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CANADIAN LITERATURE No. 22

Autumn, 1964

LOUIS DUDEK AS MAN OF LETTERS

Articles

BY WYNNE FRANCIS, MARYA FIAMENGO, LOUIS DUDEK,
NAIM KATTAN, PETER STEVENS

Recollections

BY ETHEL WILSON

Reviews

BY THELMA MCCORMACK, GEORGE WOODCOCK, FRANK DAVEY,
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Decorative linocuts by GEORGE KUTHAN

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contributors

WYNNE FRANCIS, in her article printed in this issue, enlarges on an aspect of the Montreal poets, about whom she has already contributed to *Canadian Literature* an important article, "Montreal Poets of the Forties", which won the President's Medal of the University of Western Ontario.

MARYA FIAMENGO, a regular reviewer for *Canadian Literature*, has published one book of poems, *The Quality of Halves*, and individual poems in many periodicals. She teaches English at the University of British Columbia.

ETHEL WILSON, author of *The Innocent Traveller*, *Swamp Angel*, *The Equations of Love* and *Love and Salt Water*, as well as many short stories, has been a regular contributor to *Canadian Literature* since its earliest issues and one of its most devoted supporters.

LOUIS DUDEK is himself the subject of an article in this issue, and we draw attention to the copious information about his career which it contains.

NAIM KATTAN, Associate Editor of *Tamarack Review* and literary columnist to *Le Devoir*, has now become our correspondent for French Canada, and he will be contributing regular letters on writing in Quebec.

FRANK DAVEY, the former editor of *Tisk*, is the author of two books of poems, *Day and After* and *City of the Gulls and Sea*. The latter will be reviewed in the next issue of *Canadian Literature*.

UNCOMMERCIAL VOICES

TWO ARTICLES in this issue deal in varying ways with the contribution of the small private presses to the encouragement of Canadian poets and even occasionally of writers in prose. The tribute which these articles imply is hardly sufficient acknowledgment of the debt which Canadian authors and readers owe to the men and women who have devoted their time, their skill and their financial resources, often extremely unobtrusively, to providing the means by which writers whose work do not at first sight look commercially profitable can be tested out by the *aficionados* in their art. The record of the private presses in this kind of endeavour is more than impressive; Contact Press, the most important and durable of them all, has been the first publisher for an extraordinary list of Canadian poets since accepted by the regular publishers as writers who will bring prestige to an imprint, if not profit to a publisher's coffers.

Without the private presses, with their care for presentation which gives an added pleasure to the reading of poetry, and without the mimeographed little mags which one reads with the hope of finding some interesting new talent fighting against one's distaste at the smudgy and ugly pages, Canadian poetry might still be very largely a community of verse-writers listening to each other's voices in clannish gatherings. At times poetry may take on life from the voice — sometimes a life that is not its own — but only on the page does it endure real examination and survive. Even the most fanatical supporters of poetry readings are rightly anxious to get into print at the first possible opportunity, since they know as well as everyone else that reading a poem from the printed page is a far truer test than listening to it, muttered, ranted or even carefully elocuted by its creator, who all too often sounds like its destroyer.

Not only do our private presses print poetry that otherwise might find no way to a reader, but they are there as a constant reminder to the commercial pub-

lishers of a duty to literature which they must expect to fulfil without profit. To be just, though some Canadian publishers have cut back severely on poetry since the 1950's, others are maintaining a respectable record. This Fall at least six new books of verse are either just off the press or due to appear almost immediately from the large Toronto houses. This is a far higher ratio to the total number of new books published than one would find in London or New York, while it appears that — in terms of actual sales of their works — Canadian poets are also proportionately better off than their British counterparts. Without wishing to suggest that Canada in 1964 is a poet's paradise, the fact is that, thanks mainly to the private presses and the little mags, the verse-writer has a better chance than ever in the past to see his work published, either at best in elegant print or at worst in the uncertain grey of the mimeographed leaflet.

In one other field — that of local history — private publishing, often by the author in collaboration with an interested printer, has done a great deal of good work in recent years. Every province produces books of this kind; most of them are mediocre, some are sensationally bad, and a few very good, but almost all of them make a contribution to the sum of historical knowledge, even if their literary merits are often low. An example of how ambitious and useful this kind of undertaking can become is given by a massive volume of more than five hundred pages, copiously illustrated and entitled *Peace River Chronicles* (\$6.50, published by Prescott Publishing Company, Vancouver). This volume, collected by G. E. Bowes from the narratives of 81 travellers extending over a century and a half, and flawlessly printed by Morriss of Victoria, is a remarkably rich source book for students of Western Canadian history, and also an example of fine book production from which some at least of our commercial publishers might learn a great deal. It even has its literary aspect, though a rather melancholy one. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, the records and narratives show a depressing decline in style and descriptive power; the evident reason is that at this point professional journalists begin to displace the miners and Hudson's Bay men, the travelling officers and the squatters' wives who felt so directly in their daily lives the rough embrace of an existence on the edge of the world. Perhaps there is a lesson in this for those who take too easily to the idea that the mass media may be the saviours of literature.

May the private presses flourish and may the dedicated amateurs who operate them receive from readers the support which they deserve and need if they are to carry on their indispensable functions in the literary world of modern Canada.

A CRITIC OF LIFE

*Louis Dudek as
Man of Letters*

Wynne Francis

“**A**LL POETRY NOWADAYS, anyhow, is someone’s effort to save his soul.” So wrote Louis Dudek in the first issue of his magazine *Delta* in October 1957. The “nowadays, anyhow,” is an interesting qualification. There were times perhaps when poetry could and did perform other functions. There were times when there were other means of saving one’s soul. But “nowadays” poetry has taken on, as Arnold predicted it would, the burden previously borne by religion. Poetry, for Dudek, has a moral function to perform — moral in the Arnoldian sense of “a criticism of life.” “There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve,” wrote Arnold, “. . . more and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.” Arnold saw poetry as the bulwark, in a secular society, against the degrading commercialism and industrialism of his day, against the insensitivity, mediocrity and flabbiness of Philistinism, against the effete aestheticism of “*l’art pour l’art*,” and as “capable of wonderfully helping us to relate the results of modern science to our need for conduct, our need for beauty.”

These are also essentially the views held by the Canadian humanist poet-critic Louis Dudek. For Dudek, as for Arnold, poetry is a serious search for moral truth. Therefore Arnold could say “For poetry the idea is everything . . . poetry

attaches its emotion to the idea; the 'idea' is the fact." And Dudek after him, ". . . it is what you say with language that really matters." Arnold no more than Dudek would have accepted the new-critical dictum that poetry is primarily words, or that of Northrop Frye that "in literature it isn't what you say but how it's said that matters." In a restatement of editorial policy in *Delta* recently Dudek writes somewhat cryptically:

To extend the subject matter of poetry. In line with this, to look for new and necessary treatment and techniques. Poetry, with symbolism and formalism on the ascendant, lost almost all relevant content to prose. . . . Every resurgence of poetry in the past has come with a new sense of content. The subject matter is all here, crying for intelligent voices: it is simply the whole problem of dealing effectively in poetry with our moral and political void. . . .

The poet, for Dudek, must constantly take account of life as it is being lived. He must use words only to say honestly and simply what he thinks and feels about that life, to extract its essential meaning. His function is not to make decorative verses, forge new metaphors or illustrate myths, but rather to record in words the results of his personal explorations in the various dimensions of actuality and to share with the world his search for new depths of truth and beauty in human experience. Specifically, Dudek says, the modern poet's task is to "redeem the actual" — to find "a way of knowledge and vision, practicable against the evil, unknown to the absinthe drinkers and the squares. . . ." (better known to Arnoldians as the aesthetes and the Philistines.)

Dudek differs from Arnold in that he does not share Arnold's reliance on the residuum of literary culture. To the respect for the cumulative records of the past Dudek would prefer the simpler appeal of Wordsworth to nature and the direct salute of Whitman to immediate experience, albeit with the philosophical overtones of both these poets. For it is primarily in a joyous acceptance of nature and in a moral assessment of experience that the poet appears as his own priest, his goal being moral wisdom and each poem an "effort" to save his soul. Furthermore, where Arnold, Dudek claims, merely defined the function of poetry, he himself has pursued that definition in the effort to discover the intellectual and religious bearings actually apprehensible through poetry. "The residue of religion in my work," he says, "appears as a modified transcendentalism, and the positivist scientific side of my thought appears as concreteness and realism. The effort to reconcile the two is at the core of all my poetry."

Louis Dudek at 46, tall, balding, gaunt, with a shy smile and a wistful manner,

has acquired over the years a dignity of bearing that matches the soberness of his thoughts. He takes a serious view of life and poetry which embraces at once a shining idealism and a flat-footed realism. He is known in literary and academic circles for his strong opinions and soft speech, for his warm generosity and his unrelenting stubbornness, and most of all for his complete dedication to the cause of Canadian poetry. As a poet, he is still seeking a way to successfully relate the diaphanous wings of his lyric gift to the clay feet of his empirical philosophy. But in his larger role as a man-of-letters in mid-twentieth-century Canada he has already achieved a stature of which at least a temporary assessment may be made.

Dudek was born a Roman Catholic, of Polish immigrant parents, in the east end of Montreal in 1918. As a schoolboy, inspired by *Poems of the Romantic Revival*, he wrote many verses in the fashion of Keats and Shelley. So did his sister. In fact the two saw themselves as friendly rival poets and it was decided that a *meistersinger* contest should be held to decide which of them could write the better poems. Father Bernard, the local parish priest, agreed to act as judge. Each of the young people submitted twenty-five poems, the fifty poems all being written down by the same hand. Father Bernard read the poems carefully. He named the best poems and it was revealed that fifteen-year-old Louis was the author of them. (His sister, no doubt disappointed at the time, is today his most enthusiastic reader.)

Young Dudek apparently did not doubt the Father's wisdom with regard to the merit of his poems. He continued to write poetry through high school. But at some time during adolescence he did begin to doubt the faith that the priest stood for. His subsequent rejection of organized religion and his ever-deepening concern for poetry are closely related. Growing up in a working-class milieu during the Depression years, Dudek came to believe that religion was incapable of measuring the complexities of modern life, that it took inadequate account of both the beauty and the horror of natural existence, and that it was restrictive and inhibiting in its view of mankind. Poetry on the other hand offered an increasingly appealing way of assessing life. Poetry, Dudek began to believe, was not a matter of words and sound patterns or of literary allusions but of language made to render faithfully man's response to real experience. Life was not to be lived from a book, not even from *The Book*. And poems were to be made not from other poems but from life.

BY THE TIME Dudek entered McGill in 1936 he already entertained this serious view of poetry. Reading Nietzsche, Ibsen and D. H. Lawrence strengthened him in his rejection of religion. The compelling arguments of these reformers could not, he felt, be accommodated within a dogmatic faith. Reading Whitman, the Imagists, Sandburg, Spender and C. Day-Lewis, on the other hand, convinced him that poetry could, without sacrificing the actual — indeed, rather by being saturated with actual experience — say something of importance about reality. As an undergraduate he began publishing poems of social protest in the *McGill Daily*. As an Associate Editor of the *Daily* he also wrote editorials which were provocative enough occasionally to be reprinted in college papers across the country. Thus he was even then engaged in the dual activity of writing and editing which was to consume his interest in years to come. By the end of his college years, Dudek was convinced that his vocation was poetry, while as a profession he chose journalism. Upon graduation, therefore, he set out as an apprentice journalist, getting odd jobs with advertising agencies as a copywriter and doing free-lance work for *The Montrealer* and other papers.

Meanwhile, he kept up his association with the young men of literary persuasion at McGill, spending his lunch hours and other free time at the offices of the student newspaper and continuing to publish poems in the *Daily*. Another poet publishing in the *Daily* at this time was Irving Layton. At a Literary Society meeting in 1940 the two men met and recognized each other as poets having much in common. Dudek was sufficiently enthusiastic about Layton's poetry to make it the object of his first publishing venture. Using the facilities and knowledge he had acquired at the Hayhurst Advertising Agency, Dudek set to work to produce a book of Layton's poems. The job was never completed but meanwhile the poets became close friends. Layton introduced Dudek to John Sutherland, who in 1941 had begun to edit the Montreal little magazine *First Statement*. Dudek felt an immediate affinity with the aims of the new magazine. Within a short time he was closely engaged in its production. His name is readily associated with those of Layton and Sutherland in the poetic renaissance of the Forties; but looking back he now insists "I always felt myself 'third'. Sutherland was the leader and editor, Layton was 'the poet' — we all expected he would soon be recognized — and I was best at handling the mechanics of the printing press." The modesty of this reflection should not obscure the significance of Dudek's experience with *First Statement*. His direct association with the venture lasted

only about two years but they were crucial years in his development.

In the first place, Dudek's knowledge of Canadian poetry was broadened. John Sutherland had read fairly widely, especially in Canadian poetry, and knew personally or through correspondence many poets across the country even before he began *First Statement*. It was perhaps Sutherland's determination to foster a native tradition in poetry which served to strengthen Dudek's interest and to focus his attention on Canadian literature.

Secondly, the existence of the rival Montreal magazine *Preview* and its talented poet-editor Patrick Anderson stimulated the *First Statement* writers, Dudek among them, to read the British moderns, especially Auden, Barker and Dylan Thomas, in order to follow and to attack Anderson's poetic theory and practice. On the other hand Dudek read such American moderns as Hart Crane, Williams, Edgar Lee Masters, E. E. Cummings and Kenneth Fearing in order to find models and arguments for *First Statement* predilections. Such intensive reading and the ensuing vigorous debates helped Dudek to clarify and substantiate further his own views of poetry and its function. He became more adamant in his belief that to be vital poetry must be rooted in experience and must not become "literary" or be allowed to rest in conventional patterns. Reflections of his reading and his views can be seen in the poems he was writing at the time — poems rich in social content and personal observation — which vary from free verse to tightly structured rhythmic patterns with many experiments in between.

Thirdly, Dudek's share in the actual production of the magazine deepened his awareness of the dependence of literature upon the physical, material and economic exigencies of publication. Watching *First Statement* grow from its mimeographed form into print, learning to operate the rickety, ancient handpress, contributing from his own pocket to buy paper on which to print, sharing reluctant decisions to cut size and format to suit financial means, these and many other practical aspects of publishing a literary magazine impressed upon Dudek the stringent conditions which society imposes on poets. It is typical of him that he could not accept these conditions without profoundly questioning them. Indeed he was to spend the next twenty years attempting to understand their origin and to overcome their pressure in so far as he could.

By the end of 1943, Dudek, employed by day as a copywriter in an advertising agency,¹ was becoming restless in his job. He made a decision to leave Montreal

¹ The writer sitting at the desk next to him writing French copy was Yves Thériault. Dudek had early contact with several writers destined to effect a renaissance in French-Canadian letters.

and to get out of the advertising field. He and his wife Stephanie, whom he had first met at a *First Statement* "open meeting", left in 1943 for New York where Dudek was to spend the next seven years.

His departure from Montreal did not, however, signify a loss of interest in the Canadian literary scene. Throughout the New York interlude he kept in close touch with Canadian friends. He corresponded regularly with Alan Crawley of the West Coast poetry magazine *Contemporary Verse*, with Raymond Souster of Toronto, and with Irving Layton and others in Montreal. He continued to publish poems and articles in *First Statement* even after it became amalgamated with *Preview* to form *Northern Review*.

Furthermore, while he was in New York, Dudek's recognition as a Canadian poet grew. As early as 1944 he had appeared as one of the poets presented in *Unit of Five*, edited by Ronald Hambleton and published by Ryerson. In 1946 Ryerson published his first separate book under the title *East of the City*. In 1947 he was well represented in Sutherland's *Other Canadians*; and several of his poems were included, the following year, in A. J. M. Smith's revision of his anthology, *The Book of Canadian Poetry*.

Meanwhile, in New York, Dudek was being exposed to new ideas and new literary associations. He had originally registered at Columbia University for courses in journalism and history but found himself, in his second year, engaged in a Master's programme, taking lectures in literature from Lionel Trilling and in history from Jacques Barzun and the Canadian historian J. B. Brebner.

Trilling's liberal ideas served to wrench Dudek from his rather narrow political base and to expose for him the superficiality of the brand of socialism which he had favoured while in Montreal. The ensuing change in his political thinking, and the increasing though grudging respect he was gaining for academic intellectuals, were reflected in his letters at the time, and were at least in part responsible for the eventual break in his relations with Layton, who remained committed to more or less doctrinaire Marxism and who thoroughly detested academicians of any kind.

Professor Brebner's influence on Dudek was more personal and direct than Trilling's. The Canadian poet A. G. Bailey had written warmly of Dudek to his friend Brebner and as a result Brebner took a personal interest in his progress. Dudek had already conceived the plan of his Master's thesis — it was to be a study of the effects of commercialism on writing under the title "Thackeray and the Profession of Letters" — when Brebner persuaded him to read *A Revolution in European Poetry* by Emery Neff. The book made an impact on Dudek and

when he later met the author he was even more strongly impressed. Neff was a scholar in the tradition of A. H. Thorndike at Columbia. Thorndike's *Literature in a Changing Age* and Neff's *Carlyle* clearly provided the lead for Dudek's growing interest in the sociology of literature. Under the influence of Emery Neff he decided to pursue, beyond the Master's level, his interest in the relation of literature to technological and commercial factors in civilization. He at first proposed to study the profession of letters "from Roman times to the present." But by the time he was ready to begin work on the topic, in the form of a doctoral thesis, it had been narrowed and focused on "The Relations between Literature and the Press".

Apart from his academic associations Dudek found many new friends in literary circles in New York. Among these the most important for his future career were the poet Paul Blackburn, the novelist Herbert Gold, and Cid Corman, editor of the literary magazine *Origin*. He had also come under the influence of the poetry of William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound. It was while he was in New York, too, that he began his correspondence with Pound at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Through such associations Dudek kept in touch with current experiments in writing in the United States and was able to find outlets for articles and for some of the poems which he continued prolifically to produce.

Thus during his years in New York Dudek's academic orientation grew stronger and his poetic development continued. Meanwhile his interest in journalism as a career was abandoned. Though he did some free-lance writing, his studies and his poetry now absorbed almost all his time and energy. He was, by the late Forties, seriously preparing himself for an academic career. Desperate for money at one point, he rushed down to City College of New York to apply for a job teaching Sociology to evening students, since no openings were available in literature. As luck would have it, the Sociology office was closed by the time he arrived. "Just as well!" he says now, "I find it hard to imagine myself teaching Sociology! Anyway, while I was standing outside the office feeling at a loss, someone told me of a position open in the English department and this time I was lucky enough to get the job." So it was that, as he began work on his doctoral thesis toward the end of his New York sojourn, he became not a journalist but a teacher. He found the experience not as alien to his taste as he had thought. He had previously believed that to be a journalist was to be in close touch with actualities. But journalists, to be successful, must too often take on the colour of their times. Dudek wanted very much to change the colour of the times, to be in a position

to criticize and evaluate contemporary life. It was becoming clearer to him that for this purpose there were at least two more fundamental means than journalism. One was certainly poetry; and it began to seem likely that teaching was another.

At McGill University, meanwhile, the English Department had been attempting to establish a policy of having "Visiting Poets" on staff as lecturers for extended periods. Both A. M. Klein and Patrick Anderson had previously enjoyed this distinction. In 1950, Dr. Harold Files, then Chairman of the Department, wrote to Louis Dudek inviting him to apply for such a position.

