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# CANADIAN LITERATURE No. 30

*Autumn, 1966*

## A SALUTE TO EARLE BIRNEY

### Articles
BY A. J. M. SMITH, MILTON WILSON, EARLE BIRNEY, DOROTHY LIVESAY

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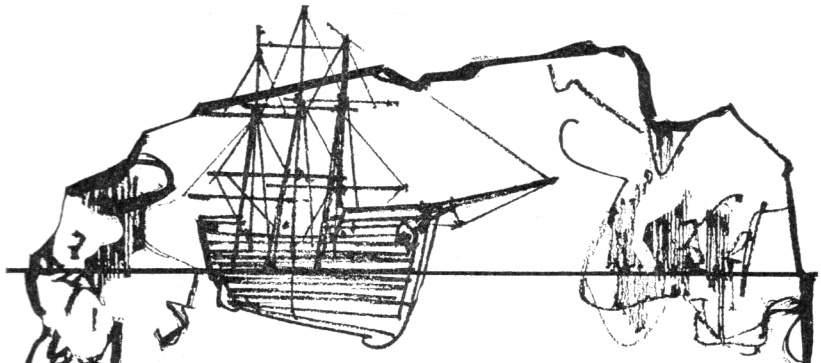
A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW



## RASMUSSEN SPEAKS

FROM A VERSE PLAY "Terror and Erebus"

BY GWENDOLYN MACEWEN

Now the great passage is open,
the one you dreamed of, Franklin,
and great white ships sail through it
over and over again,
easily, lightly,
packed with cargo and carefree men...
it is as though no one had to prove it
because the passage was always there...
or...is it that the way was invented,
Franklin...?
that you cracked the passage open
with the forces of sheer certainty,
or is it that you cannot know,
can never know,
where the passage lies
between conjecture and reality...

UBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF
RITISH COLUMBIA, VANCOUVER 8

# CANADIAN LITERATURE

ITTERATURE CANADIENNE

UMBER 30, AUTUMN 1966

*Quarterly of Criticism and eview Edited by George Woodcock.*

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RINTED IN CANADA BY MORRISS
RINTING COMPANY LTD., VICTORIA

ndexed in the
*anadian Periodical Index.*

uthorized as second class mail by
e Post Office Department, Ottawa,
d for payment of postage in cash.

*nsolicited manuscripts will not be turned unless accompanied by amped, addressed envelopes.*

ddress subscriptions to Circulation epartment, *Canadian Literature*, ublications Centre, University of ritish Columbia, Vancouver 8, B.C., anada.

UBSCRIPTION $3.50 A YEAR
UTSIDE CANADA $4.00 A YEAR

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editorial

# GEORGE KUTHAN

IT IS WITH GREAT REGRET that we publish *Canadian Literature* for the first time without its customary decorations. The starkness of our pages in this issue betokens the ending, through the death of our decorative artist, George Kuthan, of an association which lasted unbroken, and with a respect which we hope was mutual, for more than seven years, the whole life of the magazine. During that time George Kuthan never failed for a single issue to produce new and interesting designs which often provided their own quietly ironic comments on what our writers had to say.

Born in Czechoslovakia, George Kuthan began his studies at the University of Prague, and left his native country for good when the Germans occupied it in 1939. He spent several years working in Paris, and in 1950 he came to Canada, where he lived until his untimely death last August. As those who have seen his exhibitions in Canada, the United States or Europe will remember, he was a graphic artist of great lyrical sensitivity, passionately concerned with the interpretation of natural forms, and extremely knowledgeable in the graphic traditions of the past — those of the Oriental miniaturists and of the mediaeval European woodcut-makers in particular. His book, *Vancouver, Sights and Insights*, for which Donald Stainsby wrote the text, was a great revelation of his virtuosity as an impressionistic draughtsman. To the life of Canada he made his own distinctive contribution, and from the surface of the Canadian land he received in turn much of his inspiration in later years.

We know that our readers will join in our sadness that his designs will no longer be there to decorate our pages, and that only our esteem and affection will remain in place of the artist who worked with us from the beginning, conscientiously and harmoniously.

# A UNIFIED PERSONALITY

## *Birney's Poems*

*A. J. M. Smith*

WITH THE PUBLICATION this spring of Earle Birney's *Selected Poems*, a generous and representative gathering of a hundred poems, many of them long and ambitious and all of them interesting, we have an opportunity to sum up a long, fruitful, and varied poetic career — a career which this volume indicates has grown steadily in significance. The poems from Birney's two most recent books, *Ice, Cod, Bell or Stone* and *Near False Creek Mouth*, have a power and mastery that was foreshadowed but only occasionally attained in *David* or *Trial of a City*, the works on which Birney's reputation has been founded and established. Though Birney has written two novels, edited an anthology, and published a good many scholarly articles, including an immensely valuable analysis of the poetic reputation of E. J. Pratt, it is as a poet, a teacher of poetry, and a publicist for poetry that he is chiefly and rightly known; and it is his poetry only that I propose to examine here.

I don't remember when I first read a poem by Earle Birney. I know that when Frank Scott and I were preparing the manuscript for *New Provinces* in 1935 we had not heard of him, though we soon began to read the pieces that appeared in *The Canadian Forum*, of which Birney was literary editor from 1936 to 1940. It was not, however, until the publication of *David & Other Poems* in 1942 that it became apparent that a new poet had arrived, a poet who gave promise of being a worthy continuer of the tradition of heroic narrative established by Pratt and perhaps the precursor of a new school of modern poetry in Canada. Now a quarter of a century later and with the present volume before us we can see that these hopeful anticipations have been amply fulfilled. Birney's career — even more certainly than F. R. Scott's, which I hope to examine in these pages in a subsequent essay — has been analagous to the development of modern Canadian poetry as a whole. Both poets have been leaders in some respects and

followers in others. From the beginning both have been adventurous and experimental, and if occasionally they have seemed to be groping or merely wandering, the occasions were remarkably few. Scott, in spite of his liberal and leftist point of view, has been mainly traditional, while his experiments have been in the direction of new and avant-garde techniques. Birney, who is also politically and socially of the left, takes more naturally to the experimental, though in his case, parodoxically enough, his most successful experiment is the experiment of being traditional. Some of the best of his earlier poems — "Slug in Woods", "Anglo-Saxon Street", "Mappemounde", and parts of "Damnation of Vancouver" as well — while not mere pastiche or parody, certainly owe their success to the skill with which the poet has utilized his scholarly knowledge of *Beowulf*, Chaucer, *Piers Plowman*, and Hopkins. To the advantages of a western mountain childhood and hard work as a manual labourer and logger in his youth, Birney added those of a thorough academic training in English literature, culminating in a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto in 1936. With the exception of some years spent in study and travel abroad on various fellowships and grants, all his life since the end of the second world war has been spent as a university teacher of literature and creative writing. The rather touchy remarks about academic critics and anthologists in the "Preface" to *Selected Poems* should not be taken too seriously. They are partly confessional, for Birney has been both. A few of the poems (I shall cite instances later) do suffer because the literary sophistication of the technique calls attention to itself in a way that is distracting rather than expressive. But this does not happen very often, and in any case it is the price that has to be paid for the successes.

THERE ARE SOME THINGS about *Selected Poems* I do not like, and my praise of the poet would be less convincing if I did not say what they were. Let me do so at once. Some of them, of course, are not the poet's responsibility. The make-up of the book, like so many of McClelland & Stewart's recent volumes of verse, seems to be pretentious and flamboyant, while the illustrations, though good in themsleves, seem to be competing with the poems. Poetry ought to be left to speak for itself.

For me the same criticism applies — and here the poet himself must bear the responsibility — to the typographical gimmicks and punctuational nudity imposed

on many fine straightforward clear poems that when originally published made their point convincingly and movingly without the promptings of visual aids. In his "Preface" Birney is facetiously indignant at the expense of provincial journalists and conservative critics who have registered a similar objection. Actually it is beside the point to cite the practice of E. E. Cummings. Cummings is a unique, highly special, and absolutely consistent poetic individual. If his influence is to be felt in more than a superficial way it has to be felt in the blood. It will probably be expressed by nothing more showy than the slightly unusual placing of an adverb or the curious elongation of a cadence. To put on another man's hat doesn't make you that man. Birney is so good a poet when he is himself that he has no need to seek a fashionable "modernism" in typographical eccenticity. Poems like "Appeal to a Lady with a Diaper" and "Mammorial Stunzas for Aimee Simple McFarcin", light and satirical as they are, have been made distractingly difficult to read. The visual-aids have become handicaps. The eye has to run an obstacle race.

These are practical and specific objections. I realize perfectly well that there are many typographically expressive passages that are not confusing or difficult at all. Here is a passage from "Letter to a Conceivable Great-Grandson":

Now we've got automation Our
letters
are set to de
liver them
selves
fast
er than
meteors Soon we'll be
sending wholemanuscriptsprepaidtothe
planets
But what's crazy for real is
we're so damned busy no
body has time to de what
cipher
language it is we're iting
r
w

This is clear enough, though a little inconvenient to read; and its purpose is clear enough — to make the reader experience, physically and mentally, just what the poem is saying at this particular point, i.e. that we write and transmit so fast

that what we write is inconvenient to read. This of course is the modern dogma that Wyndham Lewis and Yvor Winters have attacked — that to express confusion we must write confusedly. My objection to this kind of thing is not that it lacks clarity but that it lacks point: the device is so childishly obvious. However, if as Birney says in his "Preface" these devices are spells to appease an intermittent madman within him let us be grateful and turn to the true poet and the true poems.

SELECTED POEMS is divided into six sections. The first, made up mainly of later poems, is entitled after one of the best pieces in it, "The Bear on the Delhi Road", and is a record of Birney's travels westward from British Columbia to the South Seas, Japan, India, Thailand and back through Greece, Spain, England, and the Arctic home again. These poems, with one or two not very important exceptions, date from the late fifties and the early sixties, and include half a dozen pieces that are among the best things Birney ever wrote — "A Walk in Kyoto", "Bangkok Boy", "The Bear on the Delhi Road", and best of all, the magnificent "El Greco: *Espolio*." Here too is one of the not-so-many light, satirical, gently comic poems that is completely successful — successful I think because the satire here directed against the world of tourism and public relations is directed, even if ever so gently, against the poet himself too. This is the delightful "Twenty-Third Flight" that begins —

> Lo as I pause in the alien vale of the airport
> fearing ahead the official ambush
> a voice languorous and strange as these winds
> of Oahu
> calleth my name and I turn to be quoited in
> orchids
> and amazed with a kiss perfumed and soft as
> the *lei*.
> Straight from a travel poster thou steppest
> thy arms like mangoes for smoothness
> O implausible shepherdess for this one aging sheep —

and continues to the tragi-comic conclusion of the poet so welcomed being nevertheless soon ruthlessly abandoned: "Nay, but thou stayest not?" —

O nubile goddess of the Kaiser Training
Programme
is it possible that tonight my cup runneth
not over
and that I shall sit in the still pastures of
the lobby
while thou leadest another old ram in garlands
past me . . .
And that I shall lie by the waters of Waikiki
and want?

This is my favourite among the comic poems, but there are many others almost equally seductive, some satirical, some whimsical, and some with a wry seriousness, as in the brilliant series of Mexican poems. I don't know where you'll find anything better in modern North American poetry than the combination of wit and sentiment, pertinent observation and auricular, almost ventriloquistic precision than "Sinaloa", "Ajijic", or "Six-Sided Square: Actopan".

These last poems are in the second section of the book, which is headed "Trans-Americana." The section begins with a series of satirical pieces on certain unlovely aspects of "civilization" north of the Rio Grande. Most of these, when compared with the charm and sureness of "Twenty-Third Flight," seem weak or forced — a defect which may be partly due to the arbitrary typographical eccentricity that has been imposed upon them since they first appeared in earlier volumes.

When we come, however, to the poems on Mexico, Peru, and the Caribbean islands all such cavilling falls away. These are not only among the finest of Birney's poems; they are just simply and plainly, *man, the finest*. The new style that some of our West Coast poets learned from Olson, Creeley, and the Black Mountain writers (and from Birney himself, I suspect) has here been put to uses that transcend the personal and the purely emotional. Poems like "Cartagena de Indias", "Machu Picchu", "Letter to a Cuzco Priest", "Barranquilla Bridge", and others sum up a whole ancient and alien civilization and bring it — and our own — under the scrutiny of a sharp, sensitive, and discursive mind.

