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TIME AND FICTION

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contributors

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S. E. READ was one of the original group who planned *Canadian Literature* in 1957 and 1958. Since then he has been a regular contributor of reviews and articles to our columns. He is at present Acting Head of the Department of English at the University of British Columbia.

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W. H. NEW has just returned to Vancouver after a period of association with the Commonwealth Literature project at the University of Leeds in England.

A. J. M. SMITH, who needs no introduction, has just published the first volume of a new anthology project, *The Book of Canadian Prose*.

editorial

A QUALITY OF NEGATIVES

THERE ARE, no doubt, peculiar qualities to Canadian literature. These particularly show themselves in university classes where the students are interested in what has happened in their own country, and in what is happening now. But they, like the literature they examine, look to the future. Somewhere during a course in Canadian literature a student asks me where Canadian literature is going? When will the great Canadian novel be written? When, the great Canadian poem? Rarely does anyone want to play the role of prophet; it is an impossible task. But together, we seem to have tried to answer these questions. What we come up with is a quality of negatives. Because an editorial is naturally limited, to repeat these here is perhaps dangerous because of the generalizations involved.

The fresh, young, and delightful minds with which I work feel that all literature in Canada never quite comes off. When we talk about the better novels, there is always something wrong. Either the plot is too pat, the pace too awkward, the characterization too one-dimensional. They agree that *Who Has Seen The Wind* is a good novel, but they underline this with "of its kind". Admittedly, Mitchell has grasped the quality of the boy and the wind; but the novel does not rank with the great novels written outside of Canada. They like the importance of environment in *As For Me and My House*, but many of the characters are too shadowy, too diffuse. *The Loved and the Lost* has an important theme, but the symbolism is too obvious. Their final evaluation is always tinged with ambivalence; the novelist has tried, has done a good job in many things, but not in all facets of his art; his work never is whole. Some novelists reach for it, but the sustained totality never appears.

These students also try to explain why. Admittedly, often, the explanation is intangible. But through the past five years together we have reached some conclusions for explanations. There is the passionate complacency of the Canadian writer and the Canadian reader, and not the passion usually equated with sex. Everything is taken seriously even by the humourists. At times the complacency becomes smugness, for some writers cry to their readers that they have accomplished something. And because the country has not emerged as a totality, absurd local loyalties to various writers quickly made a distorted pastiche of both value and accomplishment on the Canadian literary scene.

Then there is the more obvious conclusion: the limitation of the imagination and sensibility that makes it impossible for most Canadian novelists to write about sex in any mature or distinguishing way. Perhaps the approach is not even a civilized one. Novels that came out last autumn clearly show this lack, where sex is marked by childish embarrassment or not-so-subtle innuendo. Both novelists and poets have a great deal of learning to do in this area, for a sophisticated approach is needed. Just because more history is made in the boudoir does not mean that most sex is learned behind the barn.

It is a growing literature, but often it is only in a process of germination. There is the occasional writer who reaches beyond this stage at some point in his writing: Morley Callaghan, Adele Wiseman, Phylis Webb. But Canadian writers and readers have only recently decided that complacency must go, and these people are a minority. What is going to happen? Above all, a maturer approach to the human situation is essential, so that completeness in character and conflict emerge. And where is it all going? In comes an age of satire, or, more probable, a romantic revival?

D.S.

THE MAZE OF LIFE

The Work of Margaret Laurence

S. E. Read

DR. JOHNSON in his "Preface to Shakespeare" comments trenchantly on the hazards of evaluating that which is new in the realm of the creative arts. "To works . . . of which the excellence is not absolute and definite, but gradual and comparative; to works not raised upon principles demonstrative and scientific, but appealing wholly to observation and experience, no other test can be applied than length of duration and continuance of esteem." Yet the new must be tested and appraised, and esteem or condemnation rendered, long before the passing of the traditional century, "the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit."

To criticize the writings of Margaret Laurence is to criticize that which is new — very new. Five years ago her name was unknown to the reading public. Today, as the result of the publication of four works, three of which appeared in a few brief months in 1963 and 1964, she is recognized in many parts of the English-speaking world as a serious writer who has already achieved greatly and who gives promise of even greater achievement. I realize, of course, that the excellence of her works "is not absolute and definite," but when I read her pages I feel certain that her means are just, and "Applause, in spite of trivial faults, is due."

Margaret Laurence is a Canadian, born in Neepawa, Manitoba, a very small prairie town somewhat to the northeast of Brandon. She graduated from the

University of Manitoba but shortly after found herself in the British protectorate of Somaliland (now part of the Republic of Somalia), the young wife of a British civil engineer. She then moved to the Gold Coast (now Ghana); later, for a brief period, to Vancouver; then back to England. But wherever she goes, she looks, sees, records, studies, and remembers. For she had the eye of an artist and from the world of her experience she draws the materials for the patterns of her writing. And the patterns are many and varied.

Though the establishment of her reputation has been brilliantly rapid, this is not to say that she sprang full armed from the head of Melpomene, or some such suitable muse. From childhood on she has studied and practised the craft of story telling, and readers of *Prism* and *Queen's Quarterly* may recall a few of her short stories published in the late 1950's. But her first novel, *This Side Jordan*, did not appear until 1960, to be followed, after a silence of more than two years, by *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (1963), *The Tomorrow Tamer* (1963), and *The Stone Angel* (1964). It is on these books that her present reputation rests.

The Prophet's Camel Bell makes the best starting point for an article of this general nature. It most fully reveals the writer herself — her character and personality, her attitudes and opinions, her sensitivity and her reactions to the world around her, her ability to observe and interpret, her approach to the business of writing.

The work itself does not slip easily into any rigid category. It starts like a journal and in some parts reads like a journal. But basically it is a commentary on a people — the Somalis — and on their character, their ways of life, and their literature. It also contains a series of sharp, penetrating sketches of individuals — Somalis, Italians, British. But free of dates and the binding restrictions of time, it has a timeless feeling about it that sets the work quite apart from the usual books of travel and adventure in distant and exotic parts.

Mrs. Laurence was twenty-four or less when she went to Somaliland as the wife of an English engineer, who had been appointed by the British Government to direct the construction of a series of *ballehs* or earth dams along the southern edge of the Protectorate, just to the north of the Ethiopian boundary. The area is known as the Haud. On its northern edge is Hargeisa, the only town of any size, and it is no centre of civilization. The economy of the country is poor; the chief occupation is grazing camels and sheep; the population is almost entirely Moslem; the number of Europeans is very small; and the heat can be extreme. Yet into the Haud Mrs. Laurence went, to be with her husband as he surveyed the project and as he supervised the building of the *ballehs* that were to store water and to

bring some assurance of life to the animals and the people of the land. Conditions were tough and the hazards real. Yet it is from this background that Mrs. Laurence drew the fabrics for the *Prophet's Camel Bell*; and — if I may hazard a guess — it is within this circle of time that she began to mature as a writer.

If she had not been herself she might well have become a memsahib, a well behaved, tea-going wife of a sahib. This would have been the right and proper thing to do. But she saw the distance which the memsahibs "put between themselves and the Somalis" and quickly took the unconventional road. Within hours of arriving at Hargeisa she had gone to the town's centre *on foot* ("European women did not go to the Somali town alone, and no European ever went on foot. It simply wasn't done."); she soon entertained Somalis in her house; and before long she moved into the wilderness to live with the working crews. Actions such as these require courage, independence, and perhaps a good sense of humour. Mrs. Laurence has all three.

But she did not do these things just to be contrary. She wanted to learn, to know, and to acquire materials from which books might be made. She not only observed and listened, with keen eyes and delicately atuned ears; she also studied works on Somaliland (for example, Richard Burton's classic, *First Steps in East Africa*), and immersed herself in the language and the unwritten literature of the people. In brief, she became a thoroughly disciplined and a hard working scholar and writer.

Two works resulted. The first, *A Tree for Poverty*, a translation of traditional though unrecorded tales and poems, was published by the Somaliland government in 1954; the second, *The Prophet's Camel Bell*, appeared almost a decade later, in 1963. I have not seen the earlier work, but one chapter in the more recent book is entitled "A Tree for Poverty" and contains critical comments on the literature of the Somalis, as well as extended examples of poems and tales. Included are one *belwo*, a short love poem; an extract from a *gabei*, the highest literary form, impressive in proportions and technique; and two thoroughly delightful tales, rapid in movement, rich in humour, and revealing Somali attitudes towards life, death, and Allah.

All in all, the Somaliland venture must have been a rich one for Mrs. Laurence, and by the time she moved from Somaliland into the Gold Coast (still not yet Ghana) she had become a skilled stylist, a sharp observer of landscapes and people, deeply involved in the study of language, folk lore, myths, and traditions. She was ready to begin the groundwork for her volume of short stories, *The Tomorrow-Tamer*, and the novel that brought her initial fame, *This Side Jordan*.

I AM NOT QUITE SURE when the Laurences went to the Gold Coast, but it was in the period of transition — shortly before Ghana became independent in 1957. Certainly the atmosphere of change — of breakdown and building, of white withdrawal and black upsurge, of uncertain conflict and deep-rooted suspicion — runs through all the stories and through the novel, a unifying, binding current.

Ten stories in all compose *The Tomorrow-Tamer*. Nine of them had been previously published in magazines and periodicals from 1956 to 1963. All of them are gems, though some more finely cut than others, and the volume is unified by a common theme — the dying of the old way of life and the birth of the new. *The Tomorrow-Tamer* has been wisely chosen as the core story for the volume. Not only is it the best story, but it best expresses the inevitable conflict inherent in change.

In bare outline the story is simple. A bridge is to be built across the river Owura. The bridge will link the village Owurasu with the outside world. The village is old and primitive, in the grip of the ancient gods and the old superstitions. The bridge is new, modern, and, to the villagers, a mystery. Will the river god be offended by the structure that slowly begins to span the waters? Will the destruction of the sacred grove bring disaster? At first the young man Kofi is the only villager the council of elders will allow to work with the invading labour force. When no harm comes to him, other villagers are allowed to join in the work. Kofi becomes their leader; then, in his own mind, he becomes the priest of the bridge. He will tend it; fearless he will tame it. In his pride, he climbs to the highest beam of the great structure, and standing erect on the steel he gazes even higher — into the sun. Blinded by the sudden brilliance, he loses his balance and plunges to his death in the waters far below.

> As for the people of Owurasu, they were not surprised. They understood perfectly well what had happened. The bridge, clearly, had sacrificed its priest in order to appease the river. The people felt they knew the bridge now. Kofi had been the first to recognize the shrine, but he had been wrong about one thing. The bridge was not as powerful as Owura. The river had been acknowledged as elder. The queenly bridge had paid its homage and was a part of Owurasu at last.

This conflict, clearly symbolic, is repeated with varying patterns in the other stories — at times with humour, at times with a touch of sentiment, at times with irony and bitterness. "The Merchant of Heaven", the tale of Amory Lemon,

"proselytizer for a mission known as the Angel of Philadelphia," is a bitter and acid comment on a salvager of souls who is no better than the witch doctor in a bush village; "The Perfume Sea" is a delightful tale of Archipelago, "English-Style Barber European Ladies' Hairdresser," who managed to survive the impact of change by merging his interests with that of his manicurist and beautician and painting a new sign that read:

ARCHIPELAGO & DOREE
BARBERSHOP
ALL-BEAUTY SALON
African Ladies a Specialty

And "The Pure Diamond Man" is a good-fun story of a fast operator, Tettel, who tries to make quick money by selling the secrets of village magic to an amateur anthropologist only to be caught in his own trickery. It is satiric, but not as serious a study of change as the other stories I have mentioned. All in all it is a collection of delightful and brilliantly told tales. I shall say more later about the distinguishing characteristics of the style.

To date, Mrs. Laurence has had two novels published — *This Side Jordan* and *The Stone Angel.* The first (and it is the earlier) belongs to the African period; the second is purely Canadian in its setting.

This Side Jordan continues the theme that runs through the tales. The setting is again Ghana; the time, the transitional period of Ghanaian independence. The action stems from the problem of adjustment — the adjustment of the African to a new-found freedom; the adjustment of the English to a radically and rapidly changing position. The characters are neatly arranged in two opposing groups — Africans on the left, English on the right; and the action is skilfully developed (though at times it seems slightly artificial or contrived) so as to bring the two groups spasmodically together. Irritation, suspicion, anger, even hate are the recurring results when their paths cross.

Johnnie Kestoe, the principal English character, is an opportunist — aggressive, short-sighted, intolerant, and self-centred. As a new employee of the Textile Division of a long-established English firm, he does not understand the world he is in, nor does he want to. Only at the end does he shift ground slightly, but then by necessity more than desire. His dramatic opponent, Nathaniel Amegbe, schoolmaster at Futura Academy (principal and owner, Jacob Abraham), is unqualified, underpaid, somewhat stupid, slightly dishonest, and, still close to the primi-

tive ways and superstitions of the bush village from which he came, confused and frustrated by Christianity, education, and city life. But, unlike Kestoe, Amegbe is something of an idealist, though slightly tarnished, and can dream about, and is willing to work for, a better world in the not too distant future.

This balance of opposites is neatly extended to include the two wives. Miranda, the wife of Kestoe, is painfully curious about the African way of life and embarrasses the sensitive Amegbe at every turn. Aya, Amegbe's wife, is ignorant, suspicious, hostile. Both women, as the novel opens, are pregnant; and, as the novel comes to its close, they find themselves together in hospital, each awaiting the common experience of birth. Within hours, to each a child is born — to Miranda, a girl, Mary; to Aya, a boy, Joshua. And with their birth, hope for the future is also born — the new Mary may bring a new love, the new Joshua may well lead his people to "this side Jordan."

Around this central four revolve a half dozen or more other characters — black and white. None is perfect, either in virtue or villainy; all are caught in the whirlpool of change, all are confused, each in his own degree. Some resist and break; some compromise and survive. All are sketched with penetrating insight and considerable sympathy. For — if I read it aright — this is a novel that damns no one completely. Rather it is a novel that pleads for understanding and enlightenment. As such, it was, and is, a successful and exciting work. As such, too, it creates its own limitations — for it is a novel that deals with a problem of a moment, and, with the passing of time, its reason for being will be darkened, and interest in it will decline.

With the writing of *The Stone Angel*, Mrs. Laurence reached full maturity as a novelist. In my opinion she must now be considered as a significant literary artist — on any terms. For here she has created a great central character, untrammeled by bounds of place or time; and has handled her core theme — the aging of a prideful, independent woman — with profound sympathy and telling conviction. This is a novel that should appeal to many readers for many years to come.

The book's jacket describes the work as a "novel with a Canadian setting." True. Part of the action unrolls in Manawaka, a small town somewhere on the prairie; part in a nameless city (Vancouver — perhaps) on the western seaboard. But these settings are condiments. They give flavour or spice, but they are not the essential food. That is Hagar Shipley, an old and stubborn woman of ninety, who is "rampant with memory," but who also finds that each passing day has for her a rarity which must be treasured and admired.

It is the weaving of these past and present strands that makes the final fabric of the work. Through an alternating pattern we are given the story of her life and the account of her last struggle to maintain her independence; and when the weaving is done, we see her as a character portrayed with deep understanding and sympathy. This autobiographical technique — combining as it does reminiscence and stream of consciousness — may produce some flaws and certainly demands suspension of disbelief; but it is handled with skill and daring and produces a fast moving story and a strong feeling of tension.

Hagar Shipley is a Lear-like figure. She is prideful, stubborn, hard, opinionated, and confused. Like her Biblical namesake, she wanders in a wilderness of her own making. Like the stone angel that stands over the remains "of her who relinquished her feeble ghost as I gained my stubborn one," she views her world with sightless eyes, for the marble monument was "doubly blind, not only stone but unendowed with even a pretense of sight. Whoever carved her had left the eyeballs blank." But, like Lear, she — Hagar — through the agony of her last days, achieves vision, understands human suffering, and reaches out her hands in a dying gesture of love.

The time span of the final action is short — a few days. But these days are rich in experience and deep with meaning. They frame her last struggle to retain her independence. Against her are ranged her disintegrating body, a bumbling son, Melvin, and a plotting, offensive daughter-in-law, Doris. Against the attacks of the flesh she is helpless; against the scheming of her human opponents she stands firm. With the sharpness of an old vixen she rightly foresees their plan to place her in "Silverthreads," a nursing home where "Mother will find the companionship of those her age, plus every comfort and convenience," and, with animal courage, she seeks salvation in flight.

Alone, by the edge of the sea, she takes refuge from storm and cold in a crumbling cannery building. She seeks and finds courage not through hymns or the Twenty-third Psalm, but through lines from Keats:

> Old Meg was brave as Margaret Queen,
> And tall as Amazon;
> An old red blanket coat she wore,
> A ship hat had she on.

She reviews the darkest moments of her life — the deaths of her drunken husband and her favourite son John, upon whom she had lavished her affection only to

have him become her Ishmael, whose hand was "against every man, and every man's hand against him." Then into the blackness of her night comes a fool — a vague parallel, perhaps, but a parallel none the less of Lear's fool — a tippling insurance salesman, Murray F. Lees. Together they fill their bellies with cheap red wine, then tell, each to the other, sad tales of loss and of sorrow. And to Hagar, as she listens to Lees and as she receives from him understanding and kindness, comes understanding of self and the realization that tragedy is the common lot of man.

A few days later, after being found by her distraught son and daughter-in-law, old Hagar dies in hospital, but not before she has shown, through acts of kindness to those around her, that she has found a new meaning to life. Through freely giving of self, the old stone angel at last receives eyes and sees with terrifying clarity that she herself has been the cause of her blackened years. "Pride was my wilderness, and the demon that lead me was fear. I was alone, never anything else, and never free, for I carried my chains within me, and they spread out from me and shackled all I touched."

It is the creation of Hagar Shipley that clearly marks — for me at least — the emergence of Mrs. Laurence as a fine novelist. For the first business of a serious novelist is the creation of character. And when any particular character slips, almost imperceptibly perhaps, beyond the realms of obvious fiction into the world of reality then the summit of the novelist's art has been achieved. Such is Hagar. She belongs in that great company that begins with Chaucer's Monk and Pardoner, Prioress and Wife of Bath and stretches through the works of the great down to our present day. At times vicious and vulgar, irascible and prideful, stubborn and independent, she is by no means loveable; but she is capable of profound feelings and in the end demands respect. I'll forget, eventually, Johnnie Kestoe and Nathaniel Amegbe; but I'll not forget the Stone Angel. I may even see her from time to time — on the street, in a bus, or in a hospital ward; for she is timeless and the world is her home.

It is evident from what I have already said that Margaret Laurence can tell a good story — short or long, skilfully handle tense dramatic situations, observe with microscopic eye the societies in which she has lived, and create memorable characters. But she can also write extremely well. Her command of language is sure and controlled. Each word is precisely chosen to produce a desired effect, and each sentence is carefully structured to fit the mood of the moment or the motion of the action. Through her extraordinary powers of observation combined with her sure grasp of words she can transport the reader into far-distant lands

where sights, sounds, smells, colours form patterns quite different from those we encounter in our own round of life. Take, for example, a brief passage from "The Merchant of Heaven" where the narrator and Brother Lemon, the evangelist, walk through the streets of a Ghanaian town:

> On our second trip, however, he began to notice other things. A boy with suppurating yaws covering nearly as much of his body as did his shreds of clothing. A loin-clothed labourer carrying a headload so heavy that his flimsy legs buckled and bent. A trader woman minding a roadside stall on which her living was spread — a half dozen boxes of cube sugar and a handful of pink plastic combs. A girl child squatting modestly in the filth-flowing gutter. A grinning penny-pleading gamin with a belly outpuffed by navel hernia. A young woman, pregnant and carrying another infant on her back, her placid eyes growing all at once proud and hating as we passed comfortably by. An old Muslim beggar who howled and shouted *sura* from the Qoran, and then, silent, looked and looked with the unclouded innocent eyes of lunacy.

Or take the opening lines of "The Tomorrow-Tamer," lines filled with rapid movement, strong colours, and local lore:

> The dust rose like clouds of red locusts around the small stampeding hooves of taggle-furred goats and the frantic wings of chickens with all their feathers awry. Behind them the children darted, their bodies velvety with dust, like a flash and tumble of brown butterflies in the sun.
>
> The young man laughed to see them, and began to lope after them. Past the palms where the tapsters got wine, and the sacred grave to Owura, god of the river. Past the shrine where Nana Ayensu poured libation to the dead and guardian grandsires. Past the thicket of ghosts, where the graves were, where every leaf and flower had fed on someone's kin, and the wind was the thin whisper-speech of ancestral spirits. Past the deserted huts, clay walls runnelled by rain, where rats and demons dwelt in unholy brotherhood. Past the old men drowsing in doorways, dreaming of women, perhaps, or death. Past the good huts with their brown baked walls strong against any threatening night-thing, the slithering snake carrying in its secret sac the end of life, or red-eyed Sasabonsam, huge and hairy, older than time and always hungry.

