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THE WRITER'S WORLD

Articles

BY ROBERT L. MCDOUGALL, MORDECAI RICHLER, NAIM KATTIM, JOAN SELBY, BRUCE H. NESBITT

Reviews

BY GEORGE ROBERTSON, GEORGE BOWERING, S. E. READ, GEORGE WOODCOCK, FRANK DAVEY, DONALD STEPHENS, MARYA FIAMENGO, AND OTHERS

A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW

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Decorative linocuts by GEORGE KUTHAN

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MORDECAI RICHLER's most recent novel, *The Incomparable Atuk*, has just been published in Canada. The Memoir printed in this issue of *Canadian Literature* is the first of a series of essays by various writers on the world that has formed the background to their writing.

NAIM KATTIM was born in Bagdad and studied at the Sorbonne. In Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, as well as in France and other European countries, he contributed to many periodicals. He came to Canada in 1954, and is now a Lecturer at Laval University, Editor of the *Bulletin du Cercle Juif* in Montreal, and a member of the Editorial Board of *Tamarack Review*.

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editorial

A COMMONWEALTH OF LITERATURES

THE IDEA OF A COMMONWEALTH of literatures, paralleling the political Commonwealth, gathers substance from the kind of writing which is now being published in the countries that formerly belonged to the Empire. The pattern, which was examined in a volume of essays — *The Commonwealth Pen* — noticed some issues ago in these pages, is deepened by the growing differentiation as well as the growing achievement of writers working and publishing outside the literary metropolis of London. Thirty years ago anthologies of verse from the Empire had a curiously blimpish tone and a foggy mediocrity that made Charles G. D. Roberts and Adam Lindsay Gordon look like considerable poets. The situation has changed radically in a generation, and a recent collection like Margaret J. O'Donnell's *Anthology of Commonwealth Verse*, distributed in Canada by Ryerson Press, leaves one with the conviction that, since last war's end at least, the English-writing poets of Canada and Australia, of South Africa and New Zealand, are competing on equal ground with those of Britain. In fact, when one reads the tired, dusty verses of the English poets of the 1950's "Movement", it seems evident that nowadays Canadians and New Zealanders at least are singing with truer poetic voices.

An anthology bringing together a number of literatures, using variants of a common language, is always a difficult project, and Miss O'Donnell's collection is saved mainly by the intrinsic merit of the better verse it includes. In planning and arrangement the anthologist has made most of the possible mistakes, so that her collection can at least on one level be read as a manual of examples of what not to do. She starts with the early Victorian age, when no colonial literature was other than derivative, and the result is that poor old Heavysege and Sangster and their contemporaries elsewhere are made to perform beside Wordsworth, Browning and Clare. On the other hand, the attempt to be fair by containing English

poetry in spatial limits equal to those devoted to other countries means that the anthology appears without most of the best English voices of the period covered — Byron, Shelley, Keats, etc. etc.

It would surely have been better to have restricted the anthology to a period — say the last thirty years — in which the various Commonwealth literatures, including the British, could have been presented on something approaching equal terms. But instead Miss O'Donnell has tried to extricate herself from the difficulties created by the legion of British poets writing during the past century by dividing them into English, Welsh, Scottish and Irish, using place of birth as the main criterion of selection. This has led to some curious combinations — and divisions. Since MacNeice and Day Lewis are presented as Irish and Auden and Spender as English, the Thirties movement is split down the middle and half its leading figures appear in the odd company of Padraic Colum and James Stephens. Those delightful nature poets of the English countryside, Andrew Young and Edward Thomas, are presented respectively as Scottish and Welsh poets, though Wilfred Owen, who was born much nearer to Wales than Edward Thomas, is mysteriously classed as English. The fact is that, except for clearly regional poets like Huw Menai in Wales and Hugh MacDiarmid in Scotland, most of the writers represented in the British sections of the book came together in the inclusive atmosphere of the London literary world; they formed that world. Miss O'Donnell recognizes the irrelevance of origins in such circumstances when she includes T. S. Eliot among the English; but she does not carry the implications of this sensible decision to their logical conclusion.

But outside Britain origins do take on meaning. Poets living out their lives away from Europe, enjoying local experiences, speaking with local accents in local variants of the common language, slowly produce their own idioms, and we can observe their distinctive poetic traditions emerging, New Zealand developing a characteristic strain of nature-sensitive lyricism, and Canada producing — to its own surprise — the most sophisticated verse of all during these last years, varying from the ironically astringent to the metaphysically involuted.

The kind of rapid sampling survey which such a volume permits is enough to point up some interesting facts about poets in the Commonwealth. One can note, for instance, how deeply poetry depends on the writer using a native language spoken from childhood. The least satisfying poems in the volume are those by Indians, Pakistanis and Africans, and this comparative failure in verse is given particular point when one remembers how many good English-writing novelists India, for example, has produced. No Indian poet stands so high among con-

temporary writers in English as prose writers like R. K. Narayan, Aubrey Menen and Mulk Raj Anand.

And then there is the curious case of South Africa, which for decades has been sprouting excellent writers from among its English-speaking population, yet has never produced a really characteristic local literature for the reason that the good South African poets all seem to find their way as quickly as possible to London, where they have taken over the rôle of the brilliant expatriate once reserved for the Anglo-Irish. Roy Campbell, William Plomer, Charles Madge, R. N. Currey, F. T. Prince, David Wright; it is astonishing how many of them have fled from home and how few have gone back. Obviously the social stresses and strains that exist in a country like South Africa are not conducive to continued literary creation, and those writers who are wise escape to fulfil their literary destinies elsewhere. Perhaps there is a warning here for Canadians — both French and English — that a country too sharply divided against itself may be culturally no more healthy than it is politically.

THE DODO AND THE CRUISING AUK

Class in Canadian Literature

Robert L. McDougall

THIS IS A PAPER about our society and our literature, and it assumes a correlation between the kind of society which has evolved in this country and the kind of literature it has produced. It is substantially the paper which I gave almost a year ago to an interdisciplinary seminar sponsored by the Institute of Canadian Studies at Carleton University for the purpose of examining the question of "Class in Canada". Since the paper then took its place in a context of studies made of the same subject by my colleagues in other disciplines, I must reactivate enough of that context now to make clear my point of departure. Before I do this, however, I should like to say that the intervening federal election of April last has shown very plainly the extrapolation of the argument you are about to hear into the field of politics. I was and am concerned, as many were to become concerned in the period leading up to the election, with the negative image presented by many aspects of the life of our nation. Mr. Pearson has offered the electorate his "Sixty Days of Decision" as the way out of the wasteland of Canadian political inertia. My interests for present purposes are literary: I have examined the deficiencies of the literary imagination in Canada and have asked by what means a Dodo can become at least a Cruising Auk.

My point of departure is supplied chiefly by the work of Professor John Porter of our Department of Sociology at Carleton, who has written extensively about social class in Canada and who will publish soon an important book on the power

élite in Canadian society. Professor Porter is not happy about our society, and I must now tell you briefly about some of the features of the Canadian social profile which he brings to my notice that are at once unusual and unattractive. At the level of the distribution of economic wealth, for example, he shows me not a pyramid (which, he tells me, is what I should see) but something which, like a space-capsule, is narrow in the up-ended neck and dumpy at the base. The design, good for space travel, does not in this context reflect a free flow of economic opportunity. Other inhibitors darken the picture. The powerful groups are subtly but adamantly exclusive in terms of the training of their members, their ethnic origin, even the religious faith they profess. So subtle are they that they spend a good deal of their time hiding their true colours and are therefore, despite their power, a dull lot. Too few bright birds hatched in other and lower orders of society get in from the outside to liven things up; too many bright birds stay more or less where they are put, and in doing so fail to realize the creative potential that is in them. What is worse, they seem content to stay put; indeed the entire community congratulates itself daily on the superiority of its social arrangements over those made by neighbouring communities. This much, oversimplified, from Professor Porter. His message seems plain: Canadian society is moribund and doesn't know it; it is a flightless bird that preens its vestigial wings.

Now I have asked myself what our literature, and especially our fiction (since fiction is the form of literature most directly concerned with the image of man in society) has to say about this message. And I must tell you immediately, with mixed sadness and elation, that it seems to me to say that the message is true. Professor Porter and I differ on many points, and we are of course looking at different bodies of evidence; but as far as that part of his thesis I have just examined is concerned, we see eye to eye. I shall ask you to detect in our literature a climate of thought and feeling that is frigid and constrained. The air is cold; hostile forces threaten; hope is deferred. In this environment, man's stance is static, his mood introverted, his virtues stoic. More directly, I shall ask you to conclude that our literature shows what can only be described as an abnormal absence of feeling for class and of concern for what the class structure can do in a developing society to make or mar the life of the individual. I shall ask you to regard its silence on the question of class as ominous. I shall say that it is due partly to the existence within our culture of inhibitions so strong as to all but rule out the possibility of a dynamic theory of social mobility, and partly to the fact that most Canadian writers belong to a single social group identifiable with a university-based Establishment.

I have begun to speak metaphorically because metaphor is the language of literature. In my examination of the social implications of our literature, I have thought it wise to avoid the use of direct comments which our writers have made in fiction or in poetry about Canadian society. I could offer you a collection of such comments quite easily. Navel-gazing on a national scale is something our writers do very well. But I believe, as you must, that when writers are being most self-consciously sociological they are being most marginally literary. I see no point in asking our writers to testify as amateur sociologists. Fortunately, poets and novelists have another manner of speaking which is truly their own and which involves the use of language to create a work of art rather than, primarily, a social document. As it happens, since the way in which their imaginations characteristically work within the books or poems they write are themselves social facts, we can listen to them when they speak the language of literature and still remain within a sociological frame of reference.

I have said that metaphor is the language of literature. I mean by this that men and woman who write novels or poems discover in doing so what R. W. B. Lewis in *The American Adam* has described as the "representative images" and "stories" for the ideas and attitudes of the society in which they live. Taking a long and broad look at American literature, Mr. Lewis has concluded that "a century ago, the image contrived to embody the most fruitful contemporary ideas was that of the authentic American figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history." Hawthorne's description, in a fantasy of 1844 called "Earth's Holocaust", of a huge bonfire built on the western prairies, "upon which was piled all the world's 'outworn' trumpery," becomes in this context the complement of Thoreau's representative image of the "busk", a New England custom which entailed the replacing of old things with new in village homes and the ritual burning of the past on the village green. Such images and stories, says Mr. Lewis, considered in relation to the anti-types which inevitably develop from them, help to define the characteristic debate or dialectic of American society. My only departure from this form of inquiry into the basic metaphor of a body of literature is to insist (in company with Miss Bodkin in her *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* and Wilson Knight in his Shakespearian criticism) that as much, perhaps even more, validity attaches to the representative image produced by the writer when he is unaware of the implications of what he is doing as to the representative image he produces as a "conscious" literary artist.

As we might expect, neither the subsuming form of the representative image or "story" nor the debate or dialectic which is the sign of its vitality is as apparent

this side of the border as it is to the south. No simple myth or ideology is available within whose field the separate symbols can find their orientation. The Americans took over the only ones truly appropriate to this continent some centuries ago: the Adamite myth and the ideology of democratic egalitarianism. Urged partly by our history and partly by sheer perversity, we have been looking fruitlessly for alternatives ever since. Nevertheless, a pattern exists here, even though, as we shall see, its organizing principle is negative.

In 1946, Northrop Frye contributed to the periodical *Gants du Ciel* an article entitled (the piece was translated from the English) "La Tradition Narrative dans la Poésie Canadienne-Anglaise". In this article he pointed out that the Canadian poet, though he might be younger than Eliot or Yeats, wrote in an environment for which it would be difficult to find a counterpart in England without going back to a period prior to the age of Chaucer. Our poets, he said, shared with the authors of *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* a certain attitude or feeling:

> a feeling [he said] of melancholy inspired by a sparsely settled and northern country, a feeling of the terrible loneliness of the creative spirit in such a country, a feeling of resignation to misery and isolation as the only means of achieving, if not serenity, at least a sort of stoic calm.

He noted a family resemblance between on the one hand the defeat of the English at Maldon and the heroism of the French at Roncesvalles, and, on the other, the archetypes of our national history: the martyrdom of the Jesuits in Huronia; Dollard's stand against the Iroquois at the Long Sault; the desperate courage of the Indians who died beside Tecumseh and Riel; the stirring yet abortive winter of our discontent in 1837; the hopeless struggle against gas at Saint-Julien in World War I; the sacrificial raid on Dieppe in World War II. The images and "stories" of the literature which emerges from this environment, Professor Frye goes on to say, reflect a consistent view of the human situation: man is a beautiful but frail creature encompassed by forces beyond his ability to control which strike out repeatedly and blindly to destroy him. Max, the hero of Isabella Valancy Crawford's *Malcolm's Katie*, at the very moment when he is defending the march of civilization and an idealistic view of human nature, is struck down by a falling

tree. In Lampman's *At the Long Sault*, as the image of the defeat of Dollard's band merges with the image of the magnificent bull-mouse attacked and destroyed by a pack of wolves, we see the ritual destruction of the higher forms of life by the lower.

Professor Frye's feeling for this part of our literature seems to me so absolutely right (his accounting for what he finds is another matter, for I think he is misleading when he says that the northern environment is the cause) that I have only to go on from where he leaves off. Within the field of the description he has provided lie, and lie all one way, the central themes, certainly the mood and spirit, of the main part of our poetry and fiction. E. J. Pratt is in many ways our most vigorous and affirmative poet. Yet the dominant linear image of Pratt's poetry is the image of the parabola, of the line moving obliquely and curving back upon itself. In his "Come Away, Death", after the obliterating blast of the bomb, "human speech curved back upon itself/Through Druid runways and Piltdown scarps,/Beyond the stammers of the Java caves." Evolution and reversion are two functions of the same graph. More obviously, the central image of Pratt's long poem on the sinking of the *Titanic* is that of an iceberg whose colossal strength, two-thirds hidden beneath the surface, rips through the bowels of the ship that is man's pride and joy. In D. C. Scott's poetry, which E. K. Brown has called a poetry of "restrained intensity", there is the image of the Indian crone who had once baited her hook with her own flesh to catch fish for her child, but who now, cast off by her tribe to die in the wilderness, sits mantled with snow, her breath a thin meerschaum of vapour in the white silence. Jay MacPherson's Adam is the fallen Adam barred from re-entry into Eden by the Cherubim's flaming sword until the second Adam come. Even the titles of collections of poems are emblematic: Margaret Avison's *Winter Sun*; Patrick Anderson's *The White Centre*; A. M. Klein's *The Rocking Chair* ("symbol of this static folk"); James Reaney's *A Suit of Nettles*.

Turn to our fiction, which is perhaps more telling in its evidences because it is more dependent in its form on a total human situation, and we find images and "stories" consistent with those of the poetry. The representative figure of Canadian fiction is not the innocent Adam, nor yet the Adam of the fortunate fall who is triumphant even in defeat at the hands of the alien tribe — as, for example, are Melville's Billy Budd or the Joads in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Nor is he, like Dorothea Brooke in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, the figure made strong and capable of extended life by voluntary renunciation. These are positive; our archetype is negative. Grove's heroes inhabit the world of the dark tragedies, the world

of *Lear* and *Othello*. Morley Callaghan's protracted study of the nature of innocence in a fallen world ends with the identification, in Harry Lane of *The Many Coloured Coat*, of innocence with presumption and guilt. His Father Dowling, in *Such Is My Beloved*, unable to see a solution either in conventionally Christian or in Marxist terms to the problem posed by the two prostitutes he has befriended, steps back over the lintel and the door closes on the dark room of his insanity. In Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*, two race legends touch but do not join, and Athanase Tallard, at the point of the novel's real climax, dies an immolation to unappeasible gods. Tallard's son Paul, ostensibly the man in whom the two worlds become one, does *not* rise Phoenix-like from the ashes, and we are to be consoled with the image of oil and alcohol in a bottle which, we are told, "had not broken yet." The real hero of MacLennan's earlier novel, *Barometer Rising*, is the chance explosion of 3000 tons of T.N.T. in Halifax harbour which removes from the scene, in addition to 6000 Haligonians, Neil MacRae's enemy, Colonel Wain. In Sinclair Ross's *As For Me and My House*, Philip Bentley withdraws so repeatedly behind the slammed door of his study that the image becomes an organizing principle of the action; and, in the same novel, the Puritan-ridden town of Horizon, from which, we feel, the railway lines run out only to other and quite as empty Horizons, is a frontier town which has known no youth but only old age. Milton Wilson, reviewing a recent collection of Canadian short stories, writes: "In the end, when the long line of dead birds, animals, and children, of frozen, inarticulate sons and lovers, of crucified hired men and farm boys has filed past, one is both appalled and impressed"; it is a world, he concludes, of "sacrificial chilliness" in which man's responses are "passive and inarticulate".

Can one escape conclusion? This is a negative rather than a positive literature. I was on the point of saying that it is a literature of the Everlasting Nay, but the Everlasting Nay, as Carlyle and Melville testify, is deeply affirmative. In our literature, heroic action remains possible but becomes so deeply tinged with futility that withdrawal becomes a more characteristic response than commitment. The representative images are those of denial and defeat rather than fulfilment and victory.

In the presence of these images it seems superfluous to ask whether our literature embodies a dynamic view of our social arrangements or supports a vigorous debate on the problem of freedom of movement for the individual within the mosaic of the class structure. Still, to round out my argument, the question may be put and an answer given. I shall confine my attention to the fiction.

One has the impression, in reading our fiction, that the social environment is in sharp focus. I presume it was this fact which led M. Falardeau, in the Plaunt lectures for 1960, to attempt a distinction between English-Canadian and French-Canadian literature.

> If one compares the English and French literatures of Canada, one discovers that the former expresses itself along an axis which I would see as horizontal while the latter has a more vertical axis . . . For most English-Canadian novelists, the novel as artistic expression is more the description and analysis of a social situation than a plunging into the depths of an individual soul. . . .In the French-Canadian novel, with Langevin, Elie, or Charbonneau, the characteristic tension is one between man and himself. More exactly, it is a tension between the individual and his destiny.

I think M. Falardeau is right up to a point: the English-Canadian novel, less lyric and "romantic" than its French-Canadian counterpart, belongs to a tradition of realism in which the horizontal dimension is clearly displayed as part of the requirement for what Henry James called "solidity of specification". Moreover, as I suggested at the beginning of my paper, it is a novel notable for the at least superficial evidence it gives of social awareness. Hugh MacLennan, for example, is most accurately aware of Professor Porter's tight little circle of corporate élite. Huntley McQueen, in *Two Solitudes*, is a modest member of the pack which daily rides the elevator of the Bank Building in Saint James Street:

> The elevator continued with McQueen to the top floor. The thought crossed his mind that if an accident had occurred between the first and second floors, half a million men would at that instant have lost their masters. It was an alarming thought. It was also ironic, for these individuals were so remote from the beings they governed, they operated with such cantilevered indirections, that they could all die at once without even ruffling the sleep of the remote employees on the distant end of the chain of cause and effect. The structure of interlocking directorates which governed the nation's finances, subject to an exceptionally discreet parliament, seemed to McQueen so delicate that a puff of breath could make the whole edifice quiver. But no, McQueen smiled at his own thoughts, the structure was quite strong enough. The men who had ridden together in the elevator this morning were so sound they seldom told even their wives what they thought or did or hoped to do. Indeed, Sir Rupert Irons was so careful he had no wife at all. They were Presbyterians to a man, they went to church regularly, and Irons was known to believe quite literally in predestination.

Similarly, it would be possible to derive from English-Canadian fiction the material for a demographic map which would show plainly the difference, let us say, be-

tween the social environment of Mort, in *The Equations of Love*, who lives on Powell Street in Vancouver, and that of Mr. H. Y. Dunkerley, the lumber magnate, who lives in the British Properties in West Vancouver; or between the social environment of the Carvers, in *The Loved and the Lost*, who live on the Mountain in Montreal, and that of Peggy Sanderson, who frequents the St. Antoine district of the city, just north of the tracks. Is this not to say that M. Falardeau is right, then? And is this not to say that English-Canadian fiction does indeed present a dynamic view of class in Canada?

