmosphere by the use of quasi-colloquialisms. The following paragraph indicates the level of the style:

> As he passed a small group of men near the door he stopped to listen because they were talking about Cariboo.
>
> ". . . out there a year or so ago," one of the men was saying, "Gold the size of your fist, waiting to be picked up."
>
> "Why'd you come back?" asked one of the listeners.
>
> "To get me another stake," said the man. "Going to build a hut and move in this time."

The Great Canoe, by Adelaide Leitch, is the best of the three. Based on a small part of Champlain's diary, it becomes the story of a small Huron boy (Gros-Louis) who inveigles himself into a war party against the Iroquois and wins the friendship of Champlain. Although seriously marred by infelicitous dialogue, the narrative moves along fairly expertly and with a ring of authority, particularly in the account of the boy's trip through Lake Couchiching and the Kawarthas. The quality that this book has which makes it stand out in comparison with the other two is a believable young hero with whom the young readers can identify themselves. SHEILA EGOFF

WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL

JAMES REANEY. *Twelve Letters to a Small Town.* Ryerson Press. $1.50.

AS I READ *Twelve Letters to a Small*

Town, I cannot escape the feeling that it is an extremely charming book of verse, although I constantly hear my conscience demanding that I do not call it poetry. James Reaney displays here an extraordinary capacity for capturing and beautifying the naïve and hypersentimental kindergarten teacher's interpretation of the child's world. He stimulates all that is unrealistic and nostalgic within a reader to acclaim his verse as great; it may be only a touch of cynicism that can save a reader from deception, and bring him to want to say, "James Reaney, the world is *not* so goody-goody." Perhaps I am being insensitive to Reaney's verse, but I do fear that it is only the unperceptive, naïve, and sentimental adult who can look back and say, in effect, "O for the perfect childhood days astride the Crimean cannon!" — for even the actual child on the cannon is usually only too painfully aware that life's joys tend to be balanced by misfortune.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" Reaney keeps saying in these verses that made their debut on the C.B.C., and, pinned down on the page without the camouflage of John Beckwith's music, the message appears rather trivial. The works bear a striking similarity to the child's Grade One Dick and Jane reader that has recently received severe criticism for being overly infantile:

> Dick said, "Look look.
> Look up.
> Look up, up, up."

Here is Reaney:

> PUPIL:
> Twig and branch, twig and branch
> Bricks, stones and traffic hum
> Twig and branch, twig and branch
> Bricks, stones and traffic hum

or:

> A First take two sticks and two leafy branches.
> B First take two sticks and two leafy branches.
> A Put their ends together so they form spokes.
> B Put their ends together so they form spokes.

and so on in this "Letter" for three pages.

Sometimes the verse does threaten to rise near the significance of a poem. But once out of the child's garden Reaney seems to want to become only the sentimental middle-class C.B.C. poet. Do twelve home-town reminiscences commissioned by the C.B.C. have to contain only such things as nostalgia for the cloakroom (Fifth Letter), a gentle eulogy for the river (First Letter), or saccharined approval for maiden aunts (Sixth Letter)? Perhaps so, but still I suspect that the mind of the writer may be as much to blame here as the tastes of the radio network.

There is magic indeed in the way Reaney makes the child's world even more than alive, but I am afraid that most people, especially children, would laugh at him. If Reaney is serious in this book, he is sadly out of touch with reality. *Twelve Letters to a Small Town* is strictly for watery-eyed old ladies.

FRANK DAVEY

BEFORE THE VOLCANO

MALCOLM LOWRY. *Ultramarine*. Clarke, Irwin. $4.00.

Ultramarine is Malcolm Lowry's first novel, published twenty years ago and fourteen years before *Under the Volcano*. Lowry saw his writing as a continuous process; he could never regard anything

he produced as finally complete, and so during his years in Canada he kept noting in his copy of *Ultramarine* alterations that might be used in a future edition if it ever appeared. Thus the novel as it is now printed a generation after its first publication differs in a number of details from the original version. But none of the changes is of major importance, and only the scholar need be concerned with assessing their significance.

Ultramarine is a frankly derivative novel. Lowry made no bones about the fact that in writing it he was influenced by both Conrad Aiken's *Blue Voyage* and Nordahl Grieg's *The Ship Sails On,* but, while the extent of his borrowings and imitations might form the subject of a valuable research article, it seems to me that in first considering the reappearance of a work of this kind one should regard the book in its own rights, accepting whatever has been derived as part of a work as ultimately autonomous as, say, a neo-Classical building that openly proclaims its ancestry. Is *Ultramarine,* in fictional terms, a convincing and self-consistent book? Or should we regard it as the work of a brilliant young writer nearing the end of his apprenticeship and preparing himself for the creative efforts that were to make *Under the Volcano* one of the important novels of its generation?

The latter assessment is nearer the truth. The structure of *Ultramarine* is dominated by Lowry's attempt to create a counterpoint between the interior monologues of the middle-class hero Dana Hilliot, who has gone to sea for the experience, and the talk of his shipmates as the boat trails from one Far Eastern port to the next. There is a certain inconsequential drama about the long dialogue passages; there is at times a poignant, romantic nostalgia in the hero's stream of thoughts, stated with the ebullient prolixity of a mind mad for words. But the two ways of writing seem like never-meeting parallels, and, despite some finely worked passages, the book as a whole remains the brilliant exercise of a young man preparing for greater things. As such it is worth the reading; we often gain more from a good writer's *juvenilia* than from the masterpieces of mediocrities, and *aficionados* of *Under the Volcano* will find in *Ultramarine* the roots and buds of that magnificent efflorescence. G.W.

TO THE EDITOR

Dear Professor Woodcock,

I read in No. 16 of your admirable journal, and in a review of Malcolm Lowry's Poems by John Robert Colombo on p. 61, the following: "In many ways a genuine literary interest in Lowry's poetry is as hollow as the 1962 Governor-General's Award for Fiction, which was given for *Hear Us O Lord.* The novel got the award, yes, but not the $1,000 prize, which the Canada Council reserves for living authors."

It is true that the $1,000 prize was not given directly to Mr. Lowry, who had not left a forwarding address: it was, however, given to Mrs. Lowry.

Yours faithfully,
NORTHROP FRYE,
Victoria College, Toronto.

We regret the false impression created by this reference, and draw the attention of our readers to Dr. Frye's correction. *Ed.*