Or again, this passage from *The Stone Angel,* which further illustrates Mrs. Laurence's profound powers of perception, her delicate handling of language, and her ability to penetrate the workings of the mind. Old Hagar, having fled from her family, sits alone in the forest. Her mind wanders freely, the movement is slow, poetic:

> Now I perceive that the forest is not still at all, but crammed with creatures scurrying here and there on multitudinous and mysterious errands. A line of ants crosses the tree trunk where I'm sitting. Solemn and in single file they march towards some miniature battle or carrion feast. A giant slug oozes across my path, flowing with infinite slowness like a stagnant creek. My log is covered with moss — I pluck it, and an enormous piece comes away in my hand. It's long and curly as hair, a green wig suitable for some judicial owl holding court over the thievish jays of scavenging beetles. Beside me grows a shelf of fungus, the velvety underside a mushroom colour, and when I touch it, it takes and retains my fingerprint. From the ground nearby sprouts a scarlet-tipped Indian paintbrush — that's for the scribe. Now we need only summon the sparrows as jurors, but they'd condemn me quick as a wink, no doubt.

With equal skill, Mrs. Laurence handles the dialogue of her characters. She has a fine ear for conversation, and through the nuances of idiom, the tonal variations that exist between young and old, native and non-native, and the vocabulary differences between educated and uneducated she keeps her characters sharply apart. She rarely fumbles, for she is a genuine artist in the handling of words. There is little padding. Each word — even each sound — has its place in the overall pattern. As a result, she is effective, persuasive, and at times deeply moving.

But she is not effective and moving merely because she writes well. In the last analysis, I believe that her potential greatness — a greatness not yet fully realized — lies in the fact that through all her works runs a deep and passionate interest in human beings. From *The Prophet's Camel Bell* through to *The Stone Angel* there is an ever-present call for understanding and tolerance between individuals, of different races or of the same race. In none of her works is Mrs. Laurence just a slick and a brilliant teller of tales, nor a cold, albeit perceptive analyst. She is deeply moved, I am sure, by the tragedies of human existence, by man's constant frustrations as he tries to work through the Minoan maze that is life. She writes because she is impelled to write, not as a propagandist or an orthodox moralist, but as one willing to wrestle unceasingly with the human dilemma. Her far distant ancestor is the unknown author of Job who in his own questioning anguish cried:

> Oh that my words were now written!
> Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
> That with an iron pen and lead
> They were graven in the rock for ever!

SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN

Personal Glimpses

M. E. R.

SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN'S *The Imperialist* is known to Canadian readers, but only in recent years have biographers and critics made an effort to write about the successive phases of her career: as a journalist in Canada, a novelist in India and England, and latterly an aspiring playwright in London. A thesis by Miss Rae E. Goodwin, a postgraduate student working under Professor Gordon Roper at Trinity College, Toronto, has established the facts about S. J. D.'s early journalism; a thesis on the English-Canadian-American novels is being prepared by Mr. T. W. McGuffin; and the manuscripts of a dozen plays are under study in the Library of the University of Western Ontario, having recently been deposited there through the kindness of Mrs. P. V. Cotes of Oxshott, Surrey (the widow of Everard Cotes).

Sara Jeannette Duncan was the first wife of Everard Cotes, and sometimes signed her works as Mrs. Cotes. She died in 1922 and was buried beside the parish church in Ashstead, near Epsom, Surrey. No one now has intimate knowledge of the novelist's Indian and English periods to match that of Mrs. Sandford Ross ("M.E.R.") of Combe, in Oxfordshire, the author of this brief, but skillfully revealing, sketch. Mrs. Ross, a niece of S.J.D.'s husband, was a youthful guest in the Cote's home in India and was with her aunt when the latter died in Ashtead.

CARL F. KLINCK

IT WAS IN MY EARLY TEENS that I first came to know Sara Jeannette Duncan — Aunt Redney. Till then she had been merely the Canadian Aunt in India who wrote books — and especially a little blue covered book called *Sonny Sahib*. There were no pictures in this book as there were in

later editions, so that I was surprised to find anything to attract me in it in those youthful days. But I read it many times and always ended in tears for the motherless little boy who "did not tell", and old Tooni who had kept the Memsahib's Bible safely as proof of Sonny Sahib's parentage. I was told that the story was based on an incident of the Indian Mutiny, but I do not know if that was a fact. I do know that in later years the author told me of all her books that slim little early one had paid her royalties ever since it was first published.

I think that Aunt Redney was not often in England during the first ten or twelve years of her married life, for I do not remember seeing her much until I was about fourteen, though she told me that she had seen me as a baby in London. Later my family lived in the country and it was on a country walk in our village that I have a clear picture of her. There was a little shop that sold fish and on the marble slab was a heap of winkles. Aunt Redney asked me what they were and said she had never seen them before. I had to confess that I had never tasted one, but that our nursemaid said they were "lovely", and you got them out of their shells with a pin. My Aunt said at once that she must try one in spite of my saying they were horrid little sea snails. The shopman was very much amused at being asked for one winkle! However a pin was found and rather to my surprise the winkle did come out on the end of the pin and Aunt Redney popped it into her mouth. She chewed it and chewed it as we walked on, but at last she threw it out and said it was a tough proposition. At that moment a small dog came in sight, and seeing something being thrown out he thought it worth while investigating and he also started to chew; however he very soon gave up and spat it out, which tickled Aunt Redney who said — "There — you see he agrees with me, so I don't want any more winkles."

I suppose she returned then to India, possibly via Canada unless she had been there first, as she generally visited England and Canada when she came from India, sometimes with my Uncle and sometimes by herself.

In re-reading *The Imperialist* recently I was reminded that the authoress was staying with us in Hertfordshire just before a General Election and that she was extremely interested in the canvassing and posters, and asked many questions about it and may have been taken to some of the local meetings addressed by the candidates or their friends. I can remember being told that she was writing a book and wanted to see how such election preparations compared with those in Canada. *The Imperialist* was of course the book, though at the time I did not know that it was her only one apparently that had its stage and setting in Canada, her birthplace.

After this she must have been more in India than anywhere else for there is a fairly long gap when I do not remember her or my Uncle for more than passing glimpses until the Spring of 1912 when I went with her to India, and I remember how great an interest she took in choosing pretty frocks for me and making all the arrangements for the voyage out. In those days there was no such thing as air-conditioning in the cabins and fans were luxuries, so I was much impressed to see an electric fan in her cabin and to be told that it was a "compliment" from the shipping company or her publisher, I do not remember which.

We arrived in Bombay where my Uncle met us on my birthday and Aunt Redney got me a charming little necklace of Indian gold and turquoise which I still possess.

We went straight up to Simla, then the summer capital and seat of government for the hot season, and where Aunt Redney had for some years been very interested in converting poor bungalows into charming dwellings. We went to the one she had been working on the summer before and she had made it a very delightful home. It was called "Dormers", and we had brought out with us her new materials for the furnishings. Ivory-coloured linen with a design of moss-rosebuds and said to have been designed originally for Queen Victoria's yacht, and soft green velvet for long doors and French windows.

Sara Jeannette Duncan did much writing in Simla and her normal hours for it were from 10 a.m. to 2 or 3 p.m. Before 10 a.m. she had sometimes been riding with my Uncle before breakfast, and after the meal she did her interviewing with the *khansamah* (cook) and the *khitmagar* (head house servant) and then often she strolled round the garden with me and talked to the *mali* about the flowers and what he was to provide for the table if there was a dinner party on. I well remember that early Spring in her garden, a narrow ledge cut out of the hillside and facing the gorgeous range of snow-capped Himalayas, and at our feet a bed of lilies-of-the-valley which the *mali* called "Lili-he-lili", which greatly charmed her.

Sometimes on a Sunday morning there would be a "breakfast" party at 10 a.m. I was aware of the great interest my Aunt took in the political situation then in India, with all the talk of removing the capital from Calcutta and making a New Delhi, and I do not think it would be going too far to say that she had a good deal to do with the outcome, especially as to the positioning of the main buildings. Certainly there was much talk in high places as well as at the Sunday breakfasts. Later in Delhi the original foundation stones familiarly and affectionately known as George and Mary for obvious reasons, were found to have

flitted in the night to where I presume they may still stand. It was all very interesting and exciting to me who saw how much my Aunt's influence and advice was sought.

Normally the writing hours were spent in her bedroom, where propped among pillows she would work with pencil and paper, and one just did not venture to disturb her during that time. She did not have a mid-day meal, nor did my Uncle, so I lunched in solemn state alone!

During the rainy month, August I think it was, there was a weekly "At Home", when many people came to tea and talk and I used to think what a charming and wonderful hostess she was.

At the end of the Simla season that year the government and everyone else went down for its cold weather in Delhi, and the inauguration of it. The opening ceremony made history in more ways than was intended, by the bomb throwing at the Viceroy, and the marvellous behaviour of the processional elephants. My Aunt was among those who wondered if this incident would spark off more trouble, and the air was tense and electric. We were so near it all there, and the day before I had ridden the processional route all through old Delhi upon the Commander-in-Chief's elephant in the rehearsal for the next day's pageant. This elephant was directly behind the one carrying the Viceroy when the bomb fell into the back compartment of the Howdah killing one of the jamadars and slightly wounding the Viceroy. The inauguration ceremony was cancelled naturally, and a uniformed rider came galloping to the place where everyone was waiting for the procession to arrive to announce the cancellation and give the news.

Aunt Redney had a busy time that first season in Delhi, and she met many people and was consulted on many important matters, but I rather lost touch then as I was summoned home suddenly owing to my Father's death, and I did not see my Aunt again till she came to England later in 1913. It may have been that year that she had for a time a charming little house in the Chelsea area, and I was often there with her, but I remember her more after the start of the 1914 war when she returned from Canada via the U.S.A. and gave us all a graphic description of her voyage when the Captain prevented the ship from being torpedoed by flying the Stars and Stripes. He had very many Americans aboard and so saved the ship, though I believe she was sunk on her next trip.

In March 1915 I returned to India with Aunt Redney; the War was in its early stages and a British ship that passed through the Suez Canal a few days before us had seen the bodies of Turks floating in the Canal as the result of an engagement with our troops. We reached Bombay without incident and went on to

Simla to the pretty house — Dormers. I chiefly remember that my Aunt was much occupied with a play she wrote then to raise funds for War Charities. It was called "Brown with an E" and was put on the stage by the Amateur Dramatic Society of Simla, in which there were some very good performers. I think the name was changed later when it was put on in London also for War Charities. I know that still later when it reached the provinces it had been so vulgarized that my Aunt had her name taken off the boards. I do not know how much money the charities got from it, as I did not go with her to England then. Needless to say there was a Brown without an "E"; both were young soldiers enlisted for the War and came from very different ways of life. The mix-up lent itself to comical and ridiculous positions made much of by the Author.

Aunt Redney did not return to India nor could I get to England, as by then women and children were not allowed to travel.

At the end of the War my Uncle retired and I went Home to England with him and joined my Aunt in her Chelsea house. Then she and my Uncle started to look for a home near London, but in the country. In the early Spring they found one at Ashtead in Surrey, and I was busy helping with all the business of alterations and moving and furnishing, so it was not till May that we moved in to a very unfinished interior. My Aunt was also busy with her writing, so I had my hands full indeed.

Alas — she was never to see her plans all finished and the new carpets laid. My Uncle was going daily to London as he took on some work for an American newspaper. Just after breakfast one morning in June I went in to the garden at a call from Aunt Redney — she was standing on a flower-bed with a fork in her hands, and said "I feel awfully queer." I got her to bed with hot bottles, and then ran across to some kindly neighbours to ask who and where was a doctor; then I 'phoned my Uncle. I don't know now how long she was ill — perhaps ten days — but I was with her at the end and she turned her head towards me and opened her wonderful blue eyes, so live and clear, as if she would impress something on my mind, and then closed them for ever.

THE VITAL PRETENSE

McDougall's Execution

Ronald Sutherland

BEFORE PUBLISHING the novel *Execution*, Colin McDougall allowed himself fourteen years to ponder his experience of World War II. During that time he was able to consider the aftermath of the war, and to develop a sense of perspective and interpretation which has made his novel something more than simply another story of military adventure. The adventure and the drama, of course, are there. But also there, one can find a significant insight into what is perhaps the fundamental pyschological problem of the Twentieth Century — the problem of accepting life itself as meaningful when the age-old props of expected success, religious conviction, and the challenge of tomorrow have been knocked away.

The novel got off to a spectacular enough start with the Governor General's Award for Fiction, but in the seven years since its publication it has been virtually ignored by the critics. It would seem, nonetheless, that a good deal remains to be said about Colin McDougall's *Execution*. Whether or not to a degree intended by the author, the more extraordinary thematic aspects of the novel are camouflaged by a surface of deceptive simplicity. Concentrated to the point of almost hypnotic effect, charged with dramatic irony, the book makes unusual demands upon the reader's critical attention.

The plot of *Execution* hangs upon the ancient literary device of a journey, but

it is so stripped of inessentials as to resemble a stream of consciousness. The separate, yet closely integrated and often skilfully counterpointed episodes blend into a series which progresses rapidly, perhaps too rapidly for anyone to assimilate the full texture of meaning in the course of a single reading. In the first episode, Krasnick, a stolid farm boy from Manitoba, is refusing to shoot his Bren gun at a group of Italians performing a cavalry charge. Once assured that he need not shoot the horses, but only the men off the horses, Krasnick steadies his gun, and with quick bursts of fire he slaughters the moustached giant in the lead and brings the charge to an end as efficiently and finally as modern warfare terminated the chivalric notions of days gone by. Thus, from the very outset, McDougall makes clear that he is not concerned with heroics — there will be no storming and holding of the British square. But like any other modern military novelist, he is concerned with the great levelling power of a bullet; and the episode of the horses, recalled a second time at the end of the novel, serves neatly to underline the devaluation of human life brought about by war. More precisely, *Execution* is in large part a study of the effects of killing, with or without benefit of law court, upon those who perform and witness it.

The first effect, ironically enough, is one of exhilaration, when Pachino is totally destroyed "by express command to provide a beacon for ships and aircraft" and Castello Donato is captured. John Adam discovers a "mad grandeur in the concept that cities should be made funeral pyres," and even the gentle Padre Doorn finds it impossible to summon up pity and regret. But McDougall cuts the exhilaration short; when the two harmless Italians whom the Canadians have befriended, Little Joe and Big Jim, are crudely executed by Brigade command in the barnyard serving as Battalion headquarters, the effect is crushing disillusionment. McDougall handles the scene with sharp, fitting detail: the prisoners, six revolver bullets pumped into their bodies, are writhing in a manure pile, and Adam must rush in to finish them off with bursts from his tommy-gun — an act grotesquely parallel to Krasnick's merciful killing of the wounded horses at Castello Donato. The whole, sordid barnyard execution, in fact, is vividly contrasted to the first engagement, in which Adam gallantly refused to accept the sabre the defeated Italian officer no less gallantly offered him, in which the Canadians toasted their triumph from vats of *vino rosso*, and in which Adam actually contemplated riding on one of the captured white chargers to make his tour of inspection.

The barnyard execution is the first major pivot upon which the novel revolves. Presented with such realism that it is entirely believable, it is nevertheless a

shrewdly calculated device: here is the ultimate brutality, the very antithesis of goodness, mercy, nobility, and even of efficiency. It cannot be rationalized as "part of the game", as were the disagreeable aspects of Pachino and Castello Donato. Moreover, it is not a routine brutality of the dehumanized Hun; it is commanded, perpetrated and sanctioned by Canadian vested authority. One wonders what the verdict of a tribunal would be in respect to the responsibility of Mitchell, who disobeyed an order in not shooting the two Italians on sight, of Brigadier Kildare, who issued the order, and of Colonel Dodds, who decided that he had no choice but to see that the order was carried out. McDougall, of course, had witnessed enough of the military to know that in every army there is always a sadistic Sergeant Krebs available.

Execution is haunted by the idea that, immersed in the barbarism of war, a sensitive, thinking person is in danger of becoming dehumanized. Through the episode of the barnyard killing, this process of dehumanization is speeded up in the cases of Adam and the Padre. The average, generally unthinking soldier is not in quite the same danger, he accommodates without losing his sense of human identity. When the old farmer whose son has been destroyed by a shell burst begins to pound his head on the ground and scream "*Mio bambino*! *Morte*! *Morte*! he is stopped, it is true, by a hard slap on the face. But when Ewart, as the platoon is about to move off, callously asks, "Hey . . . What about those chickens?" the reaction of the others indicates that they have simply conditioned their feelings, not relinquished them.

John Adam and the Padre, on the other hand, do go through a period when the sense of human identity is lost. After the barnyard execution, Adam feels violated: "as he walked he wanted to cry out for his lost innocence. It was like the time, he remembered, that first time when he was seventeen and he walked away one rainy night from visiting a brothel." To carry on, he must develop a protective shell of efficiency: "Perhaps, he thought, the only end in life is to be functional: to do one's job is as much as a man can ever do." Yet by the time of the death of Rifleman Jones, both Adam and the Padre have regained a sense of human identity.

THE SHOOTING of Jones by a Canadian firing squad is, of course, the climax of the novel. Jones is unquestionably blameless, yet McDougall

makes the strange circumstances leading up to his trial and conviction seem as real and believable as those surrounding the barnyard execution. Jones has no idea of what is happening when Frazer takes him to the hideout of a gangster ring composed of Americans, Canadians, Italians, and even Germans. But he and an American thug are the only two captured when the U.S. military police move in. The activities of the gang, the raid, and the consequent death of one of the American policemen, receive wide publicity in the newspapers. The people at home in North America, understandably, are outraged; strong political pressures are brought to bear for swift retribution. The Americans convict and shoot "their boy" with no delay, and the Canadian Army is expected to do likewise with Jones. For the Canadians, however, there is an embarrassing delay, owing to the technicality that Jones is entirely innocent.

This execution, and Jones himself, are meaningful in a variety of ways. Jones is a symbol of purity and innocence, which are destroyed by the war. At his trial it is argued that he should never have been placed in a combat unit, to kill and perhaps be killed; but then what man ought to be so placed? In the Jamesian sense, he is the naïve goodness of the New World being confronted by the scheming evil of the Old. He is the thoughtless boy who becomes a man overnight, in the last few hours actually strengthening Adam and Padre Doorn, who, ironically, have come to protect him. There are parallels between the death of Jonesy and the crucifixion of Jesus: both are put to death because of political and social pressures; each forgives his executioners. But these echoes should not be forced to the point of considering the episode allegorical. General Kildare, for example, does not wash his hands of the affair; his commutation of the sentence is simply not accepted by the higher authorities. Adam and the Padre walk with Jones to the stake, but they are not executed, as were the thieves with Jesus.

In essence, Rifleman Jones represents the two Italian boys slaughtered in the Sicilian barnyard and every other blameless person subjected to the anti-order, victimized by the madness that is war. "The truth was that Jonesy had done nothing wrong at all, unless perhaps it was to be born what he was, to *be* what he was."

The two bitter men who are with Jones when he dies have done everything in their power to prevent the injustice; but after the execution is performed, both men feel "in a sense, perhaps, restored to whatever they had been before Sicily." It is not, however, the execution itself which has this regenerative effect, it is Jones's attitude. The man Adam and Doorn had thought to be simple-minded, to require sheltering from the realities of life, demonstrates that it is possible to

face knowingly the ultimate brutality of life without being reduced to the brute. But he is able to do it because he does not attempt to understand life; nor does he descend ino the hell of being unable to love. His final words are spoken out of concern for the safety of Adam.