THE FACT IS that class is not a central issue in any significant part of our fiction. The social awareness of which I have spoken remains almost everywhere a social awareness marginal to the purposes of the novel. Characteristically, it is the awareness of a detached observer who says what he has to say about a social problem in a sequence of mildly ironic comments which leave him, as the device of irony permits, uncommitted. Irony is of course an excellent literary device. But the use of it on a national scale, and the use on a national scale of that particular form of it which conceals position rather than reveals it, seems to me to have disturbing implications. Some years ago, Malcolm Ross was astute enough to identify irony as the Canadian way of doing things in literature. The difference between us is simply that Professor Ross thinks the ironic mode a good basis for a sense of identity while I do not.

I must answer M. Falardeau further by saying that even where the question of class appears to be a central issue in our fiction, in the end almost invariably it is not. Morley Callaghan, for example, who is on the surface a novelist preeminently concerned with the social structure in Canada, on closer examination turns out to be a novelist preeminently concerned with personal values and "inscape". In *They Shall Inherit the Earth*, published in 1935, the conclusion which Michael Aikenhead, on a hunting trip, draws from the spectacle of the apparently wanton slaughter of deer by a pack of wolves virtually kills the debate on social justice which the novel has sponsored. The lesson which nature supplies is ambiguous, it would seem, and in the face of this ambiguity we must, for the sake of unity, suspend judgement on the question of justice in society. It is a defensible position. It is nevertheless a peculiarly static and negative position in the context of the thirties. The effect in the novel is to drive the emphasis squarely back upon

what has been its central issue from the beginning, the personal relation between Michael and his father; and this issue is then cautiously resolved in terms of the cautious conclusion of the book's social debate. And *They Shall Inherit the Earth* is perhaps the most "horizontal" of Callaghan's novels. Elsewhere, and especially in the more recent novels such as *The Loved and the Lost* and *The Many Coloured Coat*, the "vertical" is unquestionably the main dimension of the work.

Callaghan is of course not the English-Canadian novel, but since my time is limited I must ask you to believe that what we find and do not find in him is representative of a wide spectrum of Canadian fiction. Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952) is a novel locked in space and time, its theme one of containment, its mood retrospective, its emphasis, as Dr. Bissell has pointed out, "not so much on movement forward as on exploration below." Hugh MacLennan's *The Watch That Ends the Night* (1959), despite its brilliant reconstruction of the ferment of the thirties in Montreal and the presence in it of the rather unrepresentative Life-Force figure of Jerome Martell, is a spiritual odyssey of the search for the meaning of pain and life and death in which the action folds progressively inward upon the private worlds of the narrator and his invalid wife. Consistently, in Sinclair Ross as in such unlikely quarters as Robertson Davies and Mazo de la Roche, the "horizontal" tilts to the "vertical". English-Canadian writers have more in common with French-Canadian writers than M. Falardeau would lead us to believe.

And as the private worlds enlarge, of course, the worlds of social relationship diminish. Nature and puritanism and the illiberal mind are forces to be reckoned with here, and any combination of these can act in a social context to frustrate the individual and nourish his self-doubt. But the class structure itself is not, apparently, a challenge. There are exceptions. I believe some of our minority-group writers, as they might be called, have had (and for obvious reasons) a genuine feeling for the problem of social mobility — John Marlyn, for example, in *Under the Ribs of Death*, and Mordecai Richler in *Son of a Smaller Hero*. I think also of Ethel Wilson's "Lilly's Story", though Ethel Wilson writing "Lilly's Story" is Jane Austen writing *Sister Carrie*. But the exceptions are too few to be significant.

Indeed it is quite simply the monolithic uniformity of the picture that disturbs me. I concede that Morley Callaghan has done well in his inquiry into the problem of faith and guilt in a fallen world, and I can tell you that I was his champion long before Edmund Wilson took him up, and still am. I concede that any novelist worthy of his calling will see any individual as being in a sense in a class by him-

self, that all good novels are concerned with the inner life, and that the probing of man's consciousness and conscience at the expense of external social reference has been increasingly the mark of fiction in the western world over the past fifty years. But where in our literature, early or late, do we find the infusion of that bold concern for placing the individual's problems in significant relation to the structure of his society which is so clearly to be seen in the literatures of England and the United States? Dickens knew about class in a society well advanced towards industrialization, and Dickens wrote about class in *Hard Times* and *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations*. George Eliot knew the class structure of a town like Middlemarch as well as she knew the palm of her hand and could use this knowledge to illuminate the action and discourse of her characters. Henry James thought the principle of exclusiveness so important to the art of fiction that he went to Europe where he could observe it in its purest form and where he then proceeded to write novel after novel in which (with no sacrifice of inwardness, be it noted) he juxtaposed New World ideas about class with those of the Old. Within a few years of James's departure, the American novelist W. D. Howells had satisfied his own Jamesian concern for the principle of exclusiveness by writing, in *The Rise of Silas Lapham*, a full-length and artistically satisfying study of the issue of class that had arisen with the pressure of the new economic élite of industrial America upon the Brahmin class of Boston society. Theodore Dreiser in *Sister Carrie* and Horatio Alger in *Struggling Upward* made a literary image out of the sociological concept of upward mobility. Lady Chatterley's lover is a gamekeeper, and this simple fact stands close to the heart of what Lawrence is trying to say in that novel. Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath* sees the class issue with the hard clarity of a Marxist.

Here in Canada we seem to have had no feel for this sort of thing — or, if we had a feel for it once, we have lost it. Susanna Moodie looked with a shrewd eye on what she called the "mixed society" growing up along the "front" of the St. Lawrence River in the 1840's and was well aware of the implications of the new kind of class structure she saw taking shape in the new environment. Later, Sara Jeanette Duncan was able, in *The Imperialist*, to do with excellent insight for the small Ontario town of Elgin (her Brantford) what George Eliot had done for Middlemarch. But thereafter the record diminishes. It is true that the thirties produced a spate of socially directed poetry in this country, and I have no wish to question the sincerity of the convictions which led F. R. Scott and Earle Birney and others to write it. But the voice of the poetry of these years is ambiguous, as a glance at the volume *New Provinces* (published in 1936) will show. Above all,

I see in it little evidence of what I should call a genuine feeling for class. It is academic. One has the impression that it is a poetry written neither by Brahmins nor by prols. And if we turn to the fiction of the depression years, the essential lack remains. Irene Baird's *Waste Heritage*, whose setting is hobodom in Vancouver during the riots and sitdown strikes of the thirties, is a genuinely proletarian novel, and it is a piece of work that has a good deal of the quality of gusto and authenticity of approach to the social scene that I am looking for. But it is the only one of its kind. In the post-war years, evidence of the feel for class in our literature all but disappears.

The record, I repeat, has been different elsewhere. Scott Fitzgerald hated the privileges of the high "with the smouldering hatred of a peasant", while at the same time coveting the freedom and beauty which, it seemed to him, only wealth provided. "Gatsby", we read in Fitzgerald's famous novel of the twenties, "was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor." Waiving the question of which of our novelists can write like that, which of them gives us any reason to believe that he can *feel* like that about the ceremonies and attributes of class? None, to my knowledge. And if you think (wrongly, as I would believe) that the social conditions which sparked Fitzgerald in the twenties have no counterpart in Canada today, which of our novelists can answer in kind to the energetic vision of class and of individual problem seen in relation to the class structure which is embodied in Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and John Braine's *Room at the Top*? Again none, to my knowledge.

I do not propose to explore the reasons for this gap in our literature. The reasons are our history and where and how that history has evolved, and if you really want to linger lovingly over how difficult it has all been you can do no better than to take a Great Books course of reading in the Reports of our Royal Commissions of Inquiry. There is, however, one probable reason for the gap which seems to me worth looking into for a moment before I close because it involves the kind of evidence that my friend Professor Porter likes to use in his analysis of Canadian society. It has to do with the question of recruitment to the ranks of authors in this country.

I HAVE SAID THAT our poetry of the thirties gives one the feeling of having been written neither by Brahmins nor by prols. I have said that it has an academic flavour. The same observation can be made of poetry written before and after the decade of the thirties and of almost the entire run of Canadian fiction. Had I had time, I might have prepared for you a set of statistics to show that the representative hero of Canadian fiction has a university degree or its equivalent, and that the representative setting for Canadian fiction is one which links the action directly or indirectly to an institution of higher learning. What I have been able to do is to gather a few biographical facts about our authors.

Observe the common denominators in family background and education. Hugh MacLennan, the son of a surgeon, was educated first at Halifax Academy, then at Dalhousie University where he was winner of the Governor-General's Gold Medal and where he took his B.A. in 1929. As a Rhodes Scholar he attended Oriel College, Oxford, where he took his M.A. in 1932. He went next to Princeton, where he became M.A. squared and where he took his Ph.D. in 1935. He was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1943-44 and is currently a Professor of English at McGill University and an Associate Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Morley Callaghan took his B.A. at St. Michael's College, Toronto, in 1925 and later attended Law School at Osgoode Hall. E. J. Pratt, the son of a clergyman, is E. J. Pratt, C.M.G., M.A., PH.D., D.LITT., D.C.L., LL.D., F.R.S.C., and Professor Emeritus at Victoria University, Toronto. F. R. Scott, the son of Archdeacon F. G. Scott and the grandson of Professor Scott who for forty years taught anatomy at McGill University, is F. R. Scott, LL.D., B.A., B.LITT., B.C.L., F.R.S.C. He too was a Rhodes Scholar and attended Magdalen College, Oxford. He has been a High School teacher and a teacher at Bishop's and at Lower Canada College. He is currently Macdonald Professor of Law and Dean, McGill University. Robertson Davies, the son of Senator William Rupert Davies, was educated at Upper Canada College, Queen's University, and Balliol College, Oxford, where he took his B.Litt. He is to be the first Master of Massey House, the new graduate centre at the University of Toronto. Earl Birney, PH.D., F.R.S.C., pursued higher education at the universities of British Columbia, Toronto, California and London, and has been a scholar and teacher all the days of his working life. Dorothy Livesay, journalist and social worker, attended Glen Mawr school in Toronto and took her B.A. at Trinity College, Toronto, in 1931. She took her Diplome d'études supérieures at the Sorbonne in 1932 and then returned to the University of

Toronto to complete her studies in the social sciences in 1934. She is currently a lecturer in creative writing on the staff of the Department of Extension at the University of British Columbia. A. M. Klein took his B.A. at McGill University in 1930, studied for a time to become a rabbi, then took a degree in law at the Université de Montréal in 1933. A. J. M. Smith, M.A., PH.D., D.LITT., has been for many years Professor of English at Michigan State College. I note that besides being a poet, Professor Smith is our foremost anthologist and therefore in a sense the custodian of our poetic tradition. James Reaney holds an M.A. degree from the University of Toronto and has been a university professor all the days of his working life. Mazo de la Roche, the descendant of United Empire Loyalist stock and the daughter of a professor of classics and letters at Baltimore University, was educated at Parkdale Collegiate Institute and at the University of Toronto. Ethel Wilson was educated at private schools in England and Vancouver and attended the provincial Normal School in that city. She was a teacher for some years prior to her marriage in 1920 to Dr. Wilson. There is more of the same, but I think the pattern is plain.

There is no law which says that a university man cannot have, as a writer, a feeling for class. Scott Fitzgerald and many of his fellow writers of the twenties were graduates of one or other of the Ivy League universities. Yet surely there is something unusual and, I think, even alarming in the overwhelming uniformity of the picture I have presented. In most cases the formative years, to say nothing of entire lives, have been spent in academic circles. T. S. Eliot, in his introduction to the Cresset Press edition of *Huckleberry Finn*, has this to say about Mark Twain's grip upon his subject:

> There are, perhaps, only two ways in which a writer can acquire the understanding of environment which he can later turn to account: by having spent his childhood in that environment — that is, living in it at a period of life in which one experiences much more than one is aware of; and by having had to struggle for a livelihood in that environment — a livelihood bearing no direct relation to any intention of writing about it, of *using* it as literary material.

I believe this to be true. For the great bulk of Canadian writers the environments of childhood and of "the struggle for a living" are uniform in kind; professional, relatively well-to-do, "genteel", above all, academic. Is one to expect from these closed, circumspect and intellectually sophisticated ranks a dynamic view of society? It is not surprising that our literature lies all one way, and it is not surprising that within this literature the concepts of class are dim and the response to the problem of individual freedom within the social structure negligible.

If it is not surprising, it is, for me at least, deeply disturbing. The dead cold air, the uniformity of assumptions, the lack of commitment are oppressive. I am not here concerned specifically with the way out of the wasteland, but in so far as the way out is implicit in all that I have said you will see that the path I look to is a different path from the one favoured by radical sociologists like Professor Porter. I am not interested in what the sociologists call "class abatement"; we shall always have classes in the broad sense in which I have understood the term, and I am content that this should be so. I think the heart of the matter is the question of individual liberty and of the vital relation which the principle of individual liberty must always bear to the life of a democratic nation. It is not the reinforcing of the class struggle that is wanted, not the triumph of the proletariat nor of John Birch societies, for this would simply be to substitute one form of fixed response for another. It is rather turbulence that is needed — the kind of turbulence that encompasses the whole of the social mosaic and in the end makes possible within it that freedom of choice and of movement for the individual which, from a secular point of view, is the best means open to us of enabling him to realize the creative potential within him. The station to which it has pleased God to call us is not always the station to which it has pleased man to call us. We have an obligation to debate perpetually the credentials of the social plan.

I doubt whether the opening up of the routes to higher education, as we at present conceive of higher education, is the panacea. Professor Porter seems to think it is. Ezra Pound, rallying American writers of the twenties to take a stand against the political and social platitudes of the Old Gang in this period of low ebb in the nation's life, diagnosed the difficulty in plain terms: "Anemia of guts on the one hand," he said, "and anemia of education on the other." I mistrust our universities. I mistrust, from the point of view of literary criticism, the mob they house of gentlemen who write with ease, who are cosmopolitan and urbane to the last drop of sherry that flows in their veins. I mistrust, from the student's point of view, the levelling and debilitating effects of our universities. In their growing role as a fifth estate of the realm, they seem to me to be creating a new and pernicious dimension to the problem of the class structure. I mistrust their hold upon writers and writing in this country. The fault is not of course in the nature of the institutions themselves, but in how we conceive of them. I merely think that aspiring writers, for the time being at least, would be well advised to stay away from them. The present state of our society considered, I think a portion at any rate of those who intend to write in Canada would do better to learn

elsewhere what they need to know about life, and, in their spare time, as Whitman demanded, "go freely with powerful uneducated persons."

I shall end as I began, with metaphor. About a year ago I saw a television play based on the death of the Avro-Arrow project, and the title of the play was *The Day of the Dodo.* The Americans have their eagle; our emblem may well be the wingless, flightless Dodo. We, and especially our writers since it is theirs to make as much as it is to reflect the national will, must get off the ground. And the beauty of it is that the kind of wings we need are made at the sole cost of the mind and heart. Energy and a positive thrust to the imagination can accomplish all. We can become at least a cruising auk, the cruising auk that George Johnston's Mr. Murple saw: " a splendid auk/Flying across the sky." Can you not see him?

> Surely his eye belittles our despair,
> Our unheroic mornings, afternoons
> Disconsolate in the echo-laden air —
> Echoes of trumpet noises, horses' hooves.
>
> Splendid, however, we can
> Rejoice in him, cruising there:
> He is our uncle and lo,
> O Mr. Murple, O beloved friends,
> Airborne!

The Writer's World (1)

THE WAR, CHAVERIM AND AFTER

Mordecai Richler

ONE SATURDAY MORNING Duddy took me to Eaton's. Instead of trying to lift stuff in the toy department we went directly to Lingerie and when nobody was looking darted into a hall with changing rooms. Duddy pushed open a door just in time for us to gawk at a gorgeous girl stooping to snuggle into a black lace brassiere. A fat saleslady let out a shriek.

"I was only looking for my Aunt Ettie," Duddy whined, retreating.

The saleslady snatched Duddy by the arm. "I'm going to get the manager and have you sent to reform school for life. Filthy things!"

"Aunt Ettie," Duddy hollered.

"Oh, let them go," the girl said.

"This one's been here before, you know."

"AUNT ETTIE!"

Doors inched open, outraged women glared at us. Duddy stepped on the saleslady's foot and we were off, scooting between shoppers, and flying down the escalator. Outside, Duddy said, "Did you see her bazooms, but? What a handful!"

We found some butts, lit up, and went to the mountain to search for couples in the bushes. "Everybody's doin' it, doin' it," Duddy sang. "Pickin' their nose and chewin' it, chewin' it." He told me that once he had found a couple stuck together, just like dogs, and had had to summon a St. John's ambulance man to get a kettle of boiling water to break them apart. I didn't believe him.

Duddy hated Mr. Blumberg, our fourth grade teacher at the Talmud Torah. One day he looked up Blumberg's address in the telephone book and led me through the snow to his house. While I waited, my heart thumping, Duddy peed in Blumberg's letterbox, rang the bell, and ran off.

Blumberg was a militant Zionist.

"How did we get arms for Eretz? Why, we bought them from the British. We'd pretend somebody was dead, fill a coffin with rifles, and bury it against . . . the right moment."

If we responded to this tale of cunning with yawns or maybe two fingers held up to signify disbelief, it was not that we weren't impressed. It was simply that Blumberg, a refugee from Poland, heaped a vengeful amount of homework on us and we thrived on putting him down. Blumberg fed us on frightening stories of anti-semitic outrages. Life would be sour for us. We were doomed to suffer the malice of the gentiles. But I wasn't scared because I had no intention of becoming a Jew like Blumberg was, with a foolish accent, an eye for a bargain, and a habit, clearly unsanitary, of licking his thumb before turning a page of the *Aufbau*. I was a real Canadian and could understand people not liking Blumberg, maybe even finding him funny. So did I. Blumberg had lived in Palestine for a while and despised the British army. I didn't. How could I? *In Which We Serve* was in its umpteenth week at the Orpheum. Cousins and uncles were with the Canadian army in Sussex, training for the invasion.

War.

"Praise the Lord," my father sang, demanding more baked beans, "and pass the ammunition." My brother wore a Red Cross Blood Donor's badge. I collected salvage. At the Talmud Torah we gave up collecting hockey cards for the duration and instead became experts on aircraft recognition. I learned to tell a Stuka from a Spitfire.

One of the first to enlist was killed almost immediately. Benjy Trachtstein joined the R.C.A.F. and the first time he went up with an instructor in a Harvard trainer the airplane broke apart, crashed on the outskirts of Montreal, and Benjy burned to death. At the funeral my father said, "It's kismet, fate. When your time comes your time comes."

Mrs. Trachtstein went out of her mind and Benjy's father, a grocer, became a withering reproach to everyone. "When is your black-marketeer of a son going to join up?" he asked one mother and to another he said, "How much did it cost you the doctor to keep your boy out of the army?"

We began to avoid Trachtstein's grocery the excuse being he never washed

his hands any more, it was enough to turn your stomach to take a pound of cottage cheese from him or to eat a herring he had touched. It was also suspected that Trachtstein was the one who had written those anonymous letters reporting other stores in the neighbourhood to the Wartime Prices & Trade Board. The letters were a costly nuisance. An inspector always followed up because there could be twenty dollars or maybe even a case of whiskey in it for him.

Benjy's wasted death was brandished at any boy on the street hot-headed enough to want to enlist. Still, they volunteered. Some because they were politically-conscious, others because boredom made them reckless. One Saturday morning Gordie Roth, a long fuzzy-haired boy with watery blue eyes, turned up at the Young Israel Synagogue in an officer's uniform: his father broke down and sobbed and shuffled out of *shul* without a word to his son. Those who had elected to stay on at McGill, thereby gaining an exemption from military service, were insulted by Gordie's gesture. It was one thing for a dental graduate to accept a commission in the medical corps, something else again for a boy to chuck law school for the infantry. Privately the boys said Gordie wasn't such a hero; he had been bound to flunk out at McGill anyway. Garber's boy, a psychology major, had plenty to say about the death-wish. But Fay Katz wrinkled her nose and laughed spitefully at him. "You know what that is down your back," she said, "a yellow stripe."