THE IDEA OF RETURNING to Montreal appealed to Dudek. He was psychologically ready to come home. From the distance of New York he had mourned the lag in poetic activity in Canada which had set in after 1947. There were a variety of reasons for this lag, one being the dispersal of the leading writers who had supported the little magazines of the Forties, another being the growing conservatism of John Sutherland and his gradual disenchantment with Canadian moderns which, reflected in *Northern Review*, eventually disqualified that magazine as an outlet for new Canadian writing. No other little magazine of comparable seriousness existed in Canada until *Tamarack Review* rose from the ashes of *Northern Review* in 1956. In the interim, Canadian commercial publishing houses, traditionally timid, had again become reluctant to invest at a loss in Canadian writing, especially in poetry. Even Ryerson, who had published the new poets generously in the 1940's, narrowed their scope on the retirement of Lorne Pierce from the firm.

Thus in 1950, Canadian poetry was languishing from neglect on the part of publishers. Dudek was convinced of this rather than of the possibility that no good writing was being done. As for himself, he had been pouring out poetry throughout all his years in New York. He was ready to publish. He had submitted a second manuscript to Ryerson in 1950, and it was their decision to publish only a handful of his poems in chapbook form (*The Searching Image*) that perhaps set the spark to his discontent. "I thought a lot of myself in those days," he says now, "I believed myself to be a good poet and felt that my work deserved more attention than the commercial publishers were willing to give it."

The prospect of returning to Montreal as a "Visiting Poet" at McGill University was no doubt a pleasant boost to his ego. It was true, he still harboured

some misgivings about the alliance of poetry with academic life. His appointment would seem ironic to those who remembered his injunctions against such an alliance in the pages of *First Statement* (August 1944). But he had gained considerable respect for some college professors since that time and it no longer seemed to him quite so inevitable that vigorous poetry could not survive in the atmosphere of the university.

So in 1951 he came home, carrying three significant possessions — an unfinished Ph.D. thesis on the relations of literature and the press, a file of the American magazine *Origin*, and a determination to revitalize the poetry movement in Canada by initiating private publishing ventures.

Upon arrival at McGill his exuberance was somewhat dulled by the discovery that the “Visiting Poets” policy no longer obtained. He found himself teaching, instead, English Composition and survey courses in the daytime, and a single course in modern poetry in the evening Extension Department of the University.

But being back in Montreal had other compensations. He was able to renew many old friendships with writers and to make contact with several younger poets eager for encouragement. And he had not been in town very long when he received a phone call from Betty Sutherland, then married to Irving Layton, urging him to reopen his heart to his old friend. The two had ceased to correspond since about 1947 when Layton had taken violent exception, in a series of letters, to Dudek’s changing opinions, especially in regard to political thought, while he was at Columbia. The reconciliation made in 1951 was to prove fruitful for Canadian letters throughout the Fifties, though by the end of that decade the two poets were to be again bitterly estranged.

Layton had, of course, been writing sparsely but steadily throughout the Forties. But, aside from his frequent contributions of poems to magazines, he had published only one book (*Here and Now*) by 1950. Contrary to the expectations of those who had known and liked his work in the early days, Layton had not yet been “discovered” and acclaimed by either the commercial publishing houses or the critics. Even A. J. M. Smith, who had given Dudek’s *East of the City* a favourable review in 1947 and included Dudek’s poems in the 1948 revision of his anthology, had not as yet admitted the talent of Layton. Thus Layton himself was more than receptive in 1951 to Dudek’s messianic enthusiasm in regard to publishing.

Raymond Souster, “the other *First Statement* poet from Toronto”, had fared but little better than Layton. He had appeared, along with Dudek, in *Unit of Five* (1944) and in a selection *When We Were Young* published by First State-

ment Press in 1946, and again in *Go To Sleep World* (Ryerson, 1947). In 1951, when Dudek returned, Souster was bringing out a little magazine, *Contact*, from his Toronto address, and nursing a growing file of his own unpublished poems, though Ryerson was scheduled to bring out a few of them in an eight-page chapbook (*City Hall Street*) that very year.

The three poet friends, with their common needs, grievances and dreams, met together in the summer of 1951 in a house on Dudek's grandmother's farm near Charlemagne, Quebec. On this occasion Dudek dumped on the table, in front of Layton and Souster, the file of *Origin* which he had brought back from New York. The three friends pored over the magazine. They spent many hours critically discussing its merits and its relevance to their own ambitions. Souster, it seems, was especially impressed by Corman's magazine; Layton and Dudek were more critical. At any rate, as Dudek was to write ten years later, "The result was a string of new writers in Souster's *Contact*, Layton's appearance in *Origin*, the Layton discovery by William Carlos Williams, and some of the new work in *CIV/n*, the magazine we started soon after."

The 1951 meeting at Charlemagne had other important consequences. Shortly thereafter, the three poets, determined to see their own work published, as well as that of other deserving Canadian poets, founded Contact Press. Souster's Toronto home became the headquarters of the press but the editorial responsibility was shared equally by all three. Among books to come off the press in its first few years were *Cerberus* (poems by Dudek, Layton and Souster), *Twenty-four Poems* (Louis Dudek), *Canadian Poems 1850-1952* (edited by Dudek and Layton), *Love the Conquering Worm* (Layton, 1953) and *The Transparent Sea* (Dudek, 1956). The editors were also on the lookout for other worthy candidates among contemporary poets. The first result of their search was their publication of *Trio* (poems by Eli Mandel, Phyllis Webb, and Gael Turnbull) in 1954. Later, Contact Press was to publish the work of F. R. Scott, W. W. E. Ross, George Walton and R. G. Everson, from among the older names; and books by Leonard Cohen, Henry Moscovitch, George Ellenbogen, Daryl Hine, D. G. Jones, Alfred Purdy and Alden Nowlan from among the younger poets.

By the end of the Fifties the imprint of Contact Press had become a prestige symbol among writers. Today in 1964 it is thriving, though its real success is not to be measured in money. Two of the founding editors remain, Layton having withdrawn in 1956 to attend to his own burgeoning career. Dudek and Souster have recently been joined by the poet Peter Miller who shares their idealism and lends the practical aspect of his mind (and generously sacrifices his pocket-

book) to the growing organizational needs of the enterprise.

There seems no doubt that the concept of this publishing venture originated with Dudek. Contact Press exists today as a concrete expression not only of the enthusiasm and zeal with which he returned to the Canadian scene in 1951, but also of a deeply ingrained trait of his character: the determination to render his ideals into effective action.

Another example of this determination to make good ideas work is his activity among the younger poets of the Fifties. Shortly after returning to Montreal he had written an article "Où Sont les Jeunes?" (in Souster's *Contact*) calling for young writers to carry on the work of the Forties' generation. And he, together with Layton, helped found a little magazine, *CIV/n*, edited by Aileen Collins in Montreal, which was designed to stir up the local scene. *CIV/n* ran for only seven numbers but it had desirable effects. Younger writers attracted by it, or reacting against it, have since started little magazines of varying fortunes and merit, but all playing their role of giving a public hearing to new poets.

One such recent magazine, *Cataract*, will be remembered perhaps chiefly for its contribution to the final break between Layton and Dudek. A rift between the two older poets had been growing since 1956 and in the ensuing years the younger poets in Montreal tended to split into camps in support of one or the other. Hoping to attract attention to their magazine thereby, the editors of *Cataract* solicited an article from Layton which appeared in their second number (Winter, 1962) under the title "An Open Letter to Louis Dudek." It was a scurrilous letter in Layton's practised style of personal abuse and four-letter invectives. It is difficult, upon reading it, to decide just what Layton was objecting to, since his attack was made in a confusing fashion, on several different levels — personal, literary and ideological, to name a few. But it is clear that Layton treated Dudek as a traitor to a cause; Dudek appears as a professed realist turned intellectual, as a proletarian turned bourgeois, as a man of the people turned academic, and as a poet turned critic, among many other "infidelities." Most readers were appalled at the violence and crudeness of the letter. In its third and last number (July 1962) *Cataract* printed a spirited defence of Dudek written by George Ellenbogen. Dudek himself did not reply in print.

Layton and Dudek had been growing apart since 1956. That year had been an important one for each of them. Layton, having attracted the attention of the public and of commercial publishing houses both in Canada and in the United States, decided to withdraw from Contact Press and to strike out on his own. He was, indeed, about to embark on his astonishing, much-publicized career

as Canada's best known and most controversial poet. In this phase of his development he has combined a rich poetic talent with a flamboyant campaign in public relations and has emerged a literary and financial success unprecedented in the history of Canadian poetry.

Dudek, on the other hand, claimed his doctorate from Columbia in 1955, advanced gradually to become Associate Professor within the English department at McGill, and published his doctoral thesis as a book under the title *Literature and the Press* in 1956. Though he did not become as well known to the general public as Irving Layton, Dudek, within the next few years, won respect among literary and academic colleagues for his publishing enterprises, his critical articles, his lectures and poetry readings. He by no means gave up writing poems, nor his vocation as a poet. It was rather that his commitment to poetry as a way of life had broadened in its implications. Like Ezra Pound, whom he so much admired, Dudek felt the need to spread the gospel of poetry and to justify his faith by works as practical as possible. Thus the encouragement which he offered to young poets, for example, took the form not only of advice and criticism and financial assistance where needed but also of the establishment of further publishing outlets for their work.

To this end he embarked towards the end of the Fifties, on two significant publishing enterprises. One was the founding of *Delta* magazine and the other the establishment of the McGill Poetry Series. The latter is largely a personal venture. It receives no kind of support from McGill University and is not subsidized. Yet it plays the important role of stimulating University students to creative endeavour, and it has so far produced a rather impressive array of young talent in the work of Leonard Cohen, Daryl Hine, George Ellenbogen, Sylvia Barnard, Dave Solway, Michael Malus and Pierre Coupey.

THE OTHER VENTURE, *Delta*, is even more personal. Dudek founded the magazine in 1957, and financially and editorially it is a one-man show. The first few numbers were printed by hand, Dudek's own, on a press which he had bought for the purpose. The contents are selected by Dudek himself and often include his own articles and poems. The editorializing is not restricted to the "Editorial" page. Dudek describes *Delta* as "a complex of poetry . . . interlarded with prose that aims to shake up the conventional subject matter

of verse", but though Dudek occasionally prints letters from readers and snippets of articles drawn from far and wide, he frequently takes the prerogative of appending his personal, often caustic, replies.

Delta by 1964 has run for twenty-three numbers, each one unfailingly stimulating. Dudek describes his decision to launch the magazine as "a great relief to me. At last I was free from editorial boards with their indecision and compromises. I could speak my own mind." He has done just that in *Delta*, and, apart from its value as a repository of new and refreshing poems by many writers, the magazine has revealed to its readers both the remarkable range of Dudek's interests and the peculiarities of his personality as well as the occasional depth of his thought.

Delta favours experimental poems and often deals editorially with questions of verse technique. In this respect the magazine is helpful to anyone trying to follow Dudek's own development as a poet. Over the years he has exhibited widely varying styles in his poems and if readers fail to detect a lasting and distinctive "Dudekian" motif, he himself will share their difficulty. He is still searching for style — "metrical structure" is the term he prefers. His predilection of late years has been for a loose, organic rhythm — "The sea is the only measure of music", he says — and for visually oriented verse patterns rather than rhetorical structures. His admiration for E. E. Cummings is partly based on that poet's experiments in calligraphy; and he has devoted many pages of *Delta* to poems which explore the possibilities inherent in the distribution of black letters on white paper. Students of his poetry will also find "Functional Poetry" (*Delta*, No. 8) and "Lac en Coeur" (*Delta*, No. 10) of considerable interest. They reveal Dudek's intense striving to fuse "things" with "words", to eliminate as far as possible the distinction between the experience and the poem, between life and literature.

Implicit here is a theory which sets Dudek in fundamental opposition to at least three other possible views of poetry current in Canada — the literary allusive traditionalism of a poet like Roy Daniells, the witty seriousness of George Johnston, and the myth-structured poetry of James Reaney. Dudek is especially reactive to the last of these. He has frequently used the pages of *Delta* to make forays against myth, attacking it with the same fervour he uses to attack religion. Indeed, he senses that the mythic consciousness is an aspect of the religious consciousness and berates the "myth critics" for relegating poetry to the position of handmaid just as religion had done. Precisely because for Dudek poetry *is* a religion — poetry is his way of relating to and evaluating existence — he deplores

what he feels is a relapse into prescientific orientation, "The obsession with myth and symbolism is pathological," he says without qualification. His whole life has been directed to the establishment of "conscious and enlightened poetry" as the vehicle for that dimension of experience which once was embodied in pagan and Christian myth. His realist aesthetic, being historical, empirical and sequential, can never come to terms with the a-historical, allusive, symbolic aesthetic derived from myth. Dudek is well aware of this. His antipathy to the poetry of Reaney and others of the "school of Frye" is founded on his rejection of the critical archetypal monism of Northrop Frye which Dudek regards as having strong theistic overtones (See *Delta*, No. 22).

Another of the themes frequently sounded in *Delta* is the relation of poetry to science. Poetry being Dudek's word for Arnold's "culture", the theme is a transposition into twentieth-century terms of Arnold's nineteenth-century campaign. Like Arnold, Dudek believes that poetry can redeem science. Like Wordsworth, Dudek believes that the poet's function is partly to stand at the side of the man of science, "humanizing and transfiguring" the changes the scientist makes in our mode of existence. Like his own contemporary, C. P. Snow, Dudek deplors the existence of two cultures and strives to find a mode of union between the sciences and the humanities. "By a criticism of science, and a criticism of romantic atavism, the two may be brought together" he says. His scientific interests veer, however, to the sciences of Psychology and Biology, these two being most likely to free men and women from the taboos and inhibitions with which religion has saddled them for centuries. Thus, frequently he devotes pages of *Delta* to discussion of the ideas of Julian Huxley, N. J. Berrill, C. P. Martin and other scientists of an acceptable philosophic persuasion.

A refreshing aspect of *Delta* is the frequent inclusion of translations from poetry in other languages. Dudek has Polish, Russian, Italian, German and French at his command for such translations and the result is that the readers of *Delta* are often treated to insights into the work of contemporary foreign poets. But Dudek's linguistic ability is most telling when lent to the Canadian scene. He has developed in recent years a strong interest in the poetic renaissance in French Canada. His command of French permits him to lecture in that language at the University of Montreal, to mingle easily with the French writers and publishers in Quebec, to engage in co-authorship of a book (*Montreal, Paris of America*) with the French-Canadian poet Michel Régnier, and to keep his English readers of *Delta* informed of developments in French-Canadian life and letters. He has recently taken an interest in the broader implications of French-Canadian

nationalism and while on the one hand, in the pages of *Delta* and elsewhere, he seeks to interpret French-Canadian thought to English Canadians, on the other he is cautioning French Canada not to destroy itself by accepting the extreme views of Separatists. Certainly among literary critics, Dudek is one of the few to be intimately concerned with modern movements in both English- and French-Canadian writing.

Thus *Delta*, while serving as an organ of opinion for Dudek himself, provides readers with a rich awareness of the Canadian literary scene and so constitutes one of his important contributions to Canadian letters. The magazine costs him money, time and energy, and he has often talked of giving it up; but if and when he does, the Canadian literary consciousness will have lost a valuable and perhaps (because it is so personal) an irreplaceable facet of expression.

Delta, the McGill Poetry Series, and Contact Press, are merely the major publishing activities of Dudek in the past fifteen years. Yet considering only these, one may well wonder how and when all his zeal was generated. The inspiration for it came during his predoctoral days at Columbia University in the late Forties. Perhaps the original stimulus even for that was his early publishing experience in Montreal which gave him his first insight into the plight of serious literature in an industrialized, commercialized culture. At any rate, students who are curious will find abundant documentation of his interest in this topic in his book *Literature and the Press*. The book was the eventual result of the "unfinished doctoral thesis" he had brought back to Montreal in 1951. He had, in other words, been working on the material in this book throughout the period of his most intensive preoccupation with Contact Press, and the policies of the Press are clearly an application of the principles established in the book. *Literature and the Press* is dedicated to the purpose of "clarifying the condition of the artist as writer in a world of mass audiences," and it insistently documents the ill effects of commercial publishing on literature as an art.

It is ironic that as a book, *Literature and the Press* must be considered a failure. To many readers it appears to be a painful exercise in the methods of graduate school research. But even apart from its form, the book suffers badly when compared to the almost concurrent work in a similar field by Marshall McLuhan. The topic so laboriously "researched" by Dudek was already being so radically reinterpreted by McLuhan (albeit in his own execrable jargon) that Dudek's concepts appear naïve, his methods pedestrian, and his conclusions out of date or irrelevant.

Nevertheless, the book stands as an illumination of the prime and fundamental

concerns of Dudek as a man of letters over a period of twenty-five years. In it, he tracks down his long-standing conviction of the essential antagonism between literature and the conditions of modern society. His search for factual documentation of this antagonism led him to retrace the history of publishing from Gutenberg to the present. He discusses in detail the mechanical operations of printing presses from the simplest to the most modern and complex; the economic advantages of such discoveries as the making of paper from pulp; technological improvements which facilitated mass publication; the growth and policy changes of literary magazines, reviews and newspapers; the emergence of publishing as a commercial enterprise; and the effects of all these and many other factors on the writer and on literary values. The most readable chapter in the book deals with literary magazines and shows convincingly — and prophetically — the importance of the private literary effort in the form of the “little magazine”. Having finished the book, the reader no longer wonders at Dudek’s zeal for publishing. One clearly understands his devotion to Contact Press, *Delta* and the McGill Poetry Series when one reads his conviction that “within the machine and money-profit system, the survival of civilized arts and literature can be maintained only in areas where neither quantity production nor money play a leading role.”

DUDEK’S LITERARY ENERGIES were not entirely expended in publishing and writing poems. He has also produced, since 1951, a number of critical articles. Aside from specific studies of Pratt (*Tamarack Review*, No. 6), Klein (*Canadian Forum*, 1957), Lampman (*Culture*, 1957) and the exchange with A. J. M. Smith in which Dudek defended Layton’s poetry (*Queen’s Quarterly*, Summer, 1956), he has written general articles concerning various stages of the history of Canadian poetry. In such articles he has naturally displayed an intimate knowledge of both the history and current activity of poetry in Canada. His critical preferences, being deeply rooted in his philosophy of life, lead him to express a persistent bias in favour of the realist poet. He is occasionally uncritically generous in his praise of poets like Souster, the early Layton, Alfred Purdy and Alden Nowlan. On the other hand he gives short shrift to the stylistically more complex “literary” poets of either the classical, metaphysical or mythic varieties. He would like, it would seem, to dispose of the rivals to his favourite poetic mode by pronouncing them already dead in one way or an-

other — characterizing the traditionalists as the “stiff-jointed older boys”, and the myth poets as the “young of yesterday” and as “really a digression or even a regression of a kind; interesting but not very promising.” Critically, his disenchantment with Layton, reflected in his *Culture* article of 1958 and in his *Delta* (No. 15) review “Layton on the Carpet”, would seem to stem mainly from his detection of new mythic dimensions and symbolic overtones in Layton’s poetry. The perceptiveness which much of his criticism displays is, however, often nullified by his tendency to overstate his case. The French have a saying: “If you want to get rid of your dog, accuse him of having rabies.” Dudek tends, as a critic, to do something very much like this with poets who do not win his approval.