When these poems are compared with even the best of the poems of the early forties that make up the next part of the book ("War Winters") we see how great and how sure has been Birney's development as a craftsman in poetry, a development which depends upon and expresses a development in intellectual and emotional maturity. Perhaps this growth in maturity is the achievement of

originality, the setting free of a unique poetic personality that after years of work has at last found itself and its true voice. This is not to be taken to mean that such well-known early poems as "Hands", "Vancouver Lights", and "Dusk on the Bay" are not sincere and accurate expressions of what a Canadian felt in the dark days of 1939 and 1940. But it is easier to see now than it was then that they speak with the voices of Auden, Rex Warner, or Stephen Spender, as we feel they might have recalled Rupert Brooke had they been written in 1915. They are true to their time rather than to a unique person, and they are not, therefore, without their own kind of historical significance. They do certainly present an attractive contrast to the war poems of some of the aged survivors of an older generation. Even today only a few poems written later in the war — Douglas LePan's poems of the Italian campaign and Pratt's *Behind the Log* — stand higher than these as interpretations of Canada's war.

In the next section, "Canada: Case History", Birney has grouped those poems, some of them satirical but most of them serious and, indeed, "devout", in which he has come to grips with the problem of what it means to be Canadian and what it is to be a Canadian poet. Viewed as a problem this theme has become something of a nervous obsession, and Birney, like Scott and some others, is at his best when he approaches it obliquely and allows his hawk's eye and his adder's tongue to do the work for him. Everything that is really important is conveyed in the imagery and the diction. Cadences like

> the moon carved unknown totems
> out of the lakeshore
> owls in the beardusky woods derided him
> moosehorned cedars circled his swamps
> and tossed
> their antlers up to the stars . . .
> *
> a marten moving like quicksilver
> scouted us . . .
> *
> the veins of bald glaciers blackened
> white pulses of waterfalls
> beat in the bare rockflesh

— to give but three brief samples, are simple, sensuous, and passionate. Such indigenous music and imagery give to poems like "David", "Bushed", and the poems of transcontinental air travel, "North Star West", and "Way to the West",

a richness that Birney and a few other poets rooted in the native tradition seem to have derived from the earth and air of Canada itself. This is a northern style, and an excellent one. Our sense of its validity is increased when we realize that it is not peculiar to Birney but is a common heritage. Here are some examples chosen almost at random from *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*:

No more the slow stream spreading clear in
    sunlight
Lacing the swamp with intricate shining
    channels . . .
        the mica glint in the sliding water
The bright winged flies and the muskrat gone
    like a shadow . . .
(Floris McLaren)

*

The sachem voices cloven out of the hills
spat teeth in the sea like nails . . .
(Alfred Bailey)

*

On the North Shore a reptile lay asleep . . .
(E. J. Pratt)

*

Sinuous, red as copper snakes,
Sharp-headed serpents, made of light,
Glided, and hid themselves in night. . . .
(Isabella Crawford)

This last passage, and the poem from which I have taken it, shows better than all the explanations in the "Preface" why Birney is impatient with commas and rhyme.

Of course not every one of the northern poems has the linguistic rightness of "Bushed" or "David". Sometimes his Eng. Lit. sophistication betrays Birney into an overstrained conceit, as for example in these lines from "Page of Gaspé" —

Between over-generous margins
between the unprinted river and the
    rubbed-out peaks
run the human typelines . . .
farms split to sentences by editor death
fattening subtitles of rockfence . . .

> In this repetitive prose a sawmill
> sets quotemarks after the stone windmill's
> period . . .

or leads him to indulge in a sort of metrical plagiarism. "North of Superior" is filled with more or less erudite allusions to Scyldings, Excalibur, the Green Knight, the Den of Error, Azazel, and Roland, and the metre which recalls Pound's "Seafarer" in the first stanza reminds us of "Evangeline" in the second.

But these are occasional failures. To risk making them is the price every alive and eager artist must pay for his successes. One such success is surely the fine reflective poem "November Walk Near False Creek Mouth", the major work in Birney's last collection of new poems. It is dated "Vancouver 1961 — Ametlla, Spain 1963". "November Walk" is a rich meditative ode-like poem that gathers up the themes of the long series of descriptive, narrative, and reflective poems set in or near Vancouver from "Dusk on the Bay" and "Hands" to the present, and finally and on a much larger scale achieves what the poet had been groping for from the start of his career — an orientation of himself and his place and his time in terms that are both emotionally and rationally satisfying. This poem stands with the poems on Mexico and Peru as the high water mark of Birney's achievement up to now. Most encouraging of all, it gives promise of fine things still to come, for it shows the poet has found a style commensurate with the theme he has approached in many different ways in many different poems — man's effort as microcosm to come to terms with society, nature, and the macrocosm in the brief moment of allotted time. It is a promise that makes Birney's remark in the "Preface" — "In my next work I am thinking of pasting my poems on mobiles" — seem like the frivolous joke it's intended as.

The fifth section of *Selected Poems*, headed rather journalistically "Letter to a Conceivable Great-grandson", is the least successful part of the book. It is a somewhat haphazard collection of pieces on the threat of atomic extinction and the ironies and confusions inherent in the world of cold-war distrust and science-fiction posturing. The point of view is liberal and humane, and the sentiments are those which all decent men must share. The trouble with this sort of poetry is not something that can be laid at the door of an individual poet. The responsibility is elsewhere. These excellent sentiments are shared (and expressed) by politicians, statesmen, editorial writers, publicists and generals who find them no bar whatsoever to actions and votes that lead in the practical world to the aggravation and perpetuation of the crisis that they (hypocritically) and the liberal

poet (ineffectively) lament. The result is a widening of the gap between the poem's practical intention and the possible achievement of that end. Perhaps its most successful accomplishment is to demonstrate the futility of poetry as propaganda and drive home the corollary that action alone is adequate. This built-in demonstration of its own uselessness is what vitiates nearly all poetry that takes a bold stand against sin, and make the social poetry of Birney, and of Frank Scott too, the weakest part of their work. Two of the finest poems, however, in this part of the book are translations from Mao-Tse-Tung made with the assistance of Professor Ping-ti Ho, of The University of British Columbia and Peking University. Here the cleverness and strain of some of the poems and the echoes of Spender and Rex Warner in others give way to a simple direct style that is very moving indeed.

There is not much that needs to be said here about "Damnation of Vancouver," which forms the final section of this book. Originally published as *Trial of a City* in 1952, it was recognized as one of the most original and technically accomplished of Birney's poems, a *tour de force* of linguistic virtuosity and a satire as biting as anything in Canadian literature. It marked a distinct advance on the simple and unified narrative "David", mingling as it did the colloquial and the grand styles and the satirical and the affirmative modes. It thus anticipates the South and Central American poems of the sixties and fuses perfectly for the first time in Birney's work the two themes that Northrop Frye has named as central to Canadian poetry, "one a primarily comic theme of satire and exuberance, the other a primarily tragic theme of loneliness and terror."

For the new book Birney has revised what was originally a poem or masque and turned it into a play, complete with elaborate stage directions, descriptions of actions (business), and statements about the emotional implications and tones of voice to be got into some of the speeches. This is fine for the amateur actor and the inexperienced director, but the reader of poetry, I should think, would prefer to take his poetry neat. The development of the theme — which is the rape of the land of the Indians by the forces of commercial exploitation and "progress" — comes through more vividly in the original version.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE SAID in conclusion? Not very much surely. It is quite clear that Earle Birney is one of our major poets, perhaps since the death of E. J. Pratt our leading poet. Certainly he is the only rival of Pratt

as the creator of heroic narrative on a bold scale and, unlike Pratt, he has been consistently experimental. He has not always been successful, and he has sometimes aped styles and fashions that are unworthy of his real talents; but without a somewhat boyish spirit of adventure his successes would have been impossible too. The real triumph of *Selected Poems* is that it demonstrates so clearly and forcibly — as does indeed the whole of Birney's career — a unified personality of great charm, wit, strength, and generosity. I recall Louis MacNeice's description of the modern poet. I have quoted it before, but it fits the poet I have been discussing so well that I can think of no better words to end with. "I would have a poet able-bodied, fond of talking, a reader of the newspapers, capable of pity and laughter, informed in economics, appreciative of women, involved in personal relationships, actively interested in politics, susceptible to physical impressions . . ." This is the man I know, and the poet who rises out of this book.

# POET WITHOUT A MUSE

*Milton Wilson*

YOU MIGHT SUPPOSE that Earle Birney was too busy creating new poems to worry about collecting old ones. But for a writer whose old poems never stop pestering him to be transformed into new ones, the first task is hard to separate from the second. These *Selected Poems 1940-1966* aren't really a retrospective show; they challenge us to see Birney not so much plain as anew. I've read his work far too often in the past to make a fresh look very easy. What follows is at best a series of notes towards an unwritten revised portrait.

1

THE MORE BIRNEY you read, the less he looks like anybody else. His asymmetrical, bulky, unpredictable accumulation of poems gathers individuality as it grows. In context even the least distinguished members start to seem unlikely and even independent. For a poet so unmistakably of his own time and place, he is a surprisingly free agent. Certainly no influential contemporary has ever taught him how to iron out any local idiosyncrasies and unfashionable commonplaces that he preferred to keep. He has learned only what he wanted and at his own speed. Any inescapable influence of his generation that he found irrelevant (T. S. Eliot, for example), he has managed to escape completely. What gives his work distinctiveness, I suppose, is not so much its originality as its mixture of openness and stubbornness, of cleverness and provinciality, even the way it sometimes stumbles over its own reality, like that half-teachable bear the title of whose poem Birney sets at the entrance to this selection.

2

IF THE PROBLEM OF BIRNEY'S EDUCATION as a poet is worth a second glance, it ought to be a very careful and sceptical one, particularly now

that we have these *Selected Poems*, which throw doubt on many of the old Birney legends. Take the matter of chronology. The legend of Birney the late starter may have to give way to Birney the late publisher, depending on how seriously you take the vital statistics of date and place with which he has labelled his offspring, some of them — like "North of Superior" (labelled "1926-1945") and "Mammorial Stunzas for Aimee Simple McFarcin" (labelled "Toronto 1932-San Francisco 1934," but first printed in a *Prism* of 1959) — apparently twice-born or at least held in suspension for a long time. Did Birney draft a full-scale version of "North of Superior" in 1926 or did the 1945 version just incorporate a jotted image or two from the distant past? Was "Mammorial Stunzas", which seems so characteristic of Birney's linguistic high spirits in the fifties, entirely conceived in the early thirties or did the young Birney merely give Aimee her graffiti from Belshazzar's feast and a pun or two on her name and then wait twenty-five years for the right poem to go with them and justify publication? The dating, in this case, seems to insist on a finished product in 1934 (or as finished as a Birney poem ever allows itself to be — the format has been completely reshaped for 1966). At least I will now stop being puzzled as to why anyone would choose to write Aimee's definitive poem long after everyone else had forgotten her.

Then there's the legend of a poetic hiatus in the mid-fifties, of a Birney unproductive because he had maybe lost faith in poetry or humanity or even himself. But, from the new vantage point, any hiatus, if it existed, starts to look pretty small, the sort of thing that needed little more than a trip to Mexico for its cure. And anyway, if Birney can write and only publish twenty or twenty-five years later, who knows what piles of unpublished poems lie in his bottom drawer waiting for their public moment?

3

SIMPLE QUESTIONS OF CHRONOLOGY may be tricky, but the difficulties are multiplied for anyone who ventures to talk about Birney's poetic development and its relation to his poetic contemporaries. Most of the obvious half-truths that used to occur to me, I now find myself wanting to qualify almost as soon as I have uttered them. The staple product of conventional up-to-date British and American poetry can (very broadly indeed) be described as having moved from a metaphoric and allusive phase in the thirties and forties to a more linguistic — idiomatic and syntactic — one in the fifties and sixties, from the rhetoric of the image to the rhetoric of the voice. It's tempting to see Birney's own development following a similar course, with *Trial of a City* (1952) as the Janus-faced turning

point. Nobody could be surprised at the date of an elaborate editorial conceit like "Page of Gaspé" (1943-1950) or an even more elaborate tidal one like "The Ebb Begins from Dream" (1945-1947) — despite Birney's difficulty persuading editors to print the latter. Still, although they date, they aren't just dated. The slightly later "North Star West" (1951) seems more of a mere period piece, the sort of inventive and readable exercise in imagery that with luck you might be able to bring off in those days. Indeed, if I interpret a remark in Birney's Preface correctly, that may be part of the point of the poem. But, while some of Birney's poems could (and in fact did) fit quite snugly into the post-war world of *Penguin New Writing*, the philologist and verbal mimic didn't need to wait until *Trial of a City* to be released. Among the early poems for which obviously no retrospective indulgence at all is needed are "Anglo-Saxon Street", "Mappemounde" and "War Winters". Birney is amused by those critics who thought that to write the verse of these poems he had to be an imitator of Hopkins, instead of just a mere student and teacher of mediaeval literature. Although he is properly aware of the dangers in any academic-poetic alliance, his own academic niche could hardly have been a luckier choice.