Mothers who had used to brag about their children's health, making any childhood illness seem a shameful show of weakness, now cherished nothing in their young so greedily as flat feet, astigmatism, a heart murmur, or a nice little rupture. After a month in camp with the university army training corps my brother limped home with raw bleeding feet and jaundice. A Sergeant McCormick had called him a hard-assed kike. "Why should we fight for them, the fascists?" my brother said.

"The poor boy, what he's been through," my mother said.

Hershey had a brother overseas. Arty's American cousin was in the marines. I was bitterly disappointed in my brother.

One evening my father read us an item from the front page of the *Star*. A Luftwaffe pilot, shot down over London, had been given a blood transfusion. "There you are, old chap," the British doctor said. "Now you've got some good Jewish blood in you." My father scratched his head thoughtfully before turning the page and I could see that he was pleased, flattered.

Only Tansky, the *roite* who ran the corner cigar & soda, questioned the integrity of Britain's war effort. Lots of ships were being sunk in the Battle of the Atlantic,

true, but how many people knew that U-Boat commanders never torpedoed a ship insured by Lloyd's or that certain German factories were proof against air raids, because of interlocking British directorships?

If Tansky was concerned about capitalist treachery overseas the truth is French-Canadians at home gave us much more cause for alarm. Duplessis's Union Nationale had circulated a pamphlet that showed a coarse old Jew, nose long and misshapen as a carrot, retreating into the night with sacks of gold. The caption suggested that Ikey ought to go back to Palestine. Mr. Blumberg, our fourth grade teacher at the Talmud Torah, agreed. "There's only one place for a Jew. Eretz. But you boys are too soft. You know nothing about what it is to be a Jew."

Our principal was a Zionist of a different order. His affinities were literary. Ahad Ha-am, Bialik, Buber. But I managed to graduate from the Talmud Torah uncontaminated. In fact I doubt that I ever would have become a Zionist if not for Jerry.

Jerry, who was in my classroom at Baron Byng High School, ignored me for months. Then, on the day our report cards came out, he joined me by the lockers, bouncing a mock punch off my shoulder. "Congrats," he said.

I looked baffled.

"Well, you're rank two, aren'cha?"

Jerry represented everything I admired. He wore a blazer with JERRY printed in gold letters across his broad back and there was a hockey crest sewn over his heart. He had fought in the Golden Gloves for the Y.M.H.A. and he was a high scorer on our school basketball team. Whenever Jerry began to dribble shiftily down the centre court the girls would squeal, leap up, and shout,

> X_2, Y_2, H_2SO_4,
> Themistocles, Thermopylae, the Peloponnesian War,
> One-two-three-four,
> Who are we for —
> JERRY, OLD BOY!

Jerry went in for rakishly pegged trousers and always carried condoms in his billfold.

"How would you like to come down to Habonim with me tonight? If you like it, maybe you'll join."

"Sure," I said.

The Habonim meeting house was on Jeanne Mance Street, not far from my grandfather's house, and I recalled that on Friday nights the old man glowered as the *chaverim* passed, singing. The fact that it was *shabus*, however, was all that

restrained my grandfather from calling the police to protest against the racket the chaverim kicked up. My grandfather was uncompromisingly orthodox. Turning on lights, tearing paper, were both forbidden on the sabbath. So late Friday afternoon one of my aunts tore up enough toilet paper to see out *shabus*. One of my uncles had devised a Rube Goldberg apparatus, the key part of which was a string attached to a clock that turned off the toilet and hall lights when the alarm sounded at midnight.

Now I would have to risk passing the house with the others. Shoving, throwing snowballs, teasing the girls, singing.

Pa'am achas bochur ya'za, bochur v'bachura. . . .

Jerry, chewing on a matchstick, picked me up after supper and on the way we called for Hershey and Stan. I was flattered that Jerry had come to my house first, and in the guise of telling him what fun Hershey and Stan were, I let him understand that I was a much more desirable boy to have for a friend.

Walking to Habonim with Jerry, Hershey, and Stan, became a Friday night ritual that was to continue unbroken through four years of high school.

THE WAR WAS DONE. Cousins and uncles were gradually coming home.

"What was it like over there?"

"An education."

We read in the *Star* that in Denver a veteran had run amok and shot people down in the street; the *Reader's Digest* warned us not to ask too many questions, the boys had been through hell; but on St. Urbain Street the boys took off their uniforms, bought new suits, and took up where they had left off.

IS HITLER REALLY DEAD? was what concerned us all. That, and an end to wartime shortages. These were rapidly overcome. Sugar, coffee, and gas, came off the ration list. The Better Business Bureau warned housewives not to buy soap or combs from cripples who claimed to be disabled veterans. An intrepid reporter walked the length of Calgary's main street in an S.S. uniform without being stopped once. HAVE WE FORGOTTEN WHAT THE BOYS DIED FOR? he wanted to know. Ted Williams was safe, so was Jimmy Stewart. McKenzie King wrote, "It affords me much pleasure both personally and as Prime Minister to add a word of tribute to the record of the services of Canadian Jews in the

armed forces in the recent war." Nice, very nice. Pete Grey, the Toronto Maple Leafs' one-armed player, was made a free agent. A returning veteran took his place in the outfield.

Harry, our group leader in Habonim, had been in the R.C.A.F., where it had been his job to show returned fighter pilots the combat films they had taken. Each time a pilot fired his guns, Harry explained, a camera in the wings took pictures. This way it could be established if a pilot's claim to a kill was true. Some of the films, he said, showed enemy aircraft bursting into flames. But on the flight home most of the pilots swooped low over German streets to shoot up cyclists for sport. These films would end abruptly — just as the cyclists crumpled.

Hershey's father, gone into the war a scrap dealer, a rotund good-natured man whose sporting life had once been confined to cracking peanuts in the bleachers at Sunday afternoon double-headers, now flew Army Ordnance Corps colonels and their secretaries by chartered airplane to his hunting and fishing cabin on a lake in northern Quebec. He emerged as a leading dealer in army surplus trucks, jeeps, and other heavy equipment. Hershey's family moved to Outremont.

Duddy Kravitz drifted away from us too. Calling himself Victory Vendors he bought four peanut machines and set them up on what he had clocked as the busiest corners in the neighbourhood.

Jerry and I became inseparable, but his father terrified me.

"You know what you are," Jerry's father was fond of saying. "Your father's mistake."

Jerry's father was a widower — a wiry grey-haired man with mocking black eyes. He astonished me because he didn't eat kosher and he drank. Not a quick little schnapps with honey cake, head tossed back and eyes immediately tearing, like my father and the other men at the synagogue when there was a bar-mitzvah.

— This is quality stuff; the best.

— It warms you right here.

— Smooth.

Jerry's father drank Black Horse Ale, bottle after bottle. He settled in sullenly at the kitchen table, his smile morose, and suddenly he'd call out, "Pull my finger!" If you did he let out a tremendous burp. Jerry's father could fall asleep at the table, mouth open, a cigarette burning between his stubby blackened fingers. Sometimes he sat with us on Saturday nights to listen to the hockey broadcasts. He was a Canadien fan. "You can't beat the Rocket or Durnan when the chips are down. They're money players, real money players — Hey, here it comes." He lifted himself gently off his chair. "SBD." A self-satisfied pause.

"Know what that means, kid?"

Jerry, holding his nose, went to open a window.

"Silent but deadly."

Jerry's father ridiculed Habonim.

"So, little shmedricks, what are you gonna do? Save the Jews? Any time the Arabs want they can run them into the sea."

On the occasional Friday night I was allowed to stay overnight at Jerry's house and the two of us would sit up late and talk about Eretz.

"I can hardly wait to go," Jerry said.

I can no longer remember much about our group meetings on Fridays or the impassioned general meetings on Sunday afternoons. I can recall catch-words, no more. Yishuv, White Paper, emancipation, Negev, revisionist, Aliya. Pierre Van Paasen was our trusted ally; Koestler, since *Thieves in the Night*, was despicable. Following our group meetings we all clambered down to the damp cellar to join the girls and dance the hora. I seldom took part, prefering to puff at my newly-acquired pipe on the sidelines and watch Gitel's breasts heave. Afterwards we spilled exuberantly onto the street and usually went on to one of the girls' houses to dance to the music of Sammy Kaye and Arty Shaw. Spike Jones was very big with us; so were Frank Sinatra, Danny Kaye, and the Andrew Sisters.

On Saturdays we listened to speeches about soil redemption and saw movies glorifying life on the kibbutz. All of us planned to settle in Eretz.

"What's there for a Jew here? Balls all squared."

"Did you hear about Jack Zimmerman's brother? He came third in the province in the matrics and they still won't let him into pre-med school."

Early Sunday mornings we were out ringing doorbells for the Jewish National Fund, shaking tin boxes under uprooted sleepy faces, righteously demanding quarters, dimes, and nickels that would help reclaim the desert, buy arms for Hagana and, incidentally, yield thirty-five cents each off the top — enough for the matinee at the Rialto. We licked envelopes at Zionist headquarters. Our choir sang at fund-raising rallies. And in the summertime those among us who were not working as waiters or shippers went to a camp in a mosquito-ridden Laurentian valley, heard more speakers, studied Hebrew and, in the absence of Arabs, watched out for fishy-looking French-Canadians. Our unrivalled hero was the chalutz, and I can still see him as he stood on the cover of God knows how many pamphlets, clear-eyed, resolute, a rifle slung over his shoulder and a sickle in his hand.

After the meeting one Friday night Jerry pulled me aside. "If my father calls tell him I'm staying over at your house tonight."

"Sure," I said, delighted, and I offered to invite Hershey, Stan, and some of the others over for a poker game. Then, looking into Jerry's apprehensive face, I suddenly understood. "Oh. Oh, I get you," I said. "Where you going, but?"

Jerry put a finger to his lips, he gave me a poke. For the first time I noticed Selma walking slowly and satisfied ahead of us down the street. She stopped to stare into a store window.

"Go to hell," I said vehemently to Jerry, surprising myself.

"You'll do it, but."

"Sure, sure," I said, hurrying off in the opposite direction.

Selma was reputed to be hot stuff — crazy for it — but all I saw was a shy dark girl with long blue black hair, a manner that was somewhat withdrawn, and the loveliest breasts imaginable.

"You know what she told me," Hershey said, "She broke it jumping over a fire hydrant when she was a kid. Oi."

Even Arty, who was as short as me with worse pimples, claimed to have sat through *The Jolson Story* three times with Selma.

One Friday, having managed to walk all the way to Habonim without once stepping on a sidewalk crack, I asked Selma to come to a dance with me. But she said she was busy.

ON THE NIGHT of Nov. 29, 1947, after the UN approved the partition plan, we gathered at Habonim and marched downtown in a group, waving Israeli flags, flaunting our songs in Anglo-Saxon neighbourhoods, stopping to blow horns and pull down streetcar wires, until we reached the heart of the city where, as I remember it, we faltered briefly — embarrassed, self-conscious — before we put a stop to traffic by forming defiant circles and dancing the hora in the middle of the street.

"Who am I?"

"YISROAL."

"Who are you?"

"YISROAL."

"All of us?"

"YISRO-YISRO-YISROAL."

Our group leaders, as well as several of the older chaverim, went off to fight for Eretz. And in the febrile days that followed the proclamation of the State of

Israel we gathered nightly at Habonim to discuss developments in Eretz and at home. A distinguished Jewish doctor was invited to address the Canadian Club. To the astonishment of the community, the doctor said that though he was Jewish he was, first of all, a Canadian. Israel, he said, would make for divided loyalties, and he was against the establishment of the new state. The *Star* printed the complete text of the doctor's speech.

— If Ben Gurion speaks maybe they can fit in a paragraph on page thirty-two, but if that shmock opens his lousy mouth. . . .

Punitive action came quickly. The editor of the *Canadian Jewish Eagle* wrote that the Star of David will long outlast the *Star* of Montreal. We collected money door-to-door so that A. M. Klein could reply to the doctor on the radio. We also, I'm sorry to say, took to phoning the doctor at all hours of the night, shouting obscenities at him, and hanging up. We sent taxis, furniture removers, and fire engines to his door . . . then, as one event tumbled so urgently over another, we forgot him. Harry, we heard, had been interned in Cyprus. Lennie, another chaver, was a captain in the army.

One day we opened our newspapers and read that Buzz Beurling, Canada's most glamorous war ace, had joined the Israeli air force. At Habonim it was whispered yes, it's true, but the price was a thousand dollars a month. We had outbid the arabs.

Beurling never got as far as Eretz. His fighter plane crashed near Rome.

Abruptly, our group began to disintegrate. We had finished high school. Some of the chaverim actually went to settle in Eretz, others entered university, still more took jobs. We made new friends, found fresh interests. Hershey entered McGill. My marks weren't high enough and I had to settle for the less desirable Sir George Williams College. Months later I ran into Hershey at the Café André. He wore a white sweater with a big red M on it and sat drinking beer with a robust bunch of blond boys and girls. Thumping the table, they sang loudly

> If all the girls were like rabbits,
> and I was a hare I'd teach them bad habits.

My companions were turning out a little magazine. I had written my first poem. Hershey and I waved at each other, embarrassed. He didn't come to my table, I didn't go to his.

BRIAN MOORE

Naim Kattim

LES PRINCIPAUX PERSONNAGES des quatre romans de Brian Moore sont Irlandais. Que l'intrigue se déroule à Montréal, comme dans *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, à New York, comme dans *An Answer from Limbo*, ou à Belfast, comme dans ses deux premiers ouvrages: *Judith Hearne* et *The Feast of Lupercal*, l'atmosphère demeure la même car elle ne tire pas ses caractéristiques des éléments extérieurs. Il s'agit plutôt d'une certaine vision du monde et d'un ensemble d'attitudes envers les événements, les hommes et la société ambiante. Et c'est cela qui donne à l'univers de Moore son unité et à ses romans un sens de continuité malgré les pérégrinations de ses héros.

Tous les personnages principaux de Moore ont connu la sécurité de l'enracinement. Ils sont nés dans une société ordonnée avec ses conventions, ses lois et ses traditions. Plus tard, ils supportent mal le poids de ce cadre bien délimité. Ils étouffent au sein d'un groupe qui, à force de les accabler de son esprit communautaire et quasi tribal, finit par étrangler tous leurs élans. Voilà le leitmotiv qu'on retrouve dans tous les romans de Moore.

Judith Hearne pour qui la religion est une assurance, éprouve le drame de l'enracinement défaillant, de la terre qui lui glisse sous les pieds. Si elle perd la foi, elle perd aussi cette grande chaleur du foyer nourricier, quelque despotique qu'il soit.

> Si on ne croit pas, on est seul. Moi, j'étais d'Irlande, au milieu des miens, membre de mon Eglise. Maintenant je n'ai plus la foi — et sans foi, pas de prochain. Non, non, je n'ai pas renoncé. Je ne peux pas. Parce que si j'abandonne cela, je suis obligée d'abandonner tout le reste.

Dans ce premier roman on voit déjà se profiler un autre genre d'Irlandais non moins typique, James Madden, l'expatrié errant qui a voulu s'affranchir d'un pays où "tous les rêves étaient calculables", mais qui n'a trouvé dans le New York libre qu'un monde de dureté et, comble de paradoxe, d'irréalité, monde dont la seule force tient dans la puissance des rêves qu'il suscite.

> Il se rappelait New York, il se rappelait qu'à dix heures et demie du matin l'énorme agglomération vibrait déjà sous l'effort de millions d'êtres en train de faire des fortunes, des réputations, des constructions, toutes les affaires, toutes les astuces imaginables. Alors que lui, il traînait dans une ville morne et bête où les gens faisaient de l'argent comme les bonnes lavent les parquets, bêtement, seuls, à une allure de corbillard.

Il a toujours porté en lui son Irlande natale. Et au terme d'une existence faite d'une suite ininterrompue d'échecs, il est de retour au pays. Dès lors, New York redevient le domaine lointain et proche où tout est possible puisque dans le second exil, celui du retour au pays natal, la métropole accablante recouvre ses sortilèges et, perdant toute attache avec la réalité, redevient le royaume radieux de l'illusion, du possible et du rêve.

C'est le même monde fermé, la même société repliée sur elle-même, impitoyable à l'égard de tous ceux qui transgressent ses lois, qu'on retrouve dans *The Feast of Lupercal*. L'Irlande que connait Diarmuid Devine, est ce pays "où les protestants représentent le monde hostile, ce sont eux, avec leurs noms anglais et écossais, qui tiennent les rênes du pouvoir et qui vous refusent un emploi quand vous déclinez le nom de l'école où vous avez fait vos études."

Ils ne connaissent que déboires les héros de Moore qui tentent le grand saut, traversent l'océan pour vivre au large, dans les vastes horizons du Nouveau Monde. Ginger Coffey ne tarde pas à découvrir que le Canada où il émigre n'est pas uniquement la terre de l'avenir et de la fortune mais aussi un pays dur où lui, un étranger, se rend chaque jour compte qu'il est irlandais et que les pays lointains ne sont que le vaste empire des virtualités, des contingences, des réalisations futures et possibles, du moment qu'on n'en foule pas le sol et qu'on n'en hume pas l'air glacial ou torride.

> Tout le monde est tellement pressé ici, on vous pousse de tous les côtés. Les Canadiens n'ont pas de manières. Pays dru, glacial, avec ses hommes cupides, arrivistes, qui saisissent tout ce qui leur tombe entre les mains et vous repoussent. Pays plein de promesses! A d'autres.

C'est à New York que la mère de Brendan Tierney, fraîchement débarquée d'Irlande, dans *An Answer from Limbo*, se demande comment il se fait qu'à New York "seuls ces pauvres et indésirables immigrants, prisonniers de leur langue et de leurs coutumes étrangères, ont une vie avec le sens réel de la communauté."

Moore n'a pas fait de l'Irlande un vert paradis de l'enfance où l'innocence et la pureté sont des qualités communes et non des vertus inaccessibles. La distance qui le sépare des scènes familières de son adolescence n'est pas si grande pour que la nostalgie vienne embelleir sa jeunesse passée et l'amener à reléguer une société écrasante au rôle d'un simple ornement et la transformer en un scintillant décor. S'il existe une réalité irrésistible dans l'œuvre de Moore c'est bien celle de cette Irlande ambivalente, située à égale distance entre la chaude sécurité et l'aveugle certitude. Tous les personnages qui tentent de s'en échapper ne tardent pas à se rendre compte qu'aussi enserrés qu'ils aient été à l'intérieur de leurs pesantes frontières, les murs protecteurs de leur société les empêchaient de se trouver en face de leur solitude. Leur petit monde abondait en maintes consolations. A force de se bercer dans l'espace restreint d'un ordre rigoureux et de conventions rigides, ils réussissaient à écarter au-delà de leur horizon la terrifiante menace de l'aliénation. Ils n'étaient pas assaillis alors par la réalité de leur dénuement et par la conscience de la fragilité de leurs moyens de défense.

Dans un moment de lucidité, le héros de *The Feast of Lupercal*, Devine, parlant d'un autre Irlandais, s'exclame avec sévérité: "Il est comme de tas d'Irlandais que je connais. Il prétend qu'il est un Celte déchaîné mais il est terrifié par ses voisins et ne ferait rien qu'ils n'approuveraient."

BERCES PAR LA MONOTONIE des rites sociaux dont ils ne mettent en doute le bien-fondé que dans les moments de crise, les personnages de Moore ignorent la solitude foncière dont leur destin est chargé, solitude qu'ils réussissent parfois à apprivoiser par l'oubli. Ils n'ont jamais la témérité de proclamer leur révolte car ils ressentent profondément le poids de leur médiocrité. Ne possédant que peu de ressources intérieures, ils savent qu'à l'exterieur de leur coquille protectrice ils se trouveraient dans une terrifiante et inexorable détresse. Où puiseraient-ils l'énergie de crier leur refus, de faire entendre leur protestation?