Several of his most recent articles have revealed the broader humanistic range of his interests. Dudek is of the modern variety of humanists who may be called scientific, if this signifies a concern with cultural matters in their contemporary scientific milieu rather than the traditional humanist’s orientation towards a literary and religious cultural heritage. Of the articles revealing Dudek’s humanistic leanings, “Art, Entertainment and Religion” (*Queen’s Quarterly*, Autumn, 1963) is a sorry example. In a galloping survey of Western culture, Dudek seeks to show that in the modern world “entertainment”, born of a spurious union of commercialism and “irreligion”, has usurped the place of art. The article is murky, pedantic and filled with windy and confused generalizations. Whatever truth there is in it (and certainly it reveals some provocative insights) is almost wholly obscured by his rhetorician’s trick of making one word, religion, stand for many different forces, all of them deplorable, against which the artist is obliged to struggle. His most obvious though perhaps unconscious rhetorical device is to identify religion with Puritanism or narrow dogmatism and then to beat it for not being the “the beautiful open question” which he feels religion should be. The article is not to his credit, either as a thinker or as a writer.

He is on a much sounder footing in “Communication and the World Today” which appeared in *Culture* in the summer of 1962. Here he is obviously drawing on the material from his book and in his expansion of it, he is at ease with telling facts and provocative opinions, especially about the weaknesses and shortcomings of the commercial press. That the article found its mark is evident from the reproof appearing in the editorial column of the *Montreal Star* under the heading “Really, Mr. Dudek!”

As far as poetry is concerned, apart from the experimental poems appearing in *Delta* and elsewhere, Dudek has produced three books in the past ten years. *Europe* (1954) is a long, loosely-structured poem which records his impressions

published in various magazines. It appears so far as a brooding, religious essay along the lines of Wordsworth's *Prelude*. It is, Dudek says, "about God and Politics and Reality all at once without presenting these as a rational discursive idea." In the parts read so far, he allows his thoughts to wander freely through history and the present, through all the countries he has lived in and visited, through all the various experiences he has had. It is a yearning, melancholic, meditative poem revealing occasionally his anger, his laughter, his love, but suffused with a wistful anguished searching for moral truth.

It is a search for form also. The poet who long ago gave up organized religion as the formal vehicle of moral truth and who today strongly resists the mythic and symbolic projections of this dimension of experience, is still engaged in the task he set himself as a young man: to find an alternative style of expression which will make poetry the mode of redemption. Whether he ever finds his new Atlantis, or rediscovers the old, lost, submerged continent, may be mainly a matter of record in his personal spiritual odyssey, but as a poem *Atlantis* promises to be an important major work.

Thus far then, Louis Dudek, poet, publicist, critic — a man of letters in Canada who, though still young, has already won for himself, through his many and varied contributions, a secure place in the history of modern Canadian literature.



PRIVATE PRESSES IN VANCOUVER

Marya Fiamengo

A NEW PUBLICATION from Klanak Press, *Signatures* by F. R. Scott, and a group of three brochures of verse from the Periwinkle Press — *Kyoto Airs* by Roy Kiyooka, *White Lunch* by Gerry Gilbert, *elephants mothers & others* by John Newlove — show the continued vitality of private publishing ventures on the West Coast.

Describing the origins and history of his Klanak Press in *The Canadian Reader* of September 1960, William McConnell writes, "We're only in competition with ourselves." This is a significant comment, and it applies equally to Takao Tanabe's Periwinkle Press, the other concern of a similar nature in Vancouver. There are other resemblances, for it is no accident that Mr. Tanabe's publications immediately remind one in format of those of the Klanak Press. Tanabe has been the designer and typographer for all Klanak Press publications but one, while both presses maintain an excellence of production which is undoubtedly facilitated by the happy condition of being "in competition with oneself."

William McConnell has described Klanak Press as a "Cottage Industry". The epithet is both apt and misleading. Like the best of cottage industries, Klanak Press reflects a care in making, a sense of concern for the workmanship and craft involved, all aimed at a final touchstone of individuality. Unlike cottage industries, however, there is nothing of the homespun or the rustic in the formats that are attained. Their elegance is the reflection of a desire for a pleasing aesthetic whole, in which format and content shall if possible complement each other. The product of this attitude has been five books of unquestionable distinction for design and typography, apart from their literary merit.

The Quality of Halves, a first book of poems by Marya Fiamengo and Klanak's first publication, received honourable mention in *Typography* '59. The second

publication, *Klanak Islands*, a collection of short stories, was exceptional on several counts. First, it was a venture into prose publication, which is relatively expensive, with a larger press run of 1,500 copies as opposed to the 630 copies of *The Quality of Halves*. Secondly, the eight stories chosen were works by eight Western writers of varying reputation, ranging from Henry Kreisel, the best established, to the relatively new and unknown voices of Margaret Mills, Marion Smith and Raymond Hull; these stories were accompanied by illustrations by artists — also from the West Coast — such as Don Jarvis, Robert Steele, Ben Lim and Herbert Gilbert. Collections of short stories not only cost more to produce than verse, but also seem to have a more limited appeal, yet *Klanak Islands* continues to sell steadily and to justify the publishers' determination to extend their scope. The format of the third Klanak volume, *Rocky Mountain Poems* by Ralph Gustafson, was undertaken by Ben Lim, whose design won an award at the Stratford Festival of Typography in 1960. Like its predecessor in verse, *The Quality of Halves*, *Rocky Mountain Poems* has sold well; both books, almost sold out, are becoming collectors' items.

F. R. Scott's outstanding volume of translation, *St. Denys Garneau and Anne Hébert*, appeared with Klanak Press in 1962, and now it is followed by Scott's own volume, *Signatures*. These poems have the qualities we have learnt to expect from Mr. Scott — the satirist's wit, the elegance of the civilized man, the seriousness of the poet, and the eloquence of a former Dean of Law. They do not strike one as supreme examples of lyricism, and they sometimes fall short of rapture when rapture is intended, as in "Heart" and "Lips", but they are invariably perceptive and astute. They provide a welcome relief from the intense young men who wear their intense egos on sleeves of basic vernacular.

The forging of new identity; the discovery of the self as "being", expressed in the imagery and the process of geologic and human evolution; an ironic sense of the repetitiveness of human error; these are the themes which preoccupy Scott: these and the ever prevalent Northern vastness and solitude which broods over the geography of Canada — a "land so bleak and bare/a single plume of smoke/ is a scroll of history." *Signatures* is a book whose poems indicate a sensibility both varied and accomplished, expressed in a verse that is satisfyingly finished, even if on occasion it is neatly eloquent rather than profound.

In welcoming this latest production of the Klanak Press, it seems appropriate to comment on the singular initiative, imagination and taste of the Press's founders, William and Alice McConnell. Not only have they exhibited a serious concern for the fate of much writing which for commercial reasons might not

otherwise have found a publisher, but they have also translated this concern into the acceptance of an active personal responsibility. Yet their sense of responsibility to the writer has been matched by their trust in the existence of a discriminating audience which would respond to their venture. The McConnells find that they have not been disappointed. Klanak Press, while it does not make a profit, does not lose money. And the final financial concern of these publishers is to break even, or at most to make a small profit that can be used to continue their work.

PERIWINKLE PRESS is the private printing venture of Takao Tanabe, who divides his time between the twin obsessions of painting and typography; he insists that his obsessional interest in typography was the result of an association with Robert Reid, the former British Columbian printer and the pioneer in fine typography on the West Coast.

Periwinkle Press began with the publication of handsome broadsheets, poems by Phyllis Webb and Robin Mathews, open letters by the painter Joseph Plaskett and the director of Vancouver's New Design Gallery, Alvin Balkind. It could be said of Tanabe's work as a typographer that he "touches nothing that he does not adorn." His broadsheets were a triumph of taste, and the three brochures of poems which have now appeared are equally impressive. Since Periwinkle Press is non-commercial, the books are published without profit and for the cost of materials, the printer in a sense subsidizing them by contributing freely his time, his experience and his skill.

The design of all these three books is neat, unobtrusive and simple, yet in each case subtly suited to the tone of the individual work. In the case of Gerry Gilbert the tone is one of quiet, personal lyricism. The poems in Mr. Gilbert's *White Lunch* are the direct and tender minutiae of a private life. In the main they arise out of the experience of marriage and parenthood, as in the case of "Marriage and the Maple Tree", where the self of a child is juxtaposed against adult awareness. "I came to my childhood and said/to myself your mother is a maple tree."

There is a certain monotony owing to the evenness of tone which runs through the collection. Yet in the final poem, "The Man in the Valley", poignancy gives way to a sharper tone, a stronger, more assertive voice. The final image is arresting; "the glow of the fat burning in the loose coffin" provides light, the image,

the imagination through which the poet becomes aware of the vulnerability and fragility of both the creative and physical self in the face of death. "Paper is not thinner than/I am is not the servant that I am/to ink, the shadow moving under the mountain."

Kyoto Airs, by Roy Kiyooka, are the poems of a painter. They have the quality of Japanese art at its best, severe and delicate restraint. There is the occasional obvious poem, where the subject defies the simplicity of approach; "creased with dust/the painted smile looks back" in "Reclining Buddha" is a descent into the commonplace. Most, however, have the terse strength and spareness of "The Warrior". "Did/they lie here — her pale/white face/upturned/to his/beneath his cherry/tree where they lie buried/his brother too." Sometimes a hint of coldness intervenes, as in the irony of "The Guest", but on the whole it is the exact delicacy of "the sash you bought/for my ukata is/firm around my waist/how else tell/of a brother and sister/thirty years parted/drawn together, again." These poems certainly gain from the unity of theme suggested by the title, *Kyoto Airs*. They are the poetic record of Kiyooka's visit to Japan, his family there, and the shrines of his people.

John Newlove has written more impressive poems than those which appear in *elephants mothers & others*. The language and imagery of his earlier volume, *Grave Sirs*, strike one as fresher and sharper than those of *elephants*. The new collection is, nonetheless, interesting in itself. If an almost too tender vulnerability to experience is the characteristic of Gerry Gilbert's verse, a stern and strict honesty is explicit in John Newlove's. There is considerable self-appraisal and self-analysis; there is also an open and compelling strength, as well as compassion, in such lines as "Smelling your blood, dear friend,/I have more fear than I can use/young and morbid and alive, and so/I spare a part of it for you." It is this sense of the validity of the "other", a sense of groping toward the responsibilities of love that is most moving in Newlove's work. "Half in love with the grimacing girl/whose tears I regret, is/half in love with myself."

Mr. Newlove's work shows the intrinsic attitude towards experience that is essential in the making of art, an intelligent and sensitive awareness as well as a completely honest evaluation. He is capable of the purely lyrical response: "And as the trees, a small girl/said once, make the wind/move, you the leafy trees thusly/make me move, and so move me."

There are weak and even unsuccessful poems in this book, but these are the expected growing pains of any young poet — and John Newlove shows a power of poetic growth that promises well for his future as a poet.

PRIVATE PRESSES

It is something of a reassurance to find in Vancouver the taste and venturesomeness displayed by Klanak Press and Periwinkle Press. One hopes they will act as incentives to other ventures of a like nature or even form a challenge to commercial publishers to move in a similar direction.



REFLECTIONS IN A POOL

Ethel Wilson

I AM OLD ENOUGH to remember the older members of the previous generation and the much older members of the generation before that — dwindling towards their close — and, like large slow-moving fairies in white beards or white caps, the survivors of a generation before that, who chiefly existed in quotations, or in palely inscribed ink on brittle paper, or on gravestones.

Turning the binoculars of the living on to the far remembered dead, I discover that although my maternal and paternal forbears derived from stocks which were similar in beliefs, customs, and low income levels, their very differing characteristics persisted through the three generations that I knew — or nearly knew. In our quite changed and mobile world of today, these characteristics are no longer characteristic. My maternal forbears were urban, my paternal forbears were rural. They lived in parts of England then remote from one another. Now they are all over the place and in all kinds of occupations. My Mother's forbears were strict Dissenters; my Father's were Dissenters but un-strict. They were both better than gold, far better than money, and when I speedily became an orphan, both families held out their hands, ready to give loving care to a child. I was taken into my Mother's family and was cared for by them. That is a great proof of goodness — to take a child and care for it.

What has begun to interest me in the backward look is that, in the three older generations of my maternal family which I can remember, the capacity for being shocked was highly developed and regarded. It may have been a quite reasonable preservative and a reaction against certain bygone dangers which I do not know. There was not, of course, as much to be shocked at as there is today but, taking the conventional world as it then was, the capacity for experiencing shock, and the discussions involved, were considerable, and cherished. The objects of shock

were confined to the very small conformities and circumference of the life of those generations, and included the incorrect uses of spoons, the right occasions for boots, the silence or importunity of children, caps or no caps, beards or non-beards, delay of christenings, small religious discrepancies. Shock did not need to extend as far as adultery, of which there was relatively little in the middle classes of those times. As far as I can see, there was nothing to be shocked at within the lives of those generations. Shockedness had become a kind of domestic duty or fetish and perhaps had its value, but did not amuse. Those generations were kind, stern, sometimes merry, but had little humour; their workmanship was sound. They were incapable of deceit or cruelty. Come to think of it, they shared the characteristics of Jane Austen's Sir Thomas Bertram, but unlike him, had neither great income nor estate.

My Father's family, and pre-families, on the other hand, seemed unable to be shocked. The spoons and boots did not matter, nor the delay of christenings, not even the fact that my Father and his brothers were taught in school by an unprincipled young Frenchman whose name was Paul Verlaine. When, long after the death of my Father, I remembered the name and read about the goings-on and poetry of Paul Verlaine, I found this difficult to believe, but hoped it was true. I went to see my half-uncle Herbert and said, "Uncle Herbert, can it be true that Paul Verlaine was your schoolmaster and Father's too?" and to my surprise Uncle Herbert said, "Yes, he was." So I said, "Oh Uncle Herbert, tell me some of the things that Verlaine said and did!" and Uncle Herbert said, "I'm sorry my dear, but I only remember that he roared at a very snivelling boy 'Sir! Sweep your nose!' and that's all I remember of the words of the poet Verlaine."

I told Kildare Dobbs about that and he gave me a little book in which was a drawing by Max Beerbohm of Paul Verlaine in a top-hat escorting a crocodile of little schoolboys also in top-hats. It looks incongruous. They all appear vindictive, including Paul Verlaine. Verlaine must have moved up into a higher bracket of schools, because in my Father's village the boys did not wear top-hats. This was before the Rimbaud days and those later harridan Eugénie days in Paris, and perhaps before most of the poetry which must, however, have been brewing.

My Father's family and pre-families seemed to have had swift perceptions and senses of humours that made life amusing whether rural or urban, but not commercially productive. In the few years in which I remember my Father, life was luminous and merry and beloved, although I was sometimes whipped on my hands with the back of a hairbrush. I always started to bellow while the hairbrush was still in the air and before it touched me — gently. I became difficult

when, in my reading lessons I (aged 5) could not understand the meaning of the word “the”. I asked “*What* is a ‘the’?” My Father tried to explain but could not tell me. “But what *is* a ‘the’? What does it do?” He could not say.

It may or may not be because my Father’s county, Lincolnshire, had a mild and milky name or because it is a county of fells and a few fens but chiefly flat pastoral country, that boys were adventurous and wished to leave it and did leave it. Vikings and refugee French had arrived there and have left interesting linguistic remains, but the first departer that I know of is Captain John Smith whom we associate with Pocahontas and continental wars. There were of course the escapers to the New World who gathered at the little Lincolnshire town of Boston and carried the name away with them, and I have seen in village churches the memorials of Arctic explorers. My Father’s eldest brother Tom went to Africa, full of gaiety, and was at last thought to be dead, for no more was heard of him. The next brother went to Australia, and then my Father after a year or two at Trinity College, Dublin, went off to Africa too. Of the half-sisters, one went to Russia, one went to South Africa (in failed near-money-less search for her half-brother Tom, I do believe), returned to England and became a journalist and Garvin’s right-hand man on the *Observer*. The third sister who was dreamily and intensely musical went to Germany and became the last pupil of Clara Schumann. She translated Schumann’s letters and, later, Pushkin’s poem *The Tale of the Golden Cockerel*, published in an elegant little yellow book with a commentary by Raïssa Lomonossova. She returned to England prepared for a brilliant musical career. She never had it, as she soon married a feckless clever character on the staff of *The Times*, and between them they translated Spengler’s *Decline of The West*. He left her and took up with someone else who took to drink. To this sad family my half-aunt, who was an agnostic, gave angelic care. She was charming; her tastes were musical and intellectual, not domestic. She had a sweet fatigued voice, like silk or a lute. Her middle name was Waller as her step-side of the family was descended from Edmund Waller the erratic poet who wrote “Go, lovely rose! Tell her that wastes her time and me.” I used to feel deprived that it was only my Father’s step-side who were descended from Waller, as it struck me that otherwise I could claim an addiction to writing from him. But no. I have long recovered from that desire, and it does not matter; anyway he was not a reliable character.

UNCLE HERBERT told me a story of a meeting that my Father had in Africa which I have always pictured vividly in my mind. It was in a bright-coloured country and there were Zulus there, and some Kaffirs. A very tall Zulu gave my very tall Father a big Stick of good fortune. But it brought no luck to my Father nor — later — to me. Soon after he married, his young wife died; then he died; then the stick vanished and practically all I had of my Father's was his little ten volumes of Shakespeare which have brought me more happiness than the stick could have brought to anybody. Missionaries in Africa have only treasure in Heaven to leave to their children.

In this bright-coloured part of Africa whose name I do not know, my Father lived in a rough sort of little bungalow. He had a Kaffir boy and he had a little horse. One day he was riding along an interminable dusty road into the hills to another village when he saw plodding towards him, raising a small cloud of dust, a man who — as he approached — appeared to have been white once and was now very dirty and wore shabby and ragged clothes. My Father was thinking of something else, yet, as he passed the plodding man and gave him a cursory glance and the man looked up at him, he saw something familiar in that sombre face. The man did not stop, but my Father stopped. He turned his horse and looked after the plodding man with such strange and conflicting memories — the family at home, the present scene, the gay departure of the adventurous Tom, the excitement of letters, the gradual decline, few letters, fewer, no letters, no word of Tom, and at last the parents' buried sorrow. Was this Tom?

My Father, very much moved by all this, rode back to the man who now had stopped, turned, and stood heavily without motion. My Father reined in his horse, looked into the man's face, exclaimed "Tom?" and dismounted. Tom said nothing and it was impossible to know what his feelings were. Humiliation of discovery in this condition? What has your life been? thought my Father as he took Tom's arm and they walked slowly together. My Father was unable to say what he wanted to say, but because he was still young and very boyish he spoke quickly of home, and of his luck in meeting Tom — and look! there is my bungalow!

When they reached the bungalow my Father tethered the horse and took his brother inside. My Father was excited. What the past of this man had been he did not know, nor the future. He and his young Kaffir boy quickly made a simple meal and the men sat down. Tom wolfed his food and hardly spoke. He told nothing. He is suffering, thought my Father, he is thinking of our days and of

some great change and of disappointments. Something makes him suffer very much and he does not want to tell me anything. He is not glad that we have met.

When Tom threw down his knife and fork and pushed back from the table, my Father said, "Would you like to go to bed now, Tom, or shall we go outside and talk?"

"Bed sounds all right to me," said the man.

My Father took him into the other little room where there was a bed and a chair and a box, a bowl and a jug of water. He went to the box and took out his other nightshirt for Tom.

He turned towards the bed. The man had pulled down the bedclothes. He said "Well, goodnight young Robert," and got into the bed, heavy boots and all, dust and all, dirt and all, pulled up the sheet and turned away on the pillow with his eyes shut. Just like sleep. Just like exclusion.

My Father stood and looked down at the stranger in the bed. But all he could think was — He must have suffered. He has confusion and regrets. Everything is lost. He is no longer Tom. He is a stranger.

When my Father awoke from the mat on which he had slept, Tom had gone.

I think, vaguely, that my Father found him again some time later, but I do not know the rest of the story except that after my Father had returned to England with me, Uncle Tom wrote letters, sometimes, and then he died, alone, of enteric fever which spread through Africa, and that was the end of the boy who had left home, so gay.