The execution of Jones has tremendous dramatic effect. It occupies a climactic, dominant position in the book, and the reader is almost forced to search for a master key to the novel's meaning in the incident itself. It may well be that this is a flaw in McDougall's work. Since it diverts attention from the deeper issues of *Execution*, the issues which take the novel beyond the range of the usual military story. It is important to recognize that Jones' death is neither mystical nor crucial in the thematic sense, but merely a foil for McDougall's major theme. Jones does not attempt to understand life; for those who do try — Padre Doorn, Bazin and John Adam — there *is* a descent into hell, a journey to the "heart of darkness." Bazin does not survive the war, but the Padre and Adam are both able eventually to readjust to reality; the death of Jones simply marks the culmination of that readjustment. The quality which elevates *Execution* above the ordinary is not McDougall's analysis, however impressive it is, of the process of dehumanization; nor is it his study of accommodation to the state of war, the type of study which characterizes every military novel. The true elevating quality is McDougall's analysis of the intricate process of regeneration. In presenting, through the characterization of Adam, a painfully acquired attitude which permits that character to live with twentieth-century reality, McDougall achieves a positive note generally absent from the modern novel. This positive note, moreover, has bearing upon the whole age. The wartime setting of *Execution* operates as a magnifying glass.

Probably the most complete and succinct statement of current psychological problems is that of Viktor E. Frankl, discoverer of the psychiatric technique of logotherapy. According to Frankl, the dominant neurosis of the World War II and post-war periods can be traced not to the Freudian frustration in sexual life, but to "the failure of the sufferer to find meaning and a sense of responsibility in his existence." [1] Frankl, who spent the war in a concentration camp, points out that a preconceived set of attitudes toward the world can be shaken by "the mental agony caused by the injustice, the unreasonableness of it all." He observes that "it is a peculiarity of man that he can only live by looking to the future — *sub specie aeternitatis*." Setting aside the Freudian principle of "will-to-pleasure" and the Adlerian "will-to-power," Frankl introduces the "will-to-meaning," and asserts that "what threatens contemporary man is that which I call 'the existential

vacuum' within him." Logotherapy is essentially the process of conquering the neurotic effects of boredom and disillusionment by providing a "will-to-meaning." In *Execution,* McDougall also tackles the problem of the "existential vacuum" and comes up with his own solution.

Christianity, of course, is in the western hemisphere the major pattern of set, basic attitudes toward the world. In *Execution,* McDougall seems to suggest that this pattern can prove inadequate. Padre Doorn is a sincere and intelligent Christian at the beginning of the book, "a man at peace with himself and his God." One imagines that had Doorn lived in more tranquil times, he would have become a gentle, inspirational pastor. At first he is able to fit the war into his pattern of basic attitudes; the Canadian soldiers are crusaders going about God's work. Then comes the shock of the Sicilian barnyard. Like Adam, his initial reaction is to fill the vacuum with functional activity; he becomes a graveyard ghoul — "happy only when he had a burial to conduct." He finds himself leaning toward the Roman Catholic rites and sacraments because in them "everything was provided for." But the emptiness within the Padre is so great that he becomes demented. Using a smoke bomb for cover, he steals an alleged piece of the True Cross from the Chapel of the Sacrament of the Church of Sant' Agata. He reasons that with this relic he will be able to focus God's attention on the insane slaughter that is taking place, and that a God of Pity and Love cannot permit such wanton destruction of the innocent to continue. Along with what is left of the Padre's set pattern of attitudes, the piece of the True Cross is "ground into dust on the Hitler Line." Philip Doorn must now develop a new "will-to-meaning."

In contrast to the Padre, there is little Frazer, who regards the world as a crude, godless, loveless rat-race. Faced with the revelation of the war, his pattern of attitudes proves much more adequate than the Padre's. Completely self-reliant, fearless, he is one of the few soldiers to survive the insane attack at Monte Cassino. Frazer, however, is fit only for the battlefield. When not in action, he is continually in detention. Naturally, he is the one to join the gangster ring.

The pattern of attitudes which Bunny Bazin brings to the testing ground of World War II is somewhere in between the Padre's and Frazer's. He has faith in the goodness of individuals, but he thinks of life as a hopeless paradox: when Adam visits him at a sniper post, he is shooting his rifle at the enemy while conjugating the Latin verb *amare.* In conversation with Adam, he reveals his thoughts:

. . . . if you dare look at the thing — instead of building up and hiding behind a

> shield of competence . . . What it's about, of course, is execution. It started in that Sicilian barn-yard, with your two Italians — big Jim and little Joe, did you call them? — when you stood by and acquiesced in their execution — . . . and remember — execution is the ultimate injustice, the ultimate degradation of man. Look what it's done to the Padre, that poor bastard Philip Doorn. . . .
>
> . . . . Don't ask me what the answer is . . . Perhaps it is man's plight to acquiesce. On the other hand, even recognizing execution as the evil may be victory of sorts; struggling against it may be the closest man ever comes to victory.

Bazin understands what is troubling Adam, and his words provide the latter with elements for a readjustment to life; but he is convinced that his own fate is to be killed. Unable to formulate a "will-to-meaning," in his subconscious, perhaps even in his conscious mind, he wants to die, just as a person who drives at ridiculous speeds on a dangerous highway is probably flirting with a subconscious death-wish. When Adam learns that Bazin has been killed by a sniper's bullet, he speculates on what a "beautifully conceived stroke of fate" it would be if perhaps, as he squeezed the trigger, the German soldier had been conjugating the Latin verb *to love*.

WHATEVER THE PATTERN of attitudes John Adam brings to the war, after the Sicilian barnyard, as we have noted, he offsets the vacuum within him by complete devotion to duty. What Frankl calls the "Sunday neurosis" — an awareness of the lack of content in life when the rush of the busy week is over — hits Adam when he goes on leave to Bari. There he meets Elena, a young prostitute to whom he feels immediately attracted. Elena, whose name means "light" or "torch," is much like Dostoevsky's Sonia. She is obviously different from the two hardened "pros" who are with her. Eventually she takes Adam to her home:

> That first time, as they sat together on her bed, his hands feeling the texture of her flesh, Adam wondered for a fantastic instant if the parents in the rooms outside, waited for the creak and groan of bedsprings, and how they planned to spend the 1,000-lire note. There had even been a formal offer of wine; and that — for a blazing moment — sent Adam blindly, furiously mad with anger. The daughter of the house represented the family's capital: they sent her out to earn the food they must eat . . . But Adam's anger cooled. What the hell, he thought: much

> worse things than this happen in wartime . . . He declined the offer of wine and followed Elena into her room.

Once they are in bed together, Elena pleads with Adam to say the words "*Ti amo*" before taking her. But Adam has visited Dostoevsky's hell; he has been moving toward the state of "being unable to love" by willing that he never again become emotionally involved. His response to the girl lying naked in front of him is "Go to hell." Then suddenly, because his withdrawal is not yet complete, he understands why Elena is making such a strange request: the young girl is suffering what for her is the ultimate brutality, and she is attempting to offset the existential vacuum within her by pretending that she is with her lover. "*Io ti amo*," he repeats. "It was pretense, but he had given her something; and, oddly, he felt better at once, as though he had also given something to himself."

Adam's initial reaction to Elena's request is perfectly understandable. He resents the idea that she is refusing to face all the facts and is trying to make her life slightly more than functional. He resents it because, as Bazin correctly observes, he has made no such attempt himself. Withdrawal is clearly the easiest, perhaps the normal recourse when one's sense of human identity has been violated. His experience with Elena causes him to realize for the first time that no matter what the circumstances, an individual may still retain a measure of control over the spiritual depths to which he can be reduced. He also realizes the essential nature of a certain kind of pretense in creating a tenable "will-to-meaning." It is not the pretense of falsification or self-glorification, but simply the process of making one's condition sufferable, perhaps even meaningful, by stressing the *be* in *what could be*. In other words, if one is to develop an adequate working relationship with accepted reality, then sooner or later one must go beyond what can be objectively demonstrated as scientific fact; one must create for oneself a set of life-justifying premises, a glass through which the world appears tolerable and reasonably comprehensible; in short, a vital pretense.

Sinclair Ross, in his novel *As For Me and My House*, presents some interesting reflections upon the same principle:

> Religion and art . . . are almost the same thing anyway. Just different ways of taking a man out of himself, bringing him to the emotional pitch that we call ecstasy or rapture. They're both a rejection of the material, common-sense world for one that's illusory, yet somehow more important. Now it's always when a man turns away from this common-sense world around him that he begins to create, when he looks into a void, and has to give it life and form.[2]

Before the Twentieth Century and its emphasis upon scientific truth and the material fact, the majority of people, it seems, unwittingly and automatically acquired the vital pretense. The mind of a child instinctively embraces it. Christianity furnished it ready-made, called it "faith," and insisted upon it; the most twentieth-century-minded of the disciples of Jesus was forever branded with the pejorative title of Doubting Thomas. The problem of our age, clearly, is that a significant number of thinking people, especially young people, cannot get beyond Adam's initial reaction to Elena. Like Salinger's Holden Caulfield, basically honest with themselves and seeking the objective truth, they perceive only the "phoniness," the pretense. Like McDougall's Padre Doorn, they discover that the Christian-Judaic pattern of beliefs is convenient and functional up to a point, but that it no longer can explain and justify observable phenomena in an acceptable manner. In an age of increasingly efficient mass murder, the doctrinal flaw which Voltaire put his finger on — "Thou shalt not kill, except with the sound of trumpets and in large numbers" — glares like an open wound. What is manifestly wrong can no longer be explained away by such strategems as predestination, the unknowable will of God, or the divine plan that is beyond human understanding, with their resultant policy of *laisser-faire*. The Christian Church, ironically, is being forced to de-emphasize those aspects of its teaching which for centuries supplied, albeit unintentionally, the vital pretense to millions of believers; leaders of the Church appear to have sensed that the kind of faith with which she is traditionally associated is no longer viable — it is 2,000 years too late to provide evidence for the Doubting Thomases, and mountains today are moved by bulldozers. Like John Adam, indeed like the legendary Adam, many people in the post-war world are being left to their own philosophical resources, while life around them, projected right into their living rooms by the television networks, is a context of disorder, slaughter of the innocent and large-scale human depravity. McDougall's *Execution*, far from "ending in a philosophical and ethical fog," not only dramatizes the emerging major problem of the Twentieth Century, but points to one kind of solution based upon simple experience of life.

The lesson Adam learns from Elena, then, is that unreality can sometimes be used to make reality endurable, and without presenting too great demands on the critical faculty. He has experienced the emotional sterility of withdrawal from life, but after his meeting with the girl, he is inspired to grope for a personal "will-to-meaning." He accepts Bazin's observation that man cannot eliminate injustice, and that the world is bound to remain an arena of crudities. In this respect, there is no self-deception; the world and life are accepted for what they are. But he

learns to curtail his demands — there are no such things as absolute justice, permanent happiness, or realizable peace on earth. But one can struggle for justice, as Adam does in the Jones affair, and the struggle itself is a victory. For the individual, moreover, there can be long moments of complete happiness, provided he preserves his capacity to love, and is willing to suspend his disbelief and allow himself to be transported by the illusion of permanence. The emotion of love, however short-lived and likely to be unsustained, is none the less legitimate and humanizing. This attitude blossoms for Adam in the joy of his sojourn with Toni. Earlier in the book, another instance of the same attitude is provided, when Sergeant DiCicco dismisses the war during a leave by stacking a few tins of bully beef on a kitchen table and living for five days as the son-in-law of an Italian family.

The new Adam is a less efficient fighting machine, but he is a human being again, and the experiences he has undergone have the inevitable effect of heightening his sympathy for other human beings. He develops a sense of the shared challenge of life. Tortured by the screams of a woman whose husband, child and home have just been destroyed by Canadian artillery, he desperately wants to register his compassion. Looking into the woman's eyes, the only words he can muster are "*Ti amo — Io ti amo*," but something of the significance of these words for Adam is communicated to the woman and she becomes relatively calm. At the end of the book, when Adam is thinking about the soldiers who have served under him, he says: "Each one of them, in his fashion, was a good man. The trouble was that they *were* men, and being such, they were caught up in the strangling nets which man's plight cast over them: they could not always act the way their goodness wanted them to."

As we have seen, the execution of Jonesy marks the culmination of Adam's readjustment. He is now conditioned to resign himself to the inescapable depravities and injustices of life without resigning from life itself. At the same time, however, he can avoid the abyss of stark cynicism and the spiritual sterility of *laisser-faire*; he can struggle against injustice. By accepting the vital pretense, he can recharge himself emotionally and sustain a personal *raison d'être*. He does not have, it is true, a defined code of ethics; for McDougall suggests that fundamental moral issues can not be resolved by a code of ethics. The new John Adam has something far more simple and effective, far less professional and susceptible to the deteriorating influences of the nuclear age — he has acquired a genuine compassion for his fellowmen. In his characterization of John Adam, McDougall thus takes what is in fact an ancient philosophy of life, strips it of the accumu-

lated paraphernalia of centuries, and shapes it to fit the major demand of our times.

THE ARTISTIC QUALITIES of *Execution* are concordant with the significance of its theme. The style is laconic, touched with poetry on occasion, and ideally suited to the dramatic quality of the material. When dialogue is used, it rings true. Perhaps the most notable aspect of McDougall's style is a device which creates a verbal echo of the impact of war upon the participants; he presents a passage of flowing, descriptive prose, then shatters the effect of order and calm with a single shell-burst phrase.

> Brigadier Kildare, he told the Padre, exalted the Scottish Borderers as a subtle means of humbling the regular officers under him and infuriating those above. Then Major Bazin smiled gently at the Padre's puzzlement and told him not to worry if it didn't make sense; so many things did not after all. One thing, at least, which the Padre understood was the crushing burden of responsibility that this man bore. As they stood at the rail together, in this moment of crisis, the Padre could imagine the stern look on the face beside him, those blue eyes clouded in sombre reflection of the next terrible decision to be made.
>
> The Brigadier tapped his cigar ash on the rail. "Got 'em by the balls, Padre?" he inquired courteously.

McDougall has a particularly keen eye for scenic and ironic detail. His description of the attack at Caielli, for instance, is a tour de force. A panoramic view of the action is punctuated by glimpses of the thoughts of the various soldiers, then there is the strange tranquility which grips everyone during a lull in the German offensive: "There was a gentleness about every soldier in Caielli. Each was considerate toward his fellows. Faults and meannesses which at other times would have drawn quick anger were overlooked." When Adam is consulting with a British tank Major about siting guns before the battle begins, he casually notes that "his plump jowls were exquisitely shaven; his face had a pinkish tinge, as though he had come fresh from his tub and toilet lotions." But even this minor detail is tinged with irony; after the attack, Adam finds the tank commander dead: "It must have been an A.P. shell because the Major had no head: there was only the red, meaty stump of his neck."

The way in which each small detail contributes to the organic unity of the novel is indicative of great care and artistic skill. The seemingly unimportant character traits of Ewart and Krasnick, for instance, take on fascinating significance when the latter hears about D.D.T. There are the incidents of the crimson wine spilling on Adam, the secret of Fergus-Cohen and Kildare, the church which serves as a latrine, the effect of the ordered stand of pines, the big sergeant weeping after he had given the command to the firing squad, the pitiful old soldier Perkins, whose life has no meaning outside of the military context, and numerous others. The combined effect of all these details is a total and powerful impression of war — its thrills, its horrors, its glory, its boredom, its madness, and ironically, its momentary periods of profound peace.

[1] Gordon W. Allport, in Preface to Frankl, *From Death-camp to Existentialism*, trans. Ilse Lasch (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), p. x. Other references are to text of book.

[2] New Canadian Library N4 (Toronto, 1957), p. 112.

BASTARD BOHEMIA

Creative Writing in the Universities

Robert Harlow

IT IS DIFFICULT, in an age when most of the fine arts are taught on campus, to keep patience with those who oppose Creative Writing as a legitimate university pursuit. Musicians, painters, actors, dancers, can come to the campus and few eyebrows are raised, but let there come a writer to the university and even before his first drink at the Faculty Club he is asked to argue the proposition that writing cannot be taught. The lady of the streets who is asked by every neophyte whoremaster how she got into the business can be no less bored than the writer by this kind of importunity. The point is, you cannot teach philosophy or mathematics or physics or political science either — not, at any rate, at the level the poor writer's interlocutor is insisting upon. What he is really saying is that you cannot teach a Dostoyevsky how to be Dostoyevsky, or a Dickens how to be Dickens, or an Eliot how to be Eliot. As usual, he is dead right.

There should be an answer to these attacks, a definitive one, but unfortunately there is none. There are, however, points that can be made about writers and writing students on campus. My own belief is that writing workshops are valuable adjuncts to learning the craft of writing. I did my own graduate work at the oldest and the best known of them and, looking back, I consider the experience to have been a valuable one whose positive aspects outweighed the negative ones

by a considerable margin. Now, fifteen years later, I have come back to teach at a university where the climate for writers and writing courses is favourable. I write these remarks, therefore, from a privileged vantage point, and I make them with the hope that they will be of help to advocates of Creative Writing courses and that they might rally some support from the uncommitted.

There is nothing new or startling about offering creative writing courses, at least in North America. Eugene O'Neill attended one fifty-odd years ago; Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller were Theatre Guild drama students just before the war. Writers with styles and interests as widely separated as Wallace Stegner, Robie Macauley and Flannery O'Connor attended the fledgling Iowa workshop in the thirties and forties. In 1965, the students of that writing centre will publish eleven novels and seven books of poetry, and its staff will have published half a dozen volumes by the end of the year. Iowa is exceptional, of course; its workshop has been in operation for nearly a generation and it is rich in university support and grants and scholarships so that it can attract the best student writers. A great number of campuses have flourishing full-time writing programmes, and the university or college in the U.S. without at least one writing course in its calendar is the exception in the mid-sixties. The argument about the fact of writing courses on American campuses has been over for nearly fifteen years, and published authors, even quite famous and influential ones, are as much at home as faculty members as — say, Galbraith, Bundy, Van Allen, or Milton Eisenhower.

In Canada, the argument is hardly begun, but there are writers on most campuses, and Toronto, Sir George Williams and the University of New Brunswick have at last established writers-in-residence. The author just chosen for the Toronto post is Earle Birney, who for nearly two decades has been the country's best-known and most forceful advocate of creative writing as a legitimate university pursuit. His elevation is poetic justice of the right and proper kind. After nineteen years of struggle, the single course he began giving in 1946 at the University of British Columbia has expanded to become the only Creative Writing Department in the country. Among academicians, and oddly enough among writers too, there are still residual doubts about the validity of this kind of creative pursuit. What lingers, is, on the one hand, the view of the older generation of authors that bohemia is the place to learn to write, and, on the other, the academic view that writing, like making love commercially, is best kept in its own district and designated by lights of an appropriate colour. The two views merge in the end and may perhaps be dealt with concurrently as we go along.

Bohemia (I use the word here to mean the "territory" the writer inhabits

intellectually and spiritually but not necessarily physically: Henry James "lived" there as certainly as Balzac did) has a strong appeal. It is far from deserted. Nor should it be. Bohemia is freedom from compromise — the kind a man makes when he takes a job and must conform to specifications set up by one managerial system or another. It is freedom from commercial commitments which say "Fashion sells" and "Give people what they want". It is freedom from the pressures of the manners and mores of society — which are always designed to prevent the boat from rocking under those who have got it made. It is intellectual freedom from philosophies — political, economic, psychological and religious — which are largely deterministic, naturalistic, anti-individualistic and Philistine despite much protestation to the contrary. There are fashions and fads, commitments and philosophies in bohemia too, but it is a good place and must be kept well populated — the best suburb of the conscience, without which the whole of our moral and cultural heritage might perish.

Fortunately bohemia is portable. Perhaps it began that way. When the Christians triumphed in Rome and outlawed, among other things, the theatre, the players took to the Roman roads and played split weeks at country fairs for nearly a thousand years before the onset of the Renaissance eventually broke down enough of the prejudice against the theatre to allow its re-establishment as a national cultural venture. The writers, meanwhile, became churchmen. For them, bohemia was not a physical thing but a state of mind, eminently portable. It was not cowardice that made them join the church. Writers have always gathered around centres of power. Like gamblers, they want to be where the action is; it is what they write about. The church, the court, the civil service, parliament, even the military, have all housed writers at one time or another during their careers. It has only been since the Industrial Revolution that there has been no natural centre of power and patronage. The writer also was disinherited when the machine arrived and God was turned into a loyalty oath, the king into a figurehead and the priest into a social worker. He was once again forced to take his bohemia with him as he disappeared into the streets where patronage was nil and starvation probable. Bohemia became a very real and physical thing, and a centre of power in its own right, but now its structure has begun to break down because a funny thing happened on the way to the end of the second millenium: the writer found a new patron in the University.