Judith Hearne est un récit direct et peu complexe. La médiocrité du personnage principal éclate telle une évidence. C'est l'exemple parfait de l'anti-héros dont

abonde le roman moderne. La vie morne, la désolation de Judith Hearne sont inscrites sur son visage. Elle a toujours vécu en serre chaude. Son existence est faite de l'alternance entre le malheur et la résignation. Son dénuement est total dès qu'elle perd graduellement toutes ses certitudes, dès qu'elle découvre l'illusion et la vanité de ses espoirs. La foi, l'illusoire amitié d'une famille qui lui entrouvre ses portes par simple charité, s'évanouissent et la laissent dans l'abandon. Il lui reste une passion secrète: la boisson. Comment éviter, cependant, l'humiliation de perdre contenance, de se départir de son masque de respectabilité et de dignité? Elle ressent la véritable irréalité de toutes ses assurances. Son petit monde s'écroule. Une rencontre la sort de son engourdissement, de sa résignation à cette vie de seconde zone. James Madden, cet Irlandais qui a vécu la réalité du rêve dans un New York impitoyable et qui est revenu à la ville de son enfance, est prodigue en détails sur ses succès et sur la grandeur de l'Amérique. Judith Hearne a pensé qu'il l'aimait tandis que lui ne pensait qu'à soutirer les économies de cette vieille fille desséchée. Elle s'accroche à cette promesse de bonheur, à l'espoir de se hisser au-dessus de son inexorable médiocrité et ne réalise que plus durement les dimensions de son isolement.

Le héros de *The Feast of Lupercal*, Devine, est moulé dans la même forme. Instituteur sans prestige, vieux garçon solitaire, il rejette momentanément la monotonie d'une vie sans goût et d'une existence au passé et à l'avenir indifférents quand l'amour passager de la nièce d'un de ses collègues suscite en lui le goût du bonheur. Pourtant, a-t-il le droit d'échapper à sa médiocrité, lui qui n'en a pas la force. L'amour de cette jeune fille protestante, dont le passé est le sujet de murmures et de chuchotements (n'avait-elle pas eu une aventure à Dublin avec un homme marié?) et de ce catholique ne tarde d'éclabousser la tranquillité de cette petite société. Devine était prêt à la braver. Son échec n'est pas dû à un manque de courage mais à sa sécheresse intérieure, au tarissement de ses sources vitales. Il a tout simplement perdu l'habitude de vivre. Le bonheur, l'amour l'écrasent car il a trop longtemps appris à bâtir sa demeure dans le vide et l'absence. Il était déjà vaincu. Il ne peut pas satisfaire l'amour de la jeune fille qui lui fait don de son corps. Cette crise, cette volonté soudaine de bifurguer, de cheminer dans une voie inconnue, de suivre le sillon de l'aventure, de faire face à son destin, d'opposer la témérité à son humiliante médiocrité, tout cela finit par le démasquer à lui-même, impitoyablement.

Aux âmes mal nées, il n'y a que la résignation pour partage. Il n'a même plus l'espoir d'un bonheur possible et son humiliation n'en est que plus lourde. Il ne suffit pas d'avoir la volonté et le courage de changer pour y arriver, il faut posséder

la force de le faire. Et puis, était-ce vraiment du courage cette impulsion aveugle de la passion?

Pour modifier son destin il faut être en possession de soi. C'est le sens de la tentative avortée de Ginger Coffey. En changeant d'espace, il essaie de prendre en main son destin. Il croit que les dés ne sont pas jetés une fois pour toutes et que les échecs qu'il a essuyés dans sa ville natale n'ont pas définitivement scellé son avenir. Sous de nouveaux horizons, il pourrait peut-être effacer un passé peu glorieux et par de convaincantes preuves de succès, faire taire le constant rappel de sa médiocrité passée et présente. Ceux qui rêvent d'une terre promise, d'une réalité glorieuse qui redresserait les torts du présent ne récoltent que les fruits de leurs illusions. Dans cette poursuite d'une dignité à laquelle leur faiblesse ne leur permet pas d'aspirer, ils perdent, chemin faisant, les dernières lueurs d'espoir qui leur restaient en même temps que le semblant de respectabilité qu'ils ont réussi à sauvegarder.

Il ne suffit pas de tourner le dos au passé pour devenir maître de l'avenir si on n'a pas la force de le conquérir. C'est au Canada que Ginger Coffey découvre que sa médiocrité est encore plus profonde qu'il ne pensait. Son immigration est une tentative qui lui coûte cher puisqu'elle se solde par la perte de l'amour de sa femme et par la désorientation de sa fille. Il apprend à son corps défendant la douloureuse leçon de la résignation.

> Il n'y aura pas de victoire pour Ginger Coffey, ni grande ni petite. . . . La vie fut elle-même la victoire, n'est-ce pas? Continuer, poursuivre, fut la victoire.

POUR GINGER COFFEY tout autant que pour Judith Hearne, la réussite, la conquête du destin doivent mener à une plus grande victoire: l'accession à la liberté. C'est un bien précieux chargé de tous les prestiges dont rêvent ceux qui veulent échapper à la geôle de leur médiocrité et qui sont prisonniers d'une société dont ils ne partagent pas les valeurs, société qui a atteint un tel niveau de petitesse et d'étroitesse qu'elle ne peut même pas offrir l'illusion de grandeur et de noblesse en récompense à ceux qui s'astreignent à suivre sa dure discipline et ses tristes rigueurs. Rien ne compense leur abandon de la liberté.

Aux médiocres, à ceux qui ne peuvent aspirer au dépassement, les murs qu'érige une société fermée et sourcilleuse dans sa sévérité leur servent d'abri et de refuge. Au-delà du mur, de l'autre côté de la frontière, la promesse de liberté se mue en

une suite de déboires. Les fugitifs qui transgressent les lois rigides sont doublement démunis puisqu'ils perdent la chaleur du foyer sans pour cela jamais s'affranchir. N'existe-t-il donc aucune issue, aucun espoir, pour ceux qui ne sont pas nés pour la gloire et la grandeur? Peut-être. A condition qu'ils acceptent au départ d'y mettre le prix. Et d'abord il faut qu'ils acceptent lucidement l'hypothèse que la liberté ne soit qu'une équation de l'illusion. Les rêveurs qui se pressent de quitter leur île de sécurité et qui prennent la route du départ afin que l'"ailleurs" lointain prenne le visage vivant d'un monde nouveau ne tardent pas à découvrir que le Nouveau Continent est plus impitoyable que leur petit monde. La liberté qu'il fait miroiter n'est qu'une monstrueuse illusion. Le petit homme frustré, ne se contentant ni de l'exil ni du dépaysement, veut se perdre dans l'illusion, y faire corps pour la transformer en conquête. S'il est écrivain, la liberté ne lui semble pas hors d'atteinte. Par la médiation des mots, elle est à sa portée. Pour la mériter, il doit immoler en sacrifice les dons gratuits de la vie des communs: l'amour, l'amitié, les petites joies quotidiennes. Tout est subordonné à cette grande conquête. Et au bout du compte, il faut consentir au suprême sacrifice: l'abandon du contact et de l'accord avec le réel.

Voilà l'aventure de Brendan Tierney qui finit par ne plus éprouver de sentiments au premier degré. La littérature devient un gouffre et tout y passe. Tout se transforme en matière première pour cette œuvre hypothétique. Il ne peut même plus ressentir la douleur de la perte de sa mère et de l'infidélité de sa femme.

Le long itinéraire suivi par Moore aboutit à cette conclusion vieille comme le monde: le seul antidote à la médiocrité, le seul remède à l'exil et à la pression sociale, c'est l'art pourvoyeur de l'unique dépassement possible et qui compte. Mais c'est sur le ton de l'interrogation et de l'hypothèse que Moore énonce cette idée. Vaut-il la peine de sacrifier les joies et les bonheurs d'une vie identique à mille autres pour une liberté et une gloire incertaines?

Pris dans l'engrenage de leur faiblesse foncière et de la conscience qu'ils prennent de leur médiocrité, les personnages de Moore ne sont pas assez forts pour se révolter. Tout au plus leur est-il donné de se cabrer. Leur refus d'obéissance leur est presque imposé par des circonstances extérieures. Leur désir de libération est précipité par une crise: l'amour dans les deux premiers romans, l'exil dans *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, l'exaltation littéraire dans *An Answer from Limbo*.

La crise se prépare de longue date avant d'éclater. Les héros de Moore s'examinent, s'analysent, se jaugent. Ils font le poids de leur réussite et de leur échec. Ils affectionnent les miroirs. L'image qui s'y reflète c'est le visage de l'autre, de l'étranger. Cette épreuve du regard n'est jamais concluante, elle est presque

toujours négative. Elle indique toutefois l'état second dans lequel évoluent ces personnages. Membres d'un groupe minoritaire, ils ont l'impression que les yeux du monde entier sont braqués sur eux et que chacun de leurs gestes fait l'objet de maintes délibérations. Une certaine formation janséniste accentue cette propension à l'examen de conscience. Mais il y a plus: Moore sait fort bien que sans cette disposition à contempler le reflet de leur image, ses personnages ne pourront jamais opposer de refus à leur destin. Prototypes de l'anti-héros, ils peuvent difficilement clamer leur révolte encore moins en assumer les conséquences.

Nous savons qu'ils vont ruer dans les brancards et qu'ils seront vaincus. Autrement, tout médiocres qu'ils soient ils auraient eu conscience du tragique et un net sentiment de l'absurdité de leur condition. Moore n'a pas la puissance de pousser aussi loin son investigation. Son œuvre se situe sur un autre plan: celui du drame. Pour éviter les ficelles et les conventions du genre et afin de ne pas succomber à un certain sentimentalisme du roman à quatre sous, pour éviter finalement l'apitoiement sur soi qui est la tentation constante de ses personnages, il introduit dans ses romans deux éléments qui font sa force, son originalité, qui fait qu'on reconnaît sa griffe: la compassion et le sens du ridicule qui confine au burlesque. C'est ainsi que la profonde compassion dans laquelle baigne le récit des malheurs de Judith Hearne a sauvé cette œuvre de l'écueil auquel se heurte ce genre: le misérabilisme.

C'est au burlesque que Moore fait appel dans son second roman. Dans le troisième il devient plus ambitieux. Il essaie d'arriver au mélange du burlesque et de la compassion. Si on ajoute l'aspect réaliste de ce roman puisque l'auteur décrit à travers les yeux d'un immigrant diverses facettes de Montréal, on découvre qu'on a affaire à un mélange de trois genres.

L'auteur pousse parfois trop loin le ridicule pour qu'une certaine affectation ne se glisse pas. Déjà, dans *The Feast of Lupercal*, on décelait certains signes de cette exploitation de l'effet. Le comique et le burlesque ne sont qu'une manière, fort efficace et quelque peu facile, d'exprimer le dédoublement du personnage. Le regard fixé sur le miroir n'est pas qu'une contemplation narcissique. C'est la conscience qui, par la connaissance, tente de saisir le visage. Acte de liberté et de raison et tentative de s'insurger contre les forces obscures d'une fatalité qui s'abat sur nous, nous créant des êtres ordinaires sans possibilité de dépassement grandiose. Le reflet du visage renvoyé par le miroir offre à l'homme du troupeau, l'illusion d'être en possession de soi. De plus, saisir la réalité du visage c'est accepter l'aventure humaine dans ses dimensions et ses limites réelles. Voilà une victoire qui est à la portée de celui qui accepte de jouer le jeu.

Ginger Coffey c'est la négation du tragique. Il s'agit là d'un parti-pris et non de la conséquence d'une faiblesse. Le héros est capable d'un regard tragique. L'anti-héros saisit la vie dans sa négativité apparente. Pour lui la réponse n'est pas dans un au-delà ou dans le dépassement mais dans la vie elle-même, dans son va-et-vient quotidien et monotone. La grandeur surgit du fond de la banalité apparente et à travers le parti-pris du refus du dépassement. On en arrive à en écarter le besoin. Au bout du compte, le médiocre se transforme en héros dans la mesure où l'on perçoit le grand drame non pas dans la transcendance du quotidien mais dans son approfondissement.

Ginger Coffey n'a rien d'unique et c'est justement cela qui devrait faire son originalité. En scrutant une vie ordinaire, un destin comme tant d'autres, le dessein de Moore était d'en faire ressortir la merveilleuse richesse et l'intangible singularité. Projet ambitieux et gigantesque intention.

Après tant d'autres, Moore a tenté d'écrire le grand roman de l'homme aliéné dans la masse urbaine. Sa réussite n'est pas complète. Cette tentative de transmettre une vision du monde est aussi l'ébauche d'un renouvellement du genre romanesque. Moore a-t-il réussi à transformer la défaite de Ginger Coffee en victoire? En apparence seulement, nous semble-t-il. En vérité, les dernières phrases du roman expriment davantage une sorte de résignation aux lois invincibles plutôt que la grandeur de la vie ordinaire. N'ayant pas l'ambition d'accomplir un destin unique, la singularisation du destin commun sert de consolation.

Une telle consolation ambiguë ne suffit pas à Brendan Tierney qui ne se contente pas de saisir son destin par le regard, à travers la conscience lucide mais fuyante. Il veut aller plus loin. Il essaie de prolonger quelques moments fugaces de lucidité, de scruter la signification de son destin. Son dédoublement est beaucoup plus tranché car il est intentionnel, voulu. Pour lui l'écriture est acte et contemplation. On a l'impression que les intentions de l'auteur se confondent avec celles de son personnage puisque ce dernier est également romancier. Moore pouvait difficilement ne pas s'apercevoir que le destin de Ginger Coffey ne devient singulier que dans la mesure qu'il devient exemplaire. Il y a là un choix, un examen de l'évolution d'une conscience. Le regard n'est plus uniquement celui de Ginger Coffey mais également celui du romancier. L'anti-héros, symbole de l'homme ordinaire, devient lui-même romancier. Pour saisir son destin, il le recrée. Il faut revivre le moment pour s'apercevoir qu'on le vit ou qu'on l'a vécu. Cependant l'acte créateur n'est convaincant que s'il aboutit à l'œuvre. Le créateur participe à l'œuvre dans la mesure où le héros et le romancier réussissent à dépasser la médiocrité de l'instant. Cette participation nous est deniée dans *An*

Answer from Limbo. On ne croit pas beaucoup dans le roman qu'élabore Brendan Tierney puisqu'il nous faut le subir comme projet. Ses sacrifices semblent vains car on n'en voit pas l'objet. Ce destin ne devient singulier que par l'acte créateur qui le transforme et le transmue, mais cet acte n'est présent qu'en état d'intention. Il se réduit dans le roman à une ambition et à un désir de réussite. Il n'est plus le moyen d'une possession de l'être. L'homme ordinaire se profile devant nous dans sa vulnérabilité. Et l'art est un suprême mensonge, l'illusion la plus vaine. Les sacrifices qu'on immole sur cet autel sont inutiles. On se déleste du réel quotidien en faveur d'une réalité supérieure mais insaisissable. Ainsi on perd et la réalité et ce qui la dépasse.

De tous les romans de Moore, *An Answer from Limbo*, est sans doute le plus pessimiste. Aucune compassion ne peut apporter le baume consolateur à l'échec. Il est impossible de concilier la résignation et le refus, l'acceptation et la révolte.

An Answer from Limbo est une suite logique à Ginger Coffey même si elle en est la contre-partie. L'art ne peut être le prolongement du destin ordinaire du fait qu'il en est la négation. L'anti-héros ne peut scruter sa médiocrité et en faire une œuvre de création puisqu'il doit, au préalable, la surmonter. Sinon, il est l'homme de transition qui refuse d'assumer sa véritable condition, de voir sa situation en face. Il ne peut en faire le point de départ d'une conduite dynamique, d'un éternel recommencement et d'un renouvellement constant. Ayant voulu passer la main à son propre héros dans son dernier roman, Moore ne domine plus le monde dont il déclenche le mécanisme. Malheureusement, Brendan Tierney peut difficilement se substituer à son créateur car il faut accepter l'ambiguité foncière et existentielle du monde et des êtres si on veut à la fois être le miroir et l'image que ce miroir reflète. Brendan Tierney ne l'accepte pas. D'autres désirs et d'autres desseins le sollicitent. Il veut vaincre, il veut laisser sa marque sur le monde, transmettre son expérience. Il convoite réussite et succès.

L'aspect le plus convaincant de l'œuvre de Moore n'est pas ce qui extérieurement semble en constituer l'essentiel. Cet écrivain qui a voulu dresser le bilan dramatique de l'homme ordinaire réussit davantage et surtout à comprendre et à exprimer le destin de l'homme partagé entre deux univers: entre une enfance protégée par des traditions vétustes et qui s'effritent et l'âge d'homme qui est

aussi l'âge de l'aventure et de la responsabilité; homme partagé entre cette responsabilité qui pèse trop lourd sur ses épaules et la nostalgie si légère et si passagère soit-elle d'un passé que sa conscience et sa volonté recusent et rejettent dans les heures de lucidité. Homme partagé aussi entre deux continents: l'Irlande et le Nouveau Monde. Au lieu de les confronter en une opposition stérile, Moore tente de définir le destin de l'homme qui se transforme dans cette terre d'attente à mesure qu'il accepte de toujours naviguer entre deux eaux, de reprendre un voyage jamais terminé, ballotté entre l'exil et le royaume; homme partagé entre la certitude de l'enracinement et l'aventure incertaine de la liberté.

Il n'est donc pas surprenant que son personnage le plus convaincant soit un immigrant. Mais dès que l'immigrant cède la place à l'exilé et à l'artiste, on se trouve sur un terrain glissant et moins sûr. Partir de la médiocrité quotidienne pour aborder la difficulté d'être, pour toucher du doigt la complexité de l'existence, ne s'est pas aventuré dans des sentiers aussi obscurs et il n'avait ni la puissance implique une vue cosmique du monde et des hommes. Gigantesque gageure. Moore créatrice ni l'angoisse pour le faire. Il aurait été dans ce cas l'un des écrivains les plus importants du siècle. Cependant, dans un registre moindre, sa réussite est grande et son œuvre garde toute sa signification.

BALLANTYNE AND THE FUR TRADERS

Joan Selby

A BOY'S CANADA, or, Recollections of a Company Man in Retirement, might be the facetious title of an essay on that "young fur-trader" turned writer, R. M. Ballantyne. But, amusing and tempting as it is to dismiss Ballantyne with a shrug, there was something more to him than a hack writer cutting a great and exciting land down to a boy's size, or a thorough-going "company man" bringing an unthinking loyalty to the service of an empire-building enterprise. An author of boys' books he was, and a Hudson's Bay man he was also, but a fool he was not. It is easy to read his stories on one level only; to mark the seeming unsophistication of his prose, of his plots and denouements; to point to his mannered sentences, his adherence to the conventions of his day, and, then, to dismiss him as a literary curiosity. He calls for a much fuller appraisal as a writer with limitations, but also with potentiality, with a power to express not only the trite and the expected, but also the fresh and unexpected.

To bring the expected and the unexpected in Ballantyne into perspective, it is helpful to know something of the man himself. He came of a family with connections in literary and intellectual circles. His uncle James was Walter Scott's printer, and his eldest brother, another James, was a distinguished Orientalist. A certain literary competence and expressiveness (perhaps more genteel than lively) might well be expected of a younger member of such a family. And, according to the style and idiom of his day, Ballantyne displays precisely such competence. But he generates also the occasional intensity and excitement which ensure that even today his *Coral Island* is read and enjoyed by a generation that thinks in terms of jets and light years.