When I mention the acquired addiction to shock ("I was indeed shocked, Elijah!") of the earlier generations of my maternal family, I also remember that my Father's two half-sisters, whom I loved so much for their unshockability and funniness and cleverness and musicalness, lived and worked in London. They combined being fastidious with not being susceptible to shock. They wanted me to become an actress. They would help. During my holidays from the boarding school to which I had been sent from Canada, I was distributed around to both sides of my family. But I saw my intellectual and amusing half-aunts less and less because my maternal Aunt-in-Chief, in whose kindly care I really was, had a great fear that if I stayed with my emancipated paternal half-aunts I would really go on the stage, and the thought was so terrible. Lost! Forever lost! Years later, when I was a married Canadian, my husband came to know and love my half-aunts as I did; but it was then too late to go on the stage. I had never wanted to, anyway.

GROUNDHOG AMONG THE STARS

*The Poetry of
Raymond Souster*

Louis Dudek

Get out your gun and call to your dog,
Get out your gun and call to your dog,
Away to the woods to catch a groundhog,
Groundhog, groundhog.

AMERICAN FOLK SONG

SOUSTER'S POEM "The Hunter" is the first poem of his I ever read, and it remains for me to this day a key to his poetry:

I carry the groundhog along by the tail
all the way back to the farm, with the blood
dripping from his mouth a couple of drops at a time,
leaving a perfect trail for anyone to follow.

The half-wit hired-man is blasting imaginary rabbits
somewhere on our left. We walk through fields steaming after rain,
jumping the mud: and watching the swing of your girl's hips
ahead of me, the proud way your hand holds the gun,
and remembering how you held it
up to the hog caught in the trap and blew his head in

wonder what fate you have in store for me.

It was in 1942. *First Statement*, a little mimeographed magazine, was in its beginning (later it became *Northern Review*) with John Sutherland as editor, and Audrey Aikman (soon after, his wife) for associate. Irving Layton and I had

just joined the group. We were sitting in a shabby room on Stanley Street in Montreal — a street now demolished to make room for parking lots and subways — deep in an old chesterfield with horsehair sticking out through the rents. “This is the kind of poetry we want,” the three of us agreed as we read the Souster manuscript together. There was actually a snag in the syntax of that poem, toward the end, which we took the liberty of correcting. It has stood with this improvement in almost all the Canadian poetry anthologies since then.

The recent publication of *The Colour of the Times: The Collected Poems of Raymond Souster* by the Ryerson Press brings to an end the period of Souster’s hothouse fame with a few admirers and makes him known and appreciated by a much larger audience of readers. It is time for the critic also to put aside the bugle of the *Town Crier* and to look at him more closely, more thoughtfully, and with more leisure for the shape and nuance of his art.

The Colour of the Times contains 256 poems. It replaces the Contact Press *Selected Poems* which I edited and published (at my own expense, let it be known) in 1956. The *Selected Poems* only recently went out of print. It contained 100 poems; but only fifty of these are retained in the new *Collected Poems*. Thus the new book contains 206 uncollected poems, but it omits a good number which have become standard Souster material. For the reader who wants to know what he is missing, I will list the most important poems which he must still look for in the old *Selected Poems*:

- “The Enemies”
- “When We Are Young”
- “Apple-blow”
- “Phoney War”
- “Green, Wonderful Things”
- “Queen Street Serenade”
- “Ersatz”
- “Sunday Night Walk”
- “Litter of the Last Rose”
- “Girl in the Gumbo”
- “The Hospital”
- “Fredericton”
- “Nice People”
- “Scandal”
- “Five Dollars”
- “The Specialist”
- “Breakfast: Old Lady in Hospital”
- “The Eggshell Blue”

“First Spring Day in the Canyons”

“Girl at the Corner of Elizabeth and Dundas”

(The economic pressures of publishing, where “we cannot go beyond 125 pages”, is probably responsible for this catastrophe. In the case of poetry, especially a Collected Poems, surely it is the poems themselves which must dictate how much space will be allowed.)

A good number of the poems, also, have undergone some revision, in vocabulary and verse arrangement; usually to the good, but sometimes losing the force of the original. Polish is not always perfection, and energy may be better than trim propriety. To take one example:

And our friends of the dance-floor
Guzzling pop, tearing the skins of hot-dogs —

has become in the new version —

and our friends of the dance-floor guzzling pop and piercing
the sad skins of hot-dogs.

The change loses a violence which the original contained, and replaces it with a lethargy of ageing disillusion. As we shall see, this is an aspect of the later Souster, incompatible with “limbs aching with desire” recorded in this poem (“Cape Breton Summer Evening”).

Let’s go back to “The Hunter” to study Souster’s ambivalence about sex. On the one hand, we have the girl, masterful and desirable: “watching the swing of your girl’s hips/ahead of me” (sexually ahead of the speaker, perhaps). Yet at the same time she is the ruthlessly cruel female. The poet ruefully and ironically studies his strange fear of her. This mixture of desire and fear is a keynote of Souster’s personality; or rather, the opposition of love and cruelty, the twin poles of his sensibility, is the dramatic centre of his poetry. The “half-wit hired-man” is a further projection of mindless violence, toward the weak and timid — “rabbits”. But most significant of all, the groundhog, the victim of ruthlessness (on the part of the woman), and explicitly partner-in-fate to the lover, is being dragged by the tail, the blood “dripping from his mouth a couple of drops at a time”. It is certainly a trail to follow.

The ecstasy of sex is one of the sources of high lyric delight in Souster’s poetry. To complicate the matter, we have horror, or fear, associated with sex. In the poem “Night Watch” the unconscious crowd is whooping it up “at Angelo’s with wine and spaghetti . . . at Joe’s, Mabel’s or Tim’s Place . . .” while the lovers stand

here with the lean cold pushing the light from the stars,
 here under ghost buildings, here with silence grown too silent,

you and I in this doorway like part of a tomb,
 kissing the night with bitter cigarettes.

I would point out the simile of the tomb, the cold, the stars, and the ghost buildings, in this picture, as providing one side to a three-cornered drama: the horror of the night; the ignorant merrymakers who know nothing about it; and the lovers who know their love and desire. But to know love in this way is to know also the night, the cold, and the terrible silence. The linking here of love and death, against the blind distractions of the city crowd, is only one example of Souster's fine, exact, yet quite undeliberate imagination. Once the relevance of his imagery is established, there is hardly a poem which does not contain some such subtlety.

A very fine poem of the early period, "Dominion Square," presents the lovers as almost mythical beings, at one with the night, the cold, the rain outside, while the speaker hurries to escape into the warm tavern with its human hubbub. (This poem has been drastically revised; I do not know whether I do not prefer the early version.) We should note the pattern of thought:

They wouldn't understand my haste
 in getting out of the rain, in leaving this cold
 wind-blowing night . . .
 . . . they seem almost part of the rain
 . . . they seem almost part of the night,
 these two lovers,
 with their slow lingering steps, their total unawareness
 of everything in this city but their love . . .

The hard inhuman features of the city are frequently used by Souster as correlatives of human indifference, cruelty, blindness. This is the shape of evil in his poetic hell and heaven:

City, while the night rides high, the filth, the stink, is forgotten,
 what the sewers run with, what the hospitals throw in the garbage,
 what the stockyard breathes, becomes

the dancing neon, the white necks, the glittering encore,
 the multiplying mirrors . . .

 ("Night-Town")

Opposite to this, there is love and compassion. For this reason the two lovers in “Dominion Square” with “their total unawareness/of everything in this city” are wondrously moving in a mythical space beyond our lesser human evil, and also beyond the greater menace of “night” and death: “they seem almost part of the night”. (The significance of that “almost” emerges at once.) And the paradox is that the human world of noise and unconsciousness — which is in fact “the city” — is at the same time a shelter. In Souster’s poetry certain features of city life become rich havens of recreation and pleasure — he loves the jazz, the lights, the crowds, the eating places — when these are seen as temporary refuge from the cold of space (death) or the inhumanity of man.

In the city proper, with its “black-hearted buildings”, life is slowly but relentlessly destroyed. Compassion is eroded away and cruelty wins out. In the biography of a criminal, “Court of General Sessions”, the life story of a city-dweller in this mythology is sketched: street gangs, poolrooms, dance-halls, girls in borrowed cars, crap games, cops . . . culminating in the “Army years/learning to be tough, to kill.” This is the essential story; and war in Souster’s poetry is the ultimate shape of evil. It is killing suddenly made plain as the reality and purpose of life, while the poet stands against it, opposed, as pacifist.

We can now read a poem, another about a kind of groundhog, in the light of this interpretation of the imagery, and see how apt the simple details suddenly become:

I want to put it down
 about the animal
 that burrowed its way
 under my back porch,
 but there’s not really much
 to say: simply, some animal
 fearing winter’s approach,
 the season of death,
 has tried to find shelter,
 and I, half in my stupid
 human fear and half
 in my pride of possession,
 have sealed him out
 so ingeniously
 with my boards and shovel,

 then gone inside
 to be out of the cold,
 quite proud of myself.

It is remarkable here that Souster implicates himself in the guilt of cruelty. We find this repeatedly in his poems, a moral equation that refuses to put the poet himself on the side of the untainted, the arrogant and free, and involves him in the common fate, of pain and guilt. This poetry is essentially Christian in its assumption of guilt and compassion; and it is a poetry of the common people in its participation on humble terms in life. (Souster has said in private that he is “a working class poet”, a title which no one will be willing to contest with him in this era of affluence and conspicuous spending.)

For just as he is involved in guilt with mankind, so Souster bears the fate of suffering with average mankind. Often in his poems he is a trapped creature, living the life of a victim and captive of society. At the personal level this may even appear as weakness — perhaps it is; at any rate, it is the voice of a poet who is not above the modern urban situation, but who is entrapped in it, and records its private agonies with a personal accent.

On this theme, the sense of frustration and inescapable boredom is conveyed in such a poem as “Yonge Street Saturday Night”:

and there are some like us,
just walking, making our feet move ahead of us,
a little bored, a little lost, a little angry,
walking as though we were really going somewhere,
walking as if there was something to see at Adelaide or maybe
on King . . .

No reader can fail to be struck by this side of Souster in despairing poems like “Bridge Over the Don” or “In Praise of Loneliness”. The tone of desperation creeps in everywhere, and is projected often into others, men, creatures, objects, as in “Old Man Leaning on a Fence”, “Litter”, “Sucker Run”, “The Child’s Umbrella”. Even such a poem as “The Tame Rabbit”, with its naïve correlatives of entrapment, belongs in this sequence, as the closing lines of the poem make clear:

So the cage for you
and the swinging by the ears,
that’s all there is
for you, little one,

and come to think of it
why should you, rabbit,
be any better off
than the rest of us?

The entire poem is extremely significant.

For after all, the groundhog (or rabbit, or ferret) is unquestionably the poet himself: looking for spring in the middle of winter, not finding any (as in the poem "Groundhog Day, 1960"), getting shot or wounded for his trouble, digging in to stay holed up through a long bad season. "Groundhog's My Nature" says Souster in the poem with that title:

Groundhog's my nature:
hole up deep in winter,
walk cautious above ground
in spring and summer:
leave a piece
of arm or leg
and a smear of blood
in the crafty hunter's trap
just to hold his interest.

PERHAPS WE CAN GO back now to the unresolved mystery of the poem "The Hunter". Just as groundhogs, ferrets, rabbits, squirrels, rodents, and captive bears (they hibernate) appear in Souster's poems as variants on a single theme — of the secluded and beleaguered self, the victim, or the canny enduring animal — so the cat and the cat family is the counterpart female symbol. "The cat comes at me . . ." in the poem titled "The Cat at Currie's":

The cat comes at me
slowly, cautiously, one pad before the other,
lifting the springing muscles over,

then strikes — to find me ready
and she unready — rolls over on her back,
fighting the losing battle with my hands
which soon pin her down: . . .

Some critics would say the poem should end here. The sexual overtones and the man-woman relation has been sufficiently implied — or has emerged from the poet's subconscious. But Souster has a genius for clarion declaration, and his privilege to make it should not be denied him:

... and as I hold her
 I remember your body, more soft, more pulsating
 than this sleek animal's, your arms more deadly,
 lips more engulfing
 and I let the cat go . . .

The word “deadly”, confirming the metaphor of “strike” and “battle”, may remind us of the gun that “blew his head in” in the “Hunter” poem. Nor is the fear of woman superficial or particular: it is a profound fear of the sexual abyss — “engulfing” — which is always associated with death, and which like any fear can only be quieted by a reassuring love.

Paradoxically, as we have already perceived, this same source of fear, sex, becomes in Souster's poetry also the greatest of ecstasies, a kind of heaven; or in the groundhog metaphor, the safe hideout from all troubles, the one reassurance in a world of cruelty and indifference.

Deep in the middle
 of this forest a cave
 made for only one
 where I often go
 to escape from man
 his cruelty
 his desolation

A small neat cave
 always warm
 always beckoning

To get there I head
 for two far birches
 then slide through moss
 to the waiting wide
 cavern of her love!
 (“The Cave”)

And best of all, in “A Bed Without a Woman”:

A bed without a woman
 is a thing of wood and springs, a pit
 to roll in with the Devil.

But let
 her body touch its length and it becomes
 a place of singing wonders, eager springboard
 to heaven and higher.

And you may join her there
in those hours between sleeping and the dawn.

Once the pattern of the poet's expression, in images as vehicles for recurrent emotions, is established, even the most trivial poems yield a nuance of meaning which adds to their fascination:

. . . you throw your slippers
across the room at me, one, two,
but checking your anger enough
so they come at me lightly
which is why I suppose
I go on loving you.

What the poem tells us is that the woman's anger is, in this event, harmless, discharged by love or temperamental mildness. She is incapable of any ruthless cruelty: "which is *why* I suppose/I go on loving you." The groundhog, let us remember, is phonetically "hog" as well as earth-born creature, and his base proclivities are humanized as well as domesticated by gentle exercise in the institution of marriage. Marriage, in fact, can be a lair or cave in the middle of the forest, where one can escape "from man/his cruelty/his desolation".

Despite these compensations, however, the permanent ground of Souster's poetry is human deprivation and loss. Unlike other poets who find their dream of happiness and fulfilment in the future, or even in the present, he looks backward to the past. "John warns me of nostalgia," carries the theme ("John" is the late John Sutherland, editor of *Northern Review*). Happiness is "a lost but recovered joy"; and all are "groping for something lost they will never find/in the drab of the street, in the dirt, in the smoke, in the noise." The imagery of youth usually conveys this meaning of loss in Souster's poetry, as in "Young Girls", where it is also an image of sexual promise; or in the poem remembering boyhood —

It's nothing but desire to live again, fresh from
the beginning like a child.

Some of his most moving and beautiful poems turn on this theme: "Not Wholly Lost," "Lagoons, Hanlan's Point," "Lambton Riding Woods," "The Amusement Park". But the return to youth is only one door to a lost heaven. The ideal good also shines for him in the natural world — where the epiphany is a total return — in images of "snow" and "green", in ecstatic jazz, in perfected

love, or in “the great/untroubled/voice of poetry”. As we shall see, also, joy is often the achieved reward of Souster’s patient realistic vision, so that retrospective nostalgia is only a more defeated direction in an idealism that ends in measure and acceptance.

The sense of loss and deprivation, the erosion of time, the cruel impersonality and brutality of the city are nevertheless the groundwork of these poems. Nor is it a private and personal condition limited to the poet. The bulk of Souster’s poetry deals with other people — the people of the city — and these are truly observed, not faceless democratic symbols as for example in Carl Sandburg. They are actual individuals (not that characterization is any aim in poetry); their pain is real, and their “wasted bitter years” are specific as their deaths and entrances. A personal predicament is projected outward in this human landscape, and at the same time a truth about the general life is revealed (since the individual is our source of knowledge about the universal, the mass, and a single imagination, if it has poetic scope, sympathy, the gift of extension, becomes representative for mankind).

If the groundhog is the signature of the poet in this book, there could be no better illustration of the transfer of the personal to the level of objectivity than his use of this figure in describing a city-dweller. He provides this for us in the poem “The Quarry”:

The terrified look
on the groundhog’s face
looking from his hole
one instant ahead
of the trap’s deadly spring,

I saw today
in the ferret stare
of the old lady lush
up Bay Street somewhere,
wandering like a child
bewildered, crushed,
in and out of the crowds,

waiting, waiting,
for that blow to fall.

Obviously Souster’s verdict on modern life is not very cheerful. Whether there is truth in this picture of waste, vanity, frustration, poverty and desperation, we may

allow the reader to judge. The poetry is not a sociological survey filled with ideological jargon, nor is it a political language about power or prestige or money; Souster's depiction of modern life is humble, human, and close to the satisfactions and discomforts of the average man. He shows people in their intimate real moments of despair, love, and pleasure. And the first of these is the ground-tone of his canvas of life.

IMAGES OF ESCAPE, liberation, total self-realization on a plane of pure fantasy, will be found in Souster's poetry. These are important, but they should not distract us from the main direction of his development. There is "The Old Prospector" who advises him to "get out of here/leave the city . . ./Move out, buy a fruit farm . . ." There is the memory of liberty and self-realization in the war years ("our careless/new-found, exploding strength"); and the memory of childhood as the continuing promise of such freedom ("so much/in the warm darkness around me tingled/with the unknown, the adventurous"). Even jazz is for Souster a realm of freedom, total mobility such as actual life denies:

all this noisy crew bringing
their Manhattan madness up here where we like it quiet
(but never the death-quiet our elders have given it!) . . .
(*"Jazz Concert, Massey Hall"*)

But actually Souster never takes the risk of total abandon, he merely observes and participates by observation, in a wishful fantasy:

The rain is only the river
grown bored, risking everything
on one big splash.

The one most revealing poem where this fantasy of revolt and liberation is explored is "Coureurs-de-Bois". Here the break with moral and religious conformism comes to a head. (Souster, a true Protestant, is a kind of heretical saint, despising Church and State, and even castigating Isaiah and "the over-zealous touch/of Matthew Mark Luke and John"; yet he goes to church on Sunday night — see the poem "Sunday Night Walk" in the *Selected Poems* — and he speaks the grace at table in his own home.) The *coureurs-de-bois* "were glad to get away/from Montreal and its whores, from Quebec/and the Great Bishop's lamentations"/; "they'd wenched, drunk, played their last louis" in the trading centre, and then went "back on the trail" — to "hardship, danger, but as well

the rub/of young flesh among the pines, in the drunken wigwams,/sweet sights of torture, dark flowerings of blood”:

while the whole colony waited their return
for a sight, for a breath of that savour
of utter abandonment to Flesh, Food and Finery,
strong, clean as the forest air sweeping into lives
watered down by the Church and eviscerated by the State.

What fascinates me in this poem is the acceptance of cruelty: “sweet sights of torture, dark flowerings of blood”. Since fear and recoil from cruelty, the impassioned rejection of cruelty, is the mainspring of Souster’s poetry — the city appearing as a monster of indifference, and desire itself a threat of violence — how astonishing to find here “the rub of young flesh among the pines” combined with “sweet sights of torture”. These *coureurs-de-bois*, deeply buried and forgotten in the beginnings of Canadian history, provide a rich symbol of primitive release and catharsis, an emotional correlative of that total orgy of fulfilment and adventure which actual life can never support.

To accept the limitations of actuality, however, is Souster’s primary road of poetic development. Here the fact — at its worst — must be attested in the face of human loss and failure — “It must be like this” — so that we can go on and endure. There are numerous poems that illustrate this direction. In contrast to Souster’s early poems, which expressed their disillusion by means of invective, these middle poems are often starkly objective and non-committal. Since they, too, turn on a conflict between the actual and something lost, irony and ripe humour often come into play; in fact, if the balance falls heavily on the side of harsh reality, cynicism results inevitably, as in the poems “Drunk, on Crutches,” “My First School,” “Another Day”. The neutral objective tone, and the idea of fact remorselessly there to be accepted, may be illustrated in the poem “Girl with the Face of Sores”:

One could get used to this face
by looking long enough at it.