The University has always been a patron of course — of dead writers. Dead writers are the only manageable kind, and it seems quite natural in times when the University was not a great centre of power that it eschew live ones. But now

the University *is* a prime influence — perhaps second only to Government itself — where some of the most important problems and ambitions of our time are being served. The younger writers have recognized this and have begun to understand it as the first "closed" centre of power since before the Industrial Revolution which offers both patronage and residence. Physical bohemia is no longer a place where the writer *must* reside while he learns and observes; it has become again a state of mind, and the move to the campus is, among other things, convenient. Writers have always taught and coached and influenced other writers, in garrets, in coffee-houses, in country homes, or by personal correspondence and by the dissemination of their opinions and work. Now, with a preponderance of the young who are interested in writing attending colleges and universities the venue for this activity has shifted to the campus. There seems small cause for alarm.

YET THERE REMAIN reservations about the writer leaving bohemia to become a teacher. There is the fear voiced by the older generation of authors of selling out, of coming under the thumb of the patron power, of serving the power rather than criticizing it, of being made a slave of a new kind of conformity, of having no time to write. Is it a good thing to leave physical bohemia and accept patronage?

For the journeyman writer who has had commercial success — as for the author with private means or a rich wife — there seems no imperative reason to live and work on campus, but for the developing, emerging writer the negative aspects are perhaps outweighed by the positive ones. Within writing programmes there is a minimal amount of compromise necessary; forced commitment to commercial fashion is non-existent; the distance from the actual pressures of society as a whole is a comfortable and necessary one; there is time alloted during the year to write; and, as I have already suggested, the University is a centre of influence and therefore a good place for a writer to be. This is not to say that the campus is a *chaise-longue* without hurly-burly. There are students to teach, written work to criticize, visiting firemen to entertain, functions to attend, committees to be avoided, interdepartmental competition and politics to be fended off, necessary administrative duties to perform; but when living costs such an alarming amount even in physical bohemia, the campus seems a good investment in time and effort for the emerging writer. Perhaps as many authors are lost to

poverty, journalism, hack writing and too much time on their hands as are lost to teaching schedules, regular pay, meals and holidays, and a life that forces a planned work schedule. The 18th century musician-composer, I am reminded, had to come to the salon with new dinner music on a regular basis and he also had to put up with giving music lessons to his patrons and their friends, but his workroom was clean and neat, his status was good, and there was time enough left over to turn out a considerable amount of music that will live as long as there are orchestras to play it. The University is a good thing, by and large, for the emerging writer, provided that he is not simply a product of the campus and has never left it. Faculty status for the writer should, ideally, be earned and not follow as a result of receiving one or two post-graduate degrees.

There are dangers, of course. One, again suggested by the older writers, is that being secure the campus author will not write. The answer to this, if it is true, is to remove the security. Publish or die. There will never be so many positions open to writers on campus that there will not be competition for them. The one-shot wonders and the pure hangers-on may be easily weeded out and shipped back to bohemia. Another danger is that the writer, if he lives and works on campus, will become cut off from the world, from reality, will become institutionalized. Writers tend to retreat from the world when they write, and the campus bears considerably more relation to reality than does bohemia. In any event, by the time the writer has shown he has talent and has begun to develop, the experience he will use as a basis for his work has mostly been gathered, and the rest of his life will only add depth to it, confirm it, consolidate it. Experience is intellectual, emotional and spiritual as well as physical and, finally, it furnishes a way of looking at life however and wherever it happens. What a great number of people mean by experience (when they worry about a writer's involvement with society) is subject matter. If subject matter were the major consideration then Arthur Haley could have written *Crime and Punishment*, but total experience is a prime criterion and that is why Dostoyevsky wrote it.

A third danger is that, in trying to become a teacher, the writer will become an academic bent on turning out carbon-copies of himself. It is a problem he will have to work out himself, and the odds are tough. We live now in a society where job-training has become a prime concern, if not a compulsion, and where almost any real effort (other than mandatory lip service, ironically enough) toward pure education is liable to be regarded as tantamount to being soft on Communism. It follows, then, that one of the biggest problems the writer-teacher may have to face is the tyranny of the textbook — the training manual. Teaching manuals

are written invitations to professors to cease educating and begin training by rote, and they are invitations as well to the student never to enter the library except to find a table at which to eat lunch or to find a Friday night date. The writer-teacher, despite administrative pressures, must avoid both the manual and any suggestion of rote; his business is to help the student-writer solve his writer's problems and not his career problems. The present job-training system is a vicious one, but it is fashionable; however, it would be unfair to locate the blame for it anywhere in particular. Systems grow in response to felt needs and expedients of all kinds, and they habitually become larger than individuals. But, still, it is the present system that allows the antiphonal academic to flourish. Perhaps the way to begin stopping this statement and response training at the undergraduate level of universities is to encourage students to participate in the kind of courses that can be taught in no other way than by the lecture-workshop method, until such time as it is possible to persuade the whole academic community that there are other ways of handling large student bodies than are presently in force. I have no hope that the University will return to its primary role any more than I expect the Church to return to the simple teachings of Christ. The community we live in is fighting for survival. The two great explosions of our time — the population and the nuclear — will, it seems, allow none of us the luxuries of real academic standards, leisure and intimacy. We must find them where we can. If the University, at almost every level, is not to become entirely a trade school, then some of the students some of the time must be free to indulge themselves in some of the conditions that lead toward pure education.

If I have digressed it has been primarily to suggest that the writer-teacher on campus might, despite orthodox faculty fears, be a force for good. There is a new kind of crisis in education. There is not only a demand from society that large numbers of students be trained, but there is a demand that the experts who teach solve some of society's most pressing problems. But to teach under the present system exhausts the professor and makes it difficult for him to meet either demand. Changes must be made. The problems society faces do not require trained personnel; rather they require educated people. I regret the aphorism because it is only going to lead to arrogance: it may be possible that the writer-teacher is a harbinger of that necessary change. Here is a man who comes to the campus and, from all available evidence, flourishes. Why? Perhaps it is because the subject he teaches cannot be taught in the manner the present system calls for. Student writers cannot be trained; they can only be educated. A department trapped happily in this kind of circumstance bears watching. Its administration necessarily

breaks with some present academic routines. Its approach necessarily involves the student doing more and more productive, self-educative work and receiving less and less spoon feeding as he approaches the B.A. level. Teaching the student in a writing class is similar to coaching an athlete who can run a little and who must be made to run a lot. Oddly, this is called training, and the training we do in classrooms is called education. But the help given a man which enables him to see how to run faster and farther is conducted with a subtlety not usually associated with training. It becomes physics, chemistry, anatomy, strategy, discipline, direction. Were the coach able to retain his youth he would become a better runner himself. Thus with the writer who comes to campus to teach. He does not simply instruct a student in the mysteries of a mechanical process. Writing, too, becomes a number of other things. It also becomes anatomy, strategy, direction, discipline, as well as psychology, anthropology, philosophy — it becomes finally shared experience, and the teacher gathers strength and stimulation from having to articulate that experience. In the orthodox department at the university, under the present undergraduate system, the instructor must somehow inject the contents of a course into the student: the writing instructor's problem is the opposite. The case for forming and observing separate writing departments at universities lies here; drawing a course out of a student instead of injecting it into him may not be a new idea, but I doubt that it's a working one at the moment.

A student does not take writing courses because they are easy; they are not. He must prove, whether freshman or graduate student, his abilities before the course begins, and he must be accepted as educable by the professor to whom he applies. This, of course, is when examinations should be conducted — before, not after the course is given. There seems no logical reason why a student should be allowed to take a course dealing with philosophies of the nineteenth century just because he has passed five largely unrelated courses the year before. An examination should be given before the course to make sure he is ready to tackle the problems it raises. This would ensure a student's interest in the course, because he already has an investment in it; it would cut lecture time to a minimum and class time considerably. It would also reduce the student population to those who are educable. The rest could go to training schools where they would become technicians and therefore useful citizens instead of disoriented and often disillusioned holders of meaningless consultative or "teaching" degrees.

Once accepted into a class, the writing student becomes a member of a small group (fifteen at most) and it meets perhaps once a week for a couple of hours. He sees his instructor regularly as his own work progresses, and he faces public

criticism of his work from other students during class time. He is not taught in the accepted sense; he is tutored, drawn out, channelled, cajoled, pushed toward becoming capable of making his own rules in terms of his own work and viewing the world through his own eyes. There are no texts, no hard and fast techniques or methodologies, no parroting. The student reaches into himself, and, whether he becomes a writer or not, he will never be the same again so long as he may live. He has made something of his own, something original and therefore unique. He has, in effect, played God (that most exhilarating of all human pursuits), modelled a little universe, peopled it, judged them good or bad, punished or rewarded them, pitied or reviled them, and perhaps, if he is really going to be a writer, he has learned something about compassion. He has been forced to look at the place where he lives and has necessarily wanted to see patterns, meanings, significances. As his confidence grows, he stops gaining only knowledge and begins achieving understanding — the Cain-mark, surely, of someone who has had the courage to murder rote in order to free himself to create. As things stand now, this is very different from applying one of Newton's laws, remembering that Hardy considered himself an ameliorist, or conjugating foreign verbs, but even these things, all of them I think, must become more attractive and interesting because suddenly, in the first romantic excess that follows creative commitment, everything is of significance and importance. In the successful creative mind — writer or otherwise — this voracious intake of equally weighted facts and impressions gradually solidifies into a healthy and hard-nosed wonder and awe that is a prime requisite for important original work. Whether the student gets this far or not is less important than the fact that he has learned something about teaching himself. Seldom does this happen now until students reach graduate school.

OUR WORKSHOP METHODS at my University differ from instructor to instructor, but each of us would agree, I think, that our approach is eclectic. Our understanding is that on the undergraduate level we are dealing with the results of nearly two decades of home and school environment and training. While our students are bright and more than usually sensitive, the majority of them are far from original, and their lights are hidden under bushels of precooked, pre-digested and canned cultural responses. The only "teaching" tool we have at our command is that they are all at the point of rebellion. They know

something is wrong, that life should not submit to the patterns suggested by father's politics and business ethics, the fearful symmetry of mother's morality, the anaemic compromises of teacher's rote, or even the appealing romantic cynicism of the powerful teenage sub-culture from which they are struggling to become separated. To serve this groping for originality by suggesting simply another pattern would be disastrous. Our approach is basically one that is designed to keep them moving toward freedom of thought and response while at the same time applying some of those attributes of writing that seem to us to be common to fine literature from the Greeks and the Bible to the present.

At first glance, this seems an essentially conservative approach. In fact, it is just common sense. One cannot teach originality; one can only preach awareness of the conditions which allow originality, and for my own part this is what writing workshops are about. Nor does this mean one teaches simply techniques; rather one insists on a concern for craft because this concern will free the young writer toward getting down on paper the only original thing he has to offer: his own unique response to being alive and having to die. Human systems may be bad, but the divine one is palpably and tragically and illogically impossible. It is basic to all art.

This, then, is what *happens* at a workshop session: over a work brought to class, a student writer confronts a dozen or so of his peers who react as best they can as intelligent readers and an instructor who insists that the craft of the writer meet and serve the intentions of the work being considered. It is out of this confrontation that critical and technical discussions grow. A student whose mind is a blunt instrument will soon be confronted with the fact. Someone whose vision of life is clear and individual will be encouraged and will gain confidence quickly. Each work is not just a problem extracted from life (although that is its genesis) but is also a problem in art. Technical concerns become apparent quickly, and gradually the workship members learn for themselves — and in terms of their own work — about the uses and abuses of techniques.

In the freshman and sophomore years, it is difficult to conduct a workshop without the help of an anthology of stories, plays and poems. Few of the students — however much they have read — know how to read. And none of them knows how to read for craft. It is in this area that pure instruction is valid. The faster writing students learn to read as writers, the quicker they will advance as writers. Hand a class of beginners Henry James' "The Real Thing" and most of them will simply be bored. Take them through it in terms of the problems James solved in order to be able to tell the story and they will at least be impressed. Each of

them has observations and chunks of experience that seem unwriteable because they do not "scan" as narratives. Give them Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find", which is at first glance a straight narrative, and they will immediately be involved in a search for meaning in terms of the craft of selection and deletion. Gradually, as we read more, they begin to see that writing is an impressionist's art. Soon they are turned inward to begin developing their own sensibilities and outward toward the human condition in terms of their own observations about it. Seldom do big miracles occur, but small ones do all the time.

Personal writing problems are talked out in the instructor's office. These sessions often seem to lead nowhere, but I believe contact with the instructor on a tutorial basis is an absolute necessity, and one which is becoming increasingly a luxury as universities grow larger and the staff-to-student ratio becomes smaller. A "hung up" student is a "hung up" writer. One does not need to be a psychologist to be a writing instructor, but it helps. For the student, writing stories or poems for consideration in the workshop is an exhilarating thing, but it is also competitive and traumatic, as many learning situations are — educational theorists to the contrary. The hour or so the student spends each week in the office of his mentor may mean the difference between beginning to educate himself and sinking permanently into the easier and more immediately attractive training programmes he is experiencing elsewhere. My own belief is that a student who shows some promise should be kept writing until it is apparent his personality and ingrained sensitivities cannot support the kind of disciplines writing demands. Literary history shows us that some have been able to write great works at twenty-one, but it is more usual to find authors achieving greatness a decade or two later. I, for one, do not want to take the chance that a late bloomer will be killed off by the kind of monolithically conformist welfare society we have developed in the twentieth century.

This brings us to the question of worth. The academic complains that creative writing is not a discipline. The older generation of writers complains that workshops are a waste of time. I suspect they are, in the end, saying the same thing: writing is a God-given gift; why try to teach it? The implication also resident here is that the writer is God-protected and slightly superhuman. He will write whatever the odds. Let us look at some facts. Canada has two cultures: French and English. The English-speaking Canadian has little literature to speak of, no theatre and no cinema. This is a culture dedicated to our perversion of the American dream which seems to say that every log cabin should house a potential statesman and every stump ranch a possible Faulkner. Obviously, this is not true,

and because of it we assume ourselves to be a second class people. That is not true either. There are Canadian artists and craftsmen all over the world, singing, dancing, directing, acting, writing, painting, to the greater glory of other cultures. We have refused them patronage. The result is that today there is literally no audience here for our writing, our theatre or our cinema. In Quebec on the other hand, culture has always enjoyed patronage. The National Film Board has allowed a cinema to begin flourishing there; government prizes and grants have given the kind of leadership that has resulted in public support for literature and the theatre. Soon, I should imagine, some of the arts in Quebec will be nearly self-sustaining.

But, it is pointed out, Quebec is a closed society, a culture that will die without forced feeding. I wonder if the effect of the facts of English-speaking Canadian culture is much different. The worth of patronage of any sort at this time seems obvious. The worth of any programme designed to foster writing of any kind is unquestionable. And the worth of a creative writing workshop within the University community is three-fold: it encourages writers in a culture which has not produced a public to encourage him; it produces, over the years, an influential audience made up of former students; and it acts as a focus of interest in writing within the larger community, which in turn, will help produce a wider and more receptive audience.

One more question remains: the question of the validity of the Creative Writing Degree. It is a question that could only arise out of a training-oriented society. A degree should be a badge proclaiming a student educated rather than trained. It should be a prize for excellence and not a piece of paper stating the world owes the holder a living. The creative writing graduate is not trained; but he may, in the end, be the better man because of it. In any event, there seems little harm in giving a man a degree for doing something original. We have been giving them for years to students who have done absolutely nothing original. If some department head mistakes it for a degree in English — well, *caveat emptor* —he may find he has hired an individual mind.

It is obvious, then, that the writer does not *need* a degree, any more than the musician, the painter or the actor. What he needs is a place in which to apprentice as a writer, a place where he can have the time and the leisure to develop, independent of the pressures of our incredible society. The Creative Writing Department is an innovation, a startling one both to the academic and the old-line writer. It seems to insult the status quo rather than simply upset it. Yet it is a necessary thing, I believe, or it would not have rooted and grown so quickly and

tenaciously in so short a time. I believe, too, that the pressure for creative courses in general and writing courses in particular will only become more widely felt as time passes. Gradually, for good or ill, as it is in the U.S.A., so will the campus in Canada become the place to learn to teach oneself to write. And — barring a complete take-over of the university by the business mind — the emerging, the journeyman, and even the emeritus author will find the university a place where interest in his work and his coaching abilities will always be resident. As his welcome grows and his students flourish it will seem neither strange nor illegitimate that Canadian writers work on Canadian campuses within independent departments dedicated to writing poetry, prose and drama.

Canada has had small success in producing a worthwhile body of writing under the aegis of commercial enterprise and physical bohemia. Perhaps the time has come to accept the fact of patronage and encouragement offered by universities as a likely means of achieving a reasonable interest in our own writers and their writing.

CANADIAN HISTORICAL FICTION FOR CHILDREN

A Survey

Sheila A. Egoff

IT IS A WRY COMMENTARY on the state of Canadian historical fiction for children that a consideration begins with the most basic question: Is it historical fiction at all? Historical fiction is surely nothing less than the imaginative recreation of the past. The good historical novel involves the reader in a bygone era, dramatically and emotionally. Such a recreation of the past must depend on a nice balance between the contending pulls of imagination and authenticity. Accuracy is important, for, like all "adjectival novels", historical fiction depends in large part for its appeal on the facts which it embodies. Put vegetation on the moon and science fiction becomes only fiction. The historical novel need not represent quite *wie es eigentlich gewesen sei*, but plausibility is essential.

Even more necessary is the writer's evocative skill. No conscientious accumulation of data itself can create the conviction which a successful historical novel demands. Only invention can bring the reader to an identification with the past, living it rather than studying it.

The artistic problems inherent in the historical novel are compounded in the works intended for children. Events must be more closely winnowed and sifted; character more clearly delineated, but without condescension or oversimplification. The child must be moved rather quickly into the consciousness of another time and his imagination immediately stirred to it. Because the child has greater need for self-identification with a hero than has an adult, the past must

become the present and the present the past to such a degree of intimacy that entry from one to the other passes almost unnoticed. All this takes more rather than less talent.

It is against these standards of historical fiction — the standards exemplified by Hope Muntz and Rosemary Sutcliff in England, Zoe Oldenbourg in France, Esther Forbes in the United States — that Canadian achievement must be measured. Only a misplaced patriotism can take comfort from the comparison.

For Canadian historical fiction for children has, by and large, been a failure. Its virtues have been manifest in the reporting of history; its failings have been literary. Canadian writers may take full credit for the conscientious and accurate assemblage of dates, names and events. But their plots are manipulated and the characters they invent are papier-maché. They recount the past, but they seldom recreate it. They seem to have decided to parcel out so much history and so much narrative, and they have commonly weighted the parcel in favour of history. How they love to teach it — not only dates and places, but how to prepare pemmican, how to make candles, how to tan a deer hide, how to construct a Red River cart, all interesting in themselves but misplaced in the pages of a novel.

Olive Knox's *The Young Surveyor* is typical of this pedagogical approach. It is based on the Jarvis survey for the Canadian Pacific Railway in British Columbia in 1875-85. A seventeen-year-old boy accompanies Jarvis and learns surveying from him. The reader perforce learns it too, since the first two chapters consist of little more than questions and answers on the subject. *The Young Surveyor* represents most of the faults to which its genre is liable. Dismiss it then as an individual mistake? Alas, no. For sales appeal is not synonymous with intrinsic merit. Diluted history of the *Young Surveyor* type has its market, and thus its own *raison-d'être*. Such markets are best exploited by standardized products. Understandably then, the most recent trend in Canadian historical fiction is for books to be commissioned by publishers and written to a formula. Formula books are designed to constitute part of a series — such as the "Buckskin Books" and the "Frontier Books". Not that the series link is in itself necessarily damaging. Arthur Ransome's Swallows and Amazons, Edith Nesbit's The Bastable Children, the Narnia books of C. S. Lewis, the Eagle of the Ninth group by Rosemary Sutcliff — all these "author-series" books show that their originators had so much to say that their joy and activity spilled over into another book.

The Canadian "publisher-series" books, however, read as if specific data had been fed into a computer. Each book is by a different author, but the similarity of their instructions is clearly reflected in the result. The formula seems to call

for the following ingredients: history must be deadly accurate; history must take precedence over fiction; don't narrate — just report event after event after event; don't worry about style or characterization; limit the vocabulary to the number specified by educationists as normative for the age group.