4

BIRNEY'S VOCAL VIRTUOSITY hasn't seemed out of place in the more recent worlds of "articulate energy" and "projective verse", or on the p.a. circuit. But he can't be confused with the new virtuosos of breath and syntax, and his academic context certainly predates structural linguistics. There's also something a bit old-fashioned about his taste for "phonetic" spelling; it doesn't help much for Birney to write "damnear" or "billyuns," when nobody says "damn near" or "billions" anyway. I suppose that it all justifies itself, in that without it the "Billboards" and "Diaper" poems couldn't have been written at all, but they remind me a bit of the easy old days when all a writer had to do to present his readers with a recognizable substandard dialect was to spell their own standard dialect as they really pronounced it. Birney's phonetic technique works best with an exotic like the speaker in that delightful monologue "Sinaloa". The people who strike my ear most successfully, however, receive no such phonetic help, like the two-tongued Colombian bookseller in "Cartagena de Indias", which (if I had to make a choice) I would call his finest poem.

5

BIRNEY'S OTHER NOTATIONAL IDIOSYNCRASIES interest me far more than his spelling. Except for a few poems (notably "David", "The Damnation of Vancouver" and the translations) and a few special places within poems (mainly conversations), instead of using the conventional comma, semicolon, colon and period as rhetorical and syntactic signposts, he now relies mainly on spacing and lineation, and has revised his old poems accordingly.

He is not (so the Preface tells us) trying to facilitate immediate and accurate reading or comprehension by these changes; on the contrary, his aim is "the art of indefinitely delayed communication — Infinite Ambiguity." I don't know how seriously to take these last phrases; I do know that the new ambiguity is real enough, and in a few cases results in a new awkwardness. The chief problem is at the end of a line, where the distinction between endstopped and run-on lines is no longer visible, even when still relevant. One space starts to look like any other space, whether it breaks or ends a line. In "Captain Cook" when

> flashed him a South Sea shilling; like a javelin
> it split the old shop's air.

is revised to

> flashed him a South Sea shilling  like a javelin
> it split the old shop's air

the phrase at the end of the first line can now look backwards and forwards instead of just forwards. It wouldn't be hard to defend the ambiguity of *that* revised version. But in the same poem when

> First voyage, mouths burning
> from the weevils in the biscuits,
> charted New Zealand.

is revised to

> First voyage  mouths burning
> from the weevils in the biscuits
> charted New Zealand

the new syntactic ambiguity of the second line is a doubtful blessing indeed. It may be amusing, but the joke is at the expense of the poem.

The advantages and disadvantages of the new notation are worth weighing not just from passage to passage but from poem to poem. One fine poem that I much prefer to see in its old format is "Wake Island": the format in the *Selected Poems* seems more confusing than ambiguous. On the other hand, while

not a word of "Late Afternoon in Manzanilla" has been altered, the poem looks twice as good and comes off twice as well in its new format. I had no idea until now what an excellent poem it is.

Of course, the reaction against the clutter of punctuation in favour of the austerity of space Birney shares with a good many of his newer contemporaries. But he isn't always that austere (dashes, apostrophes, question marks, etc. are used), or, for that matter, consistent. In the new space-filled pages, even a few concluding periods still survive (I'm glad that he kept the one at the end of the "Diaper" poem), although, so far as I've noticed, only one anomalous comma (near the end of "Tavern by the Hellespont"):

> Between
> the individual tables couples uncoupled
> by the radio's decision, turn to their true oneness —

and here, although I like to think that it's an unexpected attempt to limit Infinite Ambiguity, it may be just an editorial or proofreading oversight, like the mislineation that disfigures "The Damnation of Vancouver" on page 176.

6

NOT THAT BIRNEY minds anomalies anyway. Some of his best poems are sports. No one could possibly anticipate them, he has shown no desire to repeat them, but once written they are an inevitable choice for his *Selected Poems*, no matter how stringent the selection. "St Valentine Is Past" is an obvious example. One of the few Birney poems that reads like a pure gift from his muse (he is not the sort of poet whom one usually credits with a muse), it has remained virtually unchanged since appearing in 1952's *Trial of a City and Other Verse.* In these ballad quatrains, while Theseus is off on his boar-hunt, and death seems mercifully at a distance, love finds late fulfilment under a shadowless sky. The lovers, like the age-old elements of earth and water, renew their long-past youthful fertility, and, for a day at least, seem to have Time on their side.

> While he is rooted rock she strikes
> to foam a loud cascade
> that drowns the jeering gullish wings
> far crashings in the glade
>
> No more while lizard minutes sleep
> around a cactus land

they'll blow their longings out like spores
that never grass the sand

No longer Time's a cloud of cliffs
unechoed by her Nile . . .

But these elemental lovers or late-coupling birds or aging Venus and Adonis (or whatever you wish to call them) are no match for dusty Time. And, as their elegiac, unkept sounds fade away, the pastness of St. Valentine's Day is sealed by the return of hunter, boar and pack.

And yet and yet a failing rod
strikes only dust from rock
while all the tune and time they breathe
is never kept in talk

Now water sky and rock are gone
the huddled woodbirds back
and hot upon the throbbing boar
comes Theseus and his pack

Although Birney, in his primitive or mediaeval or modern vein (sometimes all at once), is often a poet of myths, as such different poems as "Mappemounde", "Pachuchan Miners", "Takkakaw Falls", "Bushed", "Ballad of Mr Chubb" and, of course, "November Walk near False Creek Mouth" (with its updated characters from the sagas) make evident, nevertheless the sort of Renaissance myth-making that "St. Valentine is Past" does superbly seems to me totally uncharacteristic of him. If I had to choose a historical niche for him other than his own, the Age of Spenser would be my last choice.

And yet, in other respects, this is a typical Birney love poem, typical at least of his published range. In a recent article on Irving Layton, George Woodcock has praised our older love poets at the expense of their younger rivals. But Birney's love poems have been elegiac and autumnal from the start, or, when not elegiac, at least about love at a distance (e.g., "This Page My Pigeon" and, in a sense, "The Road to Nijmegen"). The very lovely "Under the Hazel Bough" (stylistically another anomaly, but quite different from "St. Valentine is Past") is destined to this end:

but no man sees
where the trout lie now
or what leans out
from the hazel bough

In some recent poems the autumnal erotic note takes on a January-and-May form. I'm thinking not just of "Haiku for a Young Waitress", "Curacao" and "Twenty-third Flight", but also of "On the Beach" (which I miss from these *Selected Poems*), where the no longer agile speaker cries:

> I will follow in a small trot only
> not whirling
> O girl from the seafoam
> have pity

and even of "A Walk in Kyoto", where sex somehow triumphs over "the ancient discretions of Zen".

## 7

PERHAPS ALL THAT I HAVE just been doing is applying to his love poems the cliché that Birney is in some respects a very Chaucerian kind of poet. The cliché deserves its wider application too. To begin with, there is his basic impersonality. You can learn practically nothing about him as a private person from his published poems. Self-revelation or self-analysis is not his business. And yet, like Chaucer, and increasingly with age, he enjoys offering us a kind of persona in the foreground: the innocent scapegoat of "Meeting of Strangers", the aging and garlanded ram of "Twenty-third Flight", the absurdly grateful initiate of "Cartagena de Indias". If one of these days somebody writes a Ph.D. thesis called *Birney's Irony*, one person on whom the irony will not be lost is Birney himself.

# TURVEY AND THE CRITICS

*Earle Birney*

THIS SUMMER I did some moonlighting as a nursing aide in the complicated midwifery occasioned by the rebirth of Private Thomas Turvey as hero of a musicale in Charlottetown's Confederation Theatre. In the course of these duties, sometimes baffling but always exhilarating, I mulled over a scrapbook of reviews of the original *Turvey, a military picaresque* (or "picturesque" as the *Monetary Times* had it). Although some of this material is now seventeen years old, it contains patterns of criticism which seem to me to have relevance still to the problems of the writer in Canada, and perhaps elsewhere. What follows is offered as delayed author's brooding on the judgments of these critics.

## 1. *Licence, poetic or critical*

ELSEWHERE[1] I have suggested that one of the peculiar and continuing bedevilments of the Canadian literary scene is a tendency for the poets and the prose fiction writers to exist, or to be expected to exist, in water-tight compartments. Our professors of literature take it in their stride that many "foreign" poets, of significance at least in their day, from Boccaccio, through Sidney, Nashe, Samuel Johnson, Goldsmith, Poe, to Hardy, Kipling, de la Mare, e. e. cummings, Lawrence and Graves, also made genuine contributions to the development of prose fiction; but when a Canadian poet offers a plain prose novel, the Canadian critic is stopped in his tracks. At least it seemed so to me in the months following the appearance of *Turvey* in 1949:

"The kind of book . . . that one would not expect a well-known poet to write . . . lurid language . . . decidedly earthy" muttered a Winnipeg reviewer, who did not exactly approve of earth. A Vancouver columnist, hitherto one of my strongest fans, confessed himself mystified that "a distinguished poet . . . should write a 288-page book about a burlesque soldier . . . especially when it's obvious

that barrack-room humour (or perhaps humour of any kind) is not his meat. I read it with vague embarrassment." Others, it's true, were more agreeably surprised, but sometimes their astonishment revealed an assumption that poets are by definition humourless, dull, and unrealistic creatures inhabiting the non-significant and depressed areas of writing.

It's an image of the Canadian poet which undoubtedly persists, a product of the categorical naïveté of our critics, and of an emphasis upon outmoded romantic poetry by the educators who first formed our critics, and of a tendency in our poets themselves to accept such an image and remain unventuresome in the exploration of their own gifts as writers. Layton and Purdy live content in the valley that Carman and Pratt settled, MacLennan and Callaghan in the next. The critics, on Black Mountain, watch both ways against cattle raids.

Indeed I think the image persists even into that extremely generous and thoughtful and friendly preface to the most recent edition of *Turvey*, written by the editor of *Canadian Literature* himself.[2] For it's plain that my friend George Woodcock expects novels by "lifetime poets" to be "strange, outlandish" and never "massive or major". Such writers, he says, "don't worry about plausible psychology, . . . the consistency of timetables, . . . the authenticity of medical symptoms. . . . The fact they are poets seems to license any break into fantasy." While Mr. Woodcock cites many convincing examples of his thesis, from the roster of poets' novels, I do feel that, in the case of *Turvey*, he has let his preconceptions about "lifetime poets" license him into a critical fantasy. Within the limitations of a satirical picaresque, I certainly had to worry, like any novelist, about "plausible psychology" when I wrote *Turvey*, and a great deal about accuracy of time both in relation to the acts of the characters and to the parallel events of the war; and I have not yet encountered a doctor, out of the good many who have spoken or written to me about this book, who pointed out a single instance of inaccuracy in the handling of medical symptoms. This is no great boast on my part, since most of Turvey's misadventures in this respect happened first to me, and it did not put any great strain on my traumatic memories to pass them on to him.

I am simply arguing for a point which Canadian criticism of this book (and Canadian criticism only) still compels me to make, obvious as it ought to be: that a poet, particularly a "lifetime" one, should be conceivably able to write in any form current in his literary milieu, and *be expected* to perform in it as well, at least, as the next man. If he tries and seems to fail, the critic should perhaps take a second and harder look at the poetry, but not offer an *argumentum ad poetam* about the prose.

## 2. *The Professor turned Novelist*

"A STRANGE BOOK to come from a professor of English", said the *London Free Press*. The same Vancouver critic who was embarrassed by a Canadian poet attempting a novel of barrack-room humour also "knew" the attempt was doomed from the start because it didn't "come from the level of the soldier . . . but from a highly literate, intelligent and polished professor of English." Here is another of our very Canadian critical shibboleths. I know, I know — I go about the country arguing that prolonged sojourn in Canadian universities, especially in English departments, sets monastic limits to a writer's experience, as well as turning his style to glue. The fact is, however, that most North American novelists who are now in their forties or fifties have taught English in universities. Consequently in the United States no one is surprised when a professor writes a novel, or prejudges it as untrue to experience, for if the professor has succeeded in treating "real" life with veracity, it may well be because he has lived for considerable periods in other groves than the academe, or indeed that he possesses an imagination particularly resistant to campus atrophy. In my case the world of the Canadian Active Army, in which I spent nearly four years of my life, at least kept me sufficiently on "the level of the soldier" to make what I wrote about it look accurate enough to pass unchallenged by the other old sweats (who have been, from the start, the chief readers and buyers of *Turvey*). On the other hand, the critics who found mine a "professor's book" have been, to my knowledge, precisely those who themselves had no personal experience of army life, and probably knew little of writer-professors either.

## 3. *If I had a daughter*

THE ALLEGED SEXUAL REVOLUTION has undoubtedly put a more knowing look on the face of Canadian writing in the two decades since *Turvey* was written. It is unlikely that I would become involved today, as I was in 1948, in prolonged and tangled correspondence with my Toronto publisher in order to preserve one letter out of the four in some of the words my characters needed to use.