Perhaps this other element in Ballantyne was engendered by the adventures he

undertook at the age of sixteen when he came to a virgin land under the auspices and tutelage of the Hudson's Bay Company. From sixteen to twenty-two he worked as a Company clerk and finally assumed a position of enough authority to be able to refer lightly to a veteran woodsman — his companion and guide, undoubtedly many years his senior — as "my man". In such a position he cannot have been entirely ignorant that his was not a common fate, but his view was not much broader than that. There is little indication that he was aware in any historical sense of his time and place in Canada's development. In the early nineteenth century it would have taken a visionary to see beyond the circle of the Company's activities, and, while Ballantyne may afford us the unexpected, he never affords us the insights of deep vision. Yet it is inconceivable that a sense of power entirely passed him by; from his own writings one realizes how much Ballantyne and his fellow clerks and bourgeois of the Company saw themselves as lords of the earth.

During his six years in Canada, Ballantyne kept a diary of his journeyings and sojourns at Norway House, York Factory, and Tadousac. This diary formed the basis of his first published book, *Hudson's Bay* (1848). Purely autobiographical, and not intended entirely for boys, *Hudson's Bay* projects a certain robust charm and joy-in-life that presage Ballantyne's later writings. Humour is an important element, as it remains through his works; it is the leaven to his rather heavy prose. It is the humour of youthful high spirits, sometimes used merely as relief, but at times taking on a life and an artistic purpose of its own, as in the strange, compelling mixture of humour and brutality in the description of the seal-killing in *Hudson's Bay*. A little tailor, new to such slaughter, falls down and, thinking all the seals in the herd are upon him, rolls over and over, striking in terror at his imaginary adversaries. His utter incompetence is balanced by the fearful competence of his companion, a veteran of the deadly game, who kills with every stroke of his club. In this passage Ballantyne demonstrates admirably his ability to combine the horrible with the comic, the expected with the unexpected.

In *Hudson's Bay* Ballantyne writes in the conventional style of his age. Nineteenth century conventions permeate every aspect of the book — diction, sentence construction, characterization, feeling. The sentences meander like midsummer streams, and their meaning is often obscured by their grandiose construction.

> So, under the influence of these favourable circumstances, my spirits began to rise, and, when the cry arose on deck that the steamer containing the committee of

> the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company was in sight, I sprang up the companion-ladder in a state of mind, if not happy, at least as nearly so as, in the circumstances, could be expected.

This is the long way round to making the rather inconsequential observation that his mind was settled. But a closer look at Ballantyne's involuted writing suggests that its complexities do not always cover such banalities:

> My future companion and fellow-clerk, Mr. W----, was parading the deck near me. This turned my thoughts into another channel, and set me speculating upon his probable temper, qualities, and age; whether or not he was strong enough to thrash me, and if we were likely to be good friends.

Here there are no wasted words; the construction is economical and the meaning evident. The sentence reveals the many-sidedness of a boy's mind: his need to measure and compete, his defensiveness and self-doubt, and his tentative gropings towards a new friendship. It is small wonder that Ballantyne became a writer for boys; he understood them so thoroughly.

Ballantyne's descriptions are most effective when he is least conscious of what seemed to him the serious task of imparting information to his young readers. At the moment when the unexpected takes over, and he is no longer "on guard", his descriptions capture a fleeting spontaneity, as when he portrays the solemn gracelessness of Indian women at the Christmas dance.

> There is no rapid motion of the feet, no lively expression of the countenance; but with a slow, regular, up-and-down motion, they stalk through the figure with extreme gravity. They seemed to enjoy it amazingly, however, and scarcely afford the poor fiddler a moment's rest during the whole evening.

These Indian women are realized instantaneously — unsmiling and awkwardly bobbing. On the other hand, and in the same *Hudson's Bay*, Ballantyne's informative chapter on the Indian, dutifully presented, is a set piece with little life and no sparkle: a painstaking account of customs, ways, food and clothing, but with only a summary insight into the social organization or the spiritual aspects of Indian life. This is hardly surprising when one remembers that Ballantyne was after all a "company man", and, with rare individual exceptions, the contact of company men with the Indians was primarily commercial.

Ballantyne is at his best when he describes with a boy's glee some mishap at campsite or on the trail. He tells, for instance, of gathering gulls' eggs with eager anticipation at the end of a long day's journey and popping them into the cooking

pot. The first sign of impending disaster was a "loud whistling sound" and then, upon the breaking of one of the eggs, the appearance of a "young gull with a monstrous head and no feathers, squeaking and chirping in a most indefatigable manner!" He continues:

> We did not despair, nevertheless, of finding a few good ones amongst them; so, after they were well cooked, we all sat around the kettle and commenced operations . . . [but] the greater part contained boiled birds. The Indians were not nice, however, and we managed to make a good dinner off them after all.

Once again Ballantyne balances a rather unattractive incident with skill and perception upon the point of a true, wry humour.

IT WAS NOT UNTIL SEVEN YEARS after his first book, *Hudson's Bay*, was published — years spent by Ballantyne working for the printing and publishing firm of Thomas Constable of Edinburgh — that Thomas Nelson, the publisher, suggested to him that he write for boys, embodying his experiences in the "great lone land". In 1856 Ballantyne wrote his first book for boys, *Snowflakes and Sunbeams, Or, The Young Fur-Traders*, and, thereafter, managed to turn out upwards of eighty novels. The settings vary — Canada, Norway, Algiers, and Cape Colony to mention only a few — but, basically, in character and incident, the novels are similar. It would be repetitive to scrutinize closely and separately even all those which concern Canada. It is enough to glance at three of them, *The Young Fur-Traders, Ungava*, and *The Wild Man of the West*. The first two, along with the still popular *Coral Island*, are possibly his best-known works and are associated with his name when many of his other works cannot be recalled. *The Wild Man* is, in some ways, less vital and less real than the other two, but it does attempt the complexities of a developed plot. *The Young Fur-Traders* and *Ungava* are completely and unashamedly innocent of such a device.

Hudson's Bay, his book of reminiscences, is the archetype of Ballantyne's later novels: the incidents they tell are similar, but heightened by a certain romanticism and a considerable sense of drama. In essence, these books are not novels at all, but accounts of journeyings in the wilderness forming a simple framework in which to set a series of happenings calculated to hold a boy's interest. Fights with Indians, bear and buffalo hunts, shooting dangerous rapids, are common ingredients. *Ungava* attempts to hold suspense on a higher level by recounting the dis-

appearance of the little girl, Edith, but the reader is in no doubt that she will be found and returned to her mother's arms. This book also attempts the complications of a sub-plot with the parallel separation of the giant Eskimo, Maximus, and his bride, but once again the happy outcome is obvious from the beginning. *The Wild Man of the West* makes use of a slight mystery in the search for the identity of the Wild Man. It remains a poor attempt, however, and for critical purposes it can be said that Ballantyne does not attempt any but the most simple structure in his novels.

One of Ballantyne's very real strengths — and one that has already been mentioned in the analysis of *Hudson's Bay* — is his knowledge of the mentality of boys. In his first book this asset brought depth to a charming self-portrait; in his novels, it brings authenticity to quick, deft characterizations of the juvenile heroes. The mercurial personalities of Charley and Harry in *The Young Fur-Traders* are a delight throughout the book. They laugh, joke, tussle, romp and gambol like game dogs. They are ruled by the spirit of adventure. Charley daubs his face with paint — blue nose and red chin — before going to the Indian feast, and his action is entirely boyish and entirely right. He leaps upon a half-broken horse and revels in the wild dangerous ride that ends in a head-first somersault into a snowdrift. March Marston, hero of *The Wild Man of the West*, is declared by his trapper friends to be as mad "as a grisly bear with whooping-cough." His madness takes the form of displaying "an insane tendency, at all times and in all manners, to break his own neck."

There is another side to Ballantyne's portrayal of boys; they are not all entirely mad in spirit and in action. Hamilton in *The Young Fur-Traders* is a gentle, unassuming boy in sharp contrast to Charley and Harry. His only response to their wild ways and practical jokes is a quiet smile. Thought "soft" by the others, Hamilton does prove his courage and resourcefulness in a crisis. Despite the fact that Ballantyne too often indulges, as he does here, in the trite and the expected in terms of action, his sense of contrast and balance in the initial characterizations must be recognized. His novels are not one-dimensional adventure stories only.

Ballantyne's keen ability to characterize is at its best when he is portraying men and boys, rather than women and girls. The former are always vigorously created (almost "splashed on") but the latter are mainly lifeless stereotypes of nineteenth-century idealized womanhood. Relationships between men, friend and friend, father and son, are particularly well treated. Charley in *The Young Fur-Traders* and his father, Frank Kennedy, present an excellent example of Ballantyne's ability to render the mutual competitiveness, coercion on the one side and

rebellion on the other, and the underlying tenderness implicit in the father-son relationship. Indeed, Frank Kennedy, the "old fur-trader", is skilfully drawn with his irascibility, his human misjudgments, his perplexities over his son. There is no doubt that here Ballantyne is portraying a common and authentic type among the Hudson's Bay men; Kennedy is the company man who has maintained the independence of mind and personality which have suited him to the country and ensured his success. He has acquired a half-breed wife and a family of quarter-breed children and he shows true devotion to them. The inherent pathos and emotional complications of mesalliance and cross-breeding is not touched upon. Ballantyne was writing adventure stories for boys, not problem novels. Such themes were beyond his scope and intent, and even, one suspects, beyond his comprehension and literary ability.

In contrast to his happy handling of relationships between fathers and sons, and in line with his inability to portray women convincingly, Ballantyne oversentimentalizes the tie between a mother and a son. In *The Wild Man of the West* March Marston and his mother mutually suffer (and the reader with them) through some particularly coy passages. The ultimate in lack of realism is reached in an exchange between the child Edith and her mother in *Ungava*. When Edith expresses hatred for a man who has hit her dog, her mother remonstrates with her. "I wish I didn't hate him, but it *won't* go away," says the child. "Well, my pet, you must pray for him, and speak kindly to him when you meet, and that will perhaps put it away," she is told. Unreal and false as this is, it is no worse than much of the writing of the same decade. The 1850's brought a heavily moralistic and, often, rankly sentimental note to children's books, and Ballantyne was very much a man of his age in this respect.

Indeed, individualistic in many respects as his men characters are, they have one trait in common. They are all homespun philosophers and moralists. Ballantyne was quite unable to deny his didactic tendencies, and his young heroes are always supplied with companions who are guides in both the physical and the spiritual sense. Yet he managed to bring a surprising variety into these mentors; Irishmen, Indians, French-Canadians, Americans—in short, all the many kinds and types that were employed by the Company. There is no doubt that these were derived from men with whom Ballantyne had hunted and trapped, whom he had known and liked. Their talk is authentic, their camaraderie real. The banter around the campfire, the give-and-take of personal relationships, the unstinted sharing of both danger and laughter are fully realized and sustained. These characters are not simply types. Bounce with his quiet, well-defined humour, or

Baptiste, quick in word and deed, or Jacques, struggling with the philosophical argument of means and ends, are certainly individual.

Ballantyne's characterization breaks, however, in his portrayal of the Indians, who are apt to be the stereotyped "noble redskins" of his century's misconception. This fault is curious, since it is obvious from Ballantyne's own reminiscences that his attitude towards the Indians was both perceptive and realistic. Presumably the literary convention demanded this sublimation and Ballantyne bowed. Consequently the Indians who travel with Ballantyne's young heroes are benign and noble, while those whose sole function in the story is to chase and attack are satisfyingly horrible. At curious variance with his treatment of the Indian, Ballantyne gives a rounded characterization of the Eskimo, Maximus, in *Ungava*. Noble Maximus undoubtedly is, but he has also a disarming naturalness and flexibility. Ballantyne summarizes perhaps rather revealingly the difference between the Indian and the Eskimo, the former being much more withdrawn and less open in his contacts with the white men. This difference, and the projection of it in his novels, as much as the literary convention, may account for Ballantyne's greater success in portraying the Eskimo.

In his own day, Ballantyne was a writer of boys' adventure stories of enough force and character to hold his own against such popular contemporaries as Verne, Henty and Kingston. In our day, he appears dated and rather pompous, but one is still aware of his vigour, of his ability to deal with the complexities of boys' characters, and of a touch of the fey, even of the macabre. As a writer concerned with Canada, his greatest contribution is his portrayal of Hudson's Bay Company life in the 1840's, and of the adventure of being young when Canada was also young. On this level we can still read him with nostalgia, mixed with the regret that he was not a better writer, that despite his vivid re-creation of the buffalo hunter and the woodsman, of camp fire and camaraderie, he was not able to afford us a completely convincing picture of the Canada he knew a generation before Confederation.

chronicle

THE SEASONS

Grove's Unfinished Novel

Bruce H. Nesbitt

FREDERICK PHILLIP GROVE regarded his unfinished novel *The Seasons* as his masterpiece. In a series of letters written to Desmond Pacey, printed in *Canadian Literature* for Winter, 1962, Grove wrote, "I have the deliberate purpose in mind of making it my *magnum opus*. . . . It is by far the best thing I have done, as it is certainly the most ambitious." Through the kindness of Mrs. Catherine Grove, a MS and a typescript copy of the novel now form part of the Grove Papers in the Elizabeth Dafoe Library of the University of Manitoba, and for the first time we are able to see whether Grove's comments to Pacey are justified.

The basis of the first section of the typescript, "Summer", is contained in a notebook hastily titled "Democracy or Peasant Revolt or Town and Country". Although Grove was able to finish both "Summer" and "Fall" and to start "Winter" before ill-health crippled him completely, it is thus evident that he did not at first conceive *The Seasons* as the regular exploration of an "extension in space". In fact, the 469-page typescript is an integrated amalgam of what may originally have been three separate novels. Grove apparently blended two of these sub-novels to form "Summer", then proceeded to write "Fall", and later inserted into "Fall" a third sub-novel.

The connecting link among these sections, and the central figure of the more than 100 characters in the novel, is Arnold Brewster, a former political economist at the University of Toronto. Divorced from his wife and separated from their two children, he has come to farm outside "Rivers", Ontario, to escape "from the nightmare of the city into some sort of reality".[1] As the novel opens in August, 1940, Brewster is approached by other farmers in the district to help alleviate

obvious injustices forced on them by Hugh Grainger, owner of the canning factory on which they depend. Brewster sees two solutions: either to adopt a form of primitive self-sufficiency, or to form co-operative factories. "The moment you want anything beyond the peasant's needs, you hand yourself over to the industrial machine". Although he realizes that political action will only provide a forum for their grievances, he agrees to head an "Independent Agrarian Party" formed to contest an impending provincial election. It is significant that Grove himself both worked in a canning factory and ran for the Ontario legislature as a CCF candidate after he moved to Simcoe.[2]

Brewster has been attracted by Margaret Grainger, wife of the owner of the canning plant. Daughter of a French Canadian and Roman Catholic mother, Margaret was totally unprepared for her marriage to Hugh, and their wedding night was a devastating fiasco. But now, nearly thirty, she appears to have been awakened by Arnold Brewster as they are "thrilled by the common impulse" of certain landscapes. Wilfred Tracey, a sculptor visiting Rivers, senses that there is something self-contradictory in Margaret: "she was a madonna strayed into this commonplace world." In Tracéy's terms, the love of Arnold and Margaret "was entirely platonic; which meant that in each other's presence, they could never be entirely natural." Eventually Margaret takes a trip home to Montreal to consider a divorce from Hugh, whom she has seen coming from his mistress' house, but concludes that her religion will not permit it. "It seemed their fate to desire and to abstain."

Margaret's husband leads "the life of a shadow". "To him, his wife was a social asset; and his final aim was social." He continues the frustrated love-play of his erotic dreams with his latest mistress, the wife of an army officer who has been posted overseas. As a type of the irresponsible and parasitic capitalism that Grove detested, Grainger votes himself a raise while he slashes crop prices. And in the end, he self-righteously decides not to instigate divorce proceedings against Margaret and Arnold because of his fear of scandal.

Arnold's mind has attracted one other woman: Dorothy Stroker, daughter of the district's incumbent MPP. While her sister Agnes has gone to Toronto and becomes the mistress of her employer, Dorothy stays to care for her ailing mother and dying father. Her sensitivity to nature strikes Arnold, and they go walking together in the woods around Rivers. Here she confesses that she wants a child, but not a husband. In an attempt to broaden her universe, Arnold introduces her to Phil and Alice Patterson. Phil has fulfilled his ambition of *Two Generations* and is now a lecturer in astronomy at the University of Toronto, and Alice is a

doctor. Watching Phil clear brush around the cottage that he and Alice use as a refuge from the city, Dorothy feels that she is "discovering the human body, and she found pleasure in it." Eventually she accepts Phil's madcap proposal of marriage made in the middle of a snow-covered hemlock grove.

Probably the most powerful character in *The Seasons* is Wilfred Tracey, a fifty-two year old sculptor and former professor of Greek at McGill. He has been brought to Rivers by Barbara Carleton, ostensibly to teach a group of British refugee children. Barbara and he had met briefly twelve years ago, and since then the memory of each had become an obsession. Their relationship turns around the symbol of a statuette of a girl that Wilfred had sold to Barbara's late husband, a wealthy judge thirty-five years her senior. Although Wilfred hadn't seen Barbara before doing the statuette, which he calls "Absence", "what her features expressed, and what the marble expressed, were essentially the same thing." Margaret Grainger had already realized that "in this woman there was something elemental, something that gave her glimpses into unrestrained possibilities." For Wilfred, Barbara "was his fate — his, the sculptor's, as well as the man's"; she becomes not just a woman, but Eve. And for Barbara, Wilfred will provide fulfillment: "I want my very existence to be justified." Wilfred has also carved a monk's head, which Barbara suggests is Arnold Brewster. Tracey says that the head, which he secretly calls "Surrender", is based on

> a monk whom I watched for several hours, in a railway station in Montreal. A bearded monk whose every feature spoke to me of the sadness of things, of his own surrender, of the cruelty of his fate which he yet accepted, so that, to me, he became the quintessence of tragedy nobly born.

Thus while Margaret can say that man "was created of sacrifice", Arnold sees in Barbara and Wilfred echoes of Heine:

> Sie Mussten beide sterben
> Sie hatten sich viel zu lieb.
> (From "Es War ein Alter König".)

The tragedy of the monk could only be affirmed by a consummation beyond the reach of Margaret and Arnold. And as Barbara and Wilfred go to bed at Barbara's cottage, a storm rages at the trees outside:

> The wind tore and burrowed through their foliage, worrying it as a dog worries sheep; and every now and then it detached a handful of leaves which it hurtled against the panes in a sodden state, with little noises as of a hand slapping naked flesh. Their laughter was a defiance thrown to the elements; and at the same time

> it held a note of appreciation, for the trees stood humped, like cattle huddled together to let the fury of the weather expend itself upon their rumps.

In the love of Henry Baumert and Irene Valentine, Grove explores a relationship dictated by externals. Children of the depression, Henry is working on his father's farm to save for his and Irene's marriage, and she is employed as a maid in the Grainger's home. Irene, however, is impatient to be freed from their dependence on economics, and to make Henry jealous responds to the courtship of Stewart Butt, a wealthy contractor twice her age. Henry fails to take her when she offers herself, and she decides to run away to meet Stewart Butt. Inexplicably she is drawn into the fields surrounding Rivers:

> It was pitch-dark now; and there was no moon. Looking back from the far edge of the field where she had come up against another fence, it seemed to her as if the night, a giantess in black, trailing draperies, were stepping out from among the trees of the park, drawing the hem of her garment over the furrows while she grew up with the sky, above the clouds which were forming. Not a star was visible overhead.
>
> And suddenly her purpose defined itself: she must see Henry.

She finds him, and in a deserted hut they finally consummate their love.

> In the dim light from the cloud-tent they seemed suspended between the milky whiteness above and the dark, damp earth underfoot. Between the two, they were an invisible flame. All about, the night day distended, as if in a swoon.

The next day Irene marries Butt, true to her dictum that "the only thing that counted was whether one rebelled." It is a final irony that at a forced auction of the Baumert farm, of which Butt is the mortgagee, Irene reveals that their last night together has resulted in her becoming pregnant.