The Buckskin Books, the publisher would have us believe, are "exciting stories for younger readers, tales of action and adventure set against the background of rousing events in Canadian history. They are books full of lively incident that provide children with a wide and wonderful variety of good reading." Against these claims may be placed the following analysis. Each book consists of no more than 122 pages and no less than 113. The vocabulary is stringently limited: except for the proper names, the words are those derived from the textbooks produced for the age group. In each book (ten have been published since 1961), the story line is a thin thread of Canadian pseudo-history with fiction lying uneasily amid the fact. They have been prepared for children eight to ten years of age, presumably on the assumption that fairy tales and fantasy are no longer proper fare.

If we take two typical books in this series we find that they have themes familiar in North American children's literature. In *The Great Canoe*, by Adelaide Leitch, a little Indian boy attaches himself to a famous explorer; in *Father Gabriel's Cloak*, by Beulah Garland Swayze, a white girl is captured by Indians. These are young heroes with whom the reader can identify himself, the settings of the novels are authentic, and in *The Great Canoe*, there are convincing descriptions of Indian tribal beliefs, customs and rituals. Less successful are the style and characterization. In *The Great Canoe* there are frequent lapses into comic book vocalisms: "Ai-ee! Pffah! YI-i-ee!", while the method of bringing Champlain down to a young child's level is to write, "Champlain's face fell. 'Don't you think I was rather clever in the woods'?, he asked disappointedly."

The degree of over-simplification is seen in such paragraphs as this from *Father Gabriel's Cloak*: "She was a quiet girl, small for her age and dark. Madame Lemieux had been worried about her that summer. She had had a fever, so they had cut her dark hair close to her head. But by early September she was much better." The best books in this series are those with little or no attempt to establish a definite period in history, such as Catherine Anthony Clark's *The Man with Yellow Eyes* and Benham's *The Heroine of Long Point*. But the overall impression of the series remains that they are designed for an uncritical market, with little else to recommend them than their "Canadian content". No one denies the need for Canadian historical fiction, particularly in the schools, but the question

is whether Canadian history, Canadian literature or Canadian children are well served by such baldly commercial products.

One has to admit that there are few better books in their own class with which to compare the Buckskin Books. Historical fiction for the eight to ten age group is certainly difficult to write. Yet there are enough good examples to carry the point, such as *The Emperor and the Drummer Boy* by Ruth Robbins, *The Matchlock Gun* by Walter Edmonds, and *The Courage of Sarah Noble* by Alice Dalgleish. Each of these takes a single incident and tells it simply, but dramatically; each of them is thrilling enough to carry the unusual words with the simple ones.

The Frontier Books exemplify the deficiences of the "formula story" at the older age level. Described by the publisher as historical novels, they are completely based in history and no fictional characters of any consequence appear in them. Typical of this series is *John Rowand, Fur-Trader*, by Iris Allan. It is the story of an actual fur-trader who left his home in Montreal as a boy of fourteen to spend his days with the Northwest Company. We follow his rather uneventful life until he dies at the age of sixty-two. The outstanding happening is the amalgamation of the Northwest Company with the Hudson's Bay Company (an event which most adults will recall, without excitement, as thoroughly enough covered in textbooks). In similar vein is *Horseman in Scarlet*, by John W. Chalmers, recounting the career of the famous Sam Steele of the Northwest Mounted Police. The book is a mere refurbishing of facts:

> "Why is it called the Dawson Road, Sergeant Major?" Sam asked. Coyne was unable to answer that question, but Ensign Stewart Mulvey could. "Dawson is the name of an engineer who laid it out a few years ago", he explained. "It really isn't a road; it's more of a trail where a road could be built. It roughly follows the old trade route of the Nor'westers. It starts at Prince Arthur's Landing, near Fort William, and follows the Kaministikwia River west and north past the Kakabeka Falls to the Junction of the Shebandowan."
>
> "Then west to the Matawin and Oskandagee Creek", Big Neil continued. "From there past the end of Kashabowie Lake and along the Windigoostigwan Lake and some other waters to the Maligne River."

One feels sorry that Sam asked the question.

Their evident dullness aside, the plethora of factual information in the Frontier Books raises doubts as to whether they are even seriously intended as fiction. Perhaps it is fairer to see them simply as an attempt to make history more palat-

able, just as the rules of arithmetic may be more easily learned when set to some rhyme. The Frontier Books seem to say, in effect, that a child would not be interested in reading a purely factual account of say, La Salle's life, but might be induced to swallow the intellectual pill of history or biography when it is sweetened by a slight coating of fiction.

THIS ATTITUDE is, of course, not confined to Canadian writers. Much biography appearing today for both children and adults is overcast with fiction. The best ones, even for children, use the fictional element cautiously, such as Geoffrey Trease's *Sir Walter Raleigh,* where conversation is kept to a minimum and where there is some historical evidence for such conversation. But when reading *Sir Walter Raleigh* there is no doubt that one is reading biography. History, biography, historical fiction should be used to reinforce one another, not to cause confusion between fact and fiction. With the advent of the Frontier Books, Canadian authors appear to be missing the advantages of fiction while depreciating history.

Admittedly, Canadian writers have a harder task in dealing with history as material for fiction than do their counterparts in Great Britain, France or the United States. Where are Canada's revolutions, civil wars, medieval pageantries or "ages of kings"? Perhaps Canada, "the land of compromise", has had a history too underplayed to provide the conflicts that form the basis for a good rousing tale. It would be quite a feat to write an interesting children's story based on Baldwin and Lafontaine's theory of responsible government.

Yet, however valid these excuses, the range of historical topics represented in Canadian children's literature still seems extraordinarily narrow and the treatment of them unnecessarily bland. The choice of themes, for example, is almost invariably obvious: either the subjects that the textbooks label as "important" or those which have their colour already built-in: life with the Indians, the fur trade, the Rebellion of 1837, the Caribou Gold Rush, appear over and over again. Against this heavy preponderance can be set only a few exceptions which show the fresh resources that can be discovered by the exercise of ingenuity and originality: John Hayes' tales of the Selkirk Settlers and of the Fishing Admirals of Newfoundland; Thomas Raddall's account based on the attempted revolt in Nova Scotia in 1776; Marion Greene's effective use of the turbulent Ottawa of the 1820's as setting for her *Canal Boy.*

The rest is almost silence, and of events after the Riel Rebellion there is nothing at all. Many episodes in our history, both great and small, have as yet been ignored. Where are the books based on such themes as the flood of immigration or the Fenian raids?

Even more puzzling is the authors' self-imposed limitation of pitch. There is no reason to believe that Canadian children are uniquely appreciative of the virtues of restraint, but those who write for them prefer gentility to gusto. Even so competent a novelist as John Hayes almost never exploits the conflict inherent in his well-chosen subjects. His *Land Divided*, for example, is about the Acadians, tragic victims in a war that settled the fate of empires. But no need is felt for emotion or taking sides. Give the young hero a father who is an English army officer and a mother who is Acadian. Have Michael's Acadian cousin Pierre even help in the search for Michael's father when the latter is captured by the French. In turn, of course, Michael's father will kindly and courteously help his Acadian relatives live well in the foreign town to which they are banished. So well, in fact, that the impression is left that they will be far better off there any way. Michael's mother is no dramatic problem, either; she takes the oath of loyalty to King George. Why in the world did Longfellow become so emotional about *Evangeline*?

Even in Hayes' *Treason at York*, blandness and impartiality set the prevailing tone. The issues would seem to force a choice — after all, Canada was *invaded* in the War of 1812 — but Hayes somehow enables hero and reader to escape involvement. A neighbour's brother lives across the border, so the hero bears no sense of enmity to the American adversary. In many ways the book is a plea against fighting with our neighbour. This is admirable morality but does not satisfy the claims of either entertainment or historical truth. Hayes assuages feelings when it would have been more valid and dramatically effective to strengthen them.

Only in his book on the Rebellion of 1837, *Rebels Ride at Night*, does Hayes finally come round to committing a hero; the protagonist definitely takes sides with Mackenzie, though characteristically enough more for personal than for political reasons. This clearness of identification makes *Rebels Ride at Night* perhaps the most satisfactory of Hayes' books and certainly far better than the other two books on the same subject, Emily Weaver's *The Only Girl* and Lyn Cook's *Rebel on the Trail*. In these two novels, the Rebellion is seen from the periphery by young heroines. While the families in both books are alarmed by the mild attachment of an elder son to Mackenzie's cause, the Rebellion itself is

treated as a pointless scheme of a foolish few. The authors imply that a little more patience and equanimity would have desirably obviated the whole incident.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it comes as no surprise that Canadian historical fiction gingerly sidesteps the greatest issue in Canadian history — the conflict between French and English. The five books for children dealing with the events culminating in the battle of the Plains of Abraham and beginning with G. A. Henty's *With Wolfe in Canada* are all by British or American authors. It seems as though for Canadians the emotional implications of this theme can hardly be toned down, and that therefore it is thought a subject best avoided altogether. At the same time, the scarcity of material on the age of exploration and the French-Indian wars seems beyond explanation. Only three Canadian authors (Fred Swayze in *Tonty of the Iron Hand*, Adeleine Leitch in *The Great Canoe*, and Beulah Garland Swayze in *Father Gabriel's Cloak*) have dealt with this period. Even the story of our great heroine, Madeleine de Verchères, beloved in the textbooks, has been left to our American compatriots in such books as *Madeleine Takes Command* by Ethel C. Brill and *Outpost of Peril* by Alida Malkus.

The overall impression that Canadian writers withdraw from the emotional impact of historical fact is strengthened when one examines the two really outstanding historical novels for children. Both of these — Roderick Haig-Brown's *The Whale People* and Edith Sharp's *Nkwala* — might indeed more properly be described as anthropological novels. They deal, not with recorded events or with personages from history, but with a social setting no more specifically defined in time and place than British Columbia "before the white man came". This is not to say that the narratives are not based on solid historical research. The historicity is evident, but it is never obtrusive; fact underlies every fictional event but never dictates its pattern.

Nkwala and *The Whale People* also offer some useful lessons in design. Both employ a short time span — *Nkwala* a few months and *The Whale People* about two years. By contrast, most other children's historical novels, with an "other-directed" structure imposed by history book or publisher, attempt to cover too long a period. Fred Swayze's *Tonty of the Iron Hand*, for example, chronicles twenty-six years of Tonty's experiences; Olive Knox's *Black Falcon* twenty years of a white boy's life with the Indians. And most others not much less. This insensitivity to the need for dramatic unity is also manifested in the pervasive tendency to complicate plots and proliferate details. The typical novelist is likely to march his hero from fort to fort, from battle to battle in such confusing itinerary

that parts of the book must often be re-read in order to determine what is actually taking place.

Simplicity goes with artistic integrity. *Nkwala* and *The Whale People* are again the obvious examples. John Craig's *The Long Return* is another. This is the story of a white boy captured by Ojibway Indians. He lives with them for several years and becomes fond of them. When he makes his escape, he does so almost with reluctance. The plot is exciting but it is also simple. And there is not a date in the book; Craig takes ample opportunity to concentrate on character and style and the development of credibility. So too with John Hayes' *Dangerous Cove*. The Fishing Admirals on their yearly trip to the fishing banks of Newfoundland put into force their charter to drive the settlers away from the coast. The two heroes help to oppose and ultimately to defeat them. A simple and credible plot, the sharp focus produced by a short time span, and a fast-paced narration combine to achieve a successful integration of history and invention.

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, John Hayes and *The Dangerous Cove* may indeed serve to represent the typical virtues of good Canadian historical fiction for children. *The Whale People* and *Nkwala* are far better but they stand well apart from the rest; probably superior writing is always *sui generis*. For the group as a whole, the claims must be much more modest, but nonetheless hardly negligible. Canadian children will learn some history from these novels. They will find considerable variety in the settings; in their overall range from Newfoundland to British Columbia these books well portray how "the east-west dream does mock the north-south fact". They give some sense of the vastness of Canada and its varied scenes. They succeed often enough in giving the lie to the premise that Canadian history need be dull. There can really be no despair for historical fiction in Canada when it can produce as subtle and sly a view of history as is offered in James McNamee's *My Uncle Joe*, (1962). The protagonist only remembers Riel as a dinner guest in his father's home; the Rebellion is never actually encountered. Yet both the man and his movement are fully realized. A wealth of meaning is conveyed in brief compass (63 pages), and a door is opened on the privacy of history.

Canadian history is not easy to dramatize. If it does not conform to the usual pattern of bloodshed and victory, dynamic personality and odd characters, its

interpreters in fiction have perhaps the burden of developing new forms. But even so, adventure may appear in many guises and a story is every bit as exciting whether it has a battle between knights in armour or a skirmish in the Arctic forest, a boy adrift on the Sargasso Sea or wrecked on the shore of Lake Superior. Good historical fiction will impart at least the distinctive flavour of Canada's historical development and conceivably a more universal meaning is also within reach. The major revelation of historical fiction for children may well be the unfolding of man's steady search for order. Perhaps Canada, above all countries, has this to offer to its children and to children everywhere.

chronicle

LETTER FROM LONDON

D. A. Cameron

AT A CENTRAL LONDON playground much frequented by Cockney mums ("Cor stone me, luv! 'ave a go at the gee-gee!" a lithe dark-haired young mother watched my two-year-old son. Suddenly she boosted him into a swing and pushed him. When I came, she heard my accent; she asked if I were an American.

"A Canadian," I said, "from Vancouver. And you?"

"From Regina. Well, originally from Delisle, Saskatchewan."

Her husband is a poet; he works for a London publisher. They came after throwing up graduate study at the University of Toronto. But not just struggling poets come here; several established younger writers are currently living in and around London.

The longest stay in England has probably been that of Norman Levine, who came in 1949 and has been in England more or less ever since, chiefly in St. Ives, Cornwall. *Canada Made Me* (1958) announced his disenchantment with Canada, a country composed of "the throwouts, the rejects, the human kickabouts from Europe", and he seems established in England. At the moment he is in Fredericton as writer in residence at the University of New Brunswick, where he is working on a novel, his first since 1952, but the brevity of his stay there may be underlined by the fact that his wife and three daughters have remained in Cornwall. Yet his roots are Canadian, and as his most recent book, *One Way Ticket* (1961), shows, the short stories which have been his main output in the last ten years are often set either in Canada or in the artists' colonies of Cornwall; the workaday life of England has drawn little of his attention.

Mordecai Richler has lived in England off and on for nearly fifteen years too, currently in Kingston-upon-Thames, a market town that preserves its own character despite its assimilation into metropolitan London. Richler owns a hand-

some old tree-shaded house there: does this mean he regards himself as settled in England? "I don't really regard myself as *settled*," he replies, but he finds London a pleasant and convenient place to live. He visits Canada for about six weeks most years, and last summer he intended to make his first visit to the West, writing about the Calgary Stampede for an American magazine, but work on "a new long novel, set in Canada and England" intervened. Part of the convenience of living in London is its centralization: "Everything's in London — movies, TV, radio, publishers, magazines, everything." For a writer like Richler, this centralization is useful; he does a movie script every year, and an increasing amount of literary journalism for periodicals like the *New Statesman* and *Encounter*. Would he ever go back to Canada? Maybe; he finds Montreal exciting and Toronto increasingly agreeable, but on the whole Canadian cities are too small to provide stimulating people in the numbers that London or New York can afford, and they are much more difficult places in which to make a living. But he finds himself unable to write novels of English life. "One is always an outsider here, or at least I am," he says, "I see things from the outside, I wasn't brought up here. I don't know what goes on in an Englishman's home."

Margaret Laurence agrees — "Anyway, there are plenty of good English novelists who can describe it from the inside" — but unlike the other two novelists she does not find it easier to earn here. She does not do TV or movies, and she has only done the odd book review for BBC radio. Most of her work appears in the United States and Canada. Mrs. Laurence has recently been writing for *Holiday* and *Maclean's*, and she has just finished her third novel. It is a short novel set, like *The Stone Angel*, in a small prairie town — "the last one that'll be set there. I finally got out of that town."

Where she got to is a comfortable home in a village in Buckinghamshire about twenty-five miles from London. She does suspect she might go back to Canada in a few years, but after bouncing from Winnipeg to London to Somaliland to Ghana to Vancouver to London to Buckinghamshire she feels — understandably — inclined to stop for a while.

A certain catholicism about the literary atmosphere in Britain strikes Mrs. Laurence as beneficial, especially for a writer from a small literary community like that of Canada. "You want your novels to be read because they're good novels, not because they're Canadian novels. And here — all right, you're a Canadian, so what? The question is, are your novels worth reading? I'm interested in what can be done with the novel form; whatever I write is always going to be Canadian, because I'm a Canadian. But that's not the main point."

Yet Canadian opinion matters to her: "There's nothing like the reaction of your own people. They were there, they know what you're talking about and whether you've caught it." The cosmopolitanism of London, the escape from provincialism, seems to be a genuine attraction to most of the Canadians who have chosen to try their hands here.[1] Norman Levine feels that for anyone from Canada who intends to be a writer, the English experience is a very valuable one; it "makes him realize quickly that he's playing in the big league and that if he's any good he's got to take on the big boys."

AFTER ALL THIS, it is surprising to discover that, aside from the novels of Mazo de la Roche, whose complete works seem to be in print, Canadian books are hard to find and little known. The former literary editor of the *Spectator*, Ronald Bryden, who spent his teens in Canada and studied at the University of Toronto, says that too few Canadian books of any kind make their way to Britain, that Canadian literature is in need of an introduction here, and that such writers as Hugh Maclennan and Earle Birney certainly deserve more attention here than they have yet received, though Levine and Richler are known through their work in English magazines. Again, it is hard to believe that the *Tamarack Review* is not in any of the libraries of London outside the British Museum and Canada House, but I have never found it elsewhere. Even current Canadian best-sellers seem to be unavailable unless they are simultaneously published here: I had to have a copy of Simma Holt's *Terror in the Name of God* air-mailed from Toronto when I needed it quickly. And even good academic libraries, like those of University College and the University of London, have very few Canadian books.

The absence of Canadian books from the University of London Library can be partly explained by the British view of Canadian literature simply as a part of Commonwealth literature, and by the increasingly strong development of Commonwealth literature studies at the University of Leeds, rather than at London. The School of English at Leeds offers a seminar course which is each year taught by a Visiting Lecturer from the Commonwealth; in 1964-65 Carl F. Klinck taught Canadian literature. Various members of the School have connections with Australia, New Zealand, India and parts of Africa; Professor Douglas Grant has taught at Toronto and edited the *University of Toronto*

Quarterly. In 1964 the University of Leeds also held the first Commonwealth literature conference; a number of the papers read then have been collected in a new book, *Commonwealth Literature*, ed. John Press (Heinemann Educational Books, 25 s.). In addition, the School of English has established the new *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, edited by Arthur Ravenscroft; and last fall Professor A. N. Jeffares chaired a steering committee which set up The Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language studies, to encourage study and research in these areas.

The overpowering feature of London at the moment is the pervasive sense that as the world centre for literature and scholarship in English it is dying. In California a few years ago a story was current about the member of a major state university's English department going to London on sabbatical; his colleagues begged him to rush word of the coming fashions in scholarship and criticism. They shortly received a wire: DONNE FALLING. POPE STEADY. BUY TENNYSON NOW. Again, when T. S. Eliot set out to make himself a literary style-setter sixty years ago, he left the U.S. and settled in London. It is that kind of power that London is losing. Obviously the English universities, the great English libraries and the London publishing houses will continue to be influential, but increasingly the fashions in literature and scholarship are being set in New York. Prominent North Americans still come to London: last winter I heard lectures by Northrop Frye, Lionel and Diana Trilling and Cleanth Brooks. But they do not come like pilgrims; they come to visit, not to stay, and the writers, students and academics who are here full-time are unanimous that the future belongs to America.

You hear it everywhere. At a July 1st party Canadian academics from various disciplines — English, German, art history, psychology, philosophy, political science, economics — agreed without dissent that the lead in their subjects either had been or soon would be taken by the Americans. "I can afford the luxury of a British PhD," said one ambitious young political scientist, "only because I took the M.A. at Chicago." When you ask Mordecai Richler whether New York will eventually displace London as the centre of the literary world in the same way that it has become the centre for medicine and science, he replies flatly, "New York *is* the centre of the literary world" and goes on to point out that even leading British intellectual periodicals like *Encounter* are now to a considerable extent controlled and edited by Americans, and that British fiction, for example, is wallowing in the proletarian trough through which North American fiction passed thirty years ago.