Let us not have illusions, however. The sale of books in the smaller centres (where most Canadians live) is still very much determined by the reaction of the lone local newspaper reviewer, or a single wire-service journalist. From the treatment recently handed out to books like Vizinczey's *In Praise of Older Women*, and Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, I have no reason to think that the *Windsor Daily Star*, for example, would not again damn Turvey, surely a mild enough

kitten among sex-cats even in his period, as "a rogue of the dirtiest water". And it might be that Malcolm Ross, if he were reviewing my book for "Critically Speaking" in 1966, would still feel compelled, as in 1949, even while praising the "tang and veracity" of its "spoken language . . . fresh to Canadian writing", to add that it was "too fresh for Canadian radio. I shall not risk quotation. The humour is entirely physical — even intestinal . . . successful so long as he avoids the demands of meaning and morality. Once these demands break in, vulgarity is merely vulgar . . ." etc. Fun is fun, but as another C.B.C. reviewer put it, in that not so far-off year: "I will go so far as to say that it is the funniest book written by a Canadian that I have read . . . yet whether I should want my daughter to read it . . . if I had a daughter . . . is another question." Those hypothetical daughters still languish in the homes of some critics and some broadcasting governors.

Nor should Canadians be under the illusion that the prudish reviewer really helps to increase a book's sales. The "shekels" did not "roll in", as the Toronto *Varsity* perdicted, when *Turvey* was banned in 1949 by several Ontario libraries, and described in *Saturday Night* as exhibiting "a Rabelaisian reliance on the bodily functions and the Army's treatment of them". For the point which the critic (in this case Arnold Edinborough) made, was that the "Rabelaisian reliance" made much of the book "an unamusing affair". And when a reviewer tells you a novel is unamusing, he is influencing you not to buy it. It happened that *Turvey*, like many another "Rabelaisian" novel — I only wish it deserved the unintended compliment — eventually achieved a good though by no means spectacular sale in Canada, and continues to have a modest one, but all this has been in despite of the critical Grundies, not because of them. Even in its new form this summer as a musicale, *Turvey*, though it had better than average houses, never achieved the sell-out success of its companion offering, *Anne of Green Gables*, for the word went round in Prince Edward Island even before *Turvey* opened that the play's language was not at all like Anne's, indeed unlike anything suited for the ears of Island females. I've no doubt *Turvey* will survive the Puritan provincials, but I'm damned if this will be any reason for thanking them.

## 4. *Friend or enema?*

FROM MY MAIL, and from word of mouth, over seventeen years, I know now who *Turvey*'s friends have been. And they are exactly those whom many early reviewers predicted would reject him. They are the ex-army medicos, psychologists and psychiatrists whom the *Montreal Gazette*'s reviewer

predicted would be the most displeased. They are the rank and file who returned, and did not find, as did another critic, that the book was "a dismal synopsis of all the dreary conversations they had to listen to so many times in five years of war". They are the fellow Turveys, of both sexes, and all services and ranks (including one General), veterans of any war, hot or cold. They are Turvey's fellow clowns, who never twigged, as did the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, that Turvey was merely "a stooge" through whom I vented untimely undergraduate sneers at a government that had done everything possible for the returned soldier. "Perhaps not so warmly applauded by soldiers as by critics of the Canadian literary scene", wrote a *Letters in Canada* critic in 1950. The reverse was true.

Now it is 1966 and the old veterans are dying off; but the new critics have come around, and *Turvey* is supplementary reading in some Can. Lit. courses. I would be inclined to accept this as Turvey's death-kiss if I hadn't been in Charlottetown this summer and watched a new generation of his friends teaching my old half-track to sing and dance, and confront fresh audiences and new critics. He is metamorphosed, but still my wartime *alter ego*, whom I tried to shape out of a need not only to laugh *at* the mechanical and the life-destroying, but to laugh *with* the incompetently human and the naturally loving and the obstinately life-preserving. Some "critics of the Canadian literary scene" have indeed given me credit for such motivation, and praise for *Turvey* beyond its deserts, but there were not so many when I needed them most, and the steadiest heartening for me has always come from the other Turveys, scattered across this country, recognizing their kin in my novel and in me.

[1] *The Creative Writer*, Toronto CBC Publications, 1967, ch. IV.

[2] George Woodcock: introduction to *Turvey*, New Canadian Library, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart, 1963.

# THE SCULPTURE OF POETRY

## *On Louis Dudek*

*Dorothy Livesay*

NOW THAT THE FEUDS have died down it would no longer be appropriate for A. J. M. Smith to cry: "*Layton* shall tingle in Canadian air / And echo answer *Dudek* everywhere." Omitting those polemics and parodies, salutary as they have been in stirring up the *potage canadien*, what is interesting today is a concern for the styles and techniques which have made each poet so differently "an intelligent, imaginative man." [1]

Of the two it is Louis Dudek who has been most articulate about the poetic art and its relation to the spoken word. Recently he has written his own *Art Poetique*, in a poem called "Functional Poetry: a Proposal". Here he envisages poetry as "having the shape of clouds." And it is this sculptural, visual approach that aligns him with the early Imagist movement of the century and with its re-development under the aegis of William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound.

> But I go back always to the first three moderns
> Lawrence, Aldington, Eliot (then), Pound (1915)
> Lee Masters (yes! Sandburg too)
> for the beginning of what we need: straight language
> and relevance to our real concerns
>
> . . . . .
>
> i.e. some form of improvised rhythmed speech

This "manifesto" establishes Dudek as the contemporary Canadian poet most consciously concerned with shape, form and sound: the origins of rhythm. He feels that the widening scope of prose rhythm has set up an impasse for poetry which he would like to break through:

> The problem, it seems to me, is simply
> over the centuries

the loss of ground to prose
in the subject matter of poetry,

and the loss of freshness in method
as the residue of "poetic" substance
became fossilized in decadent metre and form
—and the coral reefs.
We want a renewal of substance, of technique
that goes to the origin and source:

His aim apparently is to invade the fortress where prose has taken hold and return it to the rightful owner, poetry:

to write it as they write prose
Lots of it, on all subjects that call
for communication
. . . . .
as poetry of exposition and discourse

Before he reached this eighteenth century critical position Dudek as man and poet went through many phases. His earliest poetry in *East of the City* is lyrical and imagist: concerned not with sound effects so much as with pictures in rhythmic arrangement. Already the clouds and the sea he is so fond of observing represent his objective correlative for the world of poetry: a world where recurrent rhythms subject to wind and weather, subject to sun and moon, are expressed through language:

The moon floated down
a river between two clouds
melted the stone banks and they
were gone.

In many of these short lyrical pieces the poet's "eye" is on the object but in the background is a subjective, emotional "I" responding to these objects. So we get a "double take" as in a poem called "Revolving Door";

Late, when near that waterwheel
the treaded doorway where
no man is, but momentary water
while outside the sun points
on hands, foreheads; and all fluid
sharp down spires and trees
skits the sun's lightning,
drawn an turned, I fall
loud down the sounding caves

of the watery wheel, out, and
the light blinds me,
cells burst in trillion and spill
my mind of its surprise and fear.

Dudek's search for "straight language and relevance" is certainly to be found in these early poems. Nonetheless he is not wholly free from the metrical bonds of the past. In the above lines, for instance, there is a movement outward, a loosening of the line:

while outside the sun points
on hands, foreheads,

but he quickly lapses into iambic metre in lines such as

drawn and turned, I fall

or

my mind of its surprise and fear

Also, when social criticism dominates a poem, as in "East of the City" itself, the rhythm is reminiscent of English poets of the thirties: Auden or Day Lewis:

So that someday we may go, and see the sun rise
Outside this world of rubble. Drive out
Through factories, and brick walls of buildings
To the east, to the fields sweet with clover
Where over the heads of trees, in a cup of the sky,
Laughing, the earth-warmer comes, making day warm for us.

There is a tentative groping here for an individual rhythm based on strong stresses, but the iambic or anapaestic metre takes hold firmly in the last two lines quoted. Dudek has not yet found his own voice. In a later collection, *Cerberus*, produced jointly with Layton and Souster, he is beginning to explore theories:

> The way to freedom and order in the future will be through art and poetry. . . . Language is the great saving first poem, always being written; all others are made of it. We must prize it, protect it against the destroyers and perverters of our time . . . Anyone who understands this is capable of assuming a responsibility, of becoming a citizen of the world. Anyone who, reads a good poem with understanding — a poem that bites into the evil — or retrieves a truth — creates an order in himself.

But as yet the poems do not match the theory. Stanzas like "Re-visiting Montreal" remind one of Whitman; poems on Greek themes recall the voice of Pound (as in

"For E.P.", "For Christ's sake, you didn't invent sunlight"). Occasionally there are intimations that Dudek is experimenting with strong stress metre, caesura, and formal parallelism, as in "A Drunk on the Sidewalk";

> He has a history older than England
> and no doubt has a future, this Falstaff
> He rolled on the floor of a mead-hall
> tottered through Piers' dreamland

Yet the poem ends, quite out of keeping, with a reminiscence of Sweeney:

> now let us scatter, having seen
> Christ escorted to his limousine.

These overtones of the thirties, ironic in intent, abound in the *Cerberus* collection:

> you'll walk home to roses
> leaning on your trellis, open the lock of love
> with liberty in your pocket, Life under your arm

It is unkindness to Auden! But one brief poem seems to achieve authenticity, "Alba";

> As you lay on the bed pale with
> the humid breath of kisses
> still moist on your cheek, openly,
> like a leaf your water-lily limbs,
> the river, past the bed, to the sea
> below, to the city, dragged down our two
> selves, slowly, down, to the sound of
> cataracts in the street below, in
> humming early morning light.

Every line here carries three strong stresses, balanced by carefully controlled junctures:

> ˘ ˘ ´ ˘ ˘ ´ ´ `
> As you lay/on the bed/pale with/
> ˘ ˘ ´ ˘ ´ ˘
> the humid/breath/of kisses

Moreover the poet has emphasized his rhythms by a happy use of vowel and consonant repetition: *cheek, leaf*; *water-lily limbs*; *below, slowly*; and *down, sound*. Because the lines have simplicity, grace and movement, they are a preview of Dudek's later style.

EVEN TWENTY YEARS AGO, then, Dudek had made his stand known. He was opposed to "musicality" à la Keats. He wanted poetry to reveal itself naked, without the props and embellishments of sound. His best poetry is unified, of a piece, and not discursive as is prose. It is "articulated music" in the sense that Suzanne Langer uses this term. Speaking of her views, a recent critic finds that "a poem is like a piece of music in that it articulates itself; and in thus establishing internal relations, establishes also relations of feeling". For Mrs. Langer the central fact of poetry as of music is "the creation of syntax, of meaningful arrangements." Similarly, in one of his own metaphors about poetry Dudek writes:

> yes, yes, imagination, if you like
> but to steer the log boat, keep it level
> plumb with the real thing
> after all. . . .[2]

As soon as a poet makes "meaningful arrangements" his main concern he approaches the attitude of the essayist towards his material. Dudek's recent collections, *Europe* and *En Mexico* are examples of this tendency. Again, however, this approach is justified by Suzanne Langer:

> . . . all poetry is a creation of illusory events, even when it looks like a statement of opinions philosophical or political or æsthetic. The occurrence of a thought is an event in a thinker's personal history, and has as distinct a qualitative character as an adventure, a sight, or a human contact; it is not a proposition, but the entertainment of one, which necessarily involves vital tensions, feelings, the imminence of other thoughts, and the echoes of past thinking. Poetic reflections, therefore, are not essentially trains of logical reasoning, though they may incorporate fragments, at least, of discursive argument. Essentially they create the *semblance* of reasoning . . .[3]

The key phrase in this excerpt is that poetry "is not a proposition, but an entertainment of one". Thus Dudek's apparent philosophizing, his didacticism, are in reality a consideration of possibilities. His prose content, like his prose syntax, is a kind of disguise. What then transmutes it into poetry? We can only come to some agreement on this if we examine examples. An early poem from *East of the City* called "Basement Workers" is relevant:

> Let me give you reminders to keep the image clear,
> of roofs too near overhead,
> of air sharp with particles, like gravel in sand,

boxes, and tables with torn fringes of metal,
blocked doors, stacks

of coffined cribs ready for crouching mummies,
paper to wrap around our pale corpses:
so, these dispersed, hang in the air between floor and ceiling,
where we, darker than miners between the hours
filter the dust in our collapsing lungs —
and think how noon light up there is rocking buildings,
and winds fling skirts about, cooling ankles.