The Seasons not only represented for Grove a massive continuation of the themes of most of the fiction he had published before his death, but also indicates to us a certain shift in emphasis in those themes. In the earlier pioneer novels man's fate lay partially with economic pressures beyond his control; his soul was eroded as quickly as the plot of land he had to own. In *The Seasons*, however, Grove sees in the principles of the CCF party a path for justice to become operative again in the economic sphere.

If the sexual instinct is another aspect of our fate, then Grove presents a more subtle view of his tragic vision than he has before. In *It Needs to Be Said* Grove comments on the eternal conflict between man's "beast-hood" and his "god-head", a conflict Margaret and Arnold are unable to resolve. They both "abstain"

and "desire" each other. While Arnold is the "monk" to Barbara Carleton, and Margaret is a "madonna" to Wilfred Tracey, Barbara becomes Eve, and Wilfred, Adam. In their world, however, there can be no original sin; it is interesting that Grove sees Tracey, the creative aspect of a man whose other half is Brewster, as able to resolve Arnold's and Margaret's self-contradictory realm. Nature has not only sanctified, but has also ordained the fulfilment of Wilfred and Barbara.

We are continually aware of the face of nature as the web of love is spun. Moonlight bathes the whole novel, and trees frequently take on an almost religious quality at meetings of the various lovers. And just as Arnold can say that "God is growing", so the characters of *The Seasons* grow as the complexity of the imagery expands. Both Arnold and Wilfred, for example, come to accept Grove's particular fatalism, but by the end of "Fall", affirmation appears to be the dominating mood of the novel. In *The Seasons*, moreover, Grove presents perhaps his first consistently sustained portraits of believable women. Only after the land has been tamed can an "iridescent play of desire and satisfaction" emerge.[3] Had the novel been completed, I believe it would have been Grove's richest and most competent expression of the "response of the soul to the fundamental conditions of man's life on earth".[4] It is ironic that Grove died before he could complete his statement, for in *The Seasons* he was his own greatest tragic hero.

NOTES

[1] University of Manitoba, Elizabeth Dafoe Library, Grove Papers, Box IV 7 (b), typescript p. 13. All references are to Grove's own pagination.

[2] Contesting Haldimand-Norfolk constituency in 1943, Grove received only 2577 votes, nearly 5000 less than each of his two opponents. In *The Seasons* Grove intended Brewster to lose the election.

[3] *In Search of Myself* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1946), p. 224.

[4] *It Needs to Be Said* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), p. 100.

review articles

THE MAKINGS OF A MYTH

George Robertson

GEORGE F. G. STANLEY. *Louis Riel.* Ryerson, $8.50.

AN IDEA, HOWEVER IMPROBABLE, if clothed with power can change the course of history. Had the métis been more than a temporary genealogical exercise in the racial history of North America, we might have had on the Canadian plains a nation speaking French and professing a variety of heretical Catholicism, and Louis Riel, the dreamer of this unlikely vision, would have been its first spiritual and temporal leader. But the métis, a race that sprang of union between Indian women and French-Canadian hunters and trappers, were doomed to a short passage in history; and Riel's rôle—and his tragedy — was to be bound to his people and not to some more durable cause. His story is both a political and a personal drama without precedent in this country.

I have already written in *Canadian Literature* (in a review of the play *Riel,* by John Coulter) of the appositeness of Riel's life to theatrical drama; and now a book which we can call the definitive biography of Riel has appeared, and the justness of the parallel is even more apparent. It is a fascinating story. Professor Stanley has rendered better than anyone else the pietistic background out of which Riel emerged, understands the conflicting forces at work at the Red River in the 1860's (including the constant pressure of an expansionist America to the south) and again on the Saskatchewan River in the 1880's, and has had access, I believe, to the widest range of documents yet concerning this great and tragic figure. I use the word "great" advisedly, speaking not of his place in the patriotic myth of Canada but of his capacity for illuminating, as great men do, the currents of their time, of his testing and changing those currents, and ultimately, since I have also written the word "tragic", failing.

The life of Riel was indeed a drama, with its first and last acts the two rebellions of 1869-70 and 1884-85, and with perhaps the most intriguing phase of his career, about which little has been written to now, the strange years of semi-darkness in between. In that period he was at the same time an outlaw with $5,000 on his head and a Member of Parliament who dared not take his seat (but who, on one splendid day and with the help of sympathetic French-Canadian

MP's, managed to sign the register in the parliament buildings at Ottawa without being apprehended); it is also the period of his exile in the United States and of his madness. He was confined to asylums from March 1876, to January 1878. Following his recovery, he became an American citizen and dabbled in politics. In this, as in everything else he did, he was working for the betterment of his own half-breed race, the race which, he saw, would one day become the "New Nation" of the Northwest.

There are two things especially fascinating to me about the career of Riel. The first is his handling of the situation at Red River in 1869 and 1870. Riel, only twenty-five years old, was able to hold in alliance both French and English half-breeds, and more important, the Catholic clergy, to gain the terms of entry into Confederation that he and his people thought fair. His ability to manipulate events, to anticipate opposition, to act decisively and — with one terrible exception — shrewdly, makes this part of his story almost a primer of political action. He had the will to act when action was needed, but he was always conscious that to act boldly was to risk alienating the moderates, and it was his triumph that in the end he was able to take the moderates with him. Given his youth, his race, and the measure of the men he was dealing with, this was a superb personal accomplishment.

The second thing is that this story of pure politics becomes, after his exile and his illness, complicated by strange ambiguities of motive. It is here the historian finds himself on more dubious ground — Professor Stanley allows us our alternatives — and the imagination is enriched by possibilities. He was undoubtedly "cured" when released from asylum, that is, able to be released into society, but he was just as certainly possessed by a growing conviction that he had a divine mission. He was able to write in one year (1878) to the doctor who had been attending him, "I was treated there as charitably as any lunatic could be," thanking him for his forbearance, and also to confide to a friend that he had only been feigning madness in order that the government should cease persecuting his people. He was able in 1884 to accept an invitation from the half-breeds of the Saskatchewan valley to help them obtain their rights, and not long after to attempt to bargain with the government for a payment to himself which would guarantee acquiescence of the métis to any settlement the government would propose. These were undoubtedly the extremes of a disturbed mind, and it is true that Riel set about his second agitation in the Northwest with such moderation that he gained the confidence not only of the French and English half-breeds but of many of the Canadian settlers as well. But only for a time. Critically, he lacked the confidence of the clergy, and as the church withdrew from neutrality into opposition, he supplanted it with wilder and wilder visions of his own destiny: he was the prophet of a new nation, gathering to himself all the Catholic peoples of Europe. In the end, his paranoia left him only those simple enough to believe that he might, after all, be a god, and his pitiful rebellion was put down by a cumbrous Canadian militia.

It is impossible in the space of a short review to trace more than an outline of Riel's career. But it is possible to say this: if ever history were enshrined in the

life of a man, it is enshrined in the life of Riel, and it is impossible, I think, to understand Canada in the second half of the nineteenth century without knowing both Riel and his distant antagonist, Sir John A. Macdonald. What might the old politician and the young, personable revolutionary from Manitoba have said to each other could they have met — and but for the murder of Thomas Scott, they might have met—as fellow Conservatives. For it was the execution of Scott, by no means Riel's only mistake, but his one crucial mistake, that set in train the price on his head, his exile, and very likely his overbalance into madness. The line separating the nonconforming and in time beloved statesman from the failed revolutionary is, as we know, drawn by such chance acts as this. Drawn respectably into national politics, able to make contact with his French-Canadian brothers in Quebec, saved from the extremism which was always part of his character, Riel might have become a towering figure of French Canada, instead of a desolated fanatic tied to an impossible dream.

Professor Stanley does not attempt to push speculation too far. His picture of Riel is fair: he has avoided the aura of hero-worship found in other works on Riel, but has also dealt fully with the grievances of the métis which gave Riel his mission. Without him, they would have been scattered so much the quicker like chaff across the prairie. With him, they had a voice. On trial for his life, he pleaded their right to God's lands: "We are not birds, we have to walk on the ground." His lawyers pleaded insanity, but Riel refuted them, and convinced the jury he was sane, and so went to his death with dignity. He had embraced the true Church at the last and his priest, a former opponent, wept. "He shall hang," cried Sir John A. Macdonald, "though every dog in Quebec bark in his favour." In English Canada the myth-making of Riel has not yet begun, but in this book the materials are all at hand.

PROMISES, PROMISES

George Bowering

R. G. EVERSON. *Blind Man's Holiday*. Ryerson, $2.75.
MICHAEL MALUS. *Flaming City*. McGill. $1.50.
HARRY HOWITH. *Burglar Tools*. Bytown Books, Ottawa. $1.00.

IN *Blind Man's Holiday*, his third book, and his first since 1959, R. G. Everson emerges as a minor disappointment. When he published *Three Dozen Poems* in 1957, and followed it two years later with *A Lattice for Momos*, he entered the Canadian poetry scene with a voice as fresh as lovemaking in the snow, the subject of one of his poems. Only Montrealers in the know would have realized that he was a middle-aged man and a newcomer in the guild.

But now, in a time of the country's greatest activity in the arts, and especially in poetry, Everson seems to be drifting away. His earlier brilliance of imagery has given way to a notion that ideas strung on lines and pinned with metaphor will reach the reader's mind convincingly enough. Of course, some of them do, but this reader was left with a desire to see more, to sense more, to be persuaded less.

Everson's most notable metaphor works on a system in which the poet figures himself as a distant city or historic personage, investing himself for a moment with all the remembered characteristics of that referent, but creating a muddle in which the poet can be seen only with difficulty. In other words, the poet is not recording personal experience, nor even wrapping it in musical form, but rather reaching for whimsy in a highly civilized game.

> Or am I knuckle-headed Douglas Haig?
> or Champlain, losing all the main events?
> Napoleon, bedeviled by staff and tired
> from ulcers or too much work or those hot baths,
> delayed until ten his attack at Waterloo,
> and Caesar put off seeing an eye doctor
> —anyway, failed to spot the bulging knives.

Perhaps it is just that Everson uses the mask, a method currently out of favor in Canadian poetry at the present time. But I don't think it is as simple as that. The mask of Pound or Yeats was never (or seldom) used to disguise the immediate concerns of the poet as he reacted to life at his nerve ends; in fact, the contrary is true. I think R. G. Everson is talking about his former poems when he says

> My brain is a roller coaster of convolutions,
> curlicues that mainly comprehend
> flat-out fact.
> I see and know belatedly, long after feeling.

I think it would be a mistake to say that Everson is lost to us, though. (That "us" being, perhaps, ambitious.) He has shown great capabilities. I would prefer to say that *Blind Man's Holiday* (for it is that rare thing, a unified *book*, not a random collection of four years' poetry) was an excursion into far lands.

The McGill Poetry Series is a unique institution in this country, presenting as it does interesting young poets from the Montreal campus. Former presentations have included Leonard Cohen and George Ellenbogan, for instance, and the latest is Michael Malus, a student in medicine at McGill.

Most of the poems in the book form a composite portrait of the poet's city, and they are accompanied by Stephen Roth's photographs of night-time Montreal. Malus sees his city in a way that is not particularly original, as a great animal, brooding in the shelter of Mount Royal. This is the poet's abiding metaphor, and he plays on it through seemingly endless variations. Unfortunately this simplest of romantic conventions seems contrived when it is worried over so often.

> Deserted city
> hibernating beast
> pulse slowed
> barely breathing

Heard thus, Malus sounds like any number of student-poets. In a poem like "Bus Stops", in which the poet sits between two priests and ogles a girl, and tells of his ogling in sacramental jocular terms, he sounds like Layton of fifteen years ago. (A great danger to the Montreal poet.) In fact, it will not be until at least his next book that Malus will sound like his own voice. At the present time he is too caught up with amusing simile to listen to himself, it would appear. Too

many times a poem begins: "Like a (something), the (something) (does something.)"

And I think that in his next book he will not say anything like

> In this age of republics and democracies
> I choose to dwell
> on the anachronism
> of an Absolute Ruler
> and by many
> he is called Death:

Bytown Books are the product of a lately seen swelling of poetic activity in Ottawa, and Harry Howith's offset folios promise to produce inexpensive books by some of the country's more prominent poets, including, they say, Al Purdy. Meanwhile, Howith's own book, produced with two different types, shows in itself a microcosm of what has been happening in Ottawa.

In Part I of *Burglar Tools* Howith speaks in curious stanzas of unrhymed iambics that cause a strange nagging separation from the poet's emotional activity. His responses are ironic or cerebral rather than sensual. He has a tendency, furthermore, to address the world on the behalf of some seemingly agreed social "we."

Part II switches from the stanza pattern to a kind of action painting with words, in slang and conversational address of the "modern" variety. Howith imitates the typographical ideas of earlier

liberated poets, but seemingly with more caprice than intent to clarify the reading. The language, however, is more direct than that in Part I, and imparts more life and movement.

To this time, though, Howith seems to get terribly involved in minor situations that would take a Souster four or six lines to crystallize, and often he wanders in witty Ferlinghetti-like irrelevancies.

But Howith seems to have read an amount of modern poetry, and he seems to have come across the fact that poetry is a vocal art. If he will listen more to his voice, find out for instance if he really does speak in inversions, he may produce some very interesting poetry in the years ahead.

OF LOVE AND POLITICS

S. E. Read

J. M. S. CARELESS, *Brown of the Globe*, vol. 2, *Statesman of Confederation, 1860-1880*. Macmillan, $7.50.

WHEN I REVIEWED the first volume of *Brown of the Globe* (*Can. Lit.*, No. 4, Spring, 1960) I praised it as a "work of first magnitude in the realm of Canadian scholarship," but said that though Professor Careless "has treated Brown, the politician, fully and most sympathetically, he has left Brown, the man, lurking in the shadows. Perhaps volume two will change the picture."

Now the work is done, the task completed. Volume Two traces the career of this extraordinary man through the agonizing days prior to Confederation; follows his decline as a mighty force in Canadian politics; and brings him to his tragic close as he slowly dies from a festering wound received at the hands of George Bennett, a disgruntled, drunken workman who had just been discharged from the ranks of the *Globe*. Does Brown, the man, still lurk in the shadows? The answer is a definite "No". The finished work is much more than a political history of Brown and his times. It is a fine biography, written with warmth, understanding, and sympathy, as well as with an indefatigable attention to the continuing political intrigues and manoeuvrings that somewhat overshadowed Brown as a person in the earlier volume.

The reason for Brown's emergence in this volume as a warm, human being — quite apart from Brown the politician — is a simple one. "Suddenly, surprisingly, the confirmed bachelor of forty-three was falling very much in love." The Brown of Volume One had had no love — no Tetty, no Fanny Brawne, no Countess Guiccioli, no Delilah even — to draw him from politics or from the ink-odoured office of the *Globe*. At least, Mr. Careless mentions none. But in 1862, in Edinburgh, Brown met Anne Nelson, sister of William and Thomas Nelson, the sons of that famous Thomas Nelson who had founded the publishing firm which still proudly bears the family name. Younger than Brown by some ten years, "she was light-hearted, lively, and engaging, yet no less intelligent and firm-minded for that." The courtship was quietly ardent and swiftly successful. The wedding followed quickly on the heels of the engagement. And before Anne could fully realize what had happened, she found herself in colonial Toronto, the centre of a cheering crowd of five thousand, who escorted "the Chief" and his bride through the muddy streets of the city, to the accompaniment of "hundreds of hissing torches, Roman candles, and rockets".

From this point on (and the account of the marriage comes early in the book), there are numerous quotations from Brown's letters to his beloved wife, and numerous references to problems, small

and large, inextricably connected with the existence of a thoroughly domesticated politician. He is worried about baby "Maggie", he enjoys "the most agreeable chuckles when I think how perfectly lovable and loving my Anne is," he is concerned about the choice of chandeliers, china, silverware, and household furnishings in general. He regrets leaving his wife when he goes on political commissions, even the most important, and he frequently arranges for her to travel with him — to Montreal, to Quebec, to New York. And at the end, Anne and the children watch by him as he slips into the final coma that heralded the coming of death. From love and domestic happiness emanates a warmer air than from politics alone.

Yet politics are by no means thrust entirely to one side. They still play the major role in the work, though Brown's devotion to the *Globe* and his venture into the scientific breeding of fine cattle loom large also from time to time. The political portions of the canvas are broad and exciting. Great events, seen through Liberal eyes, are described in vivid detail: the brief coalition of Macdonald and Brown preceding Confederation; the Charlottetown Conference; the junket through the Maritimes; the Quebec Conference; the negotiations with the British Government; the Fenian raids; the coming of Confederation itself. "In Toronto, to the midnight peal of church bells, as bonfires were set blazing in the downtown streets," Brown works steadily through the noisy night as he writes a massive editorial in honour of "the birthday of a new nationality".

Crowding the scene are scores of shadowy figures — Sicotte, McGee, Dorion, Mowat, Blair, Sandfield Macdonald, Wallbridge, Alexander MacKenzie, George Etienne Cartier, Taché, and hosts of others—who come and go. But John A. Macdonald is an almost omnipresent figure — the arch-opponent and arch-enemy of Brown. With the exception of the brief interlude of coalition these two men carry drawn daggers when and wherever they meet. And in the closing page of this vast, panoramic work the daggers are still drawn, though the clutching hands are now those of elderly women. "As for Anne Brown, she often spent summers at Oban in her later years, where in time the widow of another noted Canadian appeared, Lady Macdonald. It was said that the two elderly ladies ignored each other as their carriages passed, staring stiffly ahead, faithful to their husband's [sic] old enmity."

Not being an historian I am reluctant to comment on the accuracy of Professor Careless's assessment of Brown. I am sure, however, that he has searched diligently to gather his materials, that (to paraphrase Dryden) he has been a nimble spaniel, beating over and ranging through the records of Canadian history, and springing quarries with subtle skill. The Brown that finally is given us is a man of awesome stature — a devoted husband, a loving father, a superb journalist, an astute and skilful politician, an able statesman, a foremost architect of Confederation, a great Canadian.

Some there may be who will say that this portrait of Brown is the work of an hagiographist. I prefer, myself, to believe that Mr. Careless has attempted to draw his lines and use his colours with the utmost objectivity and honesty. Yet it must be admitted that the Brown who appears on occasion in Donald Creighton's memorable two volume biography,

John A. Macdonald, does not always look nor behave like the Brown of Mr. Careless.

For example, the Brown in Creighton, "an awkward, red-haired, extremely serious young Scotsman of firm views, great ambitions, and superabundant physical energy," is seen by Careless as a man of "tall, commanding presence, kindly good nature, quick laugh, and eager, voluble conversation that would reveal high ideals and sensitive dreams to the right kind of woman." Or look, if you will, at the events of Saturday, 3 September, 1864, at the Charlottetown Conference. In Creighton this is Macdonald's day. He addresses the gathering on the "general character of the proposed federation", "was full of his subject", and his speech was "probably the longest given at the conference". He was also a "convivial host", and "at three o'clock in the afternoon, all the delegates — thirty-three in number — adjourned to the *Queen Victoria* for an elaborate luncheon. They were still there, talking and drinking toasts, until late in the evening."

Careless's account of this same Saturday differs in detail and in tone. Galt, Cartier, and Brown soar into prominence. It was Galt who held the attention of the conference that morning (Macdonald, says Careless, had spoken on Friday), and "then it was the Canadians' turn to play hosts" — not specifically Macdonald's.

> All the delegates were invited to an elegant luncheon aboard the *Queen Victoria*.... The mood could not have been more cordial, as Cartier and Brown seized the glowing moments after lunch to win a psychological victory for Confederation. "Cartier and I made eloquent speeches—of course—

> and . . . the ice became completely broken, the tongues of the delegates wagged merrily, and the banns of matrimony between all the provinces of the B.N.A. having been formally proclaimed and all manner of persons duly warned then and there to speak or forever after to hold their tongues — no man appeared to forbid the banns and the union was thereupon formally completed and proclaimed!" There, in the chief stateroom of the *Queen Victoria* . . . twenty-three men had warmly agreed to found a new nation.