Each separate oozing sore
would develop its own character,
each red valley of irritation,
each rounded hill-top of pus.

Even the white skin fighting
a losing battle beneath — one could find here

the eternal parallel — beauty slowly crushed
by relentless ugliness. . . .

But the eyes are chicken
and partly betray you. And so it's much easier
to turn away, your shame greater than her shame.

I find significance in “beauty slowly crushed/by relentless ugliness” — a general statement or paradigm of Souster's most pessimistic conclusion; but even more so in the first two lines — a statement of reconciliation with reality and of acceptance. “One could get used to this face/by looking long enough at it.” The trouble is, the poet says, that we do not have the courage to do so (and as usual, he implicates himself in the guilt and failure to do so).

Souster, however, does have this courage, as numerous poems attest. Reconciliation with life — with boredom, with suffering, with defeat and death — is his sad and constant achievement as the book advances. It brings a quiet only few can know. The following poem defines much of the same idea in terms of a person who knows only sorrow and cannot come to terms with it:

She waits
for fortune to come to her
like a steeple-chase winner
like a million to the missing heir.

She goes to see the priest
reads her catechism over
then waits for the miracle
to happen.

And I'd tell her
only she wouldn't believe me,
life isn't a matter of luck,
of good fortune, it's whether
the heart can keep singing
when there's really no reason
why it should at all.

Yes, I'd tell her
but she'd only start crying,
her with a heart that never had
the excuse for a single song.

But having learned to sing when there is really no reason at all, when there is no excuse for a single song, Souster is surprised on occasion with the gift of inexplicable joy. Renunciation and acceptance of inevitable tragedy set the stage for a burst of song such as could only be equalled or surpassed by the first promise with which life began. Souster repeatedly discovers poetic ecstasy at the end of renunciation and suffering: as this pattern is perceived, the brief poems at the end of the book readily yield up their honey.

I don't wait for spring
spring waits for me

With a snap of the fingers
I can focus the sun
with a turn of the head
bring warm winds on

So the whole world waits
eyes me patiently
for something to stir
to burst inside me

like the push of a root
or the swoop of a bird!

Astonished himself, this poet of extreme and simple modesty will now address the Muse:

desiring nothing
and expecting little, living only
for your secret, inner praise,
I give thanks
that you, goddess, from so many
should have chosen me
for your cursed and singular blessing.

There is a delicacy of arrangement in *The Colour of the Times* that may be missed by the unwary reader. Again and again poems interpret one another and add nuances of meaning by their placing. Following the poem just quoted, which does perhaps contain a shade of self-approval, we find four lines entitled "Thrush":

The thrush on the farthest-out bough
sings the best song his heart will allow.

And if we haven't liked what we've heard
there's tomorrow and another bird.

(Don't fool yourself, this is no country bumpkin but "the thrush on the farthest-out bough"! And far-out is far-out in any language.)

IF THE FIGURE for Souster the man is the groundhog, then the figure for the poet is that of butterfly or bird. On the last page of the book there is a wild canary, with "the poise/of the high-wire artist" (a reminder of Ferlinghetti), "who takes every bend/every crazy sway/indifferently . . ./intent on his fill" —

then O
the wind must tire of your insolence
for with one great gust he flings
you from your perch, up and over
in a sudden yellow flash
that blinds like the sun.

And following this, in the last poem of all, groundhog becomes "weed-cutter", a plodding efficient metaphor for the creative process:

Be the weed-cutter
steaming slowly the lagoons,
working quietly, well,
your blades searching out
a clearer, deeper channel
than has been before.

Surely this is poetry of the highest order. Apparently casual and even haphazard at times, it has a sureness of touch and scope of vision that will amaze and delight futurity. The best description of it, with the larger implications of the theme we have followed, appears in a single brief poem, "I Watched a Bird," which is one of Souster's finest pieces, and one in which again the bird speaks for the poet (perhaps unawares) yet conveys everything:

I watched a bird blown in the sky
like some poor thing without control,
dipping and swerving here and there
with wings spread wide and motionless.

I watched a bird tossed down the wind
that never fought or uttered cry,
surrendered to that boundless air,
caught up in that great mystery.



LETTRE DE MONTREAL

Naim Kattan

LA RENTRÉE LITTÉRAIRE est tellement lente cette année qu'elle risque de passer inaperçue. Les controverses idéologiques drainent les énergies des jeunes écrivains. Les rares oeuvres littéraires qui ont brisé la monotone succession d'ouvrages médiocres et anodins reflètent les préoccupations politiques de l'élite intellectuelle. Que la ministre des Affaires Culturelles de la province de Québec accorde le premier prix de littérature à un jeune poète qui ne fait pas mystère de son engagement séparatiste n'a rien de surprenant. Non pas que le gouvernement québécois manifeste ainsi son appui à l'un des fondateurs de la revue indépendantiste, *Parti Pris*. Il est bien contraint, cependant, de reconnaître que la meilleure oeuvre littéraire, publiée au cours de cette année au Canada français, est justement *Terre Québec*, où le jeune poète Paul Chamberland chante son attachement à sa patrie québécoise et à la femme qu'il aime.

Michel van Schendel affirme, lui aussi dans *Variations sur la pierre* son engagement et sa volonté de participer pleinement à la vie canadienne-française. Et il est significatif que l'un des romans les plus intéressants, publié ces derniers mois, soit, *Ethel et le Terroriste* où Claude Jasmin évoque l'aventure du F.L.Q.

La pression qu'exerce l'événement sur l'écrivain, le rôle que joue celui-ci dans la cité, son engagement envers son groupe, ne se posent pas théoriquement ou en purs termes académiques. Aussi, l'organisation d'un colloque sur le thème de: "Littérature et société canadiennes françaises", par le Département de sociologie et d'anthropologie, de la Faculté des Sciences Sociales de l'Université Laval, représente, à mon avis, le grand événement littéraire de l'année. Les travaux présentés à ce colloque, réuni du 27 au 29 février, 1964, viennent d'être publiés par la revue *Recherches Sociographiques*. Cet ouvrage sera désormais un document essentiel à l'étude de la littérature canadienne-française.

Je ne voudrais parler ici ni des essais consacrés à l'histoire de la critique littéraire et aux courants idéologiques, ni à l'enquête menée auprès des écrivains, des éditeurs et des libraires sur le statut de l'écrivain et la diffusion de la littérature. Les travaux les plus percutants de ce colloque sont ceux qui furent consacrés aux thèmes de la littérature récente.

Michel van Schendel a traité du thème de l'amour dans le roman canadien-français. "L'amour," dit-il, "est le point de convergence de l'existence sociale et de la littérature". Après avoir puisé dans la littérature universelle des exemples pour appuyer cette affirmation, le jeune poète explore le roman canadien-français. Il constate l'absence de la femme et, par conséquent, de l'amour dans ce roman, particulièrement chez les auteurs du dix-neuvième siècle et du début du vingtième.

Dans ces oeuvres, l'homme n'est pas encore un individu, dit-il, il est le produit de sa fonction anonyme. Il note un autre obstacle à l'éclosion du thème de l'amour dans la littérature canadienne-française: celui de la conquête et de l'occupation. Au dix-neuvième siècle, l'élite intellectuelle vivait en vase clos. "Le lettré québécois," dit Michel van Schendel, "n'était pas un isolé culturel mais, déjà, un monstre au milieu de son peuple." Il aurait pu, dans ce retranchement, parler au peuple, être romancier, mais il n'a pas comblé le fossé. La véritable tragédie qui a frappé les auteurs canadiens-français à la naissance du roman fut le sentiment de la dépossession. "Ce sentiment n'est pas en soi un obstacle à la création. Il est même plutôt un stimulant, car il provoque un besoin de compensation. Mais ce stimulant n'agit que si la dépossession n'affecte pas les moyens grâce auxquels une compensation créatrice peut être trouvée. Or, l'un des aspects les plus sordides de la colonisation du Québec fut justement que l'on fit main basse sur les instruments intellectuels qui sont indispensables à la création".

Le Canada français fut privé des instruments de transmission des traditions. La colonisation a empêché toute expression d'amour, ce point de convergence entre l'existence sociale et la littérature. C'est là, d'après Van Schendel, l'aliénation essentielle, la malédiction initiale.

Certes, van Schendel ne prétend pas faire autre chose que formuler des hypothèses. Il constate une coupure entre la tradition qui a existé avant la conquête et l'élite qui a persisté à s'exprimer en français. Il constate que les pays colonisés comme l'Inde, la Chine et les pays arabes, de même que ceux de l'Amérique latine, ne se sont pas trouvés dans le même cas que le Canada français car, dans ces pays, la tradition est demeurée suffisamment homogène pour qu'il fût possible d'y recourir dans les heures décisives.

L'auteur passe sous silence deux facteurs qui nous paraissent essentiels. A aucun moment, il ne fait mention de la Révolution Française qui, au moins dans la même mesure que la conquête, a coupé les Canadiens français des sources de leurs traditions. Il ne parle pas non plus de l'aventure particulière de la vie des pionniers car, tout colonisés qu'ils eussent été, les Canadiens français n'avaient jamais cessé d'être des défricheurs et des conquérants de terres vierges. Les comparer aux Arabes, aux Indiens, sans faire allusion à leur implantation en terre américaine, fait pencher un peu trop la balance d'un seul côté. En plus de l'absence de la femme, l'auteur mentionne l'inversion sexuelle. Il est inutile de chercher ici des points de comparaison avec les écrivains algériens (l'homosexualité est un thème persistant dans la littérature arabe et bien avant que Driss Chraïbi n'écrive *Les Boucs*, Abou Nawass chantait les jeunes garçons dans le palais d'Haroun al Rachid). C'est dans la littérature américaine non colonisée que nous retrouvons les mêmes courants et les mêmes thèmes. Le critique Leslie Fiedler tente de le démontrer tout au long de son volumineux *Love and Death in the American Novel*.

Il ne sera pas difficile non plus de déceler certaines tendances semblables chez les écrivains canadiens-anglais. Ceci n'infirme aucunement les arguments de Michel van Schendel mais permet d'indiquer d'autres hypothèses que celles de l'aliénation et de la colonisation hypothèses nécessaires à l'examen du thème de l'amour dans le roman canadien-français.

Gilles Marcotte a présenté, au cours du colloque, une communication sur la religion dans la littérature canadienne-française. "Notre littérature, dans son ensemble," affirme-t-il, "ne peut pas être dite chrétienne. Elle fait partie d'une littérature occidentale qui s'est développée hors du christianisme." L'auteur décèle trois thèmes particuliers dans cette littérature: la culpabilité, l'absence du père et la vocation sacerdotale. D'après Marcotte, le religieux, au Canada français, a partie liée avec la culture. Et l'auteur conclut son article en disant: "Le roman canadien-français est né catholique, comme tout ce qui naît ici. Il s'est comporté pendant quelque temps en chrétien du dimanche, c'est-à-dire qu'il remplissait ses devoirs religieux tout en vaquant par ailleurs à ses petites affaires, sans souci de l'expérience de la foi. Puis la révolte est venue, qui a balayé sa foi d'honnête paroissien. Il s'est retrouvé disponible pour toutes les expériences, forcé à toutes les expériences. Au niveau des valeurs religieuses, comme à tous les autres, il n'a pas à conserver, mais à inventer."

Là encore, des comparaisons fructueuses peuvent être entreprises avec la littérature américaine. Aux Etats-Unis, toutes les églises organisées ont eu partie liée

avec la culture, et un nombre considérable d'oeuvres récentes le démontrent, le confirment (C. F. Powers, Bernard Malamud, etc.).

Jean Filiatrault a examiné, au cours du colloque, le thème de la révolte dans le roman canadien-français. Il tire la conclusion que ce qui manque vraiment aux Canadiens français c'est le sens de l'appartenance au groupe, le sens social. "Nous donnons l'impression de ne pas être une société, mais une agglutination d'individus."

A ce sujet, je voudrais citer une phrase de Saul Bellow dans les *Aventures d'Augie March*. Le romancier américain parle de Chicago: "C'est une chose inhumaine que d'avoir tant de gens réunis et dont le contact ne donne rien. Il ne peut rien donner: l'ennui engendre sa propre étincelle, si bien que rien ne se produit jamais."

L'aliénation de l'individu, et les sociologues n'ont pas manqué de le souligner, est un phénomène mondial qui est arrivé à son point d'exacerbation en Amérique du Nord.

Dans ses conclusions, le Père Georges André Vachon remarque que "Nous avons tendance à traiter l'objet de nos recherches comme un phénomène insulaire." Et il ajoute: "Une juste interprétation de ces thèmes est impossible sans recours à la méthode comparative."

Il me semble essentiel qu'avant de comparer le Canada français avec l'Afrique, l'Inde, la Chine ou même la France, qu'on commence par ce qui, malgré tout, nous est le plus familier et le plus proche: le Canada anglais et les Etats-Unis. On sera surpris alors de constater que les Canadiens anglais et les Américains souffrent des mêmes maux et s'insurgent contre les mêmes maux, bien qu'ils ne soient point colonisés.

LES *Ecrits du Canada français* paraissent depuis plus de dix ans. Sous forme de "Cahiers libres", ces *Ecrits* publient des pièces de théâtre, des romans, des nouvelles, des essais, des études littéraires et de la poésie. C'est en même temps un banc d'essai pour les jeunes écrivains et un forum pour leurs aînés.

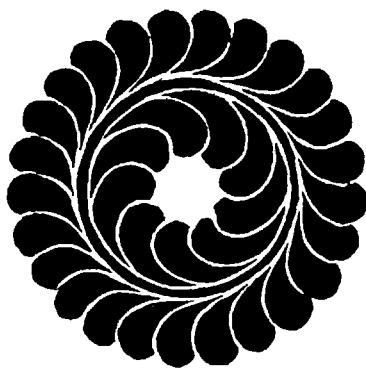
Les *Ecrits* se situent en dehors de tout engagement politique ou idéologique. Cela ne veut pas dire qu'ils ne publient que des textes incolores qui ne risquent aucunement de susciter des controverses. Au contraire, des romanciers, des poètes,

des essayistes, se situant aux antipodes sur le plan de la pensée, voisinent dans les sommaires de cette publication.

La dernière livraison des *Ecrits* (Vol. 18) nous fournit un excellent exemple de la priorité donnée à la liberté d'expression. La jeune génération est représentée par deux des porte-étendard de la nouvelle gauche séparatiste et anti-cléricale. Il s'agit d'André Major et de Paul Chamberland qui appartiennent tous deux à l'équipe de la revue *Parti Pris*. Disons, en passant, que si les poèmes de Major, publiés dans ce volume, marquent un progrès dans l'oeuvre de ce jeune écrivain, la nouvelle de Paul Chamberland est extrêmement décevante. Brillant dialecticien et bon poète, Chamberland l'est indiscutablement. L'insignifiante bleuette sentimentale qu'il fait paraître dans les *Ecrits* prouve qu'il ne peut s'aventurer sans risques dans toutes les avenues de l'expression littéraire.

Nous trouvons également dans ce numéro les noms d'écrivains qui sont encore dans la force de l'âge mais qui apparaissent, injustement, aux yeux des plus jeunes, comme de vieux croulants. La pensée de Maurice Tremblay est vigoureuse et nourrie de connaissances et de réflexions. Il y a quelques années, il publiait dans les *Ecrits* un essai où il s'en prenait violemment au nationalisme. C'est qu'il se situe aux antipodes des édiles de *Parti Pris*.

Le même numéro contient un texte du Rev. Père Ernest Gagnon sur l'art africain. Professeur de littérature, jésuite, le Père Gagnon est un écrivain dont la pensée est d'une haute élévation morale et d'une grande densité.



INNOCENT EYE ON MASS SOCIETY

Thelma McCormack

MARSHALL McLuhan, *Understanding Media*. McGraw-Hill. \$7.50.

I USED TO THINK that Marshall McLuhan was an innocent who had discovered depth psychology and called it "television." Since depth psychology is as good an approach as any to the mass media, a great deal better than some, McLuhan, with all his mannerisms was working in the right direction. This impression is borne out in *Understanding Media* where what he has to say about the mass media of communication is contrived, autodidactic, amusing, occasionally right and occasionally dangerous. But below the surface of his comments about the media is an insight and system which bear serious attention whether one is interested in the media or not. McLuhan has now gone well beyond discovering depth psychology; he has discovered mass society.

The metaphors he draws upon are from preliterate societies. In particular, he is entranced by the group cohesion and group consciousness of an "oral" culture, a term which summarizes a closed, static, tradition-bound social structure where

relationships are face-to-face, where there is scarcely any individual differentiation and only a rudimentary division of labour. In urban industrialized societies, consensus on such a scale is an artifact, achieved by the sacrifice of critical judgement, sustained internally by anxiety and externally by manipulation. To paraphrase McLuhan's most famous dictum: the medium is history: the message is the mass movement.

Content of the media is irrelevant, according to McLuhan. Thus he refuses to be drawn into discussions of Kitsch and popular culture that have so engaged intellectuals in recent years. By "content", he means the manifest content of any particular news story, feature article, TV documentary, etc. The real stuff of the media are not facts, opinions, concepts, but the structure of symbols that emerge cumulatively. Imagine the American constitution rewritten by Joyce and analysed through structural linguistics and you have approximately what McLuhan regards as the substance of the

media. Imagine, also, *Finnegan's Wake* rewritten by Thomas Jefferson and analysed by John Stuart Mill and you have the mistake McLuhan thinks we make.

Our mistake belongs to the age of mechanical technology which produced individualism, scientific detachment, democratic pluralism, nationalism, the sequential analysis of cause and effect, the class struggle, competition, the market mechanism, critical intelligence, a rational approach to social change and a high degree of self conscious awareness. All of them divisive. Electronic technology of the twentieth century is unifying, communal, demanding commitment and involvement. It submerges individual personality, obliterates social differences and de-nationalizes the world, restoring the ethos of the oral society. The great modern revolution for McLuhan, seen most clearly in the mass media of communication, is the shift from divisive to unifying ways of perceiving and organizing experience, from "explosion" to "implosion."

No field of science I know of has not moved in the direction of configurational concepts, and in that sense McLuhan is a popularizer of contemporary science though he appears to be unaware of these developments. His hypothesis, however, that technology is responsible for this historical change is something else again. It is legitimate to regard technology as a causal variable, but its weight in relation to other factors, material and non-material, in the social matrix, and the precise nature of its social and psychological impact, direct and indirect, are exceedingly complex problems. For McLuhan, however, this is not a provisional hypothesis. Technology is the Prime Mover, and everything, large or

small, becomes its consequences. Wherever he looks, from ladies' hair-does to weapons, he finds corroboration.

The immediate model for this is depth psychology where all behaviour awake or asleep, trivial or important, accidental or planned, expresses the motivational key; a key, moreover, which we do not, will not, cannot consciously recognize. McLuhan draws upon this model further by locating the source of technology within the individual. Technology is nothing more than the externalization of our feet, hands, eyes, brain, skin, teeth, etc. The correspondences he establishes between body and machine are cruder and more arbitrary than those of a Freudian since McLuhan is not guided by a theory of motivation, least of all by one based on conflict. For Oedipus, he offers Narcissus who having created his own image fails to recognize it.