It would be a mistake to assume that this simple, straight-forward use of languages, which never falls into obscurantism or ellipsis and which is always syntactically complete, is necessarily the language of prose. Dudek's poems are rhythmic wholes. One might be able to say what he is saying here, in a few paragraphs or even sentences; but one would then become aware of his stricter limitations. Order and control are the keynotes to this poet's work: as in sculpture, the whole must be visible at a glance, but the detail must be exact, and highlighted where essential. Moreover, none of Dudek's poems can be accused of being too short or too long (for even his "epic" poems are a series of short apprehensions). Quite frequently the poems seem to lack drama and dramatic tension, but they are a true rhythmic mirror of the poet's intention. No word or phrase can be taken away; none can be added. There is, further, only the sparest use of adjectives; instead there is strong reliance on nouns, verbs, clauses.

In the poem cited above the poet begins with a consideration:

Let me give you reminders

He goes on to fortify this line with a parallel list of "objects", much in the manner of Whitman; six lines whose initial words are all prepositions or objects of prepositions:

of roofs
of air
boxes
blocked doors
of coffined cribs
paper

After this listing, which dispenses with articles and uses modifiers that are nearly all verbals (as *blocked*; *coffined*; *crouching*) he pulls the argument back into

perspective with his linking words: *so*; *where*; and *think how*. By such syntactical means is the rhythm established.

Further proof that Dudek is more concerned with musical articulation than with onomatopeia — music as "cry" — is to be found in the texture of his vocabulary. Although he maintains a harmony of vowel sounds there is apparently no effort towards alliteration, assonance or half-rhymes (except in a few of the latest lyrics in *En Mexico*). It is as if the poet had an instinct for the right sounds without consciously working to make them so. A short poem from *Europe* will illustrate:

The sea loves to move
but it is in no hurry
flops over languidly like an easy animal
waiting for storms
never still

The first two lines play only on the vowel sounds /ij/, /a/ and /u/, /ow/. This This pattern continues into *flops over* and then, as the sea turns over, a new vowel sound is heard: the /æ/ in *languidly* and *animal*. It is then followed through with reverberations and echoes of all the earlier vowels. The last line is weak and fading; so are its vowels. Note also that the poem comes to rest on the liquid sound of *still* which is an echo of *animal*. In addition to these inner harmonics, and supporting them, this brief poem takes its shape from the syntactic arrangement, the line lengths and the balance of primary, tertiary and weak stresses. In additional metrics the first line could be said to have as its pivot an ionic (*loves*) flanked by an iambic stress pattern. This pattern is reversed in line two: iambs are the pivot (*it ís/ in nó*) with a trochee at the end (*húrry*). The rhythmic reversal exactly parallels the movement of the image: upward *to the séa lóves to móve* and downward to *wáiting for stórms*. The total effect is not one of onomatopeia, but a kinaesthetic identification with the object seen and its flow. One identifies with sculpture in much the same way; and the metaphor for sculpture is "frozen music"!

On a larger scale "Poem 19", also from *Europe,* uses the same techniques. It is a pleasure to hear the poet reading this poem aloud because his grave voice emphasizes the necessity for giving every word its due stress and duration, and every juncture and end-line its due timing (besides internal junctures, juncture at the end of each line is an essential part of Dudek's patterning). In "Poem 19" the frame has been widened to embrace the whole of the sea and the sky. The

small movements of the waves are seen as lives tossing against the fixed eternal laws of "gravity" (or death) and "just measure":

> The commotion of these waves
> however strong
> cannot disturb
> compass line of the horizon
> nor the plumbline of gravity

It is not practicable to "scan" these lines into prosodic feet; they must be scanned as syntactic units with strong stresses between junctures. To aid the rhythmic pattern there is, in addition, a nice parallelism in the imagery between the "compass line" and the "plumbline". Later in the poem parallelism creates the same effect again: "the dead scattered on the stage in the fifth act" who show nature restored to order and just measure".

Although this poem has several ancestors, from Nashe's

> Brightness falls from the air
> Queens have died young and fair

to Yeats' *Lapis Lazuli*,

> All perform their tragic play
> that's Ophelia, that, Cordelia —
> Yet they . . . . . .
> Do not break up their lines to weep . . .

nonetheless Dudek masters the past and creates something new as he concludes:

> The horizon is perfect,
> and nothing can be stricter
> than gravity; in relation to these
> the stage is rocked and tossed,
> kings fall with their crowns, poets sink with their laurels.

It is a most satisfying poem because the rhythm is so completely wedded to the thought. Although "objective" — the poet simply names objects, elements and avoids figurative language as assiduously as he avoids musicality — the poem cannot escape from net of metaphor: symbols take the place of similes. It is, indeed, a characteristic symbolist poem.

IF THE EVIDENCE already presented is not sufficient to prove that Dudek's rhythms are based on syntax, let us look at "Poem 46" from *En Mexico*. Here he describes

> a magnanimous mother with children
> dancing towards the shore, in a nightdress
> her opulent ankles tapering
> down to her toes
> (behind her the children shrieking)
> poised, supremely graceful, gigantic —
> America, the continent, dancing.

The rhythmic effect is achieved by the use of verbals — "ing" words: dancing, tapering, shrieking, dancing — all of them trochaic in pattern and therefore in falling rhythm. In between these metrical (and syntactic) phrases are upward-rising anapaestic rhythms:

> towards, the shore
> in a nightdress
> to her toes

Throughout there is a judicious use of what used to be called the "truncated" foot, but which may be more simply regarded as a strong stress with juncture on each side, placed initially in the line:

> Poised . . .
> down. . . .

This type of stressed unit is balanced by its opposite, the "outrider", where we find a series of unstressed syllables:

> America the

The total impression is one of weight, balanced on light feet — Williams' "variable foot", perhaps; but certainly not a "foot" in the traditional metric sense. It is a phrasal foot, or unit, marked off by junctures; isochronic in its effect. The strong dancing movement arises from the syntactic incompletion of the phrasal structures: they are all in a state of *being*, and make no use of the finite verb. The adjectives too, always sparely used by Dudek, seem to be chosen because of their rhythmic pattern, as "magnanimous mother." Out of this unity of rhythm and syntax evolves the conceptual image of a "continent dancing." Symbolism once more!

"Poem 69" is a final example of the welding of rhythm (or "beat") with syntax and concept:

> Someday we shall come again to the poem
> as mysterious as these trees, of various texture
> leaves, bark, fruit
> (the razor teeth so neatly arranged
> so clean the weathered rent)
>
> This is the art of formal repetition
> and the art of singular form — lines, lines
> like a wave-worn stone

This poem falls into three parts: first, three lines of three strong stresses each in a falling rhythm; followed by two lines of rising (or iambic) rhythm, also triple stresses; and ending with three lines which are dramatically broken up, divided so that line 7 pulls a spondee unto itself, from line 8. This pattern maintains the nine strong stresses but gives added "rhetorical" juncture and emphasis. Much care is evident here in the choice of sound harmonies. Consider for instance the line:

> the razor teeth so neatly arranged

where the vowel repetition is made more forceful by the intervening fricative consonants.

Sound harmonies then, together with a beautifully balanced phrasal pattern, enhance the *conceptual* conclusion which is the theme of all Louis Dudek's poetry: that harmony and order in nature towards which mankind strives. All his recent poetry of the fifties and sixties, with the exception of the satirical pieces of *Laughing Stalks*, repeats the same theme:

> Beauty is ordered in nature
> as the wind and sea
> shape each other for pleasure; or the just
> know, who learn of happiness
> from the report of their own actions.

As a sculptor takes a lump of clay and fashions it into varying shapes he retains the essential element that makes it a work of art: rhythm. So in his cool, grave, lucent poems does Louis Dudek create and magnify his world.

[1] Louis Dudek: "Functional Poetry," *Delta*, July 1959.
[2] *The Transparent Sea*. 1956.
[3] *Feeling and Form*. p. 219

# *1. The Preface: On Radical Absurdity*

MONTAIGNE NEVER READ *Understanding Media* yet there's a good deal of point to what he says about the relation between our animal and our human extensions:

> no use our mounting on stilts, for on stilts we must still walk on our own legs... on the loftiest throne in the world we still are only sitting on our own rump.

That he discovered his métier in the printed book seems obvious, despite his protesting his attachment to animal extensions like legs and rump. The question remains, where in the range of extensions do we locate our being? We have only to think of trumpeter and trumpet instead of king and throne to see the problem. Montaigne often chafes against the unified consciousness imposed by print, and a trumpeter, however much his trumpet means to him, might likewise if his only mode of awareness was his trumpet complain of limitation. Our worry is about freedom. Twentieth-century man has many modes of consciousness and with these goes a freedom not enjoyed by any previous civilization. It is this freedom, so terrible a freedom that we don't like looking at it, a freedom we've hardly recognized to date, a freedom radically unlike any that mankind has yet known, that I find myself wanting to celebrate in absurdist plays and in satirical verse. Satire is often a ritual of acceptance by which a Swift, a Sterne, or a Percy Wyndham Lewis castigates the crossing of territorial lines, while conceding to the future its power to innovate. Or is it exploration — I won't claim that in attempts at theatre of the absurd I've been engaged in exploration; celebrate is the right word. This new freedom I have been celebrating is really a very wonderful development — it dictates the very unrealistic settings I find myself using, and

# POEM AND PREFACE

*Wilfred Watson*

these, involving the use of multi-environments, determine the kind of dramatic texture I have been able to achieve in scripts like *Cockcrow and the Gulls* (1962), *Trial of Corporal Adam* (1963), *Another Bloody Page from Plutarch* (1963/4), *Wail for Two Pedestals* (1964/1965) and *Over Prairie Trails* (a farcical dramatization of Grove's novel).

In *Cockcrow and the Gulls* I couldn't really get started until I'd killed off all the human characters and reassembled them in a sort of limbo, where I could confront them with an atypical absurdist impasse, the fact that when you are dead you cannot die. The following excerpt is from the beginning of the play, but I think it adumbrates in its non-realistic realism the multi-realism of the second half of this work.

GWLADYS Kiss me, Cyril.

HIGGINS Forgive me, mate. It was an accident. . . .

GWLADYS You'll hang for this mate.

HIGGINS This boy here will testify it was an accident.

GWLADYS You should've done it in England, mate.
An English jury would've been lenient.
All yer'd have got would've been life, with time off for good behaviour.
But a Canadian jury will never let you off for killing a wife.
Mark what I say —
These are my dying words to you mate.
You'll hang for it.
So yer'd better prepare yer soul to meet yer maker.

HIGGINS (*bitterly*)
So yer dying happy mother?
GWLADYS You'll never be prime minister.
Not being of an irreproachable character.
Yer might have been able to hush up yer whores, but not murder.
HIGGINS And so yer dying happy mother?
Because in yer last mortal act
You think yer've ruined all my political
Intent? — Cyril, Cyril, mark
Yer mother, mate, she's dying happy, happy as a lark.
(*raises teapot in his hand to strike her again, but Cyril intervenes*)
GWLADYS Go on, go on.
HIGGINS (*to Cyril*)
Son,
Don't yer go shining yer dubious light on us now, son.
(*flings Cyril aside*)
Now yer can die happy mate.
(*hits her again and again with teapot*)
It's murder now mate.
(*Cyril drags himself to his feet, exit*)
How right you were, Sir Francis . . .
In yer fine essay of friendship!
A friend can speak to a friend without respect of persons,
But a husband can speak only to his wife as a husband,
Etcetera, etcetera. (*calls*) Cyril!
A father can only speak to his son, as a father.
A murderer can speak to no one, except as a fugitive!
(*re-enter Cyril*)
Cyril . . . where are you, boy? . . . I won't hurt you!
(*Cyril stares at him*)
Mate, I'm not a murderer.
Won't anyone tell me I'm not a murderer?
Mate, she poked her finger right into the eye of my flaw.
She picked at the scab in my soul.
She bitched at the hangnail of my self-command, when I had very little
Reserves, and defense none at all. . . .

In *Trial of Corporal Adam*, which begins in the medieval world of *Everyman*, Adam is whisked away from occupied Berlin into a multiple world in which, at his trial, Death is judge, the Church, prosecutor, the devil, defense lawyer, and Noah, Moses, David, Bathsheba witnesses.

HOLY CHURCH What sort of soldier was Uriah?
BATHSHEBA A brave soldier.
HOLY CHURCH Was he a better soldier than David?
BATHSHEBA Yes.—No.
HOLY CHURCH What sort of soldier was Adam.
BATHSHEBA I don't know.
David thought Adam was a good soldier, and said so.
HOLY CHURCH I will call the next witness.
*(exit Bathsheba)*
ADAM *(to wife)*
Did you see David weeping?
This David honest king does my heart good.
He remembered me. He didn't forget me.
He spoke of me, you see to Bathsheba.
Bathsheba didn't forget me either — what David said of me.
God loved him, and he will me, eventually.
I will repent myself to God, as David did.
MEPHISTOFILIS *(to Adam)*
But he doesn't exist. Be re-assured. . . .