The Monday following is no less confusing. In Creighton, Brown and Galt spoke "at length on the economic and financial aspects of the proposed federation", and "the conference had almost ceased to be a meeting for the consideration of a Maritime legislative union: it was becoming a conference for the promotion of British North American federation." In Careless, however, "Monday was Brown's own day at the Conference. He spoke on the constitutional framework of the proposed federation, the structure of the central and local governments, the division of powers between them, and how the judiciary should be constituted. In short, he had the all-important task of outlining the constitution of the new union, and took the whole day in doing it."

I do not intend here to promote controversy, nor do I wish to insinuate that one of these excellent biographies is more excellent than the other. But I am reminded of Dr. Johnson's well known essay (*Rambler*, No. 60) on the almost insurmountable difficulties confronting the writers of biography. ("For the incidents which give excellence to biography are of a volatile and evanescent kind, such as soon escape the memory, and are rarely transmitted by tradition.") And after all is said and done, the business of Creighton is Macdonald, that of Careless, Brown. The reader of either work should not really seek for or expect to find a detailed drawing of any figure save the primary one, who fills the central portion of the canvas and overshadows all others who crowd around him in varying attitudes of scorn, admiration, or indifference.

But let me not end on a note of confusion. In the last analysis, I am sure that this now completed portrait of George Brown will long remain a classic study in the gallery of Canadian political figures. True, Mr. Careless is no Boswell, for he did not walk the dirty streets of Toronto town with his hero, nor journey on horseback with him through the backwoods of Upper Canada, nor roister with him in the taverns of Montreal and old Quebec. The task he set himself was therefore more difficult than the one undertaken by Bozzy, for Brown had also been dead some eighty years before his biographer began to breathe life into his lifeless bones. And the bones do come alive. By the use of correspondence (personal and official), by snippets of recorded conversation, by extracts from speeches and editorials, by a carefully controlled chronological pattern, by the application of painstaking scholarship, by a clear and frequently a brilliant style, and, finally, by an unwavering devotion to his subject, Professor Careless in *Brown of the Globe* has made a rich and living centennial gift to all Canadians. It really should be "required" reading, the assignment to be completed by 1 July, 1967.

books in review

TITULAR CONFUSIONS

W. L. MORTON. *The Kingdom of Canada.* McClelland & Stewart. $10.00.

SELDOM HAS THE TITLE of a book hung on a slenderer hook than that of W. L. Morton's new history, *The Kingdom of Canada.* Observe the scope of his narrative. Cautiously ignoring the possibility of Irish forerunners, he begins with Leif Ericson almost a thousand years ago, and ends with John Diefenbaker in 1960. For a mere eight years out of that millenium Canada has been a kingdom, and in Professor Morton's narrative the affairs of that kingdom occupy precisely 25 pages out of 518, while the transition from the larval state of dominionhood is accorded a single paragraph on page 494. Surely, if the point of the whole book lies in Canada's development into a constitutional monarchy, an astonishingly weighty prelude has been written to a tiny play, and one can only regard Professor Morton's achievement as one of magnificent anti-climax.

In fact, *The Kingdom of Canada* is a straightforward and adequate history of the European occupation of British North America from the earliest known landings; once its title is disregarded as irrelevant, the book stands as a good general account to put into the hands of the reader who desires a competent survey of Canadian history as a prelude to further studies. It is an account that demonstrates clearly how from the beginning the development of Canada has led towards the emergence of a nation markedly different in both political and social terms from the other half of the North American sub-continent.

Professor Morton has carefully avoided those semi-mythical approaches to Canadian history which see it in terms of dramatically magnified movements. He has been cautious in laying stress on particular regional developments as "keys" to national development; the images of the St. Lawrence and the north-west are alike reduced from the gigantic dimensions certain other historians have been tempted to accord them. Indeed, Professor Morton has tended to over-diminish some of the significant currents of Canadian history, and British Columbians in particular may feel with justice that he has unduly neglected the role of their province in the general record. Yet the shift from baroque excess to classic restraint is to be welcomed, and Professor Morton is to be particularly commended on his refusal to create heroic images of the men who shaped the Canadian past. His dry and sometimes ironic observation of figures whom other historians have over-dramatized helps to place personalities in a true relation to events, and gives a refreshing sharpness to the narrative. In the very straightforwardness of the telling, what grandeur exists in our history is more convincingly rendered in *The Kingdom of Canada* than in many of the flamboyantly ambitious accounts that have appeared in recent decades as the expected symptoms of dawning nationalist pride.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

DEFENCE AND ESCAPE

MILTON ACORN. *Jawbreakers.* Contact Press. $2.00.

ELDON GRIER. *A Friction of Lights.* Contact Press. $2.00.

ONE THING OF WHICH Milton Acorn's *Jawbreakers* has convinced me is that political poems frequently embarrass. I have found that a poet debases himself in propaganda — especially in political propaganda pronounced at thousands of miles remove from the particular political event. Acorn in the poem "Lumumba Arrested" tries to sketch an unfamiliar scene (the Congo during rebellion), fails to do this convincingly, but then goes on to declare that the U.N. intervention in the Congo was selfish and tyrannical — was motivated only by its hatred of Lumumba's "individuality."

> It was a serious grief that made him stand
> yet he laughed for the joy of standing;
> and after him another stood . . . ten thousand others
> in all their tropical colors
> stood laughing, danced and sang — even their curses were good-humored:
> but more efficient than vultures the white men gathered
> with clubs, machine guns, sabre jets,
> and shouts of how unselfish they were.

It is not my purpose to decide what the U.N.'s motives were in the Congo; only to say that Acorn does not even attempt to persuade the reader that they were malevolent. Not to prove is to imply the impossibility of proof. Hence propaganda. And Acorn goes on in this poem to use his unsubstantiated claim as the basis for an extended and clichéd attack on North American oppression of unconventionality.

> . . . they've got measuring tapes, calipers,
> black books for names.
> They want everyone who isn't cut to a specific pattern,
> and nobody is — not even themselves.
> It's a matter of disguise.
> I advise you to wear a grey flannel suit.

Acorn's defensiveness permeates much of *Jawbreakers.* He begins ranting and bragging:

> If this brain's over-tempered
> consider that the fire was want
> and the hammers were fists.
> I've tasted my blood too much
> to love what I was born to.

And by page 17 he has finally discovered and is bravely assaulting LIFE editorials. Wow.

That the defensiveness often prevents his poems from becoming art is a shame, for Acorn is the author of some of the most vivid images in Canadian poetry.

> But my mother's look
> was a field of brown oats, soft-bearded;
> her voice rain and air rich with lilacs:
> and I loved her too much to like
> how she dragged her days like a sled over gravel.

And when the defensiveness grudgingly allows his image-making talent the particulars with which to build a real poem, Acorn does comes through with a memorable one — in this book the best seeming "Ordinary Story", where for once the compassion and anger are real, credible, and communicated.

In all his poems Acorn is robust, and next to this robustness Eldon Grier's poems seem pallid and lifeless. His *A Friction of Lights* begins with "An Ecstacy", a very unecstatic poem in twenty-one parts. Unlike Acorn, Grier celebrates his world. His lines are spotted with words such as "fantasy", "revelation", "joy", "quivering gold", "sensational", "vitality", "serene", "magical", and "beauty". Always optimistic, he says of

the new buildings that are replacing old familiar ones:

> We cannot as yet recognize the
> expression of our happiness contained
> in the clean new shapes.
>
> But it is there and more.

It is probably the perpetually smooth rhythm of these twenty-one stanzas of praise that most make them dull. Grier once in Stanza XIV advises that

> Our poets must give themselves to a kind
> of unsensible madness;
> they must hear music not meaning as they
> write.
>
> Words must be clear bells,
> or sound gravely along like horns.
> They should detonate, explode like light-
> ning under the sea, . . .

A laudable ambition, but there are few, if any, explosions in this work. Grier tells us the truth earlier in the stanza: "As a poet I need to experience ecstacy."

But Grier's poems certainly approach being art more often than do Acorn's. And they are quite pleasant near-art — harmless reading for someone who would like to be comfortable on a winter evening. They are pleasant almost to the point of being escapist; even the few disturbing scenes are made innocuous by the ever-gentle rhythm, as in one of the best poems, "View From a Window."

> And her brother whom she holds shyly for
> me to admire . . .
> the mess of mucous and the clinging feeding
> flies . . .
> awake, a toxic film covers his eyes
> shifting mechanically in patterns of escape.

Here, with characteristic dignity, he concludes that he is upset "that dozy flies can travel here without restraint/in the gentlest of hatchures."

Acorn, then, usually appears bold and

clumsy, and Grier as a shy aesthete. Acorn's "Ordinary Story" is the best poem, but on the whole neither of these contrasting books of poetry shows a poet anywhere near greatness.

FRANK DAVEY

NUANCES OF HISTORY

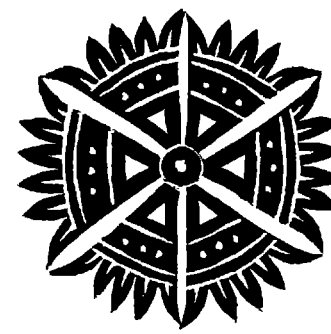
W. S. MACNUTT, *New Brunswick, A History: 1784-1867*, Macmillan, $8.50.

STEWART MACNUTT, Professor of History at the University of New Brunswick, has now filled an enormous gap by presenting an excellent history of the province where he lives and teaches. I say "teaches", for the book has that rather awesome and authoritive quality present in Professor MacNutt's lectures — even his conversation — which tends to hold suspended even the most uninterested in historical background.

There are many facts here, and the book reveals a great deal of work on the accumulating of material on early settlement and early government, but never do these facts weigh the book down. For Stewart MacNutt has both an analytical and a creative mind, and for him the roles are inseparable in this book. There is an impeccable command of the language, and awareness of the nuances of history here — all matters that, depending on how they are handled, could easily make or break the entire undertaking. It is largely because of Professor MacNutt's writing that readers will find the book one of the most interesting studies of provincial history in Canada.

For the material itself is not so very interesting. The struggle of New Brunswick toward provincehood has always been contrasted with the struggles led by such figures as Howe in Nova Scotia and Mackenzie in Ontario, and the makers of New Brunswick history have come out poorly in the contrast. Here, for the first time, comes an understanding of people as well as events, from which one may conclude that without the strong leadership from New Brunswick Canadian Confederation would not have come about. My only disappointment was that the book did not go on until 1880 when there seems to be a more obvious change in New Brunswick history and temper; but 1867 has its own logic as a date with which to end.

It is, however, in the writing that *New Brunswick* excels. It is impressively fluent and there is a practiced feeling for local history's more dashing, rhetorical aspects. It is the teacher-speaker who comes forth in this history's pages. MacNutt's use of facts is at times economical, at others sweeping, but never repetitious or routine, and his writing bespeaks an ease in the writer's role and a deep knowledge of the function of the historian. His style shows a sensitivity toward shifting dy-



namics in a rather ordinary historical context. Beyond this, he has a special feeling for poise, repose, and majesty — often seen in his lectures — and such as is not often found among Canadian historians who deal with the nineteenth century.

DONALD STEPHENS

THEM AND US

KENNETH ORVIS. *The Damned and the Destroyed.* McClelland & Stewart. $4.50.

LUBOR ZINK. *The Uprooted.* Longmans. $5.50.

THESE TWO BOOKS bear strong similarities that belie their apparent difference in theme. *The Uprooted* deals with refugee camps and resistance-from-within to the present Czech regime; *The Damned And The Destroyed* is about the narcotics trade in Montreal. Aside from this, they are both chaff from the same mill: both are *them-and-us* books, both recommend violence as the only viable solution of our social ills, both are written in a style that suggests a rapid thumb-through of several dozen movie scenarios. They are not novels, dealing with characters; they are "treatments" dealing with types.

The *them* in Lubor Zink's book is anyone who is non-Czech, or Czech and part of (or sympathetic to) the present regime. The apparent hero is George Urban, a Czech refugee who occupies much of the book like a senior-matriculation Socrates, expatiating upon History, Man, Responsibility; unlike Socrates, he leads himself to no conclusions. Eventually, his motivation grows so confused by degenerate flirtation with the porcine society of American Occupation Officers, and Officers' wives, that he manages to fail a lie-detector test and is doomed again to the life of the politically suspect, this time in the West. Not so the political underground and just plain folk he left behind. In a wave of violence and self-immolation they manage to: smuggle out George's innocent and right-thinking relatives, incriminate several commissars, kill several political cops, blow up a railway tunnel. The short fuse to all this *action* is George's wife Tanya, a movie actress and an exact double for Hedy Lamarr in all those *is-she?-or isn't-she?* intrigue films made twenty-five years ago. She has become too intimate with *them*, you see, and to become again one of *us* she must destroy herself. Taking as many of *them* with her as possible, of course.

Maxwell Dent, Kenneth Orvis' hero, is definitely one of us; he is a hero because he has fought the good fight and won for himself all the good things of this world: wall-to-wall stereo, the black belt in judo, a beautiful, sensitive girl friend, with money, connections, and a sports car. Certainly he is in a position to solve our social problems. His solution to the social ills of the narcotics trade is very simple: shoot the traffickers, and the addicts whom the resulting cold-turkey cure doesn't kill will be cured, because they cannot obtain drugs. Dent's only flaw, in fact, is that he drinks rather a lot. Perhaps Mr. Orvis' next book, which he describes as "controversial", will suggest burning the distilleries to cure alcoholism.

BARRIE HALE

COMMUNICATION WITH EFFORT

Mass Media in Canada, ed. John A. Irving. Ryerson. $5.50.

COMMUNICATION has always been vital to Canada's existence. From the lonely times of the fur-traders' canoes through the expanding era of the railway and telegraph to the present troubled times of television, communication has been a chief factor in keeping Canada going as a nation. It would seem important, therefore, for us to know something about the means of communication in Canada. A first step in studying them has been taken with the publication of *Mass Media in Canada,* edited by John A. Irving.

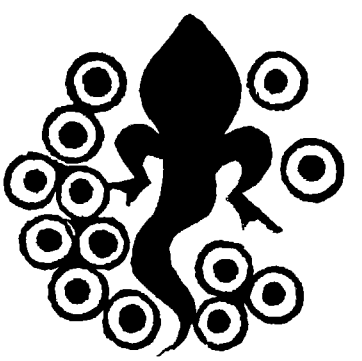
The book is really less a study than it is a panel discussion in which the moderator, Mr. Irving, introduces the topic, learned specialists present various aspects of it, and Mr. Irving then sums up, rounding out the conversation. And it suffers from the virtue and vice of panel discussions; the main theme is tackled from a variety of angles by a number of experts, but the whole issue tends to be clouded in an excess of words.

The contributors include Arnold Edinborough on the press, Robert Weaver on books, J. R. Kidd on films, Bruce Raymond on radio, Eugene Hallman on television, George Elliott on advertising, Marshall McLuhan on the electronic age and John R. Seeley on "communication, communications and community," an essay which, perhaps inevitably, comes out almost as murkily as its title.

There seems to be a general preoccupation among the contributors with the inevitable struggle Canada's systems of communication face against American intrusion. As is almost always the case, the problems are recognized, their effects described, and practicable solutions are found wanting.

The book is of value, however, in providing a concise resumé of some of the most important fields of communication. Mr. Edinborough on the press, Mr. Weaver on books and Mr. Kidd on films are particularly valuable in describing the situation in Canada today and explaining why it is that way in their respective fields. Mr. Elliott's essay on advertising is unfortunately more of a short course in the operation of advertising than it is an explanation of advertising's important role.

Marshall McLuhan's attack on the electronic age is potentially the most important section of the book. Instant communication has shrivelled the world to a village, and requires adjustment by all of us, but particularly by those involved in the more traditional fields such as newspaper publishing — far more adjustment than they show signs of making. One could have wished, however, that Mr. McLuhan's message had been itself a better example of communication.



For that matter, one could wish the same of the whole book, the physical thing. For if there was ever a book designed to thwart reading, this surely is it. Printed in thick black type on slate-grey paper it offends and wearies the eyes. Chapter titles (coyly, and thirty years late, without capital letters) are sprinkled across the page in sense-defying blots.

It is about as ugly a book as one could imagine, which is supremely ironic considering its subject. Its subject remains an important one, however, particularly to Canadians, and the persistent reader can find in this book much of value.

DONALD STAINSBY

THE SURVIVAL OF HOPE

The Plough and the Pen. Ed. Ilona Duczynska and Karl Polanyi. McClelland & Stewart. $6.50.

The Plough and the Pen is a selection of Hungarian prose and poetry written between 1930 and 1956. One moves as a reader from a sensation of abstract indignation at the social injustice of a semi-feudal society into the brief hopefulness of the period of reform, and then to a final human involvement for Humanity betrayed. Named in honour of the Hungarian Populist Movement, the book begins with selections describing the feudal condition of the Hungarian peasantry and ends with Ferenc Juhasz's powerful poem, "The Boy Changed into a Stag Cries out at the Gate of Secrets." In his foreword W. H. Auden calls this poem one of the masterpieces of our time. Such it unquestionably seems to be. It reads like an impassioned elegy for deceived human nature. Juhasz's poetry displays an extraordinary imagination, and a passionate, spawning imagery evolved from biology and modern technology.

The poets represented in *The Plough and the Pen* were translated with great care by Canadian poets as distinguished as A. J. M. Smith, Margaret Avison, Louis Dudek and Earle Birney. Bilingual work sheets were used as well as tape recordings as aids for the translators. This gives the translations a definite sense of the poetic experience recreated intact. These poems combine a direct lyricism with an insistent, social protest as in Attila Jozsef's lines, "Yet the doves that live within him,/star-feathered, carolling pure,/will swell to griffons avenging/the raven-crowd's deeds on the poor." Gyula Illyes' Odes hold the heroic sweep and tone of the folk epic. The poems of Laszlo Benjamin, Zoltan Zelk, Lajos Tomasi and Peter Kuczka express a painfully honest moral degradation and a despair both private and political.

The prose selections present an account of a groping struggle, not only for a basic social justice but also for the definition of an insistence on a fundamental human dignity denied a people. From the psychological penetration of Zsigmond Moricz's "To Eat One's Full" to the final poignant self accusation in Laszlo Nemeth's drama "Galileo", this collection passionately insists that a society which denies its members political freedom and social justice denies them their basic humanity. This is the point of Illyes' graphic portrayal of what was virtually a life of serfdom in "People of the Puszta." By contrast Aron Tamasi's "Pinions of Poverty" more lyrically and poetically evokes landscape and peasantry.

Those pieces documenting the hope

born of land reform are written in the style and from the point of view of strict social realism. But the work of Pal Szabos, Peter Veres, and Tibor Dery avoids any trace of the didactic or crudely propagandistic. Tibor Dery's "Odysseus" is the most memorable. A description of the release after seven years of a political prisoner, it is a masterpiece of restraint and conveys with spare severity the terrible impact of totalitarian injustice on human lives. MARYA FIAMENGO

DESERT MISSION

E. L. M. BURNS. *Between Arab and Israel.* Clarke, Irwin. $6.50.

LT.-GENERAL E. L. M. BURNS, now the Canadian government's adviser on disarmament, was appointed in 1954 as the Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization in Palestine. He was the senior officer representing the United Nations in the Middle East at the time of the Suez crisis, and was asked to take over as Commander of the hastily created United Nations Emergency Force. His contribution during these years was to attempt to find a peaceable solution on the ground for the many warlike incidents which occurred before and after the dramatic events of October-November 1956.

Following the United Nations' decisions on the partition of Palestine in 1948, the Jewish population set up the independent state of Israel and at once engaged in military measures to expand the frontiers beyond those laid down by the United Nations General Assembly.