The Narcissus myth eliminates the dichotomy between consumer and producer just as the modern economy eliminates the price mechanism. The "audience" of the media is not the consumer; it is the producer. We are not sold General Motors cars in McLuhan's system; we are shareholders, producers of transportation. Looked at one way, he is simply saying that audiences are not passive, that communication is a reciprocal process, and the fact that communication is now mediated, conducted through a technology, does not alter this. This is one of the cornerstones of current media research, and it is characteristic of the older media as well as the newer ones. We not only select the books we read, but read into them and read out anything that is threatening. Looked at another way, this is an argument for public ownership of the media, for it is,

as McLuhan says, as absurd for us to "lease" to others the media of communication as it would be to "lease" speech.

Either way, this new producer role does not solve any better than the old consumer role the problem — no problem to primitive societies — of how we control the media. Being told that we own or produce the media of communication can be as politically disingenuous as Henry Luce's concept of "the people's capitalism", as dishonest as thinking that letters to the Soviet press or, closer to home, open-line radio where the housewife and folksy disc jockey exchange generalities are genuine forms of participation. McLuhan does not suggest that these problems constitute another area of inquiry or that they do not properly belong in a general theory of communica-

tion. On the contrary, to raise them at all, he maintains, is to misunderstand the media. This is not arrogance on his part, for it is inherent in this theory, essentially an historical theory, that these and similar questions belong to an earlier epoch.

Much of McLuhan, including his style and his penchant for anthropology, is reminiscent of Veblen who similarly began his analysis with technology and expected that its rational logic would spread to the business class and ultimately throughout social life. Engineers were Veblen's vanguard of the revolution. Instead, we got the "managerial revolution", for Veblen, like McLuhan, underestimated our capacity to use technology without being influenced by it. Technological determinism, like all forms of determinism, is never able to cope

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with discrepancies and must rush in concepts like Ogburn's "cultural lag", Marx's "false consciousness", and McLuhan's psychic shock or "numbness".

Historical determinism is the mystique of all modern ideologies. However, what distinguishes the ideologies of mass society is their response to alienation, their disillusionment with the democratic "left", their idealization of provincial anti-intellectual and anti-secular values. They combine, as J. L. Talmon says, two contradictory notions: social cohesion and self expression. McLuhan and McCarthy, vastly different in every other respect, intuitively grasped the same thing. McLuhan is not interested in restoring the values of a secular-rational cosmopolitan *Anschauung*, for it destroys the cohesion of tribal life and is as obsolete as the assembly line in an age of automation.

The more passive, alienated and uncommitted we are, the more we yearn for, the more strongly we respond to ideologies of "effectiveness" provided they make no demands on us. The most successful ideology is the most ambiguous one which we structure ourselves with our infantile and wish fulfillment fantasies. Applying this principle to the media, McLuhan distinguishes between "hot" media, like print and radio which are highly structured, and "cold" media, like TV which are relatively unstructured. The latter, he claims, involve us; the former, do not.

Actually, they both involve us, but in different ways, the difference being the distinction between "identification"—when you cry with the martyred Elsie who is forced to play the piano on the Sabbath—and "projection"—when you see your mother's face in the clouds.

Identification is the mechanism of social learning; it is growth, strengthening and broadening the ego. Projection is regression, the absence of controls and capacity for problem-solving. When McLuhan talks about "involvement", he means projection. For the alienated with their impoverished or damaged egos, projection is the only means of involvement. It goes a long way toward explaining why changes in a party line scarcely disturb the true adherent, and why, as Lasswell pointed out many years ago, logical consistency is not the criterion of ideology. The race is to the vaguest.

McLuhan goes even further, equating projection or "participation in depth" with "maturity". As he describes "participation in depth" it is the furthest extreme from introspection, the latter being private, inner directed, self critical, leading to a sense of apartness, a capacity to live comfortably with relative truths, to resist group pressure, and, if necessary to endure isolation. McLuhan's definition of "maturity" is "belief", collective belief.

All historical determinism faces the problem of leadership. According to McLuhan, the group best qualified to lead us into the Promised Land are the artists who "can show us how to 'ride with the punch'". Taken at face value, this is a puzzling choice to make since no group has had a sorer record in the past century for its inability to understand or accept technology than artists. The explanation lies, I think, in understanding that McLuhan is talking not so much about artists as about art. He is attempting here to develop an aesthetic theory which abolishes the distinctions usually made between (1) "highbrow" and "lowbrow" art; and (2) "lowbrow" and "folk" art.

In his system, folk art and popular art ("lowbrow") become the same, a rationale that Marxist writers used to give years ago for going to Hollywood. In a limited sense, he and they are right. Structurally, popular art and folk art are both highly simplified and repetitive. They may move us at the level of universal archetypal images. Both have a social function; in the case of folk art or religion, it is to provide the closure of ritual. But, if in mass society, there is, as Malraux says, no "folk", the closure is delusional; its function is escape or pseudo-closure, harmless enough under certain circumstances, even necessary, but disastrous as a fixation and dangerous in a period of confusion and rapid social change which calls for the highest degree of political intelligence.

The distinction between "highbrow" and "lowbrow" art is minimized by recognizing that great art, too, tells us something about the "human condition". The



distinction becomes even more blurred by art styles which have no cognitive content and communicate solely by involving us. In McLuhan's system, then, there is no difference between abstract art and a television screen. "Pop art" which is, on the one hand, a parody of folk art, and, on the other hand, a parody of what we have traditionally meant by the term "creative" carries this to its logical conclusion. Aesthetic theory thus becomes the science of communication. It is as if we were asked to judge art by the same criteria we would use in judging snapshots of our children, and if this sounds foolish, it is no more so than the reverse fallacy which intellectuals usually make in approaching the media; that is, to judge family snapshots by the same criteria they would use for judging art.

When McLuhan turns to the specific media of communication, he runs into difficulty. First, because he is forced to deal with "content" in the same terms as anyone else does, e.g. "the success theme". Second, because it is almost impossible to isolate what is unique about a medium from the policies of the people who run it. For example, the diffuseness of TV, its avoidance of controversial subjects, may have as much to do with the costs of TV and the cautiousness of TV executives as it does with the intrinsic nature of the medium. We can be sure it will become even "cooler" with colour. Radio, he tells us, is a "hot" medium and so can deal with ideas, personalities (Hitler, Fred Allen) and empirical data (the weather). At the same time, since it is an electronic medium, it is intimate and tribal, or, as we are more apt to say, it is the intellectuals' ghetto, just exactly what we have been hearing from TV executives. Is it because they understand

the medium and we do not? Finally, whatever distinctions may be made among the different media, the distinction between "hot" and "cold" breaks down. All of the media, taken together or separately, are nothing if not flexible; radio and print are as capable of surrealism as realism; the seven types of ambiguity are as much in poetry as they are in television.

Still, McLuhan is a God-send to the TV producer who because he is often young wants recognition and who because he is an *arriviste* to the media wants status. In McLuhan he can find a basis for claiming that TV is unique, different from the older media; above all, different from print. Long impatient with the psychological ineptitude of most do-good preachy broadcasting and equally frustrated by the complexities of modern thought, he finds in McLuhan a mandate to experiment without worrying too much about "content". His banner is television for television's sake.

Watching TV is a revelation. More and more public affairs programmes resemble Rorschach cards, each one different but no objective content in any; each one involving us, but leaving us none the wiser as citizens. One politician differs from another in the way one piece of abstract art or one page of Joyce differs from another. Just how cynical this is is revealed by McLuhan's suggestion that had Jack Paar produced Nixon the election results might have been different. As it was, Kennedy with his more diffuse image was better suited to the medium. In other words, McLuhan is saying that TV depersonalizes and de-intellectualizes politics. The depersonalization of politics could be the hopeful start of politics based on issues in which the elected

representative is held accountable for his ideas rather than his morals or character. But a de-intellectualized politics is its antithesis. Combined, they are the politics of ideology in mass society, an ill wind that blows some good to the young eager TV producer who thinks that political theory is in the hand-held camera.

TV producers are not the only ones to welcome McLuhan. Canadians in general have become more susceptible to the charms of an intellectual exploring the cultural demi-monde without the usual class biases. It is an attractive egalitarian avant-garde image for a country that has not yet had its Whitmans, Sandburgs, or Pounds; a country that has only begun to face the fact that it is urban and industrialized, its quickest and best minds straining at the leash to break away from an intellectual Establishment which has been singularly obtuse, Mandarin-minded and peculiarly punitive. Bright young men will find in McLuhan's enthusiasm for the media a populist realism, his distrust of intellectualism a revolt against dead scholarship and the demands of specialization, his approach through technology an unsentimental toughness, his removal of the issue from a context of values a liberation from petty Philistine censors, his rejection of social criticism a long overdue break with the tiresome futile leftish politics of the thirties. It is an ideal formula for the 1960s, and to his disciples — and they are legion — McLuhan is a prophet. From a longer perspective, he is the first, original, genuine Canadian *ideologue* of mass society, but his sense-ratios were shaped by the irrationalism, determinism, and folk romanticism of the nineteenth century.

ACADEMICS TO THE BARRICADES

George Woodcock

A Place of Liberty, edited by George Whalley. Clarke, Irwin, & Co. \$4.00.

EVERYONE BY NOW has heard of the crisis of the universities. University administrators, politicians and newsmen have made us familiar with the likelihood that by 1972 more than four hundred thousand young Canadians will be trying to enter colleges and universities which at present have facilities for a third of that number. The first anxiety has been one of quantity. How are the colleges to be built and equipped, how are professors to be found to deal with this great army of searchers after knowledge and professional skills? During the past two years plans have been made in almost every part of Canada for new institutions and for radical extensions of those that exist, and the process of expansion has only just begun.

But around this question of quantitative expansion there has arisen a whole cluster of questions about the very nature of the universities themselves, and in academic circles none has become more pressing than that of university government. We may not be on the verge of a revolution of the professors, but already the banners are raised and the arguments are being put. Some of them are put very strongly in *A Place of Liberty*. This book is edited by George Whalley, a distinguished writer and head of the English Department at Queen's University, and the irony of its title will become evident when I add that the book is written by

a group of malcontent professors who are tired of a system by which, in Canadian universities up to the present, the faculty has had very little say in the formulation of university policies. The form of the book is not immediately prepossessing; it is one of those collections of papers by various hands to which the academics in our country are particularly partial, and most readers would doubtless prefer a vigorous and searching volume by a single writer. But *A Place of Liberty* is no collection of pedantic offerings. It is a volume which speaks with the voices of men who have strong feelings and are expressing them strongly, and when I say that these voices include those of such men as the poet, F. R. Scott, and the historians Frank Underhill and W. L. Morton, it will be evident that this book is the sign of a sense of disturbance at the present situation which runs through the whole academic community.

The various contributors set out the situation in historical terms and as it exists today. It becomes evident that in no real sense is the Canadian university a self-governing community of scholars. The classic examples of such scholarly communities are Oxford and Cambridge, where university policies are laid down and university affairs are administered almost entirely by those who teach. In other parts of Europe attempts have been made by the state and other organs of

the outer community to influence university government, and this has been particularly the case under absolutist regimes. Yet faculties have defended their rights so stoutly that one of the contributors to *A Place of Liberty*, the late J. Stewart Reid, was able to reveal that under the intensely reactionary government of the Austro-Hungarian empire "the scholars" — and here I quote Dr. Reid — "the scholars in the University of Vienna enjoyed a greater degree of self-government than has ever been permitted to develop at any university in Canada."

As essay after essay makes clear, the depressing truth is that professors in Canadian universities, no matter how high their international reputations as scholars, have no power to determine the policy of the institutions where they teach. Matters of policy and finance are in the hands of Boards of Governors who are not university teachers, and in most cases it is specifically laid down in university constitutions that members of the faculty cannot become Governors. Even the control of academic matters is theoretically in the hands of the Governors and is only delegated to the faculties as an act of grace. It is the Board of Governors who appoint the chief administrative officer, the President, and he is responsible to the Board and not to the faculty, which is powerless to vote him out of office.

This form of university government was borrowed from the United States. In every country of the British Commonwealth except Canada the faculties participate in varying degrees in the administration and policy-making of their institutions. But in North America the old pattern of colonial days, when the

college was started as a community enterprise, has persisted. Now, as then, the local worthies form the ruling bodies, and, since these local worthies are likely to be business men, their tendency has been to try to administer a university like a business combine. But the aims of scholarship are not those of business; they are not aims that can be judged in terms of immediate practicality. And the result is that a gulf sooner or later appears in the structure of every North American university. In the minds of the professors the we-and-they complex tends to develop, we being the academics and they the administrators.

The universities of the United States are actually realizing the dangers of this situation and beginning to act upon their realization. Today, in almost half the universities of the United States, the faculty is consulted before a President is appointed. To my knowledge, this happens in no major Canadian university, and in only two of our smallest universities is the faculty represented on the Board of Governors. Even the most distinguished scholars who teach at our universities seem to be regarded as incapable of sharing in their government.

Those who still support the present system do so mainly on the grounds that the university should be governed in the interests of the community. No-one will be inclined to dispute this, but, as the contributors to *A Place of Liberty* point out, the community which a university should serve is the universal community of learning. A university does not exist to fulfil the professional requirements of a particular area; it exists to search out and to transmit knowledge without regard to any special interest.

If this is the purpose of a university,

then it is surely illogical that the administration, which ought merely to provide for the needs of scholars in their work of teaching and research, should in fact dominate the pyramid of university life as it does today through the powers delegated to the leading administrator, the President. It is equally illogical that ultimate authority should rest with a wholly non-academic Board of Governors. The authors of *A Place of Liberty* argue that until such a situation comes to an end the universities of Canada will never become mature institutions. Their suggestions for reform cover a wide field, but they can be summed up under a few brief headings. First of all, the powers accorded to Boards of Governors should be sharply curtailed, and the judgment of the academic staffs should be allowed to influence all university policy. Secondly, everything possible should be done to eliminate the division in the universities between scholars and administrators.

Most of the contributors urge that Presidents should be appointed only if accepted by the faculty, and that representatives of the faculty should sit on the governing boards.

One cannot help being surprised that such an autocratic power system as that which still exists in Canadian universities should have survived so long in a democratic society. It can hardly maintain itself very much longer in face of the growing feeling among the academic staffs, expressed in the rapid rise of the Canadian Association of University Teachers as a powerful professional association closely concerned with matters of university government. And books like *A Place of Liberty*, which present the case of the scholars with such strength and reason, should help to convince the public that reform of our institutions of higher learning is an act of justice and wisdom long overdue.

EXCESS OF COMPLETENESS

Frank Davey

JOHN PETER, *Along That Coast*. Doubleday. \$4.95.

Along That Coast is a love story set on the southeast coast of a racially uneasy South Africa, and the author depends chiefly on his descriptions of the primitive and irrational violence of the sea, the presence of which overwhelms the atmosphere of this coast, to inject into his novel a pervading sense of the uncontrollable and resurgent primeval.

Right down the coast, from the Tugela to Algoa Bay and beyond, the rhythm of human awareness adapts itself to the thud and thunder and hissing of the surf, the life and flash of the breakers, the raw smell of the sea.

The animate sea becomes horror, violence, death, religion, and mystery in the novel, and is responsible for the feeling of impending doom that runs through it. And when the sea and its native cousins

come together, for Denton, the "hero", this doom is fulfilled.

Mr. Peter gives the impression of having been very careful to make his work both a commercial and a literary success. The novel is structured around a series of extremely sensational events: a native being thrown from a high bridge; the heroine being saved by chance from drowning by the hero; the heroine being made nearly hysterical by the hero's gutting of a live sand shark, a large shark ripping a limb from a bathing white girl, an elaborately described seduction, and an equally graphic murder — so that the reader is baited to continue by nearly every chapter. At the same time there is constant foreshadowing: Denton's fatal impatience grows from incident to incident, and Laura's hopeful "the Negroes aren't going to massacre people like you" rings in our ears in the final pages. Mr. Peter, a Cambridge-educated senior English professor at the University of Victoria and a holder of a South African degree in law, is also very careful in his choice of characters: Denton is a South African lawyer (who has retired in disillusionment), Laura is a junior English lecturer whose home is Victoria, and both have attended Cambridge.

It is in fact Mr. Peter's care to keep his reader interested that most weakens his book. Some of the bits of sensationalism he does work deeply and satisfactorily into the novel's fabric. For example, the incident of the attack by the shark, in which crowds of ghoulish onlookers impede the girl's rescue, tends to symbolize the South African racial scene, where white native-sympathizers by their own passivity do as much to harm the native as do the agents of Nationalist Apartheid. However, other sensational incidents he

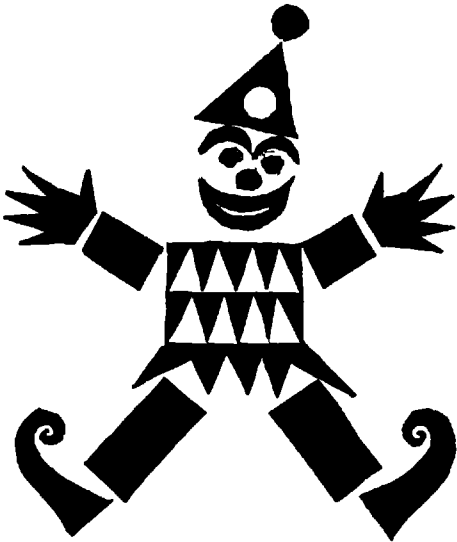
leaves completely inexcusable. The boy-meets-girl incident of Chapter 2, where at a fairly unfrequented spot on the river Laura happens to fall in and begins to flounder (although she later claims to be an average swimmer) just as Denton is swimming coincidentally by, is a flagrant example of literary wish-fulfilment, especially with Laura having to take off her wet clothing and lie conveniently nude for Denton, author, and reader. *True Romance* could have done only one thing more. And the inevitable seduction scene of Chapter 8 is nearly as bad.

The passage is seventeen pages long, has extraordinary visual accuracy, and is definitely successful in presenting sex-in-love as a beautiful, natural, and healthful thing. I must admit that our literature needs more of such writing if it is ever to rid our country of the over-riding puritanical notion that sex is in any circumstance a somewhat tainted and reprehensible thing. And yet the passage seems distinctly out of place in this particular novel. I must make clear that my objection is not to the content of the passage; if the passage were an equally detailed account of Denton's clipping his toenails, my complaint would be the same: that the passage *seems* there in all its elaborateness for its own sake only, and makes little contribution to the book.

One can certainly attempt to rationalize the presence of the passage. Denton's first wife, Maura, was both a Nationalist and a frigid mate — the latter, Denton theorizes, because of a Calvinistic guilt for their pre-marital affair. In Maura Mr. Peter seems to be suggesting that sexual guilt and racial discrimination go hand in hand, as if the personal resentment that can ruin a marriage is in some

way parallel to the general resentment that can ruin the relationships between races. "We must love one another or die," said Auden, in a statement certainly more applicable to the general situation than to the individual, and Mr. Peter seems to be giving us a rather modified echo. Laura is Maura's replacement and succeeds in reaching with Denton a state of guiltless love, but Denton, in particular, can never generalize sufficiently to rid himself of mistrust in any of his other relationships.

This is a flimsy rationalization, to be sure, and one might have to rewrite the novel to make it stick solidly. And yet without it, the passage seems to exist solely for the sexual education and excitement of the reader. Of critical importance in this consideration is what is the book's intention. The dust jacket



suggests the work to be "a symbolic novel of mature love"; Mr. Peter in conversation claims it to be a novel of love rather than of race. And yet the novel's setting at the explosive edge of sea and violence, its beginning and ending in distinctly racial incidents, and its characters' constant discussion of where the responsibility should be placed for South Africa's racial fiasco, all suggest the work to be much more than a simple love story. If the novel is only a love story, its native chapters are digressions, its conclusion a fragment from the main stream of events. If, however, the novel is a work underlining the necessary relationship between love, trust, patience, innocence, and productive human relationships of all sorts — something it nearly becomes, but not quite — many of the aforementioned passages begin to make sense.