In *Another Bloody Page from Plutarch* the action takes place in classical Bononia, first of all, and later on at Caieta. But multiple environments are important, as in the following song. Collaged together in it are: the world of the leopardess, the jungle; that of the shepherdess, classical pastoral; and the double world of Lepidus and of Mr Lepidus, the triumvirate of Rome and its modern analogue suggestive of names like Profumo, Christine Keeler and Gerda Munsinger.

DORICANUS And as for the wicked leopardess
CHIRICUS Who left behind her such a nasty mess
DORICANUS She never expected to find a shepherdess
CHIRICUS In the bed of old Mr Lepidus.

In *Wail for Two Pedestals* the action is located on, off and beside the two pedestals. The Godot who doesn't appear in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* stands on one of these pedestals. The daughter of the Lefty who doesn't appear in *Waiting for Lefty* climbs up on to the other pedestal. These two pedestals enable me to whirl round them a large number of contemporary environments, including those in the following excerpts:

CHORUS Here we go round the thunderstorm.
m We are the hollow men.
M Hollow men, unite.

| | |
|---|---|
| | You have nothing to lose except your telephones. |
| f | (*kneeling to M*) |
| | Father, forgive me, I have sinned. |
| M | In what kind have you sinned, daughter? |
| f | The sin of the flesh, father. |
| M | With whom, daughter? |
| f | I am in love with a married man, father. |
| M | What is his occupation, daughter. |
| f | He is my husband, father. |
| M | Then you are in mortal sin, daughter. |
| | Think of yourself as in danger of damnation. |
| f | What shall I do about it, father? |
| M | Leave him at once. |
| f | I can't help it, father. |
| M | God will help you, daughter. |
| f | I want to love him all |
| | the time, father. |
| M | Then you had better get |
| | him to divorce you, daughter. |
| f | He can't afford it, father. |
| M | It's all right as long as you |
| | don't use those things, daughter. |
| f | *What* things do you mean, father? |
| M | Those things. |
| f | *Pills*, father? |
| M | Those things, daughter. |
| | (*thunder*) |
| m | Thunder! |
| f | An electric storm. |
| m | A flash of lightning! |
| | (*taking f's hand*) |
| | Here we go round the |
| | eye of the storm! |
| f | Amen! |

In *Over Prairie Trails* the world of the horses, Peter and Dan, is contrasted with the world of Grove; Peter and Dan are caught in a sort of concentration-camp environment, which is epicyclic to the circle which Grove makes between Gladstone and Falmouth, through cold, fog, storm and blizzard conditions which urge Grove on to heroic efforts and impose on the horses the hell out of which they cannot escape. In this excerpt Dan wakes up the exhausted Peter and tries to console him.

DAN You understand, don't you?
PETER Yes I understand all right you've woken me up just
to tell me that what's happened today hasn't
gone unobserved.
DAN I'm sorry I've made you angry, Peter.
PETER *(after a pause)*
Daniel, you have an inclination towards the cosmic fallacy.
DAN What's that my friend?
PETER Beloved, it's the belief not well grounded that the
tragic affairs of horses and men have cosmic significance.
*(gestures)*
That the stars have eyes.

I have perhaps given enough excerpts by way of example to suggest that the collaging together of two or more milieus makes possible a treatment of an absurdist theatre not altogether unlike but by no means identical with that modern theatre movement dominated by Camus's sentiment of the absurd, where men and their questionings are answered by the blank meaningless of the world.

As I understand the new freedom, multi-media man has many worlds and many modes of awareness — as many in fact as he has media; and the significant thing is, these modes of consciousness are not unified by language, whether spoken, written or printed. This fact must, I believe, force upon us a new concept of the absurd. Formerly man could reason in a mode of awareness which was given him through language, but today man has many kinds of awareness, and to an increasing degree no two men are likely to have the same mix of the multi-consciousnesses available. Professor McLuhan has spoken of modern society as being without centres. Modern man has no centralized consciousness, he is off-centre, eccentric in a radical new way.

Comedy in the past has been a sort of oddman affair, an affair of a deviant within a group, amusing but not particularly disturbing. It is when all the members of a group are uncentred, without centre in either the group or elsewhere, that the phenomenon becomes shattering. The group whether family or society becomes little more than the cardboard carton in which when we are moving house we put plates, cups and miscellaneous items, and discard as having discharged its function when the move is over. As men in relationship with each other become more configurative, the cartons in which they exist come to seem all the more obviously cartons. This fact has led Professor Royce to write a book entitled *The Encapsulated Man*. He opens with this observation:

> Modern movements such as existentialism and the revival of interest in religion point rather decisively to the inadequacy of traditional values. And the restless searching which is manifest in the major cultural outlets, such as the arts and science, are indicative of the inability of traditional symbols to carry the weight of a meaningful existence. This book concerns itself with this search for meaning, particularly the search of 20th-century man.
>
> My thesis is that such a search demands total involvement and maximum awareness, but that man is encapsulated.

It is not surprising that the U.S. military has had trouble with its university-trained recruits. The army has become an encapsulation, a meaningless carton, particularly hated by university graduates each with his own brand of multi-consciousness and not easily brain-washed. Even the universities have become an encapsulation to many students and staff. Those who want to condition modern eccentric man may discover that this can only be done by reducing him to a feral condition. It may not be easy to make a modern concentration camp work — not nearly so easy as it used to be, when inmates had a unified consciousness, to be peeled off like a skin. Multi-consciousness doesn't strip back easily because it is acquired by doing rather than by seeing. Because he is civilized not in one direction only but in all sorts of directions, modern eccentric man has great contempt for the cardboard carton type of classification. Jean Genet expresses this contempt, especially in *The Blacks*, a play about colour of skin as a means of social classification. Professor George S. Wellwarth discusses this play as follows:

> In *The Blacks* Genet tries to make the Negro's real attitude clear to the whites. . . . The action of *The Blacks* is very simple. A group of Negroes enacts the ritual murder of a white woman. Another group of Negroes, wearing white masks and dressed in the trappings that give the whites their illusory authority, sits in judgment on them. Instead of being judged, however, the Negroes "kill" the "Whites". While the Negroes on stage are going through this mock catharsis, the real action of the play is transpiring offstage. A Negro traitor is condemned and shot, and at the end it becomes clear to the white audience that the whole play was merely an elaborate, conscious cover-up to disguise an incident in the war of the Negroes on the whites.
>
> (*Theater of Protest and Paradox*, New York, 1964, pp. 126ff.)

Genet has no sympathy for the Blacks or for the whites, only a compulsive distaste for banality of classification.

*I shot a trumpet into my brain* is a sort of manifesto-poem about what seems to me the central fact in modern civilization, its multiplicity of media. This is a fact to which every artist and every writer must address himself. The unique soul is out. Compared to the new psyche, it seems something of a fraud. What is in, is personality made up of selective configurations of public modes of consciousness. There are numerous options available to this new human being, more by a long shot than there are to a General Motors car — and each implies a mode of awareness. These options are being used. It makes communication very difficult when sending station and receiving station are incompatible. Massman is on the way out (in any case, massman was probably an early twentieth-century myth, for, as Lewis in part sees in *The Apes of God*, broadcasting creates broadcasters not listeners.) Eccentric man is on the way in, for the addition of mass media is like the addition of electrical resistances in parallel: the more media, the fewer the masses. The combinations of consciousness possible can be roughly realized if we set down the 26 letters of the alphabet, and starting with the mass-media, match them with some common medium. Thus: (a) TV, (b) radio, (c) motion picture, (d) telephone, (e) telegraph, (f) daily press, (g) weekly news magazines, (h) recordings, (i) automobile, (j) jet plane, (k) railway, (l) tape recorder, (m) camera, (n) gestettner, (o) xerox, (p) typewriter, (q) fountain pen, (r) powerboat, (s) bicycle, (t) motor scooter, (u) sewing machine, (v) hairdryer, (w) electric light, (x) vacuum cleaner, (y) adding machine, (z) credit card. If we tried to unify the various consciousnesses involved in this list, we should need a language something like Joyce's in *Finnegans Wake*, "wordloosed over seven seas crowdblast incellelleneteutoslavzendlatinsoundscript." There are advantages to every man being his own nation, but the life of eccentric man is bound to be chaotic, in his sexual, family, economic and political relations. Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 ("Let me not to the marriage of true minds/ Admit impediments") may have to be re-written ("let's not forget when contemplating marriage of minds as diverse as ours, the difficulties of intersubjectivity"). But quite obviously the radical absurdity we face is to be distinguished from the absurd Camus wrote of in the *Myth of Sisyphus* during the middle 1930's:

> For me, the sole datum is the absurd . . . a confrontation and an unceasing struggle.
>
> And carrying this absurd logic to its conclusion, I must admit that that struggle implies a total absence of hope (which has nothing to do with despair), a continual

rejection (which must not be confused with renunciation), and a conscious dissatisfaction (which must not be compared to mature unrest).

What we must explain to ourselves today is why our new radical absurdity induces in us hope, acceptance and complacency. Perhaps the reason is that what has produced this new twentieth-century man is the extraordinary development of the human extensions of man. Consequently though the new absurdity ought to be enough to sober us, in fact eccentric man causes in us a sense of elation — we are for the moon, come what may.

What we probably will have to do is seek help from the artist in solving the problems of multi-consciousness. It could be that the social order of tomorrow will depend on artists of great talent. Already if we examine modern art and literature we find a very sharp distinction between a very few famous men and the rank-and-file of artists and writers whose work is for the most part paraphrase and whose numbers tend to approximate to the sum-total of population — it would almost seem as if the best way to understand eccentric man would be to equate him with the rank-and-file of creative talents. What differentiates the men of great talent from this wider group of minor talents is the fact that the former — men like Picasso, Henry Moore, Wyndham Lewis, Corbusier, Marshall McLuhan — have all attempted to exert an integrating force of some sort or other on thought and society. Common to them is their sense of the complexity of a special kind which multi-consciousness entails upon modern society, their sense of the problem of eccentric man. The rank-and-file of minor artists pride themselves on their discovery that they are different from others and have missed the point that today the common man is just one of them. The great artists have worked in reaction to this fact though without necessarily understanding the real problem. Both Joyce and Wyndham Lewis for example understood that multi-media meant multi-consciousness, but neither knew how to relate themselves as artists to the audience of eccentrics growing up around them. The fact of the eccentricity of modern man was clear to them; but they did not discover what to do with this fact or what was their role with respect to it. Perhaps the singular distinction of Marshall McLuhan is his seeming ability to write *for*, not merely *with*, the new eccentric.

## 2. *The Poem:*
## *I Shot a Trumpet into my Brain*

> I would not have you think that I am shut out from a sense of what is called by the Japanese "the Ah-ness of things"; the melancholy inherent in the animal life. But there is a *Ho-ho-ness* too. And against the backgrounds of their sempiternal *Ah-ness* it is possible, strictly in the foreground, to proceed with a protracted comedy, which glitters against the darkness.
>
> P. Wyndham Lewis

*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
where it blew out my brains became a wall.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my skull bone grew into a tower.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my arm extended into an amphitheatre.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my two buttocks became a double bed.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my starved backbone became a plough.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my cadaver demanded a lecture hall.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my ah-ness became a cathedral farm.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my ho-ho-ness protracted itself into a monastic town.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my sensorium was infected with a,b,c's.

*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
in the lesion festered a printing press
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
which began to print the Palestrina mass.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my right hand became a cannon ball.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and the tears in my eyes dried into gunpowder
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my blood ticked away into a clock.

*Madam Sosostris*
*is dead*
*Madam Sosostris*
*is dead*

How shall we know what to do?

*Madam Sosostris is dead.*

She had just sat down to close her eyes
in the fortune-teller's throne beside her bed
and now the world is at the telephone telling the news
the world is swinging its thin cold knees,
*Madame Sosostris is dead!*

2.