Things are shifting this way for the simplest, crassest of reasons: the force of money. Sentimentalism aside, culture can to some extent be bought, and the Americans are buying it. Paintings and sculpture flow steadily across the Atlantic, the most important recent purchase being Norton Simon's acquisition of Rembrandt's portrait of his son; the crusty reactions of the London daily press to Simon's difficulties in bidding at Christie's revealed the resentment such purchases often evoke. (Margaret Laurence noticed the same resentment in the British reviews of Saul Bellow's *Herzog*: "I wonder if it didn't get an unusually rough time here just *because* it was so well received in the States.") Analogously, wealthy American university libraries with no shortage of space are snapping up the rare books, the manuscripts, the holograph letters. Scholars follow the libraries; and if you total the original appropriations to establish the libraries of all the new British universities put together, you arrive at an amount less than the University of California alone spends on its normal acquisitions in a year.

An interesting variation on this purchasing is the hot pursuit of writers by American university libraries wanting to buy their manuscripts. Many writers — Margaret Laurence among them — have been approached by Boston University; but the fabled institution is the University of Texas, which has acquired the manuscripts of Norman Levine's *Canada Made Me* and *One Way Ticket*, and which has been extremely active in purchasing manuscripts of recent books. The enterprise is almost sure to be worthwhile; a university can accumulate a large collection of manuscripts at relatively low prices when the writers are just becoming prominent, and even one important manuscript could conceivably repay a fairly large programme. The whole thing has a Texan flavour about it, and it has given rise to a number of wry jokes: someone has remarked, for instance, that young men now write novels not for the royalties, but so that they can sell the manuscript to the University of Texas.

An Indian with a wide acquaintance from all over the Commonwealth remarks that Canadians are much more critical of Britain than Australians, Indians and others, much more aware of the power of America and of the dramatic changes in human life that technology is bringing. Perhaps the Canadian experience of what tends to be felt as American domination is the prototype of what now faces Britain and will eventually face countries like Australia as well. If Canadians are unusually aware of the spread of U.S. influence, it may be that we are aware of its advantages as well as its costs: certainly we are less patient with squalor and inefficiency. There can be no doubt that Britain is becoming more modern, which is perhaps simply another term for "American": super-

highways are modern if you like them, American if you don't. As Britain is absorbed, culturally as well as politically and economically, into the American empire, the sensation of a North American in London must be rather analogous to that of a Roman in Athens: it is a charming place, and you can acquire all kinds of cultural and intellectual souvenirs; you can learn so much that it changes your character. But for better or worse you have left the future at home.

[1] I am eager to acknowledge the help of many people in preparing this Letter, but especially the candor and generosity of Mrs. Laurence, Mr. Levine and Mr. Richler. My only regret is that space allows me to include so few of their very thoughtful comments.

review articles

A FATAL MISTAKE

A. J. M. Smith

NORMAN SHRIVE, *Charles Mair: Literary Nationalist*, University of Toronto Press. $7.50.

PROFESSOR SHRIVE'S BIOGRAPHICAL and critical study of a famous Canadian poet of the last century presents us with a kind of Platonic ideal of what such a work ought to be. It is scholarly, copious, fully documented, well written, objective without being dry or evasive, and reasonably critical. It stands with Chittick's *Haliburton* and Klinck's *Wilfred Campbell* as our most perfect examples of a very respectable genre, the literary biography. In Professor Shrive's book (as in Klinck's but not in Chitticks) we see the form at its purest. The subject is so mediocre an artist that the scholarly biographer is set free to exercise his craft under what might be called "laboratory conditions". The result is a model for future biographers who have the good fortune to find a more significant subject — a Lampman, say, or a Pratt.

I do not intend to suggest by all this that Mair did not have an interesting career or that Professor Shrive has not made an interesting and, indeed, a useful book of it. However, I would like to have seen the biographer disassociate himself more explicitly from the myth that Mair has any major significance as a poet or man of letters. How and why such myths arise, how they are disseminated, and why they persist: this is the real problem for the Canadian literary biographer to come to grips with. In the present case the reader is left pretty much to speculate for himself on these matters and to come up with such answers as his knowledge and experience provide.

On the other hand, it may be urged that detachment is the special virtue of this kind of biography — the facts are left to speak for themselves, and the reader is skilfully invited in as a sort of collaborator. Perhaps this is so, but the method would have been more successful had a certain irony been allowed to creep in. The danger, of course, is that the Stracheyian biographer may demonstrate an unconscious and unmerited superiority and make fun of his victim from a standpoint that would have been utterly incomprehensible to the subject or to the men of his time. This Professor Shrive never does, and it is not the least of his merits.

Mair, nevertheless, was not a very attractive character nor a very consistent one. One cannot help being glad he isn't around today. "The priests Mair considered disloyal because they were Roman Catholics and owed allegiance only to Rome. As French Canadians they

were antipathetic to British rule, since it was still too early, he felt, to expect loyalty from a conquered race. Orangeism, however, Mair loftily despised... 'A coarse brawling pack of vulgar ruffians and imposters,' he classified them; 'God help Protestantism in Canada if it has to be defended by that contemptible trash'."

On July 1, 1891 ("*there* was an ironic date"), he wrote to his friend and admirer, the swashbuckling Col. Denison:

> To Canadian literature I have given more time and labor than it deserves. Canadians are mainly barbarians and consist, ninety-nine out of one hundred, of backs and stomachs. To expect our polished boors to enjoy art in any of its developments is too much.
>
> I am done with the "Canadian public," which consists of mere cattle or worse. It will take a hundred years to lift such swine as compose it out of the ruts and troughs and swills they delight in...

The provacations for this testiness were mainly personal — family troubles, financial troubles, imperceptive reviews, and wounded vanity. The great poetic voice of the Canada First movement and of the British Protestant West felt himself and his cause alike were something less than triumphant.

Earlier, when he had been toiling assiduously to bring his masterpiece *Tecumseh* to a conclusion he was held up by frustration and nervousness lest justice should fail in Regina. "The opinion of the best people here," he wrote Denison from Windsor, "is that Riel should be hanged... nothing but hanging will suit the right public mind of Ontario." He complained that he could not "get down to work on *Tecumseh* — I don't believe I shall be able to do much until after... that hanging!" Mair, of course, had been personally involved, and it is the story of his adventures during the Red River Insurrection of 1869 and of his involvement in the Canada First movement that has the greatest historical interest. It is clear that whatever virtues Mair lacked, courage, energy, and self-confidence were not among them.

The story of Mair's literary career is — one hardly knows what adjectives to choose: *pathetic, instructive, heroic, misguided*, typical — each of them has its application. In a sense, Mair, like Heavysege and Sangster before him (and others since), was the willing victim of the colonists' desire to demonstrate that they could produce a poet of as good a class as those of the old world and who therefore must write in the language of the old world. This was a fatal mistake.

Mair's last days, spent as a kind of professional "Old Poet," lionised by J. L. Garvin, Katherine Hale, Lorne Pierce, and the C.A.A. generally, do more credit to the old man himself than to his admirers. If there is something pathetic about his attempts to make something out of "the Futurists, the Obscurantists," and the new poetry of Miss Edith Sitwell, there was a wry humour in his diatribes against "lady *litterateurs*" and the Miss Crochets of the time and sometimes an unexpected note of humility, as when he protested in a letter to J. L. Garvin that he was not "one of Canada's greatest men... neither an angel nor an evangel" but really "a very unpretending old fellow... vain enough to think he *has* written something that will live."

I do not need to repeat what I have written elsewhere in praise of a fine descriptive passage in *Tecumseh* where his imagination caught fire as he contemplated the vast expansive of the western

wilderness. These, and a few verses from "August", "The Fireflies", or "Winter" that still appear in our anthologies are all that is left of the "something that will live."

It is a sobering thought.

TROIS OUVRAGES SUR LE QUEBEC

Jean-Guy Pilon

Quebec States her case. Ed. Frank Scott and Michael Oliver. Macmillan. $1.95.
HERBERT E. QUINN, *The Union Nationale.* University of Toronto Press. $2.95.
THOMAS SLOAN, *Quebec: the Not-so-quiet Revolution.* Ryerson. $3.50.

L'EXPERIENCE DE LIRE, en anglais et à la suite, trois ouvrages récents qui portent sur la situation politique et culturelle au Québec, vaut d'être tentée pour un lecteur de langue française. Des événements bien connus paraissent ainsi tantôt éloignés, tantôt plus rapprochés; des attitudes de certains hommes politiques prennent aussi des dimensions que l'on ne soupçonnait pas. Car, pour moi, tous les événements dont il est question dans ces livres, se déroulent habituellement en français, si je puis m'exprimer ainsi. Or, voici que la vie autour de moi est décrite dans une autre langue, avec tout ce que cela suppose d'adaptations nécessaires — ces ouvrages s'addressent quand même à des lecteurs de langue anglaise — mais aussi de distance. Je veux dire que je réagis de façon un peu différente quand je lis, traduits en anglais, des articles de Gérard Pelletier ou d'André Major. C'est donc, pour un lecteur de langue française, un dépaysement assez considérable que de lire ces ouvrages dont je m'empresse de dire qu'ils sont remarquables.

Le premier, intitulé: *Quebec States her case* est un recueil d'articles parus sous les signatures les plus diverses, dans les journaux et revues du Québec: *La Presse, Le Devoir, Cité Libre, Liberté,* etc. S'y ajoutent aussi quelques discours d'hommes politiques, comme Jean Lesage, Pierre Laporte et Daniel Johnson. Ces différents textes, signés par André Laurendeau, Gérard Pelletier, Léon Dion, André Major et plusieurs autres, ont été réunis par Frank Scott et Michael Oliver dont on sait l'intérêt qu'ils portent à tout ce qui se déroule au Québec. La traduction en anglais a été faite par une équipe de spécialistes.

Autre fait à considérer: ces articles et discours ont été choisis à cause de leur clarté, parce qu'ils s'enchaînaient bien les uns aux autres et exprimaient ainsi plusieurs aspects, complémentaires si on veut, d'une pensée qui n'est pas toujours facile à saisir dans sa globalité; ils ont aussi été groupés dans cet ordre parce qu'ils portent sur une période bien précise de l'histoire du Québec, ce que les éditeurs appellent "the years of unrest" et

qui va de l'hiver 1961 à l'été 1963.

Le second ouvrage, plus considérable, est un ouvrage d'historien et un ouvrage fort bien documenté. En intitulant son livre *The Union Nationale*, M. Herbert F. Quinn a voulu, à travers un parti politique qui fut puissant, l'Union Nationale, étudier plus spécialement l'évolution des idées au Québec, de 1936 à 1960, mais aussi à travers un homme, Maurice Duplessis, juger de l'évolution du nationalisme canadien-français.

Il faut bien reconnaître que durant presque 25 ans, Maurice Duplessis a été non seulement la figure dominante de la scène politique du Québec, mais qu'il a aussi marqué profondément tous les milieux sociaux et culturels, par ses préjugés, ses rancunes et ses haines, ses mots d'esprit et ses générosités subites, le patronage généralisé et la corruption systématique.

M. Quinn étudie tous les aspects du régime Duplessis, ses antécédents, ses lignes de force, ses moyens, sa "doctrine", et ses conséquences.

Ce livre sera d'une très grande utilité aux chercheurs et aux historiens, car il repose sur une documentation de première main extrêmement variée et abondante. M. Quinn réussit là une bonne synthèse de cette période d'histoire.

Le troisième ouvrage dont je voudrais parler ici est dû à un journaliste de Montréal, M. Thomas Sloan, qui comprend les situations et sait les expliquer clairement. Son livre s'intitule: *Québec, the not-so-quiet revolution.*

Ce petit livre est excellent. Avec beaucoup de justesse et de nuances, M. Sloan décrit les changements survenus au Québec depuis 1960 et trace un tableau général de la situation politique auquel on ne peut à peu près rien reprocher. L'auteur est non seulement bien informé, mais il est aussi bien intentionné, et il est honnête. S'il ne passe pas sous silence l'immobilisme créé au Québec par l'Union Nationale pendant 25 ans, il ne minimise pas non plus la responsabilité des Canadiens anglais dans les troubles actuels et le refus de plusieurs d'entre eux de juger du Québec sainement.

Qu'il s'agisse de la politique, de l'économie ou du nationalisme canadien-français, M. Sloan voit clair et juste. Son chapitre consacré au clergé et à son rôle en politique est cependant un peu plus faible. Par contre, le dernier chapitre consacré à la Confédération est vraiment excellent. Passant en revue les différentes solutions qui ont actuellement cours, M. Sloan en développe plus spécialement une, celle des états associés.

Voilà un petit livre qui devrait être généreusement distribué à travers tout le Canada anglais, pour que les lecteurs puissent mieux comprendre le Québec et les exigences irréversibles des Canadiens français, et mieux voir le Canada dans son ensemble, d'un point de vue général. Car c'est un fait que le réveil du Québec et la dynamique qui l'anime ont permis à tous d'apercevoir nombre d'absurdités quand il ne s'agissait pas purement et simplement d'injustices flagrantes qu'on se plaisait auparavant à nier. Et il paraît que tout cela ne fait que commercer . . .

A SEARCH FOR SENSIBILITY

William H. New

The Book of Canadian Prose: Vol. 1. Early Beginnings to Confederation. ed. A. J. M. Smith. Gage. $6.00.

NEW NATIONS EVERYWHERE can expect, in establishing themselves, to be encountering two common experiences: the expansion and development of a physical environment, and the development of satisfactory social relationships between indigenous and immigrating peoples. Their ways of meeting these situations — their histories, in effect — will reveal their differences. Their individuality is based on an approach to a land and a relationship both with colonizing and neighbouring countries, and that basis is generally quickly established. But often it generates rebellious or self-protective impulses which result in independence before the individuality has itself been realized. Individuality, moreover — an attitude to self and a full habitation of that self — can be a much more positive quality than rebelliousness and, as such, more difficult to apprehend. Such, at least, was Canada's experience. One is again led to a recognition of this by the selections included in A. J. M. Smith's recent anthology, *The Book of Canadian Prose.*

This volume (No. 1: *Early Beginnings to Confederation*) appears to be the first of a three-volume series, planned as a companion to the same editor's *The Book of Canadian Poetry.* A different sort of problem besets it. An anthology of poetry must choose between depth and breadth of coverage, and, sometimes, between "representative" and "valuable" works. An anthology of short stories faces a similar choice. But a work which avowedly aims to illustrate the "effect of geography, climate, and politics upon the sensibility of the Canadian people" must choose its selections essentially from non-belletristic writings. The inherent difficulty in this lies in the fact that political discourses, traveller's journals, and geographic commentaries are not normally of a length that makes them readily usable in an anthology. A job for a good editor, perhaps, and certainly Professor Smith is a good editor, but the items he includes are not at the last as self-contained as one would like to see them, nor do they connect smoothly into a larger single unit as a book.

There are noteworthy exceptions to this, such as Patrick Campbell's "The Story of David Ramsay", Alexander Henry's "The Massacre at Fort Michilimackinac", and Samuel Hearne's "The Slaughter of the Esquimaux". All are stylistically simple but climactic narratives, told vigorously and making excellent use of pertinent details. Yet other works by these writers add to the book's patchiness rather than help it to become a unified patchwork. Another exception is Joseph Howe's "An Open Letter to Lord John Russell", which is also vigorous, though anything but simple, in its rhetorical exposition of the needs for responsible government.

The difficulty facing Dr. Smith is most

evident in the few selections he includes from belletristic writings. Susanna Moodie's description of Uncle Joe's family is built in to *Roughing It in the Bush*; it forms an integral part of a fully created social experience in the Ontario backwoods. Here, removed from that context, it amasses characters to no achieved end and finally tails away in apparently petty detail. The several opinions of T. C. Haliburton's Sam Slick, the Clockmaker, fare somewhat better, for they were originally conceived as a series of related but individually whole units. Sam's character is recreated, as it were, by each of his opinions. Though each of them may give a slightly different slant towards both the clock salesman and the land through which he travels, Haliburton's end product is not what Forster called a fictionally "round" human figure. The eight letters from Frances Brooke's epistolary novel, *The History of Emily Montague*, fare worst, however. They lead the editor into making a rare error in fact and an equally challengeable critical interpretation, and unfortunately these pieces open the anthology. His introduction tells us that Mrs. Brooke's *heroine* writes: " 'The scenery is to be sure divine, but one grows weary of meer scenery' ", yet one comes across this affirmation, some sixteen pages further on, in a letter written by Ed. Rivers. Professor Smith also accepts Ed's assessment of the Indian — "the Noble Savage of the eighteenth century *philosophe*" — as being Mrs. Brooke's. But in context, Ed's letters and comments are superficial; until the conclusion he neither *knows himself* nor perceives the realities lying behind his "romantic" dream of "Canada". Arabella Fermor does, and Mrs. Brooke carefully juxtaposes Ed's observations with those of Arabella, to end, in the novel, with a witty and ironic perception of her society. But the selected letters do not do this, and one should have preferred to see them replaced by some of the letters of Governor James Murray. Similarly, Susanna Moodie's Preface to *Mark Hurdlestone* would have been preferable to the material from *Roughing It in the Bush*, and one of Thomas McCulloch's Letters of Mephibosheth Stepsure might have replaced some of the Haliburton material.

This is, of course, a Book of Canadian *Prose*, and another approach to the work might emphasize the stylistic development that took place between exploration and Confederation. Many of the writers, such as Hearne, Henry, Alexander Mackenzie, and William Dunlop, have a deceptively simple style that reveals a wel-

come control over the movement of language. Their syntax is straightforward, their level of diction is suited to the narrative reporting of their work, and their accurate sense of the value of detail gives their writing colour and immediacy. David Thompson's style is distinctly weaker, being somewhat more circumlocutory, but even it does not suffer either from the purple patches which afflict Jacob Bailey or from the exclamatory self-righteous indignation—"Oh, ye dealers in wild lands", "Verily we have learnt", "CANADIANS!" — that interrupts Mrs. Moodie and W. L. Mackenzie. In a way they anticipate Frederick Philip Grove, but fortunately Bailey's wit, Mrs. Moodie's sense for character, Haliburton's gift for dialect, and Campbell's deadpan (or is it unconscious?) humour add a lightness to the book.

The two master stylists are undoubtedly Joseph Howe and D'Arcy McGee, both in the oratorical tradition of nineteenth century political prose. Their oratory is not hollow, however; their conscious sense for rhetoric, for the force of parallel structures, for the theatrically valuable effect of repeated word and phrase, contributed palpably to Canadian development. The quality of their prose promises much for writing in Canada, but unfortunately Professor Smith — perhaps with an eye towards the succeeding volumes — is not so hopeful.

The "Introduction", which, as in most anthologies, is in many ways the most valuable part of the book, largely concerns itself with a Canadian "sensibility". The topic is nebulous, and the proliferation of words like "usually" and "generally" does not help to give it form. But the concrete examples from Canadian prose do. The editor suggests a twin dialogue — Canadians developing attitudes about England and the United States — which ultimately resolves itself in individuality and Confederation. Canada, however, remained somewhat enigmatic after that time, and to what extent Confederation was a "resolution" is a moot point. Certainly one is impressed in this anthology by the recurrence of a few ideas. The U.S.A. is seldom mentioned, in Bailey, W. L. Mackenzie, and Haliburton, for example, without a reference to the opposition between "freedom" and "slavery"; similar reference to Britain, in Mrs. Brooke, Mrs. Moodie, Haliburton, and Macdonald, raises an opposition between an "aristocratic hierarchy" and "independence". Amongst these ideas Canada wavers, but perhaps the destination is perceived when Howe writes that the only replacement for British government he would accept is one that would combine a "stronger executive power with more of individual liberty". Confederation seems, in fact, to have aimed for this and thereby to have influenced the direction of Canadian growth.

Professor Smith's work is an introductory one, then, useful for a short, but ultimately unsatisfactory, dip into eighteenth and nineteenth century prose in Canada. Perhaps if it directs readers back once again to the original materials, it serves its purpose well.

books in review

AT LAST, MR. MCCOURT

EDWARD MCCOURT, *The Road Across Canada.* Macmillan. $4.95.

EDWARD MCCOURT has written novels about life in Canada, and none of them are very good: his fictional world is for the most part sterile. The CBC has seen its way to produce *Fasting Friar* for summer viewing on television, but readers would do a lot better to read *The Road Across Canada,* for in this book McCourt has finally reached toward something of value. For his next book, or group of books, Mr. McCourt should do a comparable study of each Canadian province, for he studies the country well. Gone are the artificial plot structures, the strictures of the academic in writing fiction. At last, Mr. McCourt has found himself.