Mr. Peter does not seem to have known clearly what he wanted from his novel, and so he tried to get everything. He has written a good novel well — one must continually marvel at his aptness of expression — but has left at least one rather ostentatious passage without an apparent literary function. In a novel by Lawrence the passage might serve, in conjunction with the rest of the work, to dignify human sexual love, but such is clearly not the major intention of *Along That Coast*. Mr. Peter has unfortunately left his good novel open to a comment that I have heard made about it several times already — "another sex novel". And I really don't think it deserves it.

PECULIAR PICARESQUE

GEORGE CUOMO, *Bright Day, Dark Runner*.
Doubleday. \$6.95.

GEORGE CUOMO is a native New Yorker who has lived in New England, Arizona, Indiana and now teaches at Victoria. He has published poetry, won a prize for a short story and has written a textbook on how to become a better reader. His first novel *Jack Be Nimble* is about big-time college football. It was well reviewed and was called lethally hilarious, penetrating, swift-moving, by various bookmen. This new novel is designed to be all of these things too, but I think it fails rather badly. The dust jacket suggests it is in the mainstream of picaresque fiction. However, the hero is neither rogue nor adventurer, nor is the tale told in the traditional episodic style. It is carefully structured to *seem* episodic, but in fact it is a nest of stacking stools between which Mr. Cuomo somehow manages to fall. I think the problem here arises from the author's wanting to be more penetrating than hilarious and the publisher, perhaps, wanting the opposite. At any rate, the result is peculiar rather than funny and diffuse rather than meaningful.

The anti-hero, Judas Iscariot LeBlanche is really a quite ordinary guy in most ways. He had an unhappy childhood, he became a cook by accident, a

chef by design, a lover promiscuously, and a husband and father under perfectly obvious fictional circumstances. His wife dies, he gives his son up to his wife's domineering sister, loses sight of him completely as he travels around America (and the world during the war), finally landing on a little bit of Cape Cod real estate called The Mariner. It is here in this middleclass summer resort that the tangled threads of his life become recognizable, not as a knot, but as a positive pattern. Unfortunately, the larking around that goes on at The Mariner tempts the reader to put this five pound novel down long before the regulation "revelation" ending. Funtime at The Mariner includes a great deal of the kind of thing that would be funny as all-get-out after four rounds at one of our suburban beer parlours. Through all this Judas I. LeBlanche lies uneasily in the chequered shade of various trees of knowledge that spring up around him until he is finally hit on the head by the apple of truth, the core of which is, I think, that he may have been christened Judas but he will live LeBlanche.

And it is a shame. There is a lot of good writing in this book. What it lacks is the courage of what seem to me to be the author's real convictions, and control. It is two stories. It needn't have been, but it is. The first is the foreground, the summer Judas spent cooking at The Mariner where, as anti-hero and anti-rogue, he discovers how to live with his denial of life. Cuomo chooses farce (but it is really travesty) as his vehicle here and he overplays it. Long passages of meaningless plot are served up as if they were important. The reader simply wishes he wouldn't bother. But interspersed are chapters about Judas' early life that are

written with a sparseness and a directness that prove out an ability far in excess of the average. The story of Judas' false apprenticeship to the painter Paladler, his relationship with his father, his marriage to the deaf and dumb Dolores are all excellent and meaningful. To set these against the mindless antics of Phil, the sexually ambidextrous greeter at The Mariner, and the cardboard caperings of sundry other Mariner employees and guests is a sad thing to witness. The book could have been a good one. With restraint, with careful consideration of the needs of the story, its symbology, its underlying despairing comic-tragedy, Mr. Cuomo's anti-hero could have pursued his anti-picaresque career until his right to shed Judas as a name and a calling would have been powerfully earned.

ROBERT HARLOW

THE CORE OF BROWNING

WILLIAM WHITLA, *The Central Truth: The Incarnation in Browning's Poetry*. University of Toronto Press. \$5.00.

1957 WAS A BUMPER YEAR for Browning. Langbaum published his study of the dramatic monologue; King his close textual analysis of five representative poems, *The Bow & The Lyre*; and Northrop Frye his *Anatomy of Criticism*, an Alladin's cave of critical brilliance in ransacking which the collector can pick up some significant prizes — specifically Frye's relating of Browning's monodrama to the characteristic tendencies of ironic conflict and his defining of *melos* in poetry with reference to "The Flight of the Duchess". Since 1957, and apart from

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Honan's extension of Kings' approach, the market has been steady but quiet; the shareholders' annual dividend has arrived in the form of an average number of articles of moderate interest.

It is encouraging—the need for a serious reassessment of Browning's poetic art having been acknowledged and a good start made—to find critics returning their attention to the philosophical content of Browning's work. William Whitla's book, *The Central Truth: The Incarnation in Browning's Poetry*, reconsiders the poet's religious beliefs, their relationship to his ethics, his aesthetics and more general world-view. The "central truth" of Whitla's thesis is that the "Incarnation provided an adequate solution for what to Browning was the mystery of life." By way of justification, he understandably quotes the lines from "A Death in the Desert": "the acknowledgment of God in Christ/Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee/All questions in the earth and out of it."

Primary questions raised in this study concern the "spiritual unity" implied in the religious monologues; the "aesthetic unity" of the theories underlying those on art and music; the "physical unity" aspired to in the love poems; and the "composite unity" of Browning's masterwork, *The Ring and The Book*, in which "the whole complex pattern of Browning's use of the Incarnation becomes clear." Whitla believes that "Browning's poetry . . . is 'all, all of a piece throughout,'" and demonstrates this by showing how, for the Christian poet, the Incarnation is "the archetype of all other kinds of revelation". Thus, when Browning speaks of all poetry "being a putting of

the infinite within the finite" he makes poetic creation analogous to the Incarnation. Similarly, Browning's metaphor of the "moment, one and infinite", expressive of the sense of timelessness known to lovers whose physical consummation breaks the bar "between/Life and life" so that their souls meet and mix, images "the absolute uniqueness of the moment of God's revelatory love in the Incarnation". Of the "composite symbol of ring and book"—"the key to the structure" of *The Ring and The Book*—Whitla says, it is "the truth held in a suspension of fancy and fact . . . eternity made temporal, or . . . infinity fitted to the finite. [It] . . . is thus a symbol for the Incarnation," and synonymous with the "circle of experience" within which "burns/The central truth, Power, Wisdom, Goodness, — God."

The most disturbing element in Whitla's approach is the temerity with which judgment is passed on Browning's characters according to their success or failure in conforming to or exemplifying the poet's own beliefs in the Incarnation. Any thesis appearing to reject Caliban, Ferrara's Duke, St. Praxed's Bishop, Andrea, the speaker in "Two in the Campagna" in favour of David (in "Saul"), Abt Vogler, St John, the man in "By The Fireside," or Browning himself in *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day*, is bound to encounter reservations in most readers since the first set of characters represents a monument to Browning's poetic imagination more magnificent than that of the second set. In spite of which lack of discrimination, Whitla's book is a real bonus for Browning scholars.

JOHN F. HULCOOP

LEGENDS OLD AND NEW

KAY HILL, *Glooscap and His Magic*. McClelland & Stewart.

DOROTHY M. REID, *Tales of Nanabozho*. Oxford.

CLAUDE AUBRY, *The King of the Thousand Islands*, trans. by Alice Kane. McClelland & Stewart.

A VENERABLE CHILDREN'S SONG insists that the Indians of old were consistently high-minded and ("bless my soul!") double-jointed. Perhaps so, but their favourite characters were anything but consistent in either character or physique. Their variability, the archaic symbols in their stories, and the anomalies that crept into those stories through countless retellings are not the least of the problems an adapter faces in preparing versions for children that will be comprehensible yet true to the spirit and flavour of the originals.

One of the very few habitually high-minded Indian creations was the Wabanaki's humorous benevolent demigod, Glooscap, affable hero or final authority in scores of legends. Glooscap created a world — parts of the Maritimes and New England — where the Wabanaki, surrounded by archetypal animal characters, contended with King Winter, cruel Famine, cannibal chenoos, and cold-blooded, wizardly booins. To the west, Glooscap's less high-minded Ojibwa counterpart, Nanabozho, gratified, frightened, and amused his people before going to his long sleep on Lake Superior's Thunder Cape. The very different worlds of these two giants of North American mythology are now recreated and made accessible to children in Kay Hill's *Gloos-*

cap and His Magic and Dorothy Reid's *Tales of Nanabozho*.

Of the two, children will almost certainly prefer *Glooscap and His Magic*. Aside from the advantage afforded by Glooscap's obliging character, Miss Hill's sources are more sophisticated than Mrs. Reid's and lend themselves to stories of more interesting form and point, and Miss Hill has modernized more freely. As Charles Leland, a nineteenth-century scholar of Indian lore, pointed out, the Glooscap legends are remarkably similar to the Norse myths and may have sprung from the same source. And, as Miss Hill recognizes in her Foreword, some also bear likenesses to agelessly popular European fairy tales. Nevertheless, they pose some of the puzzles typical of Indian tales. Motivations are no longer clear, and the characters are given to bewildering transformations. They slide from human to animal form and back. They switch abruptly from wisdom and goodness to shrewd malice, from intelligence to gross stupidity, from dignity to clowning bawdry. Miss Hill meets these difficulties with ingenuity and skill. Where the sources are savagely cruel or erotic she omits, where they lack motivation she acts on the Indian storytellers' precedent and invents, and where characters and traits are hopelessly confused she re-assigns the traits. Lox, a Loki-like spirit, is associated variously in the original legends with the wolf, the wolverine, the badger, and the beaver; in these animals' shapes he is sometimes appallingly vicious, sometimes quite likeably mischievous. Miss Hill abstracts his mischievousness and gives it, untinged by real wickedness, to Badger, an irrespressible Indian for whom Glooscap has a weakness. Ableegumooch, the rabbits' Rabbit,

becomes the embodiment of originality, optimism, and reckless generosity. Unmitigated evil is restricted to the wolf, the wild cat, the vengeful booins, and the predatory chenoos. Yet the spirit of the original legends is retained, although specific morals are mildly Christianized. The result of Miss Hill's moderate revisions is that the reader is often surprised by a deft working of the predictable and never irked by an arbitrary conclusion.

Having sketched in her background with the tales of creation and organization that are necessary to their successors but more likely to fascinate adults with their philosophic and anthropological implications than they are to interest children with their huge concepts and plotlessness, Miss Hill tells seventeen stories full of drama and immediacy. She uses dialogue wherever possible and never stultifies her readers' imaginations with excessive description. The awesome booins, for instance, are never described, but their proper aura is effectively conveyed:

"Perhaps," said the second [booin] in a hard voice, "perhaps he is up in that tree now, hoping to hear more of our secrets!" And he suddenly hurled a stone into the tree, knocking Big Magwis to the ground and killing him instantly.

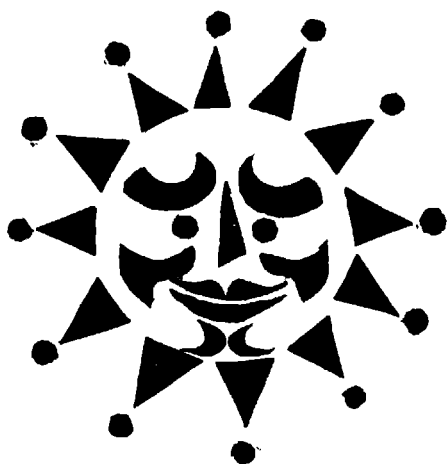
Robert Frankenberg's drawings for *Glooscap and His Magic* are vital, evocative, and pleasantly free from the fashionable pseudo-primitive ugliness that adults are apt to assume children will approve because they do themselves. Donald Grant's line drawings for *Tales of Nanabozho* seem to me to lean toward such unfortunate stylishness. The dustjacket calls them "original and witty." Certainly they contain comic disproofs of the Indians' alleged double-jointedness. In fact

most of the human figures look positively jointless, and one feels for a mammoth Minnehaha looming before a wigwam she could not possibly inhabit except on her hands and knees. A few illustrations, those showing tiny human figures pitted against immensities of nature, are powerful, and the dustjacket picture of Nanabozho sitting stolidly on an eagle's back off which he is bound to slide within seconds is arresting, but pictorially the book as a whole suggests that Nanabozho and his tribes had terrible cavernous eyes, misplaced waists, and no armpits.

Mrs. Reid's style also occasionally lacks suppleness. Perhaps echoing the unsubordinating, arbitrary manner of many Indian sources, paragraphs are sometimes monotonous marches to flat conclusions:

Nokomis was glad when she heard of Nanabozho's love and told him that the maiden was Arrowmaker's daughter. She made a beautiful doeskin jacket for the girl and decorated it with porcupine quills. Nanabozho made a pipe and prepared a pouchful of *kinni-kinnick* to console the old man for the loss of his daughter. Then they set out on their journey.

And the tales themselves are somewhat flat and loose. True to their sources, Mrs. Reid's stories concentrate upon Nanabozho's capricious character and upon the origins of natural phenomena as results of his anger, gratitude, or considered judgment. Nanabozho catches his hand between birch trees and has to watch in helpless fury as wolves eat his kill; birches still bear the scars of his punitive whip. Nanabozho rewards the red maples with sweet sap for deceiving the evil windigoes by seeming flames. Nanabozho acquires tobacco for his grateful people and their not-so-grateful successors. To the Ojibwa Nanabozho was wonderful and wonderfully funny. Despite his comic blunders and the splendid rages that spare not



even his own back when it offends him, latter-day children may not find him as hilarious — especially when he turns Minnehaha to stone for no good reason. But he is an exciting superman of legend, and Mrs. Reid has done children a service by restoring to him his greatest exploits, stolen for the Iroquois Hiawatha by Longfellow, and presenting him anew, part hero, part rogue, part clown, as the Indians conceived him.

Claude Aubry's *The King of the Thousand Islands*, unlike *Glooscap* and *Nanabozho*, is newly-hatched legend. It concerns a Mound Builder monarch who supposedly reigned beside the St. Lawrence of thousands of years ago. As the book opens, Maha-Maha the Second's mind is vacant; when an obsession enters it, it sinks. This ironic, rather slight, but wittily-told story purports to account for the existence of the Thousand Islands, but its emphasis is upon the corrupting influence of power, boredom, and bad company and upon the barren rewards of selfishness. The absence of much detailed information about the Mound

Builders allows the author to embroider freely, and he does — with threads borrowed from Egypt and the Orient. He also imports a golden-haired, golden-throated siren for his St. Lawrence shore. The 1962 French language "Book of the Year for Children" award of the Canadian Association of Children's Librarians went to this cool, clever though eclectic piece of fantasy. Now smoothly translated by Alice Kane and whimsically illustrated by Edouard Perret, it may well divert small readers of English. But it lacks the rich native backgrounds of *Glooscap* and *Nanabozho* and *Glooscap's* power to involve the emotions, and the exotic Maha-Maha is unlikely to establish himself as an enduring ghost of the Thousand Islands.

F.M. FRAZER

POLAND AND COMMUNISM

RICHARD HISCOCKS, *Poland, Bridge for the Abyss? An Interpretation of Developments in Post-war Poland*. Oxford University Press. \$9.25.

THIS STUDY of communist Poland is offered as a contribution to what the author calls "positive" peaceful coexistence, by which he means progressive mutual understanding of the rival ideologies, and perhaps even a gradual approach to each other's point of view. Poland, he says, is not "totalitarian", but "a rational and benevolent dictatorship, directed by a single-minded idealist", and with its close contact with Russia and Communism and its traditional contacts with the culture of the West, may serve

as a bridge or go-between between Russia and the West. Criticizing what he calls the "rigidity" of both western and communist statesmen and scholars towards each other's societies, Hiscocks strives to achieve a more balanced and judicious appraisal of postwar Poland. This is not to say that he is starry-eyed or naïve, or that he seeks to whitewash Polish communism, but that he seeks to understand and explain, to achieve some degree of empathy, in his painstaking and well-documented analysis of Poland's postwar travail. No doubt this approach will bring down upon his head the coals of fiery criticism from those communist and western critics who can conceive of peaceful coexistence only in terms of a bitter and ultimately victorious ideological and political struggle. For serious students of communism and Eastern Europe, however, his approach will be welcomed as a refreshing contrast to much of the literature on the subject, and the evidence provided to support his original hypothesis will be studied with care.

The book proceeds on the assumption of the importance of ideas in political action, and in particular of Marxism in communist politics. The appeal of communism is limited in Poland, but is derived, he argues, from the humanitarian content of the original doctrine, with its passion for freedom and justice, and the continuance of this in important strands of Polish Marxism, represented by Rosa Luxemburg until 1919 and by the present leader, Gomulka. Even during the worst Stalinist days, he says, when the latter was in prison, Polish communism had features that distinguished it favorably from communism elsewhere in Eastern Europe. But it is to Gomulka that

it owes the casting off of Russian overlays on Marxism and the evolution of a more liberal and humanist form. Gomulka himself is distinguished not only by his "devotion to communism", but by his "patriotism, courage, integrity, ascetic self-discipline, and indefatigable industry", and by his "warm humanity and simple kindliness". This has led him to an understanding that communism imposed by force on a hostile nation would fail, and that it must be adapted to some of the realities of Polish life, in particular its Catholicism, the conservatism of its peasants, and the love of freedom of its intellectuals. The great achievement of October 1956, was "a humanistic Communism in an independent Poland". Although most Poles are not communists, writes the author, the vast majority of them have given their support to Gomulka, not only because of their sense of the geo-political realities of Poland's position, but also by their willingness to accept much of Gomulka's programme merging national and communist ideals.

GORDON SKILLING

A. S. P. WOODHOUSE

Essays in English Literature from the Renaissance to the Victorian Age. Presented to A. S. P. Woodhouse, 1964. Ed. Millar MacLure and F. W. Watt. University of Toronto Press. \$7.50.

FOR A THIRD OF A CENTURY the name of A. S. P. Woodhouse has been well known to scholars throughout Canada as well as abroad. His activities have been many and his work has been influential. As editor of the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, as shaper and director of the honours and graduate programs in English at the University of Toronto, as a

founding member of the Humanities Research Council of Canada and of the Association of Canadian University Teachers of English, and as an internationally recognized authority in the field of Miltonic studies, he has created for himself a great and an enviable reputation in the academic community. Above all, as a stimulating teacher and a wise and disciplined director of graduate students he has left an indelible mark on a generation of Canadian scholars. "His office in University College was an imperial secretariat, from which proconsuls departed to Canadian universities from coast to coast, and to universities outside Canada."

This Caesar in the realm of Canadian letters has now officially retired, and two of his proconsuls, whose words conclude the paragraph above, have edited this volume of *Essays in English Literature* as a token of sincere affection and deep admiration for a remarkable man. The gesture is excellent, but the results are meagre, scarcely justifying the effort that has obviously gone into the book.

The collection is made up of seventeen essays. Of these one only, that by Douglas Bush of Harvard, pays direct homage to Professor Woodhouse. This essay, by a fine scholar and a good writer, surveys the Woodhouse contributions to scholarship, and leaves the reader in no doubt as to their significance and influence.

The remaining works are contributions by close associates and former students. With the exception of two or three pieces, notably "The Correspondence of the Augustans," by Herbert Davis, and "The Problem of Spiritual Authority in the Nineteenth Century," by Northrop Frye, these so-called "Essays in English

Literature" are, in reality, narrowly focussed research exercises, written by highly trained specialists for the enlightenment of other highly trained specialists. And few, if any, of these tributes to the master appear to have been written for the occasion.