*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my left eye became a telescope.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my blasted eye-socket suffered a sea-change.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and by a conversion became a navigator's sextant.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
through a fragment of bone I saw a new moon.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my armpit blackened into a coal-mine.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my left testicle becoming a spinning machine.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*

and when I blew my nose, *there* was a blast furnace.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my spilled dreams became a circulating library.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my severed ear became a threshing machine.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my hamstrings developed into a steam locomotive.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my jarred nerves extended into the electric telegraph
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
ventilating my conscience in a telegram.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my thoughts re-arranged themselves into the morning newspaper
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
jazzing my insomnias up into head lines.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
then my blind third eye opened and became a camera.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my vocal chords were transverberated into a telephone.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my fingers being paralyzed into an electric computer.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my sex became a frozen bank of sperm.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my bowel became a polluted river.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
my delirium became a bottle of champagne.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my fragmented eye became a motion picture machine.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
collaging my lips tongue and ears into a T.V. screen.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and my bladder was canonized into a gas station.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
all my instincts solidified into a moon machine.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*

my fart fathered an intercontinental rocket.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
and it opened a door
which was a means of
control the beginning
of law
and you are in
and I am out
and knock knock
knock, I am knock
and you are
knocker.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
My excrements became an underground sewer.
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
this was the beginning of egghead fun,
ho-ho,
look down into the trumpet's mouth and you shall come
to the ah-ah-ness I am extending from.
oh no,
*I shot a trumpet into my brain*
I pulverized my heart into a contraceptive pill,
amen!
*I shot a trumpet into my brain!*

chronicle

# LETTRE DE MONTREAL

## *Montréal: ville internationale*

*Naim Kattan*

LA MESURE DU DYNAMISME d'une culture, c'est sa volonté de s'épanouir. C'est une constatation qui convient parfaitement pour décrire la culture canadienne-française à l'heure actuelle. Il ne suffit pas au francophone du Continent américain de protéger son patrimoine et de préserver son héritage pour sauvegarder son particularisme. Il doit affirmer la vitalité de sa culture en multipliant les contacts et les échanges. Ainsi, depuis quelques années, Montréal devient un centre culturel international. Rien ne fut décidé au préalable par les autorités. Ce désir d'épanouissement surgit, en quelque sorte, des profondeurs. Il est né de besoins psychologiques et d'une nécessité matérielle. Il ne fut pas concerté. C'est donc un mouvement quelque peu confus et sans grande cohérence. Mais les bonnes volontés cèdent vite la place aux exigences de l'organisation.

L'une des entreprises les plus réussies dans ce domaine est le Festival international du film qui se tient depuis sept ans à Montréal. Il ne s'agit pas d'un festival compétitif, mais, pendant une semaine, le public montréalais a l'avantage de vivre à l'heure du nouveau cinéma international. Les organisateurs de cette grande manifestation cherchent encore leur voie. Comment donner à ce festival un cachet propre, un caractère qui le distingue pour qu'il soit plus qu'une vitrine ouverte sur le monde au profit du public montréalais, pour qu'il devienne une véritable rencontre internationale?

Nous avons reçu cette année des films de tous les coins du monde: de l'URSS, de la Tchécoslovaquie mais aussi du Japon, de l'Inde. Nous avons pu voir les tentatives des nouveaux cinéastes aussi bien de France, d'Italie que de Brésil et des Etats-Unis. C'est le jeune cinéma de qualité qui est en faveur dans ce festival,

non pas seulement le cinéma expérimental ni les vraies ou fausses nouvelles vagues, mais un cinéma qui cherche ses propres moyens d'expression tout en évitant les écueils de l'esthétisme facile et des tentations commerciales. Il faudrait peut-être qu'un jour l'on insiste davantage sur l'importance des jeunes cinéastes et que le Festival montréalais leur offre une véritable tribune.

Depuis quatre ans, un festival du film canadien se tient dans le cadre de ce festival international. Un jury international est invité et décerne des prix aux meilleures productions canadiennes. Cette année, le jury, qui comprenait des personnes comme la critique new-yorkaise Judith Crist et le cinéaste tchèque Milos Forman, n'a pas jugé bon d'octroyer de premier prix pour les longs et les moyens métrages.

Notons que chaque année, le Festival du film attire un nombre de plus en plus important de critiques, de producteurs et de cinéastes étrangers. Leur présence à Montréal donne aux cinéastes canadiens une occasion unique pour d'utiles et de fructueuses rencontres. Mais ce sont surtout les cinéphiles de Montréal qui sont les grand bénéficiaires du festival. Durant une semaine, le cinéma est à l'honneur et constitue le grand événement de la vie montréalaise. Les amateurs du film vivent longtemps les expériences acquises et les émotions éprouvées au cours de ces journées bien remplies.

NON MOINS SIGNIFICATIF est le symposium international de la sculpture. L'idée d'inviter des artistes à travailler devant le public, en plein air, et d'offrir à la ville qui les convie les œuvres terminées, est née en Europe. C'est à Montréal que revient l'initiative d'avoir introduit une telle manifestation en Amérique du Nord. Nous en sommes au troisième symposium. Les deux premiers se sont tenus à Montréal.

Cet été, c'est la Ville de Québec qui fut choisie comme terrain du dialogue entre l'artiste et le public et comme point de rencontre entre l'art et la cité. Le Directeur du Musée d'Art Contemporain à Montréal, M. Gilles Hénault, a invité au symposium des sculpteurs japonais, suisse, français, dominicain et canadien. Ainsi, le public canadien est le témoin de l'élaboration d'œuvres de tous les pays. C'est l'art international qui s'implante à Montréal et à Québec.

C'est la troisième année également que se tient à Montréal le Salon International de la Caricature. Ce Salon est organisé par la Ville de Montréal avec le

concours du quotidien de langue anglaise, le Montreal Star. Cette année, deux cent dix artistes appartenant à trente-sept pays, ont participé à cette exposition et à ce concours international de la caricature. L'Europe avait la plus forte représentation: seize pays dont quatre Etats socialistes. L'an dernier, c'est un israélien, M. Jacob Shiloh, qui fut la gagnant du grand prix. Cette année, le lauréat de ce prix de $5,000.00 vient de Turquie. C'est M. Erdogan Ozer.

La Ville de Montréal, s'appuyant sur le service diplomatique du Canada, fait preuve d'un grand effort pour rejoindre les caricaturistes du monde entier. Les résultats sont là pour démontrer que ce travail est couronné de succès.

La littérature participe à ce surgissement de Montréal comme centre culturel mondial. Un imprimeur de Montréal, M. J.-A. Thérien, vient de fonder un prix littéraire de la "francité". Son organisation fut confiée à M. J.-André Vachon, directeur "d'Etudes françaises", revue littéraire publiée par les Presses de l'Université de Montréal. Le montant du prix est de $2,000 et sera décerné annuellement à l'auteur d'un roman ou d'un récit. Ce qui caractérise ce prix, c'est qu'il s'adresse à tous les écrivains de langue française à l'exception de ceux qui résident en France. Les règlements du prix sont précis là-dessus. Le manuscrit n'est accepté qu'à la condition "que l'auteur ait vécu au moins la moitié de sa vie hors du territoire de la France, et au moins sept années consécutives dans un même pays, mais autre que la France; cette condition n'exclut cependant pas les concurrents qui auraient passé le même nombre d'années dans les départements et territoires français d'outre-mer."

On peut ajouter d'autres manifestations tel que le concours international du violon qui s'est déroulé à la Place des Arts cet été. Notons également que c'est à Montréal qu'est née l'idée de fonder "l'Association des Universités partiellement ou entièrement de Langue Française" (AUPELF) dont le premier président fut Mgr Irénée Lussier, ancien Recteur de l'Université de Montréal. Et c'est à Montréal que se trouve le Secrétariat International de cette Association qui prend de plus en plus d'envergure.

Une telle convergence de manifestations et de mouvements ne peut pas être complètement fortuite. Les Canadiens français savent, d'une part, que sans la coopération et l'entraide entre les divers pays francophones, la culture française dans chacun de ces pays sera affaiblie. Il y a d'autre part la découverte du

caractère universel de la culture française. Les instituteurs canadiens-français qui vont enseigner en Afrique découvrent, en dépit des distances et des différences de traditions, une communauté linguistique et culturelle.

Les manifestations et les rencontres internationales dépassent en nombre et en importance celles qui se font sur le plan canadien. L'on peut facilement remarquer que, dans son épanouissement, la culture française cherche les amitiés et les alliances en dehors du Canada et au-delà du Continent nord-américain. Il n'y a pas lieu, à mon avis, de craindre un tel état d'esprit. Au contraire, si l'on accepte que l'avenir du Canada soit celui d'un pays biculturel et bilingue, l'on doit souhaiter que les deux cultures soient fortes et vigoureuses. La biculturalisme implique l'existence de deux cultures. Les Canadiens-français, en élargissant leurs frontières et en renforçant, grâce à des amitiés internationales, la culture française au Canada, permettent tous les espoirs sur l'avenir du biculturalisme au pays.

Dans quelques mois, avec l'Expo 67, Montréal ouvrira ses portes au monde entier. Comme on le voit, les Montréalais sont psychologiquement et intellectuellement préparés à cette grande rencontre internationale.

# THE COMMONWEALTH IN PRINT

*William H. New*

If VIRGINIA WOOLF'S COMMON READER has not been seduced by the television set and is still, in fact, reading, then he still has to make the frustrating choice of what to consume. More books surround him today than they did in the 1920's; more translations have appeared; more authors from more countries have begun writing in English — not least of all in the Commonweath itself. The choice among these, though frustrating (the world and time being still too much with us, not to mention getting and spending), can yield ample reading pleasure.

Increasingly within the last few years, critics and scholars have discovered that literature exists in the Commonwealth. Many readers have known about this for some time, of course — Chinua Achebe is immensely popular in his native Nigeria, but critics are just getting around to acknowledging that he writes in English and very well. Having made the initial discovery, however, the criticism often tends to talk about Commonwealth Literature as though it were a single identifiable phenomenon. "Commonwealth *Literatures*" would be a better term, for the diversity among the nations has naturally led to a diversity in writing. We don't have to be told again about the threats to the Commonwealth from republicanism, racialism, and so on; the association is probably more of an historical accident than anything else, for all the sharing of language and institutions that may exist today. The countries (Britain excluded) share also such intangible things as a mentally colonial background; some, such as Australia and Canada, for a time felt tangibly distant-from-the-mother-country; some of the recently emerged nations must share a sense of contemporaneity, like unidentical twins. On top of all this are global conflicts, rapid transport, and mass media communications systems — phenomena of the twentieth century which have diminished the size of the world and have reduced some of the differences among literatures, particularly those related to a time lag in literary fashions.

Joseph Jones and Hartley Grattan, two of the first Americans to foster Commonwealth studies, have argued persuasively that this is one world and that today we must consider not English literature but *literature in English*. Jones's preliminary and highly selective bibliography of Commonwealth and South Pacific literatures has circulated in a pre-publication form to several academics in the field, and it is a useful basic research tool. His book, *Terranglia* (Twayne, 1966), extends the argument in a critical and bibliographical study. The book itself, of course, awaits a thorough review; the basic argument has certain validity, provided it doesn't lead us to perceive sameness where there is only similarity, or likeness where there is only a proximity in time.

It is refreshing that comparative studies are being attempted. The petty nationalism of so much Canadian and Australian criticism — the multiple choice game of "It talks about (Australia, Canada), therefore it can only be (good, bad)" — is ludicrous and justifiably allows writers such as Mordecai Richler to caricature their parochial society. Comparative studies do not promise inevitable improvement of the situation, nor do they mean instant "universality" for "regional" writers, but they do offer a means for seeing the scope of one literature by observing its relationship to another. R. E. Watters' "genographic" approach to the literatures of Canada, the U.S.A., the U.K., and Australia, in *Canadian Literature* No. 7 and in the *Proceedings* of the International Comparative Literature Association (1962) offers an interesting example, for it stresses the differences among literatures rather than their similarities. Claude Bissell's article in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1956) does the same thing for Canada and Australia, after observing the same *source* for these two societies. John Matthews' *Tradition in Exile* (Toronto, 1962) is perhaps the best known and most detailed example; objectively it observes both the parallels and differences between Australian and Canadian poetry in the nineteenth century, but in tracing themes it happily does not shrink from making value judgments as well.

The grave weakness of so many preliminary critical works is that their surveys, necessarily superficial, avoid making detailed assessments. Often they are broadly historical works that essentially acquaint the reader, common or otherwise, with a host of names. The criticism levelled at Desmond Pacey's *Creative Writing in Canada* (Ryerson, 1952) illustrates this. The same criticism has been aimed at A. L. McLeod's *The Commonwealth Pen* (Cornell, 1961). Here, again, the title implies a uniformity which even the book itself does not support; a set of histories by diverse hands, it emphasizes, no matter how unintentionally, the inequalities and irregularities among the several literatures.