In the summer of 1963 McCourt and his wife set out to drive the Trans-Canada Highway from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Victoria, British Columbia. They took their time, and they observed the country with careful and watchful eyes. This record of their journey is easy to read; there is a smoothness about the prose rarely found in travel books, and particularly rare in anything else that Mr. McCourt has written.

Mr. McCourt is a scholar, and the book draws on his interest in history and humanity. It combines a philosophy about Canada as a land with a future, but it is also aware of the tourist as he travels across the vastness that is Canada. It is often critical of what Canadians have done with their land, but Edward McCourt loves his own country and he cannot be critical for too long. He is never sentimental, either; I say this knowing that others may think the book tends to be that way. But the sentimental, as Somerset Maugham says, is those emotions that one does not like. I like the emotions in Mr. McCourt's book; he is proud of Canada, and he does not consider it naïve to say so; nor is he too blasé not to admit it.

The best way to learn about this book is to look at some of the things he says. "In Canada there is too much of everything. Too much rock, too much prairie, too much tundra, too much mountain, too much forest. Above all, too much forest. Even the man who passionately believes that he shall never see a poem as lovely as a tree will be disposed to give poetry another try after he has driven the Trans-Canada Highway."

About Newfoundland "there is, and was, more in that society to deplore than to praise: the enormous gulf between rich and poor . . . the expensive and inefficient system of denominational education; neglect of the arts, and an outlook on life bounded for too many by the limits of the local parish."

Yet Newfoundland, like Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia, is a land that McCourt loves. He fills his descriptions with reports of occasional encounters with other tourists, and natives. He catches the authentic flavour of the Maritimes that few have been able to put on paper. To most Canadians, the Maritimes are economically poor, full of people who have only the past to grasp on to. But the beauty is often forgotten

in statements about the rising tides of the Bay of Fundy, or statements of economic listlessness. For McCourt, instead, in New Brunswick "cows graze knee-deep in lush pasture grass, elm trees line the Highway on either side and sometimes meet to form an arch overhead, flower-bordered white frame houses bask in the warm sunlight, and the broad island-studded river flows slowly past on its way to the sea. All the elements of the idealized rural scene are here — the kind of scene I saw on farm-machine-company calendars when I was a small boy on the homestead, which even then seemed to me too beautiful to be true. But rural New Brunswick at its best makes any calendar picture of rustic pulchritude I ever saw look a bit drab." This is ordinary language, but the rhythm is rich and pure; the words may be trite, but they are exact; and Mr. McCourt has caught the essence of the landscape he describes.

He comments wittily about Quebec and Ontario, and fills them with his imagination. He feels that Mackenzie King's Kingsmere is "immensely comforting" because its contrived ruins show "there is hope for us yet". He loves Saskatchewan for no other reasons except that it is flat and airy, and says of Victoria, B.C., that "Victoria is not England; she has simply played on her origins to give the tourist what he wants . . . Victoria belongs properly to Disneyland".

This is but a bit of McCourt. He is superb at descriptions, and catches his summer in the palm of his hand, and never quite lets it go; he saves it all for his reader. He makes the journey exciting; he respects his country and is not afraid to say so; and his respect is tinged with the ability to criticize when criticism is due. The trip across Canada was a rare one for the McCourts and *The Road Across Canada* is an exposition of their rare experience. I think it will make Canadians want to see their own country; I know it made me want to go back over it all again.

The illustrations by John A. Hall are good, and nicely placed. My only reservation is that McCourt seems at times to criticize with one hand, and then overload with praise with another, as though he may be afraid of offending anyone. But perhaps it is a good thing that no one can be offended by his book; McCourt is not the kind of man to easily hurt; his judgment, too, is too exact for that. But he can talk about Victoria having "perpetrated the most successful hoax in the history of tourism", and then say about the Gulf: "I am convinced that had the ancients who dreamed of the Blessed Isles lying far to the west — and in some instances spent their lives searching for them — ever reached Victoria and the islands of the gulf they would have been content to search no farther".

This seems an example of pulling out the stamens to geld the lily, but Mr. McCourt cannot be criticized for being a gentleman in his own country, when most people who write of Canada are anything but.

DONALD STEPHENS

ASPECTS OF YEATS

The World of W. B. Yeats: Essays in Perspective. Eds. Robin Skelton and Ann Saddlemyer. University of Victoria.

TOO OFTEN MEMORIAL POEMS OR commemorative collections of essays, prompted though they may be by worthy

sentiments, are not really memorable, and represent, one feels, a duty fulfilled. Occasionally, however, they pleasantly surprise the reader by their perceptive and sympathetic treatment of the subject. *The World of W. B. Yeats*, edited by Robin Skelton and Ann Saddlemyer and published by the University of Victoria in connection with the W. B. Yeats Centenary Festival recently held at the University, is an example of such a successful presentation. This tribute to W. B. Yeats does credit to the editors, the contributors and the sponsoring University.

Of the seventeen essays in this collection, eleven are by the two editors, a remarkable scholarly contribution. Although normally for such a symposium one would prefer selections from a wider range of writers in order to gain a greater variety of critical points of view, this is no serious matter here, because the essayists in this volume are not concerned solely with presenting appreciations of Yeats or critical analyses of his works. In so far as these essays relate directly to Yeats, they outline, for the most part, the many aspects of Yeats's contribution to literature, more particularly to the revival of Irish culture. They concern also the achievements of those writers, such as Lady Gregory, A. E., and John Millington Synge, who were intimately associated with Yeats.

Out of this book emerges an awareness of Yeats's manifold interests, activities and achievements: his scholarly work in Irish history and legend; his subtle and discerning study of Blake; his interest in the preternatural and his involvement in theosophy; his attraction to the French symbolists; his participa-

tion in the Irish nationalist movement, briefly through political action, but mainly through his efforts to create a living culture out of what seemed a dead tradition; his building up of an Irish theatre, and his inducing many to write for it; and above all, of course, his own poetry and plays, which are the fullest and finest expression of Yeats the artist, and the most worthy achievement not only of Irish literature, but probably of all literature written in the English language in the twentieth century. What does not emerge clearly enough from these essays, though brief references are made to it, is Yeats's attempt to fuse these varied interests into a unified system of ideas. To some extent this was a forced effort by Yeats, but he was not entirely wrong when he stated that for years he tested all that he did by the need to hammer his thoughts into unity, and he was convinced that his love of literature, his belief in nationality and his form of philosophy were "a discrete expression of a single conviction." The seemingly disparate efforts grew out of each other and had a common core; they were attempts to create and express a vision of reality which, while centring on Ireland, extended to all life, including the reality beyond the senses.

These essays do much more than present aspects of Yeats's various efforts and those of his close associates. They convey a great deal of useful information regarding many less well-known phases of the Irish cultural renaissance in which Yeats was so significant a figure. Essays on the Abbey Theatre, on the little magazines and on the press in Ireland, are valuable contributions to our knowledge of the social and literary context that Yeats did so much to bring into being and which at the same time helped to shape the poet's imagination and work. The scholarship entailed in these essays is impressive. The usefulness of this information to the student of Yeats and of Irish literature makes one regret all the more the fact that some important areas are not covered in this book, or are inadequately dealt with: for example, the contribution by the Fay brothers, the work of Padraic Colum, the activities of the political societies in the 1890's.

One further comment. While the editors indicate in the Introduction that their intention is to relate Yeats's work "to its background and to the work of the poet's friends and contemporaries" and that they do not intend primarily to discuss his work, nevertheless one wishes that they had provided more opportunity for critical analyses of Yeats's poems and plays so that the general reader, who is not familiar with the learned journals that are readily available in academic circles, could have been made more aware of the richness of texture of Yeats's work. For the scholarly reader, the argument that there exists already a vast critical literature on Yeats has no force.

M. W. STEINBERG

WELL-SPUN SCHEME

NORTHROP FRYE, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance*. Columbia University Press. $3.75.

IN 1963, IN A NOTABLE SERIES of Bampton Lectures delivered at Columbia University, Professor Frye set forth a thesis that Shakespeare's four final romances "are the inevitable and genuine culmination of the poet's achievement". Now revised, and published in a most attrac-

tive format by Columbia University Press, these lectures fill the present reviewer with mounting irritation and deepening admiration.

The irritation springs from the fact that Frye is the great Aristotelian of contemporary criticism, constantly categorizing, obsessively setting up parallels and antitheses, and forever coming up with another neat literary paradigm. The present book, for instance, begins with a declaration that *all* literary critics are either (a) "Iliad critics", centring their interest in tragedy, realism, and irony, or (b) "Odyssey critics" (among whom Frye numbers himself) centring their interest in comedy and romance. We are then given three principles which lie behind the Odyssey type of criticism and launched on a journey which ends up with three moral levels being found to correspond with three groups of characters in *The Tempest*. Through it all, the categories are set forth with such remarkable literary sensitivity, such firm though quietly spoken authority, and such seeming precision, that it is hard to keep from being hypnotized into acquiescence. One sees why the author's *Anatomy of Criticism* has become a *vade mecum* for graduate students in English. Frye's tidy formulae really do seem at times to define the development of Shakespearean comedy and romance. But often when one pauses for a double take, doubts and misgivings arise.

The sad truth is that, with his splendid schemata, Professor Frye starts twisting the plays ever so slightly, and sometimes not so slightly, to make them fit. And this is where irritation begins. Consider the author's proposition that the comic dramas centre about two cycles, those of the disappearing and returning heroine, or "the white goddess" and "the black bride" as he prefers to call them. What are we to make of the following declaration?

> We may call this, the movement opposite to that of the white goddess, the cycle of the black bride. I take the word black from the Song of Songs, although Julia, Hero, Hermia, Rosaline, and Juliet are all associated with the word "Ethiop." (p. 85)

One can only reply that Shakespeare, when he has a pair of girls on the stage, often finds it handy to distinguish between them visually by having one a blonde and the other a brunette, and that Juliet after all is likened to the rich *jewel* in an Ethiop's ear, the Ethiop being not Juliet but the night. Then again, it is true that Shakespeare like Plautus often pits young lovers against hostile parents, but one boggles when, to fit *The Tempest* into the pattern, Frye makes a hostile father out of Prospero. At the back of the mind, one hears Shakespeare's Prospero speaking his wonderful lines:

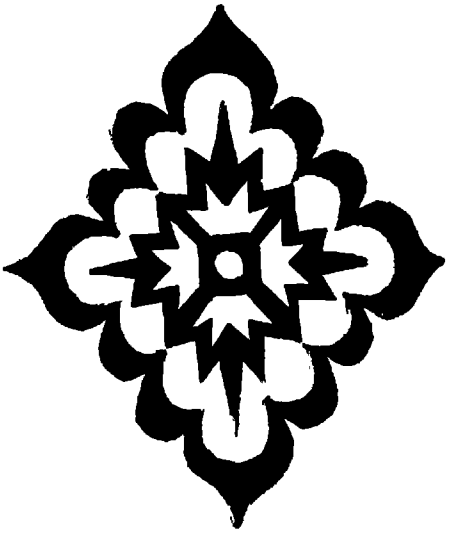
> I have done nothing but in care of thee,
> Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter
>
> So glad of this as they I cannot be,
> Who are surprised withal, but my rejoicing
> At nothing can be more.

Or, again with *The Tempest*, though a stage of confusion concerning identity may be part of the Shakespearean comic cycle, surely Frye is utterly wrong in making the question of who is rightful Duke of Milan "merge with a theme of uncertain identity". If the audience knows anything it is that Prospero is the rightful duke!

One of the more amusing passages in this book occurs when Frye turns to *The Winter's Tale*, and unco-operative Shakespeare does not come up with one of those balances and antitheses for which

the author yearns: "In *The Winter's Tale* there might have been a winter song in the first part to contrast with Autolycus' song of the daffodils which begins the second." "Might have been" — those saddest words! But Frye, abhorring a vacuum, decides that the place of the winter song is supplied by the story (never told) of the old man who dwelt by the churchyard.

One turns to those things in this book which arouse the liveliest admiration — the skill, like that of a surgeon, with which dissections are made, the utter lucidity and rightness of the phrasing, the breadth of learning, never obtrusive but always available. Frye's chronic schematic way of thinking may impel him to some odd conclusions, but it also stimulates him to a series of brilliant insights. It is for these perceptions along the way that one is chiefly grateful. Thus, in a passage which may become a *locus classicus*, he superbly defines the relation of literary criticism to the actual experience of reading a book. Again and again Frye is so right — Jonson does instruct us in the art of enjoying Jonson, he is indeed a way station on the road to Beckett, there is a world of difference between imaginative faith and the suspension of disbelief. Nobody has offered a more penetrating statement of what is wrong with sentimentality in literature than that which Frye offers in his final chapter. One remembers gratefully what the author has pointed out concerning Shakespeare's "operatic" mode of handling themes, and the co-presence of the elegaic and the ironic at the close of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Again and again Frye's schemata, even when one cannot accept them as valid, make one look at the plays in new and rewarding ways — Timon is a humour character, and there are parallels between Timon and Prospero. Often Frye's own categorical thinking does coincide with the hierarchical thinking of the Elizabethans and yield truths.



What it all boils down to is that Frye is one of the most stimulating critics writing today. Anyone interested in Shakespeare will benefit from his book. But Heaven help the reader who is naïve enough to believe all Frye's dicta, or is not aware of the danger of listening too credulously to a seductive spinner of schemes.

G. P. V. AKRIGG

BIOGRAPHICAL OMNISCIENCE

BRUCE HUTCHISON, *Mr. Prime Minister, 1867-1964*. Longmans. $7.50.

BRUCE HUTCHISON has joined the parade to the publishers to catch the centennial boom in Canadiana with a book that has been characterized as popular history. The assumption behind this category is that ordinary history isn't popular; it takes a clever writer to make it truly edible. The problem is that popular history isn't history any more than popular philosophy is philosophy. What Bruce Hutchison has done with this book is to flesh out certain facts with the product of his curiously Victorian imagination entombed in the hideous extravagance of his prose. He clearly wants to make the prime ministers of Canada live for his readers. For some he may succeed; for me he remains the Tretchikoff of Canadian journalism.

To be fair to him, he does point out in a foreword that this "is not a formal book of history", thus avoiding the risk of dullness; it is rather "a tale of adventure at the apex of Canadian power". But he spoils this honesty by adding that the narrative is "much less plausible than fiction". Unless he has invented a new category, one can only suspect he means that this book is the whole truth.

Of course it is far from the truth. The person who manages to read all of it will find that dates, names and incidents correspond with facts more soberly recorded elsewhere. But there the coincidence between Hutchison and history will end. The reader will finish the book with the feeling that somehow all Canadian prime ministers were remarkably alike, differing only in the degree Hutchison likes or dislikes them.

He does try to depict their differences but one of his major deficiencies is a total lack of modulation in narrative style and descriptive technique. For him, like those worthies who write for *Reader's Digest*, there is drama in everything. Consequently there is drama in nothing.

He writes with an omniscience that would have driven Mackenzie King mad with delight and envy. Not only does Hutchison describe events for which there can be no possible record — and this is particularly true in those sections where he describes prime ministerial boyhoods with remarkable intimacy; he also describes the innermost thoughts of his subjects. It may be that those prime ministers who were and are his contemporaries told him what they were thinking; as for the rest it can only be pure Hutchison.

The effect of this applied by one man to the minds of fourteen is to give them all a remarkable degree of similarity. All of our prime ministers think like Bruce Hutchison. If this is true it accounts for a lot of this country's problems.

And the book is badly damaged by Hutchison's uncontrollable appetite for the purple, the trite, and the mixed metaphor. He writes this of Laurier's speeches: "They seemed to be built by an architect, stone by stone. They soared into Gothic towers, flying buttresses and intricate groining. They bloomed like stained glass windows. They rang like cathedral chimes." He describes Sifton as "a man of steel"; arguments and events "strike at the vitals" or "cut like acid" and "the die is cast" at least once in every chapter. Finally he perpetuates this monstrosity: "McGee withdrew also, in an act of

generosity, to be rewarded a few months later by the bullet of a Fenian assassin in an Ottawa street where Macdonald knelt in tears over the body of his friend." Like Laurier's stained glass and intricate groining, Hutchison's purple passages tumble over one another in baroque enthusiasm until the reader chokes and suffocates after fifty pages.

The book does, however, have its lighter side. We are told that at sixty-seven years Louis St. Laurent "had learned to be himself" and that Lester Pearson, "the lonely extrovert", has a mind which "constructed by layer in a series of Chinese boxes had never revealed its inner contents to any colleague, perhaps not even to its owner". But Bruce Hutchison knows.

WALTER D. YOUNG

NARRATIVE IN NOSTALGIA

PHILIP CHILD, *The Wood of the Nightingale.* Ryerson Press.

PHILIP CHILD's new poem *The Wood of the Nightingale* shows that a narrative set entirely out of Canada, and out of North America too, can be of national significance. It can even contribute to a national myth. For Canadians the effort demanded by the First World War turned it into a unifying effort which brought together as one soldiers from previously self-centred provinces and regions. To Child a major battle like that of Ypres was a modern "Marathon" and for the returned soldiers and all the soldiers' families the battle names "lie deep as myths".

The action of Child's poem centres on three Canadian soldiers at the front and in No Man's Land, here a much blasted tangle of foxholes and tree stumps called the Wood of the Nightingale. The one survivor, Hugh Kingdom-Forty-Years-Ago, reflects on his relations with the other two, on the enemy, and on his own earlier reflections. As a deeply imaginative human being who sees his career as soldier set against thousands of years of warfare in France, Hugh is the man of Love caught in the duty of fighting. As a character study, his brother Ken stands out more sharply as a man of "closed mind and steadfast heart", a hero whom we are told Homer might have called "The Single-Minded One". So does Ken's bitter enemy, "Killer" Spurge, the jeering, dare-devil fatalist haunted by his boyhood killing of his father. The stories of these three at the front emerge in a succession of solid and vivid scenes, such as Hugh's first killing in cold blood of his alter ego on the German side, a poetically inclined letter writer named Hugo. All the incidents and people set Hugh reflecting on Time, the historic span of Western civilization, and Man's place in the world, in a way generally reminiscent of the English novel of the 1920's.

The two plot strands which finally emerge provide considerable suspense and intensity in the latter half of the poem. The love rivalry of Ken and Spurge, in which Spurge manages to poison the mind of Ken's girl and marry her, provides the background for a climactic inner struggle on Spurge's part as to whether he will murder Ken during a final raid in No Man's Land. Hugh's problem develops when he falls in love with Hugo's sister when delivering the letter Hugo had been writing when Hugh shot him.

The poem succeeds remarkably in keeping clear Hugh's many philosophical reflections as well as the story itself and all of Child's varied interests. The musings on Time and Flux as a challenge to human worth range through a wide scope of history with assurance, from the hallucination that Caesar's legions are tramping the Roman road in the foreground to the image of Life as the flight of a bird through a room, as recorded by Bede. The war is in fact only a vivifying short version of man's situation in the universe: "At crossroads with eternity, timespan / Is under fire." To set against the horror of mass killings of unidentified soldiers, Child offers a belief in Love as the ennobling human quality.

Of Child's earlier books, the novel *God's Sparrows* seems closest to *The Wood of the Nightingale.* The poem stands beside the novel for its presentation of battle scenes with a realism unrivalled elsewhere in Canadian fiction. Nothing is more praiseworthy in the poem than the way Child visualizes the horror of these scenes without becoming morbid, and yet never loses sight of the solemnity of single deaths against a setting of mass death. The chief advance of the poem over the novel in the handling of the war comes in its more unified integration into the total narrative. In the novel the war merely provides a convenient call for action which can test theories of man's love and duty. In the poem the war is the whole world as Child presents it, for it represents this No Man's Land called Life, and only Love makes it bearable.

Another major achievement of *The Wood of the Nightingale* appears most clearly in contrast to Child's long poem of 1951, *Victorian House.* Both poems are reflections on memories and so a mood of nostalgia dominates them. Nothing is more difficult for a writer than to present this very human mood ma-

turely. If he avoids sentimentality, he is doing much, but the positive strengths of vigour and intensity almost always baffle him. The earlier poem does avoid sentimentality, but at the expense of power. In *The Wood of the Nightingale* the nostalgia is solid and forceful:

> And they have known the coming back from battle.
> The coming back, they few, who but a day
> Or two ago were many: gas-soaked, unshaved,
> Stinking of cordite and of rotten mud,
> Crawling with lice.