Some are competent, bringing light into darkened corners (for example, R. C. Bald's "Historical Doubts Respecting Walton's *Life of Donne*", or F. E. L. Priestley's "Pope and the Great Chain of Being"); some remind me of the "darkness visible" in Milton's Hell; and some are so poorly written that I am frankly surprised at their inclusion in the volume.

Within this last group especially — but by no means exclusively — long and unduly complicated sentences ramble across the pages; run-on sentences follow hard upon one another; and hard, crabbed, and uncontrolled diction grates upon the ear. All of the principles of style so closely associated with freshman English — clarity, simplicity, control, balance — have long since been forgotten by too many of these most learned writers. Lest I be charged with surly exaggeration let me give two brief examples. First this:

Whether or not Milton had or had not any higher-critical awareness of the stratifications in the version of the story in Judges, of its naturalistic Paul-Bunyanesque origins, its elaboration in terms of God's Law for an covenant with his chosen people in whatever Dead-Sea scrolls, and its prophetic overtones, he was certainly aware that the aim of conflicting patristic and later commentary was to get out of the story the full implications of what the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews saw in it — and in comparable illegal actions by other Old Testament heroes, such as a favourite of the prose, David and the shew-bread. (pp. 176-177)

Then this:

The living scions were barren in their graves; why take great care of the withering stalk? Meanwhile it is at least a nice little morsel that somebody called "Spenserus" either wrote in, or was felt to be obviously connected with, the Ovidian tag which signified "my Luck is losse" — on a page of a Russell manuscript, one even signed by the particular almost last active Russell he did finally dedicate something to; it did appear in 1596 at last, and it was his "retraction," pretending at least that he like more famous authors before him is apologizing for something indiscreet written in the greener times of his youth. (pp. 19-20)

So in sorrow I must say that all too little in this volume will bring to the general reader any feeling of intellectual

excitement or aesthetic pleasure, and much within it may well dampen the ardour of the young and innocent student who still believes, naïvely perhaps, that essays in literature are sources of joy and wonder.

Yet the gesture was a good one. All honour to A. S. P. Woodhouse, scholar and gentleman!

S. E. READ

NOTE: *This review was written before the recent death of A. S. P. Woodhouse, but we have decided to leave it unchanged. A memoir of Dr. Woodhouse will appear in our next issue.* —ED.

CANADIAN LITERATURE

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PEARSON PORTRAYED

JOHN R. BEAL, *The Pearson Phenomenon*. Longmans. \$5.00.

LESTER B. PEARSON, *The Four Faces of Peace and the International Outlook*, ed. by Sherleigh B. Pierson. McClelland & Stewart. \$6.00.

LESTER PEARSON must be, by any account, a flack's nightmare. Since he became leader of the Liberal Party in 1958 no effort has been spared in building a Pearson image. He has been, at various times, the boyish, wise-cracking intellectual, the genial leader of a youthful team, a humane man "who cares", and an iron-willed leader of a nation. He has been so many things because no one of them ever stuck. One of the more amusing aspects of the last election campaign was the frenzied attempt by the Pearson ad men to find the right image for their man. They never did.

The problem they faced was and is insuperable. Unlike the late President Kennedy, whose campaign technique the Liberals copied with the same naïve fervor that an art student will copy an old master, Lester Pearson utterly lacks style. He is a dull man. He cannot be marketed as an intellectual as Adlai Stevenson was, because he is not an intellectual, and his speeches show it. He is not a man of the New Frontier, because he is fundamentally a bureaucrat and prefers the shadows of administration to the sunlight of leadership.

John Beal's book was written primarily for Americans to read. It is an attempt by a *Time* correspondent to market the Canadian prime minister to his countrymen. But it will not succeed because it is not even good *Time* journalism. It is trite, juvenile and inaccurate. And it is

too full the pointless trivia that is the hallmark of *Time* journalism. Chapter four begins with a paragraph explaining that "Mike" was told of his success in the External Affairs examination after he had been to the doctor for an eye examination and his pupils were dilated with belladonna, so he had to read the telegram in the cellar. No doubt this is a hell of a way to read a telegram but so what?

The remarkable feature of this book is that Mr. Pearson apparently lent his support to the effort, no doubt on the advice of his "image-makers", and even went so far as to allow Beal access to his diary. The result is interesting enough for the student of Canadian politics but rough on the Prime Minister. The diary selections, written, for the most part, in London during the war, provide a startling revelation of a mind both shallow and naïve. More than that they are downright juvenile in spots. In 1938 Lester Pearson wrote: "I have been asked by the *Fortnightly Review* to write an article on the significance of the recent decisions of the Privy Council. . . . I shall have to do it under a pseudonym, as we civil servants are not supposed to publish our ideas on such controversial questions. On the other hand, we civil servants nearly always need a few extra pounds, which I shall hope to receive although both the editor and I . . . were much too genteel to bring up the question of money." The subsequent entries quoted by Beal written during the early weeks of the London blitz are no better. Indeed the diary is so self-conscious and tendentious that the whole thing might well have been written under a pseudonym and published in the *Boys Own Paper*.

As Beal's narrative unfolds—or disintegrates—its subject emerges as a man who has succeeded in diplomacy more by the absence of character than by its strength. Ever ready to accept advice, either good or bad, Lester Pearson moved through the world of diplomacy in Washington and Ottawa, rubbing no one the wrong way, creating no enemies and mastering the machinery of diplomatic administration. His triumph in the establishment of the U.N. peace force in Gaza is a tribute to his blandness rather than his boldness and is, no doubt, as much a product of his ability to accept the advice of others as was the fiasco in the 1957 parliament when he moved his footless motion of censure against the Diefenbaker government.

The selection of Pearson speeches edited by Sherleigh Pierson simply confirms the impression made by Beal and simple observation. Admittedly collections of speeches are usually dull, separated from the men and the events which called them forth; Mr. Pearson's speeches are excruciatingly dull and not particularly useful at that. If he were not Prime Minister it is doubtful if they would have been published. They abound in such stylistic monsters as this from his Nobel Laureate address: "Certainly the idea of an international peace force effective against a big disturber of the peace seems today unrealizable to the point of absurdity".

It is true that these are, for the most part, the speeches of a career diplomat and everything that is said in them has been said before by others. Even those made during the Suez debate at the U.N. Assembly have about them an air of monumental dullness although they are far and away the best in the collection.

They fail to inspire and the reason is simply that Lester Pearson is not an inspiring man. And nothing can be done about it. No one turns a more polished platitude than he. There are few speech-writers who can overcome the cautious determinism of the career bureaucrat.

Taken together these two books explain a good deal about the man who is presently prime minister of Canada. He is often described by colleagues as a man who is engaging and witty in private but stiff and boring in public. It seems likely, however, that his wit is more a function of his office than his sense of humour, for the jokes John Beal quotes are frankly pathetic. He is simply a very ordinary man and, one suspects, this was what the much discussed Ballantyne exercise in cinema verite demonstrated.

There is no reason why ordinary men should not be prime ministers; when they are it proves that democracy works in at least that respect. But once there they should not be surrounded by men who would have us believe otherwise. We should then be grateful to Mr. Beal and Miss Pierson for helping, however unwittingly, to prevent such a catastrophe by presenting such overwhelming evidence.

WALTER YOUNG

QUEBEC TRADITIONAL

JEAN PALARDY, *The Early Furniture of French Canada*. Macmillan.

DURING THE PAST twenty-five years the history of French Canada has been greatly enriched by the "discovery" of its artistic aspects, particularly for the

period between 1650 and 1890. In *The National Gallery Bulletin* I have already noted the progress of this discovery in such fields as architecture, painting and silversmith's work. Recently another considerable step has been made toward a more comprehensive and accurate knowledge of Quebec's early arts through the publication of Jean Palardy's luxuriously-presented 400-page work on *The Early Furniture of French Canada*.

This important publication comes at the very moment when, for a number of reasons, a real interest in Quebec's early arts and crafts has begun to spread — at least among French Canadians — beyond the usual specialist confines. It should at the same time be pointed out that, among the English-speaking minorities in Quebec, a natural care for tradition and a somewhat detached view has long ago provoked an interest in early Quebec traditions, so that among them old stone houses, *écuelles* and *armoires* have been family heirlooms for generations.

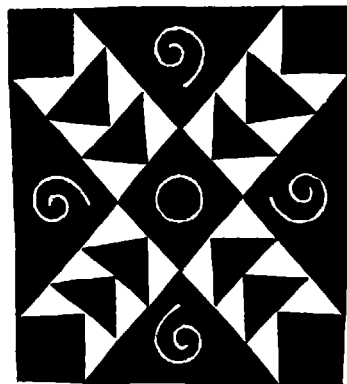
The 590 black-and-white photographs and ten full colour plates in Palardy's book — illustrating buffets, chests, beds, seats, doors, and even clocks, chandeliers and mantelpieces — are in themselves sufficient to answer most of the immediate questions one might ask about French-Canadian furniture. What does it look like? How high is its quality? How does it compare with the products of similar traditions in France, England, Ontario, New England? What degree of "civilization" does it represent?

The captions to the illustrations are presented as a *catalogue raisonné*, in

which the description of each piece and information on its provenance and character are reinforced by more general notes on the various types of furniture and by other relevant references.

In a field unexplored up to now, such an abundance of information would be enough to prove the good scholarship of a man who has already made a reputation as a painter, an interior designer and a film decorator. But Palardy has also been for decades a collector who has absorbed the secret life of his pine cupboards and his naïve sculptures. For him they are not mere objects of study, but the living and visible aspects of a certain civilization, of a kind of material philosophy in which tool, hand, wood, form, eye, imagination, play the role of abstract ideas. In his Introduction in the chapters on Technical and Historical Aspects, and in his Conclusion, one discovers the profound relationships between the furniture of French Canada and its wider traditions.

JEAN-PAUL MORISSET



A COUNTERBLAST TO MR. BOWERING

WHAT A SPLENDID FUTURE George Bowering forecasts so effusively for Canadian poetry in his article, "Poets in Their Twenties", in the last issue of *Canadian Literature*, and what a great pity almost all his quotations from these poets negate this magnificent prognosis! Of the poets he mentions, only Gwendolyn MacEwen really seems to have any genuine poetic ability, and the quotation from her work is hardly one that would induce any real confidence in her staying power.

And what of the other poets? From the fragments Mr. Bowering gives us, it is evident that they are much more interesting typographically than poetically. Does this fragmented typography show any real concern for poetry? Does it actually help either in understanding or in reading these poems? Mr. Bowering quotes approvingly from Warren Tallman's review of Frank Davey's poems, in which Tallman implies that in some mysterious way this attempt at a different notation, "helps to re-enact the poet's voicing". Mr. Davey must indulge in some tremendous dramatic pauses when he reads his verse, and yet his verse doesn't seem to need such flourishes. All those heavy dramatic sighs for a girl in black pedal pushers! Is there any significant reason why this particular quotation from Davey should be set out on the

page in this way? As James Reaney remarked in a review of Frank Davey's poetry in *Alphabet* (June 1962), "I'm not too sure that instead of projecting himself through his typewriter, his typewriter isn't projecting itself through him."

There is some very woolly thinking about the nature of poetry in Mr. Bowering's article. One of the most astonishing statements is Lionel Kearns's discovery that poetry "is a vocal art". Well now! I am sure we all agree, but it does seem a rather belated discovery. I suppose it is meant as a statement reacting against the so-called tyranny of the printed page in much modern poetry. But surely that tyranny is strengthened if the poet indulges in typographical doodling, whether he calls it "composition by field", "stacked verse" or "exploded verse". Mr. Bowering obviously disagrees. He makes an even more astounding observation: "Kearns' poetry, even on the page, is noticeably vocal". I would say that Eliot on the page is noticeably vocal, I would say Browning is, but I fail to see how this type-slinging, flying-off-in-all-directions, poetry of Kearns is "noticeably vocal", on the page.

Surely Cummings is the only poet who has made typography work for him. Even so, let Mr. Bowering try reading aloud a fairly straightforward Cummings lyric (perhaps "My father moved through doors of love") and then one with fragmented typography (perhaps "Poem, or Beauty Hurts Mr. Vinal") and see which one he honestly feels is more "noticeably vocal." It should be obvious that fragmented typography does not really "break through the barrier that separates the printed page from the poetry". In fact, it tends to increase the reader's difficulties.

In the poets Mr. Bowering quotes,

there is no concession to form. All the better practitioners of free verse rely on numerous technical devices — rhyme, assonance, repetition, parallelism — but there seems to be little of this kind of concern for poetry in Mr. Bowering's heroes. However, at one point in the article Mr. Bowering gives himself and his poets away in one of his remarks about K. V. Hertz: "One gets the impression that he wakes up in the morning and begins recording his emotions and thoughts, keeps doing this all day, resting finally to cut his long roll of paper into six-inch segments, and send the two hundred pieces in all directions from the corner mailbox". Mr. Bowering may be right that "somewhere in the mass of paper there are always surprising numbers of keenly sensitive and caring poems", but the reader would be more aware of them if they were cut away from the mass, rewritten, analysed, shaped. Must the reader rummage for these poems in the inchoate and amorphous pages of Hertz's daily diary-keeping? Has Hertz (or Mr. Bowering, for that matter) never realized that there is a shattering and almost overwhelming struggle to produce a real poem? Very often the struggle to shape the images, phrases, words into some kind of form helps define the poetic experience itself, makes the poet re-assess the importance and significance of his own reaction to the experience. There is no evidence that this shaping process has gone into the poems Mr. Bowering quotes.

But then, Mr. Bowering has very strange views about poetry: "As a result the poems produced owe much more to the image than they do to rhythmical interest, or to the qualities, and possibilities of sound in speech. The declara-

tive prose line is the most common. Statement supersedes music, and the poems, if they have impact, owe it to the vividness of the image." Now just where does Mr. Bowering stand? Does he believe with Mr. Kearns that poetry is a vocal art or does he believe that we do not need rhythm and the possibilities of speech? I may be very old-fashioned but I have always thought that poetry should have some "rhythmical interest", that it should pay attention to the "qualities of sound in speech".

And what is all this nonsense about some of this poetry making its impact by "the vividness of the image"? Zooming through empty space? A girl in black pedal pushers? Kids on tricycles? Flashing of a gull? Are these, then, the vivid images that make a poetic impact? There is nothing intrinsically unpoetic about these, but the manner in which they are presented in these poems is not in any sense in terms of a vivid imagery. Mr. Bowering mentions some of the influences on these poets — Donne, Dudek, Layton, Ferlinghetti — but that remark about "the vividness of the image" gives the game away. Most of these poets are bad Imagists. They do not have the precision of the Imagists, and they rely much more on the superficial shock of broken lines and gaps. Thus, instead of being daringly avant garde, they are basically forty years behind the times.

I know Mr. Bowering intended his article to be "an impressionistic survey . . . not a critical estimation of the state of Canadian poetry". Nonetheless, he does make critical judgments on these poets and obviously feels that many of them have already produced good poetry. He seems genuinely optimistic about the future to be created for Canadian poetry

by them, but from the evidence offered by most of the fragments he quotes I see no justification for his optimism. These poets seem to be in a state of obsolescence and futile wrong-headedness. If they are "the most likely of the newest batch of poets on the Canadian scene", heaven help Canadian poetry!

PETER STEVENS

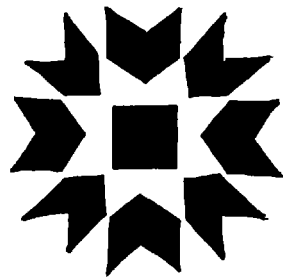
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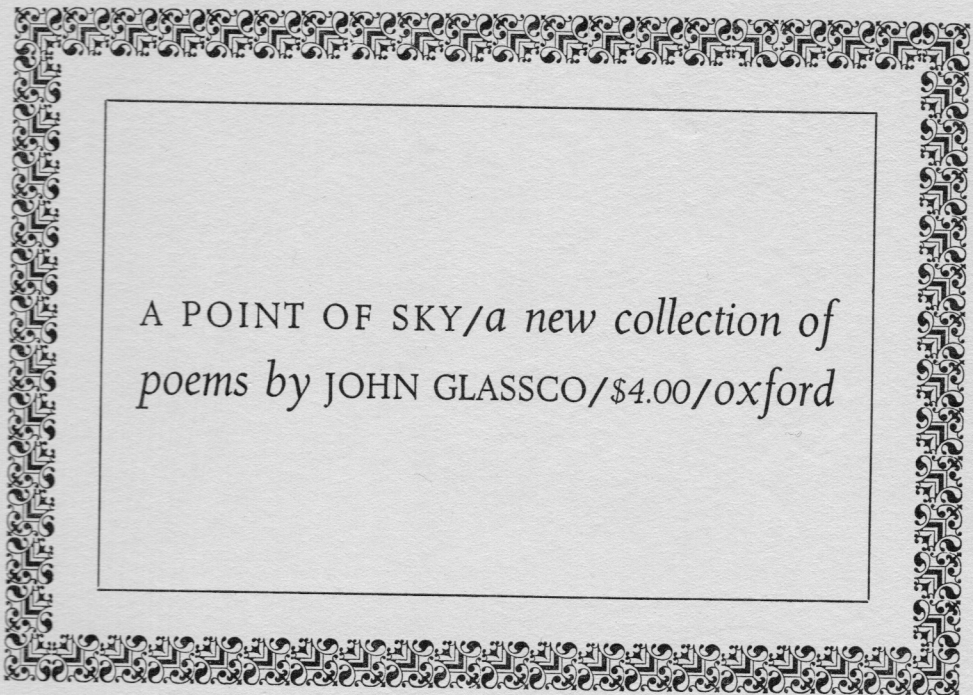
WITH SURPRISING UNOBTRUSIVENESS, Macmillans have been edging into the paperback field for several years, at first with occasional isolated volumes. Now, with such an extraordinary lack of ballyhoo that editors actually had to send for review copies, they appear to have decided on a definite paperback series, since eight reprints have just been issued simultaneously, with a uniform binding but, like the Canadian University Paperbacks, with varying format. They cover a whole spectrum of recent Macmillan publishing: biography, with the two volumes of J. M. S. Careless's definitive *Brown of the Globe* (at \$2.50 each); fiction with Charles Bruce's modest piece of regionalism, *The Channel Shore* (\$1.95), and George Elliott's whimsical but rather monotonous volume of short stories, *The Kissing Man* (\$1.50); the occasional essay with Hugh MacLennan's urbane *Scotchmen's Return* (\$1.95), which stands up extraordinarily well to dipping and re-reading; two Pioneer volumes of reprints — Samuel Hearne's fine narrative of *A Journey to the Northern Ocean*, and *Early Travellers in the Canadas*, a

collection of uneven snippets gathered together by Gerald Craig. The one volume which there seems no reason at all for re-publishing at this time is *Canadian Art* by Graham McInnes (\$1.95), a kind of guide book to the visual arts which was only precariously up to date when it originally appeared in 1950, and now in unrevised form is positively misleading since it gives no idea of the enormous changes — and the many new names — that have appeared in Canadian painting, sculpture and the graphic arts during the past fifteen years.

REPRINTED BIOGRAPHIES

AMONG THE VARIED LIST of titles now appearing in the Canadian University Paperbacks, published by the University of Toronto Press, are a number of the classic and long out-of-print Makers of Canada Series. These include William D. Le Sueur's *Count Frontenac* (\$2.50) and Abbé H. R. Casgrain's *Wolfe and Montcalm* (\$1.95), both of them works which have been supplemented but not superseded by modern scholarship.





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From the Governor and Committee
London, June 17, 1692.

Hudson's Bay Company.
INCORPORATED 2nd MAY 1670.