After several months fighting, and the murder of the United Nations mediator, Count Bernadotte, a general armistice agreement was reached and demarcation lines agreed upon. In cases of violence across these lines, or other contraventions of the armistice agreements, the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization and its military observers were to effect a peaceful settlement and, if possible, reconciliation. But as General Burns soon found, this was a hopeless task. Neither the Arabs nor the Israelis wanted peace. Israel surrounded by four Arab states was determined to prove that she could exist despite military pressures, a non-viable economy, and a mixed population. The Arab states, while never achieving a co-ordinated strategy, were all agreed on the need to suppress Israel and restore Palestine to Arab hands. Raids and counter-raids across the frontiers and demarcation lines were therefore undertaken for political reasons, and the violence and bloodshed which ensued was to show the opposite side the perils of continued hostility. Not surprisingly the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization had a frustrating task, especially as it had no physical forces of its own to interpose between the parties on the ground.

The situation was made worse after Nasser received arms from Czechoslovakia in 1955. This weakened the pressures brought by the United States on Israel for maintaining peace. And when Nasser proceeded to nationalize the Suez Canal, the Israelis seized the opportunity to exploit the quarrel for their own advantage. Their invasion of Egypt on October 29, 1956, was designed to remove the military threat to the Israeli southern border and offer Israel the chance for expansion into the Sinai Desert.

General Burns naturally welcomed the

creation of a United Nations Emergency Force, and was happy about the part Canada played in its formation. He gives an excellent outline of the conditions both political and physical under which the United Nations Emergency Force has operated. But he agrees with Mr. Hammarskjold in not seeing this force as an example of a permanent United Nations peace force. The circumstances were too special and too limited. He is pessimistic about the possibility of maintaining peace for long in the Middle East, because he believes that economic conditions will force Israel to seek expansion and she can only do this by war. In the meantime the United Nations Emergency Force still guards the arid wastes of the Gaza strip to keep the peace between Arab and Israeli. JOHN S. CONWAY

THE POINT OF FERMENT

RICHARD JOLY. *Le Visage de l'Attente.* Centre de Psychologie et de Pédagogie, Montreal. $2.60.

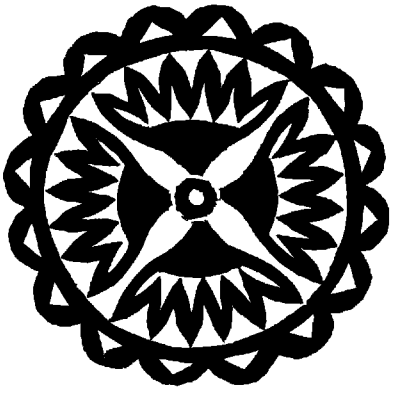
RICHARD JOLY'S *Le Visage de l'Attente,* has several levels of interest: it is an impressive achievement in novel structure, an examination of the sociological forces which continue to mould "Les Canadiens," and a psychological study of two men searching for the meaning of truth and life in a special context.

The book begins in the office of a notary, François Cadieux, who is just receiving the news that his old friend, Pascal Fabre, a priest, has died of a heart attack. Cadieux, the appointed executor of Father Fabre's will, must now take out the document and consider its provisions. As he does so, he reflects on the circumstances connected with each of the articles of the will, permitting the story to unfold in a series of flashbacks and eventually to arrive at the point where it began. Taking full advantage of the final testament as a unifying device, the author handles these flashbacks with considerable skill; the reader is kept in suspense yet is always aware of the forward movement of the plot.

M. Joly's style is idiomatic, at times almost poetic and at times strikingly simple, suggestive and flowing:

> Tu n'aurais pas compris, Pascal, la féerie des bals de la Faculté, ni la douceur de ramener à ton appartement, quand elle a trop bu et toi aussi, la pauvre petite folle qui joue sa grosse carte, ce qu'elle appelle sa meilleure carte, pour l'enjeu de devenir ta femme, la femme du voyou qui la renverra au petit matin avec une couple de baisers ennuyés qui n'ont pas même la décence d'être un "Merci" poli.

The characterization in *Le Visage* is not as effective as the book's structure and style. M. Joly plays the two main characters, the notary and the priest, against one another to bring each to life, but the priest comes out as far more believable than the notary. Lucile, the female protagonist, does not seem to come to life at all, perhaps because the



author depends too much upon abstractions such as "la femme splendide," "une femme magnifique," "une femme merveilleuse," and the abstract in a woman is hardly the thing which arouses a man in the way Lucile can apparently arouse François.

Le Visage de l'Attente has appeared at a time when many Canadians are wondering about the ferment in French Canada. It provides insight into some of the least evident yet most important elements of this ferment, in the field of education, in the field of lay-clergy relations, in the area of personal and group *raison d'être*. Without becoming bitter, it explores the kind of thinking responsible for certain inadequacies in seminary teaching, inadequacies which in turn have been the cause of extreme bitterness. It explores moreover from the inside, the author obviously having an extensive knowledge of the seminary system, as well as an unwillingness to ascribe every shortcoming in Quebec to external forces.

RONALD SUTHERLAND

CELTIC CANADA

PATRICK SLATER. *The Yellow Briar*. Macmillan. $1.65.

ORLO MILLER. *The Donnellys Must Die*. Macmillan. $5.00.

IT IS SURPRISING, when one considers how great a part the Irish immigrants played in the formative years of Canada, and how large a proportion of our population their descendents now comprise, that we should have so slight an Irish-Canadian literature. In our own generation we can count a number of fine writers of Irish descent or birth — Morley Callaghan, Brian Moore, Kildare Dobbs, but these, when they have written on the Irish in Canada, have been concerned either with recent immigrants or with second or third generation city Irish seen as victims of corrupting urbanism.

The two books I am reviewing are concerned with rural Canadian Irish — with the generation of immigrants who, in the mid-nineteenth century, brought with them to Canada their outlooks, their customs and their bloody feuds. *The Yellow Briar* by Patrick Slater (Macmillan, $1.65), which was first published thirty years ago, has now been reprinted in a paperback edition. It is one of those plausible and well-documented first person period novels which reviewers sometimes take, as *The Yellow Briar* has been taken, for straight autobiography. It tells, through the recollections of an old man, of the experiences of a boy who came from "drippy Donegal" in the age of the great potato famines. It is a book with two faces, for the author combines a stage Irishness of nauseating mushiness (Little People in the depths of Upper Canada and "Sure an Irishman gets a lot of fun watching the world go by") with an extraordinary power of evoking the physical shape and feel of the immigrants' world of the 1840's and 1850's. There are magnificent descriptions of Toronto in 1847 and of the plague that swept the city in that year; of pioneer farming and its methods of land clearing and stump farming; of the raw settlements in the bush with their toping schoolmasters and cadging circuit preachers; and, best of all, of a wild wake in which the corpse was propped up among the celebrants and the girls curtsied and asked him to dance. But when the author drifts from statement to sentiment the novel falls apart, and one

wishes Patrick Slater had merely given us the scene and the chorus and left out the hero.

In *The Donnellys Must Die* Orlo Miller documents a darker side of Irish Ontario, the bitter partisan resentments carried over with the immigrant ships from Tipperary, and the brutal, vindictive violence they perpetuated. *The Donnellys Must Die* is not fiction, though at times the deeds of which the author tells can strain one's power of belief. It is the careful reconstruction of the mass killing of a family of Irish settlers in rural Canada of 1880. Mr. Miller has convincingly investigated the eighty-year old crime. He dwells no more than necessary on the horrors of the deed itself, and develops most effectively the extraordinary pattern of popular conspiracy which, by silence, evasion and terror, saved every one of almost forty people involved in the slaughter of the Donnellys from conviction or even real exposure. That Ontario as late as 1880 could breed and conceal such a brutal mass lynching serves to remind one how long ancient patterns of violence can persist in situations where they no longer have any meaning. For the Donnellys died in a conflict that sprang out of the divisions of an oppressed and starving Ireland, yet they met their end in a prosperous Ontario farming area at the hands of neighbours who, in many cases, were respectable and respected members of their community.

L. T. CORNELIUS

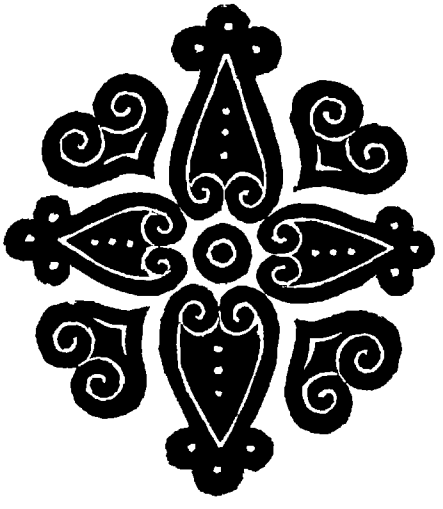
PACIFIC MYTHS

CHRISTIE HARRIS. *Once Upon A Totem.* Woodcuts by John Frazer Mills. Atheneum, $3.50.

THE INDIANS of the North Pacific Coast have an unusually rich store of myth and legend. In their days of lordship, the abundance of the sea and forest gave them leisure to organize a highly complex social structure, to raise mighty and handsome cedar lodges and to decorate them with symbols of their past and present greatness. The gifts of nature led them to hold the sumptuous potlatches which became the heart of their tribal, social and commercial life. They had time for song, time for the dance — and time for the telling of tales.

Once Upon A Totem is a retelling of five stories directed mainly towards children. Mrs. Harris came to the West Coast as the wife of the Officer in Charge of Immigration for British Columbia. Her interest in the Indian tribes was first aroused by the so-called totem poles — "monuments to a people unique among the Indians of North and South America". She began to search ethnological reports and in so doing turned up a wealth of stories related to the poles. She then mingled with the Indians as much as possible in their villages, in their homes and at their gatherings. Her five tales have been handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth.

The transition from the spoken to the written word has not spoiled these tales. They have their own freshness and originality and, as is true of all traditional literature, have also their parallels in stories from other countries. "The One-Horned Mountain Goat" is an expression of the same reverence for nature as is found in the Greek myths; "The Boy and the Sea Monsters" is another version of the success story in European folk tales, where the despised weakling finally finds himself and proves his worth; "The Wild Woman of the Woods" has overtones of Hansel and Gretel, and the young hero of "The Giant Ogre, Kloo-Teekl" belongs in the same ranks as Jack the Giant Killer. The fifth story, "Fly Again My Proud Eagle" is based on historical fact. The author tells us that Princess Da-ul, who escaped massacre at Kitsum-galum (on the Skeena River) to preserve the Eagle dynasty, was as real and romantic a figure as Bonnie Prince Charlie. This story has something of the sorrow and yearning of the great Irish legend, "The Children of Lir" — but a far happier ending. These are by no means the myths of a primitive people providing for themselves crude explanations of the world around them. Rather they illuminate the manners and mores of a proud and gifted



race who had to face often in their lives the choice between good and evil.

In style, these tales break away rather sharply from the traditional Indian tales which tend to be lengthy, leisurely, formless and — to this reviewer — rather boring. Mrs. Harris' style is clean-cut, almost staccato, with a considerable use of conversation, somewhat too colloquial at times. Traditional literature must be told anew for each generation and perhaps Mrs. Harris' most outstanding contribution has been to preserve the authenticity of her material while casting it in a mould to appeal to today's children.

SHEILA A. EGOFF

CURRENT REPRINTS

THE GROWING CROP of Canadian reprints is spreading, particularly in the fields of history and biography, to which we are becoming increasingly addicted. A paper-covered edition of J. M. S. Careless's *Canada: A Story of Challenge,* bright and informative, though not very original, has just been published by Macmillan ($2.95). The first titles in the Carleton Library — four in number — include Morris Bishop's *Champlain* ($2.35), and J. W. Dafoe's *Laurier* ($1.95), which is not so much a biography as an illuminating commentary on a politician's career by a newspaper man who observed it at close quarters; the Carleton Library is published by McClelland & Stewart.

In French there is also the excellent paperback series, Figures Canadiennes, published by Editions HMH of Montreal; the most recent titles are *Lord Durham* by Roger Viau and *Frontenac* by W. J. Eccles.

UNE HEUREUSE INITIATIVE

ST-DENYS GARNEAU ET ANNE HEBERT: translations by F. R. Scott, Klanak Press. $2.50.

MONSIEUR F. R. SCOTT nous présente recueil de neuf poèmes de St-Denys Garneau et neuf d'Anne Hébert avec sa traduction en regard. Deux de nos meilleurs poètes sont accessibles dans la même plaquette aux lecteurs canadiens anglais et français. De plus la plaquette n'est pas commune. Le papier est de qualité, la disposition du texte et la couverture attrayante montrent un goût qu'on ne rencontre généralement que dans les grandes éditions de luxe.

F. R. Scott a choisi les poèmes qu'il considère comme les plus beaux des deux poètes. Sa traduction est absolument littérale. Il justifie sa traduction en disant qu'il veut altérer le moins possible le texte original et le laisser *s'exprimer* dans l'autre langue. Il préfère un poème écrit en deux langues que deux poèmes semblables et cette façon d'entrevoir la traduction est, toujours d'après M. Scott, appropriée aux deux poètes présentés d'autant que ceux-ci usent du rythme du language ordinaire plutôt qu'une manière plus formelle. Cette façon donne quelquefois du drôle d'anglais mais le respect du poème original qui anime le traducteur excuse facilement ces tournures, et même, on peut dire que cette traduction est d'autant plus valable qu'elle nous donne vraiment l'impression qu'un canadien-français est en train de nous parler dans sa langue seconde. Gilles Marcotte dans deux pages de préface nous apporte quelques détails sur le lien de parenté entre ces deux poètes, sur

leur vies et leurs écrits. Non seulement est-on heureux d'avoir entre les mains un tel recueil, mais de plus il nous vient le désir de voir d'autres plaquettes du genre présentant des auteurs canadiens-français avec traduction anglaise en regard comme des auteurs canadiens anglais avec traduction française.

LEANDRE BERGERON

A KIND OF INCONSISTENCY

THERE IS A PECULIAR KIND of inconsistency in McClelland & Stewart's New Canadian Library series; nevertheless the Canadian reader should be thankful that the series exists. There are lapses in organization of the books, the printing style changes frequently, and there is little originality in cover design. But here they are on the market in this inexpensive edition, and though there may be questions about the choice of some of the novels reprinted, McClelland & Stewart should be congratulated for producing the series and for contributing, on the whole, excellent introductions to the works.

In the four new numbers of the series —Earle Birney's *Turvey* ($1.50), Stephen Leacock's *Nonsense Novels* ($1.25), Robert J. C. Stead's *Grain* ($1.50), and Thomas H. Raddall's *The Nymph and the Lamp* ($1.50) — there are details which catch the reader's eye immediately. The thickness of the Raddall, the Birney, and the Stead contrasts strongly with the thinness of the Leacock. The type for the first three is almost too small; for the Leacock, it is too big. Why not, instead of having five Leacocks in a series of thirty-eight, have three, with two small works in one volume (*Nonsense Novels* with *Literary Lapses*, for instance)?

The fifth Leacock selection obviously points to the problems with copyright that the publishers must be having. Why not a few Richler novels? Why not a few collections of short stories? Why not Adele Wiseman or David Walker? One hopes that this thinness does not indicate that there will be fewer of the series in the future.

With regard to the present selection, *Turvey* should of course be there; it is a Canadian classic and Birney did an excellent job, both in comedy and characterization. Raddall's position in Canadian letters is secure, though his short stories — some of which have already appeared in the New Canadian Library (No. 9) — are better than his novels. Why Stead was chosen I will never know! Why not the better prairie novelists? How about one of Niven's books? — even Grace Campbell?

The perceptiveness of the introductions continues to be the most important aspect of this series. Everyone has been good; even the elaborate hysteria of the editor himself in his introduction to *Sunshine Sketches* has its place. George Woodcock's introduction to *Turvey* is a fine essay on Birney and the poet's novel; John Matthews clearly examines the contribution of Thomas Raddall; S. Ross Beharriell gives another dimension to Leacock; and Thomas Saunders capably extends *Grain* beyond the point where it, perhaps, should go. Literary criticism in Canada has been added to by the series,

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which, despite its weaknesses, continues to be the best series of publications on the Canadian scene.

D.S.

CANADIAN TRANSLATIONS

OF RECENT CANADIAN translations the best by a long shot is George Johnston's version of *The Saga of Gisli* (University of Toronto, $3.50). This prose rendering of the Icelandic outlaw's story evokes admirably the feeling of an age hovering between Nordic paganism and Christianity, an age of open violence and the stark codes that accompanied it. The translation is accompanied by an interesting essay by Peter Foote on the Saga and its background in the rough, simple republic which arose in the sub-arctic valleys of Iceland and sent its explorers to Canadian shores as harsh as their own land.

The millenium of Poland, which is due in 1966, is the occasion for Watson Kirkconnel's translation of the great Polish mock-epic, Adam Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz* (University of Toronto, $6.50). Mickiewicz's poem, like his life, is Byronic in quality, with the same double vision, ironic and idealistic at once, as one finds in *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*. Yet one cannot dismiss this great poem, any more than one can dismiss the writings of Mickiewicz's Russian contemporary Lermontov, as a mere transplantation of belated Romanticism, with all its elements of self-mockery and ambiguous heroism, into an Eastern European literature. For the physical texture of the life of Polish landowners in Lithuania is re-created in sharply individual tones, and the characters take on life as beings of a specific time and place. Of the major irony of his poem the author seemed unaware, though it reveals one of the tragic flaws of Polish history; he celebrates the rural valour of the Polish gentry in a region where their patriotism was misplaced, since in the Lithuanian land they were just as much conquering intruders as the Russians they hated. The translation has its moments of strength and humour, but Dr. Kirkconnel, having chosen the heroic couplet as his metrical form, fails to make adequate use of its possibilities; he appears to lack either the power of sharp, concise expression in verse or the ability to create a really flexible and varied rhyme pattern.

The Forehead's Lyre (University of Toronto, $2.50) is a volume of translations by Doris Huestis Speirs of poems written in Swedish by the ornithologist Lars von Haartman. This is pleasant minor poetry, but little more — best in the brief imagistic verses that catch with a bird-watcher's sharp eye the flicker and mood of transient experiences and states of nature.

G.W.

HISTORICAL EXCURSIONS

Navies in the Mountains by Harrison Bird (Oxford, $7.00) is a painstaking study of a series of episodes in North American history — the various battles on Lake Champlain from the early forays against the Iroquois to the end of the 1812-14 war between the United States and Britain — which have not been neglected by previous historians, but have never been considered in the kind of continuous naval history which Mr. Bird has now compiled. In a sense this is American rather than Canadian history, since Lake Champlain has remained United States territory ever since the War of Independence; yet all the campaigns that were fought across its water and its winter ice affected the development of Canada in many directions during the turbulent two centuries between the arrival of Champlain and the final defeat of the British at the battle of Plattsburg Bay. Moreover, if Lake Champlain had not been there, Johnny Burgoyne would never have taken this tempting road to defeat, and Bernard Shaw would never have written *The Devil's Disciple*, and in this respect Mr. Bird's account becomes the background to events of more than merely North American interest. He presents it as a rather level narrative, but in as complete a telling as will ever be needed of this fragment of the past that is shared by Canada and the United States and, at some distant removes, by the literature of the English-speaking world.

In *The Judgments of Joan* (Thomas Nelson, $5.50), Charles Wayland Lightbody discusses in just over 170 pages the vast Joan-of-Arc literature and the changes in the image of Joan that are revealed by such a study. He is brief and prolix at the same time; much more could be said on the subject, and said less wordily. In particular, Mr. Lightbody never gets down to that most fascinating core of the Joan myth — how far she in fact was involved in that primitive religious movement which men of the Middle Ages either embraced or dismissed as witchcraft. Were her judges substantially right in regarding her as a heretic? Was she in fact, as recent writers have suggested, the high priestess of a pre-Christian pagan cult? On these points Mr. Lightbody gives us no illumination. Nor — which is more germane to his subject — does he really attempt to show what people in Joan's own time actually believed. He is much more concerned with that infinitely duller Joan, the political symbol of the most tedious aspects of French nationalism.