This mood also extends from Hugh's own associations to his musings on history:

> Stone axes, spears, then arrows flashing by,
> Pilum and gladius—the Roman eagles pass:
> Innumerable odysseys of men
> Gone to the shades.

It is an artistic triumph of the poem to capture this difficult mood so well.

In language, metrics and imagery, Child exercises considerable agility in maintaining his effects for some 6,000 lines, but the effort sometimes shows. Most of the time the language is reasonably vivid in descriptions and easy in dialogue, although the occasional phrase seems rather too formal or too slangy (such as "orts of havoc", "a pukka meal"). The blank verse lines can accommodate at once serious reflections and realistic dialogue, although once in a while the dialogue is strained by the iambics (" 'You're looking pale. First one, cold blood, eh, Hugh?' ").

The Wood of the Nightingale must stand beside *Towards the Last Spike* and *A Suit of Nettles* as a serious attempt to present the dilemma of modern man in a Canadian situation. In such a comparison Child's outstanding strength is the sense of a self-contained but realistic world. Ranging from childhood and growing up through war, love, old age and eternity; depicting practical men, misfits and visionaries; intensely recalling beauty side by side with brutal death; dramatizing quarrels of frustration, quarrels of hatred, and the end to quarrels in No Man's Land, the poem exudes a sense of whole life.

WILLIAM H. MAGEE

MACKENZIE ROMANTICIZED

PHILIP VAIL, *The Magnificent Adventures of Alexander Mackenzie*. Dodd, Mead. $4.95.

EXPLORERS' JOURNALS inevitably reflect more the purpose of the journey than the personality of the explorer. Thus, it is not strange that in reading Hearne's journal one encounters first the primal wilderness and secondly a man reacting vigorously to it, or that in David Douglas' journal one has a greater appreciation of the West Coast in 1825 than of Douglas himself, and finally that Alexander Mackenzie's journals show primarily the young North West Company partner searching for new trading domains and only by inference his attempts to overthrow Simon MacTavish's Montreal hierarchy. It would take a vivid imagination, and sources of information other than Mackenzie's own journals, to conceive of this Scot as a romantic swashbuckler dedicated to the extension of the British Empire and as one able to rise to great heights as orator and fighter in protection of his troublesome band of voyageurs and their great destiny.

In his oppressively-titled biography, *The Magnificent Adventures of Alexander Mackenzie*, Philip Vail gives the reader just such a romanticized portrait.

Vail does not attempt to hide behind the guise of biographical novelist, but gives a factual and adventurous account of Mackenzie's boyhood in the Hebrides, the years in Montreal as a clerk for the North West Company and, of course, a detailed account of Mackenzie's exploration of the Mackenzie River and the cross-country journey to Bella Coola. The exploratory trips form the basis of this book and for his information the author is dependent solely upon Mackenzie's own journals, for he makes no reference to other sources in his short bibliography. He has, by exaggerating fact, ignoring fact and, at times, by changing the wording of the journals themselves, created an heroic character overshadowing the fur trader who monotonously recorded every movement of the party from his position as Bourgeois in the middle of their enormous canoe.

In reading *The Magnificent Adventures of Alexander Mackenzie* one tries naturally to assess the literary value of the biography and to determine the type of reader to whom it is directed. At times Vail succeeds in cutting through the heavy prose of the published journals and recreates some of the excitement that must have attended these great achievements. Particularly is this true in Vail's rendering of Mackenzie's party tracking its cumbersome canoe through the Peace River canyon, and later in his description of the explorer hacking a trail over the elusive Continental Divide. But even at the most dramatic moments his style, a monotonous series of short declarative sentences, though it destroys the verbosity of the original, replaces the latter with a manner hardly less palatable.

As biography this book cannot satisfy the historian who wants facts and footnotes, nor the casual reader of biography who would balk at the style, nor in its romanticizing could it hope to gain new popularity for Mackenzie through the medium of fiction, which the book does not and cannot claim to be. The style and approach seems to be aimed at juvenile readers who might be attracted by Vail's muscular portrayal of Mackenzie as a Canadian hero of the wilderness, but it can hardly be satisfying to the serious reader conscious of the paucity of good research and writing on this enigmatic Canadian explorer and fur trader.

MAURICE HODGSON

RICHARDSON'S LETTERS

Selected Letters of Samuel Richardson, edited with an introduction by John Carroll. Oxford.

SAMUEL RICHARDSON was an extraordinary character. By profession he was a printer, skilled, industrious, and successful. By avocation (and also by accident) he was a novelist, who produced three lengthy and slow-moving epistolary works totalling nineteen volumes — *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded* (1740), *Clarissa; or the History of a Young Lady* (1747-48), and the *History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753). In his spare time he visited with adoring but highly virtuous ladies and carried on a massive correspondence with a host of friends and acquaintances, male and female. A six-volume edition of selected letters, edited by Mrs. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, was published in 1804. Today his novels are seldom read except by those students who are required to do so by those scholars who recognize the genuine contribution that Richardson

made to the development of English fiction. As for the letters, they have gathered much dust since the days of the good Mrs. Barbauld. It is to the letters that Professor John Carroll, of the University of Toronto, has addressed himself, with a rare combination of personal courage, scholarly patience, and editorial skill.

The task was a formidable one. Though Richardson, before his death, had carefully collected and edited his letters, many went through the auctioneers' hands in the early nineteenth century. Six folio volumes of them eventually found rest in the Victoria and Albert Museum, but others were scattered far and wide and are now in numerous libraries as well as in the hands of private collectors. With the persistency of a good academic Sherlock Holmes, Professor Carroll has traced nearly all of them down. But faced with an unwieldly mass of material, he decided not to follow in the footsteps of Mrs. Barbauld. Rather, he selected for publication only "those letters or passages from letters that bear on the themes and characters of Richardson's novels, on his craftsmanship and literary judgments, and on his own personality."

The decision was a wise one. Richardson was not one of the great letter writers of his age. Not only does he lack the brilliance, charm, wit, and incisiveness of Walpole or Gray; he is also, all too often, pompous, dull, repulsively pious, and boringly self-centred. As Boswell records it: "Richardson had little conversation, except about his own works, of which Sir Joshua Reynolds said he was always willing to talk, and glad to have them introduced. Johnson, when he carried Mr. Langton to him, professed that he could bring him out into conversation, and used this allusive expression, 'Sir, I can make him *rear*.' But he failed. . . ."

Yet Professor Carroll should be richly rewarded for his efforts by the thanks, spoken or unspoken, of all students of the novel and of the eighteenth century. His introduction is excellent, and all of the letters he has so carefully chosen, 128 in all, give clear evidence of meticulous scholarship and wise selection.

S. E. READ

BRITISH IN THE BUSH

ANNA BROWNELL JAMESON, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*; Selections Edited by Clara Thomas. New Canadian Library, McClelland & Stewart. $1.50.

MRS. JAMESON'S *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* has been mentioned more often than read during the past hundred years. Few Canadian antiquities have achieved such celebrity on piece-meal acquaintance. Soon after its first appearance in three volumes (London, 1838), the book was abridged, and it is still printed with numerous omissions.

In 1852, a "new" London edition, entitled *Sketches in Canada, and Rambles Among the Red Men* was put on the market, chiefly to record, as the Preface stated, Mrs. Jameson's "adventures and sketches of character and scenery among the Red-skins." This emphasis was strengthened by the dropping out of "all that was of a merely transient or merely personal nature, or obsolete in politics or criticism." Canadian editions in the twentieth century have been prepared with a finer sense of Mrs. Jameson's achievement, but still with omissions of

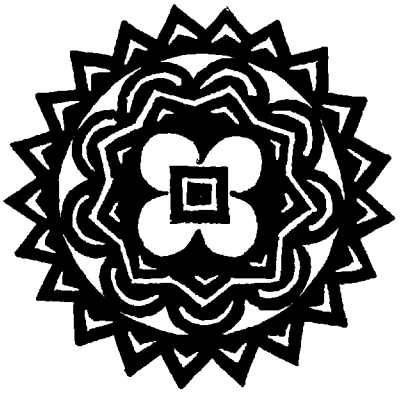
"personal" items. The whole thousand-plus pages of the original can be found only in library treasure-rooms.

Mrs. Clara Thomas has joined the other Canadian editors in aiming to keep alive the winter and summer *sketches* of Upper Canada in 1836 and 1837, rather than the literary *studies* which occupy much space in the original. This is evident although Mrs. Thomas's own interests are more literary than historical. Her selection of sketches may be part of a larger pattern involving her forthcoming biographical volume on Mrs. Jameson; and her choices may be governed by insights into the character, sensibility and intelligence of the author, which not even the whole of *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* could display.

It is well known, for example, that Mrs. Jameson was persistent in feminist propaganda; yet Mrs. Thomas has kept to a minimum the author's needling of readers about the unhappy position of women in genteel or pioneer society. On the other hand, Mrs. Jameson's concern for particular women like Mrs. MacMurray and Mrs. Johnston — shown in the printed sketches — gets to the heart of the matter, and the heart of Mrs. Jameson. She said, elsewhere in *Winter Studies*, that she could not think the supposed interest of society in general to be more important than the "honour, rights, or happiness of any individual, though the meanest." A man attracted her also, if he was individual, in the sense of "self-educated, and what are called originals".

Like so many of the hundred-odd British authors who published books about Upper Canada in her time, Mrs. Jameson was here inspired or provoked to write in her liveliest and most anecdotal vein. Her description of Colonel Talbot and his barony is a celebrated example. "Few European women of refined and civilized habits" had gone as far as she to invite adventures for a book. She was as happy in showing off her detailed knowledge of Indian life, acquired on an almost reckless trip to the top of Lake Huron. To this day she can be quoted beside Schoolcraft for evidence regarding the Chippewas. Some of this, unfortunately, had to be cut from the NCL edition; one sympathizes with the 1852 editor's preference for rambles "among the Redskins," and regrets the dropping of sections on Indian folklore and songs.

Mrs. Thomas has not lost this noted British author in the bush, but the exigencies of editing have left few reminders that Mrs. Jameson had gone as deep into the world of continental art and literature as she had gone far into the Old Northwest. She read and wrote in darkest Toronto with the same flair for pointed anecdote that gives life to her Indians. It was her secret that books and personal adventures are all one world. Travel books were obviously sources of informa-



tion for her, but Goethe, Byron and Sternberg were also in her personal scene. There is not much of this characteristic blend in this new volume, but one is happy to find Mrs. Jameson writing, and the editor including, the remark that Dr. "Johnson knew absolutely nothing about women."

CARL F. KLINCK

A PUSH FROM THE AUTHOR

JAMES REANEY, *The Boy with an R in His Hand.* Macmillan. $3.95.

ON MAY 18, 1826, members of Upper Canada's Family Compact were staggered and outraged by a violent, semi-slanderous attack from the printing-press of a red-wigged little Scot of volatile temperament and passionate Radical convictions. William Lyon Mackenzie was celebrating the second anniversary of his *Colonial Advocate* with a wicked salvo at the social pretensions and private lives of his favourite political targets. The next *Advocate* renewed the personal onslaughts. Soon afterward a band of young Tories spent a bright summer evening wrecking Mackenzie's press, mutilating or scattering some of his type, and dumping the rest into Lake Ontario, while Mr. Justice the Honourable William Allan, unmoved by the appeals of Mackenzie's son and a press apprentice, looked on smiling. The consequence was ironic: Mackenzie had been in financial straits, and the *Advocate* would almost certainly have gone under had a court not felt compelled, despite the power and prestige of the defendants' families, to grant substantial damages for such open vandalism.

A fictional witness of the printing-press riot is the hero of James Reaney's *The Boy with an R in His Hand,* a novel for children portraying York in the year leading up to the Tories' mistakes and less successfully telling a story of two young brothers whose differences symbolize, from a partisan viewpoint, the differences separating Tory from liberal and the elite of Upper Canada from the hoi polloi. As the story opens in the summer of 1825, Alec Buchanan, imaginative, humane and courageous, and his elder brother Joel, timid, orthodox, and anxious to please — an incipient Tory, have been sent from the Red River Settlement to their Tory uncle in York. Toronto's quaint little forebear is rapidly sketched in the opening pages as the boys make their way from the wharf to their uncle's mansion past such scenes of local colour as the public execution of a cow thief. Thereafter Joel dutifully fades into his uncle's drawing-room and office and the background of the story, while Alec, banished from the polite world as much for his free, defiant spirit as his youth, befriends servants, pigs, a caged bear, and Mackenzie's boy apprentices — all equally uncouth, according to his uncle. Ultimately and rather implausibly, Alec is apprenticed to Mackenzie and the stage is set for a dramatic contrast of Joel the Compact tool and Alec the instinctive moralist on the day the *Advocate*'s press is demolished. Alec retrieves one piece of type from the lake — an R of the cast branded on the hand of a servant girl wrongly convicted of robbing Bishop Strachan and figuratively branded on the forehead of Radical Reformer Mackenzie.

As history brought to literary life the book is exciting and informative. The almost black-and-white treatment of political and social issues is defensible, for the stupid, arrogant tyrannies of many Compact members are amply documented. And despite Mackenzie's sporadic descents to yellow-press tactics, which Reaney does not omit from a generally very favourable portrait, the fire-eating editor usually championed good causes.

As a series of pictures the book is also often effective, for the author has an artist's eye for essential detail. And Alec shares some of his author's picturesque imagination:

> . . . the elegant windows seemed, to Alec, to frown at them.
>
> "Where have you been?" said the study window on the left. "And who have you been with?" asked the drawing-room window on the right.

But as a novel the book somehow fails to jell. Mr. Reaney seems more interested in history and printing-presses than he is in his plot or his characters. Many of the fictitious events are merely reported in stark narrator's sentences or in letters — both of which methods preclude immediacy. And there is more violence than credibility in both characterization and unhistorical action. A real Tory, Mr. Jarvis, whose pastime it was to ride down Mackenzie's apprentices, appears here as a faceless, nearly-incredible Brom Bones; a fictitious villain, earless, menacing Mr. Jakes, is somewhat less human than the bear who is his nemesis. Moreover, because of the heresy that children must be written down to (a few stiltednesses support the possibility) or because he is more skilled at dramatic characterization than the prose-fiction varieties, Mr. Reaney is prone to spell out too much. Of Uncle John we are told, ". . . his voice was growly, and his mouth was always twisting into a scornful smile at those he spoke to, as if he didn't think they were his equals."

I suspect that children will read the book once with some interest, but remember it as rather highly-coloured and contrived. At the book's beginning Alec falls into the harbour. At the end he's over the side again, "unbelievable as it was." Unbelievable that he should fall, yes, but this time he didn't. In a fit of artistic tidiness, Mr. Reaney pushed him.

FRANCES FRAZER

A SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

The Oxford Movement. Edited by E. R. Fairweather. Oxford. $7.75.

IN THE RETROSPECT of over a hundred years, the Oxford Movement can be seen to have brought to the whole Anglican communion a spiritual renewal which was far more than a mere revival of antiquarian rituals or outdated dogmas. Indeed, it would not be too much to say that the Oxford Movement strengthened the Church at a time when it seemed dependent on either the dry rationalities of William Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* or the narrow individualistic fundamentalism of the Evangelicals, neither of which was to survive the questioning spirit of the post-Darwinian era. But as Professor Fairweather, in his introduction to this selection from the writings of six of the leading members of the Oxford Movement, rightly if somewhat grandiloquently states: "Over against the aridities of empiricist philosophy and

Utilitarian ethics, the Tractarians sought a renewed awareness of transcendent mystery and a renewed sense of human life as guided by a transcendent power to a transcendent goal."

The Oxford Movement was part of a much wider reaction to the heady enthusiasms touched off by the French Revolution. It was not merely in the political field that many men distrusted the attempt to build the Kingdom of Man by legislative decree. Newman's sermons from the most influential pulpit in England expressed doubt about the usurpations of reason, while W. G. Ward held to supernaturalistic conceptions of human life which were distinctly foreign even to the majority of his fellow Anglicans. Yet it is significant that it was Keble, the most loveable of them all, who raised in his Assize sermon — here given in full — the political challenge, which brought up the whole issue of Church and State. National apostasy was the prospect which Keble feared if the Church of England allowed its Erastian tradition to condone the reforming, even revolutionary, measures taken by the secular government. Against the opportunism of contemporary opinions, the Oxford Movement turned men's attention back to what they believed to be far more secure foundations, both for the Church and for the individual. The apostolic succession and the apostolic tradition were the bases on which the English Church had stood firm throughout all the storms of the Reformation and which were now being seduced by a to date. The Church, they affirmed, was "liberalism" which sought only to be up not a voluntary society set in a pluralistic community, but rather a divine body possessing an intrinsic authority which the State had not given and which therefore it could not take away. The task of this divine body was to re-enact God's divine economy by showing forth His saving and self-revealing action through the life of the Church and the sacraments. The Babylonian captivity of the English Church must be resisted and a return made to the life-giving doctrines on which the Church had been based for so long. Tradition was therefore not to be embraced in a reactionary and backward-looking manner, but rather to be held on to as the guiding star of surety in a world in pursuit of superficial and transient novelty. Keble's sermon on "Primitive Tradition" expresses eloquently the positive reply to the relativistic and liberal questioning of so many doubters.

It was of course unfortunate that the Oxford Movement had so little knowledge of other Protestant communions that its members were all too easily led to believe that only by embracing the absolutist claims of Rome could their position be given final authority. In fact this is not the case. Anglo-Catholicism has proved its intrinsic validity, especially in the non-Erastian circumstances of the British dominions or the U.S.A., using many of the arguments here cited by Newman and Ward before their conversion. Professor Fairweather is right, however, to give generous excerpts from their writings on the need for relating morals to theology, because holiness of life through continued dedication to a life of prayer and sacrifice became and remained the guiding star of the Tractarians' preaching. Their emphasis on the Church as the Body of Jesus Christ, and the continuing need to discern the Lord's Body through the sacraments is here well

brought out.

Perhaps, however, it was the human qualities of the Tractarians, rather than their writings, which led to their great influence. They all originated from a close-knit, almost suffocating, clerical society, in which, as Geoffrey Faber has pointed out, psychological trends and pressures were very evident. Yet their integrity, their high-minded seriousness and their earnest determination to uphold their principles make them attractive figures still. Professor Fairweather's selection from their extensive writings now enables us to know them better.

JOHN S. CONWAY

POPULARIZED MISINFORMATION

JOSEPH H. WHERRY, *The Totem Pole Indians.* Longmans. $8.25.

THIS IS AN example of popularised misinformation.

"Anthropologists have reliably reported that this tribe erected totem poles 1000 years ago."

"This clan . . . . whose origins trace back to the Biblical flood."

". . . Petroglyphs predate totem poles because of the comparatively unskilled formative technique."

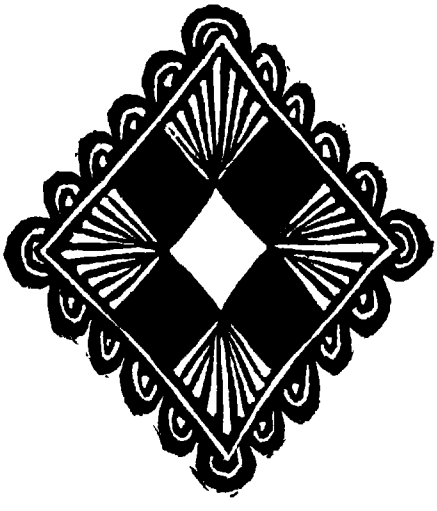
The writing varies from vulgar: "What made these Maritime aborigines tick?" to unintelligible: "a materialistic society tempered by an aboriginal transcendentalism, this culture could not be static. Its very nature encouraged daring recklessness."

It is, perhaps above all, silly. "Superstition, common among aboriginal cultures, combined with an abstract religious concept was destined to produce a vast mythology." "The developmental stages of mystical devolution to the transformable supernatural beings might have been reversed." "The myth of the cannibal giants lives on in the modern timber giant the Susquatch. Much evidence links these subhuman upright walking forest giants to the abominable snow man of India, Nepal, and Tibet."

There are photographs of various sorts, and crude line drawings.

It is annoying to think that a book of this inferior quality will probably be seen by a wider public than that small gem of ethnographic writing by Philip Drucker, *Indians of the North West Coast*, although it costs four times as much as the Drucker book. ($8.25 to $1.95).

AUDREY HAWTHORN



CANADIAN LITERATURE - 1965

A CHECKLIST EDITED BY RITA BUTTERFIELD

ENGLISH-CANADIAN LITERATURE

compiled by Rita Butterfield

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