THIS DOES NOT NEGATE the fact that parallels do exist or that the Commonwealth countries often face similar problems. The first international conference on Commonwealth literature, held in Leeds in 1964, testifies to this. People came to it knowing their own literatures, but left knowing more; more important, they left knowing each other, having discovered that problems with a language, an identity, an indigenous people, a relationship with Britain, and even with the practical matters of publication were in some way common to them all. Earlier in this chronicle, I momentarily exempted Britain from the Commonwealth. Unfortunately this is something we tend too often to do. Though the U.K. has least in common with many of the other members, it, too, has had to face the twentieth century; it, too, has problems with economy, race — and even language, as the recent minor revolution in the English novel would indicate. The "Northerner" has appeared — in conflict with London and in conflict with himself — and Sillitoe, Braine, Barstow, and Storey, among others, have all had a go at exploring what he's like. Perhaps this active discovery is one of the reasons why Leeds, rather than London, has become the academic centre for Commonwealth literary studies in England. A recent review of an inter-university drama festival in Britain suggested that if there were ever a revolution there, the titular leaders might come from Oxbridge, but all the energy would come from Leeds. It is not surprising, at any rate, that since the 1964 conference, Leeds University has continued to retain its importance in the Commonwealth field. The proceedings of that conference have been edited by John Press and published as *Commonwealth Literature* (Heinemann, 1965), and the first and excellent issue of the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* has appeared, edited by Arthur Ravenscroft. Wisely he plans to include an annual bibliography of primary and secondary sources. The Canadian bibliography section (1965, for 1964) was edited by Carl F. Klinck, and the issue also included John Matthews' interesting article on the work of A. M. Klein, and Douglas Grant's review of the *Literary History of Canada.*

Tied to all the preceding critical activity, and building upon the interest which the literature itself has aroused, is the most recent Leeds enterprise. Towards the end of 1965, A. N. Jeffares headed the steering committee for the establishment of the Association of Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies. This looks like a most worthwhile organization, and one can only applaud its formation. It hopes to encourage both comparative studies and linguistic investigations — in the various new uses of English that naturally stem from regional dialects and

between English and the many indigenous tongues. It would be a mistake to look upon this in isolation, however; the MLA Commonwealth section (the 1966 chairman is Bruce Sutherland of Pennsylvania State) is a much more limited enterprise, but a very selective bibliography has appeared in *PMLA* since 1957, a brief newsletter has been circulated, and North American interest in the field has during the last year expanded greatly. Various schools such as Texas, Cornell, Northwestern, British Columbia, and Alberta are all concerned with the study, and the Commonwealth Institute at Queen's is justifiably well known.

Such growth is remarkable, even if one is concerned only with the germination and spread of an academic idea. Casual references are the first acknowledgment; this leads to works which "fill gaps", such as Anthony Burgess's *The Novel Today*, which examines Commonwealth writers provided they are published in Britain. Afterwards come monographs like the *Australian Writers and their Works* series, and more detailed studies, like Twayne's *World Authors* series. And there are other publications. Explanation of one society to another still lies behind the "special issue" concept. The *New Statesman*'s Commonwealth issue (September 10, 1960) in which Mordecai Richler appeared, was a preliminary survey; recently it has been followed by the *TLS* in part II of "Sounding the Sixties" (September 16, 1965), which for all its acumen, still apparently equates "Canadian literature" with literature which has Canada for a setting. Writers themselves have rid literature of this hoary attitude — Earle Birney's poetry on the Caribbean and Margaret Laurence's novels about Africa spring at once to mind — but some of the critics are again behind.

*Tamarack Review*'s Caribbean issue showed an attempt to introduce Commonwealth literature in Canada by its writers and not just by criticism. The Australian issue of India's *The Literary Criterion* had a comparable aim, and this latter, edited by C. D. Narasimhaiah, has since been published in Australia by Jacaranda Press. The "International Section" of a new journal, Nissim Ezekiel's *Poetry India*, is again an interesting departure. The first issue, for example, includes works by Roy Fuller and Howard Sergeant as well as by such imagistic young Indian poets as R. Parthasarathy.

Howard Sergeant, of course, is a central but neglected figure in Commonwealth studies, for in his status as editor of *Outposts*, he has encouraged young poets to write and also provided a place for good poets from anywhere to publish. *Outposts* was founded in 1944, so we must admire it for its tenacity as well as for its quality. The consistent quality is one of the reasons for its survival of course; one tends too often to underestimate the perspicacity of the common reader. For a

work to satisfy him, it must be interesting, and this quality, when we come down to it, is what ultimately determines whether or not a work lasts more than one generation. This does not mean a writer must talk down to the public, but it does mean that his greatest sin will be dullness. A variety of poets have published in *Outposts*, ranging from U.K. writers Peter Redgrove and Charles Causley, through citizens of two worlds like Edward Lucie-Smith, to Commonwealth writers such as David Wevill, Earle Birney, John Newlove, Zulfikar Ghose, and Christopher Wallace-Crabbe. That variety of experience and literary expression does not necessarily preclude dullness, but it does make it rare.

The very mention of these names and journals raises another problem that bedevils the society that has at least discovered, if not mastered, the printed word. It is all very well for there to be the opportunities for people to get into print, but how does the ordinary reader discover what's going on, except by indiscriminately exploring? Commentators are supposed to keep him abreast of his world; little magazines are supposed to keep him ahead of it. And if the voices aren't narrow and strident, then perhaps they do. Publishers themselves have a responsibility here. If they don't take their wares to market, no one will buy. The obscurity of small presses is a problem in itself, but the larger ones, like naughty children, should often know better than to act as they do. McClelland & Stewart has a fine paperback series in the New Canadian Library, for example, but distribution in England is so haphazard that even in Leeds, the Commonwealth Literatures centre, the books are nowhere to be found. Nor does Canada have, as New Zealand does, any really comparable work to *Books in Print* to facilitate purchasers and booksellers.

In Canada and Australia there are several good series in which Commonwealth authors appear, including Macmillan's, Clarke Irwin's, and the excellent *Australian Poets* series from Angus and Robertson, which Canadian publishers would do well to imitate. Heinemann Educational's *African Writers Series* is also excellent, and occasional works appear with imprints from Three Crowns (Oxford), Fontana, Faber, Foursquare, and (in Germany) Seven Seas. Only the Indo-Anglian and the rich Caribbean literatures are badly out of print, in fact. Fortunately J. M. Dent promises a series of Commonwealth writings to begin appearing about 1968; one can hope that this will do two things: bring back works like Desani's *All About H. Hatterr* that have disappeared undeservedly, and keep us up to date with high quality new writing.

The anthology is another attempt to keep up with what is in print and to supply a sampler for the exploratory reader. Unfortunately anthologists themselves

often have difficulty tracking down the raw material. The excellent annual *Borestone Mountain Poetry Awards* volumes, for example, survey poetry which has appeared in journals during the preceding year and reprint their choice of the best. The editors have taken poems from Australian and British publications for some years, but strangely they have only recently discovered that Canada has journals and poets too. This is not, in this case, traceable to a sudden shift in the quality of Canadian writing. The inability to identify poets' names, however, arises much closer home in one of the two recent anthologies of Commonwealth poetry, Peter Brent's *Young Commonwealth Poets '65* (Heinemann, 1965). The "Canada" section of this is edited by Gerald Wilson, who includes some of his own work. (Interesting, some of it, but who is Gerald Wilson?) The choice he makes to represent the work of Canadian writers just coming into print is an odd one, but any anthology tempts a reviewer to a round of name-dropping. Why all the John Robert Colombo and no Marya Fiamengo? Why David Cull and not Lionel Kearns? Representative anthologies like this one, or like M. J. O'Donnell's *An Anthology of Commonwealth Verse* (Blackie, 1963), are bound to be uneven, for the editorial inclusion policy must be complicated by politics as well as by questions concerning artistry. The Penguin books are similarly uneven, but here simply because of different bases from book to book for the choice of poems. The New Zealand volume concentrates on a few writers in depth, whereas Ralph Gustafson's volume on Canada surveys the scene from the beginnings to the date of publication.

One ends up at this point wondering where Canadian literature fits in all this. Certainly sections are reserved for it in assorted anthologies and series, but equally as certainly the North American environment — cultural as well as physiographical — has exerted an influence upon it that makes it different from the others in some ways. We live in one world, but also in worlds within worlds, and these micro-environments overlap, reflect, reverse, lead, echo, and confront each other. If this demonstrates differences, fine. If it shows up parallels and similarities, fine again. Simply the opportunity to see the relationship among literatures is an exciting one, for in allowing the possibility for development, it augurs health for the literatures within the Commonwealth and perhaps even for those outside it as well. Inquiring readers may be overwhelmed by the increasing mound of books, but if the books are any good then the reading is enjoyable. One can only suggest that though the curious cat died, he probably led an interesting life.

review articles

# AUTOPSY ON FAULKNER

*William Hall*

MICHAEL MILLGATE, *The Achievement of William Faulkner.* Longmans. $10.00.

IT USED TO BE THAT some time after an author's death the critics and scholars gathered like vultures in disorganized and competitive flocks to pick over the literary remains, that still were something of a mystery. The process is now nothing like so long delayed or disorganized and metaphor from nature seems out of place. An autopsy perhaps seems more appropriate; with certain organs already removed in life (with the subject's consent), arranged, preserved, about the table, for reference. So it is with Faulkner, whether one likes or dislikes the change.

In *Faulkner at the University* and in his *Paris Review* interview of the 1950's Faulkner was already answering questions (with varying degrees of seriousness) about his novels and his art. Since 1964 there has been in print a complete catalogue of his library; in *William Faulkner of Oxford* some forty of those "who knew him on his home ground" have given their impressions of "the man they knew" along with some sixteen pages of photographs. And this is only a little of the kind of information that is now available. Meanwhile the Faulkner manuscripts are already installed in the literary banks (largely at the Universities of Virginia and Texas) and, as Professor Millgate's book makes clear, are already being made use of for critical study of the novels and stories.

Obviously for the critic of the modern novelist this rapid dissemination and availability of material can be invaluable. The best parts of Professor Millgate's book are those in which he puts this kind of material to use. This is so in his introductory chapter on "The Career" in which he presents in a small compass one of the most informative and clear-headed accounts of Faulkner's literary life that I have read. It is so also in the early parts of the succeeding chapters in which he discusses the relationships (though sometimes in a tantalizingly incomplete way) between manuscript and final text. These discussions frequently bring fresh light to bear on the meaning of the fiction and on the development of Faulkner as artist. This is especially so in the discussions of *The Sound and the Fury,* of *Absolom, Absolom,* and of the short stories.

The speed with which Faulkner has

become the kind of figure about whom such abundant material is available makes difficulties for the critic, however, as well as presenting him with considerable opportunities. There are already established certain clichés and general notions about Faulkner's work; notions that have become as much a part of "Faulkner parlance" as others have become of novelists like Hawthorne, Melville, and James. Faulkner and the question of time; Faulkner as comic novelist; Faulkner and the myth of the South; Faulkner and the negro: these are some of the more obvious ones. The question that arises is whether the critic, with this great mass of material now available to him, can ignore such general notions, already so obvious, as casually as Professor Millgate tends to do.

His reasons for refusing to discuss such notions as notions seem to me completely admirable:

> Thus Faulkner's major concerns, like those of all great artists, were ultimately moral, and there is little value in abstract discussions of his ideas which fail to take this into account. . . . Faulkner in his best work is not concerned with ideas in any abstract sense. His preoccupations are not intellectual but moral; what he offers is not philosophy but wisdom.

This puts the emphasis in the right place but need not preclude all discussion of, for example, Faulkner's preoccupation with time. While one would agree with Professor Millgate's general implication that such a question is too often discussed outside the context of the novels, where it becomes distorted and grossly oversimplified, it would seem to be over-simplification of another kind to quote "For was, and is, and will be, are but is" from Tennyson's *The Princess* and remark that "Faulkner used the same simple terminology to express his own conception of time's fluidity".

It would have been relevant and possible and (perhaps one might suggest) necessary, given Professor Millgate's premise, to discuss Faulkner's concept of time in terms of the action of *As I Lay Dying*, in terms of the structure of *Absalom, Absalom*, or in terms of the imagery of *The Bear*.

The same criticism might be made about the superficial attention that is given to Faulkner's comedy in the novels. Professor Millgate does suggest in his conclusion that "it is alongside Dickens . . . that Faulkner must ultimately be ranked." A very appropriate ranking one would think, but there is no evidence to indicate from the detailed examination of the novels in the book that Professor Millgate sees them ranked together as great comic novelists; they appear rather as fellows with Balzac — great national novelists.

Thus the discussions of *Sanctuary*, *The Hamlet*, and *The Town* have little or nothing to say about the comedy, although some definition of the comic quality of the vision would seem to be necessary to an understanding of those works. Professor Millgate does comment on the function of the comedy in Shreve's dialogue in *Absalom, Absalom* but says nothing about the significance of the variety of comedy in the narratives of Rosa and Mr. Compson. Yet the comedy in those sections, one might argue, is vital to the reader's correct ironic stance towards the events. They enable him to assess Faulkner's own control and understanding of the "explorations of the nature of truth" that Professor Millgate sees as one of the major concerns of that novel. Nothing is said either about the

comic tone of Jason's monologue in *The Sound and the Fury*; a tone that qualifies the reader's view of Jason and hence of Quentin and of the whole novel quite considerably.

There is one other curious lack in the book. Professor Millgate makes excellent use of his close and detailed knowledge of Faulkner's milieu but very little is said about Faulkner's relationship to the more important figures among his contemporaries or in the American tradition. Something is said of Hawthorne and Melville, by the way, but not very much. Perhaps again Professor Millgate was deliberately attempting to avoid the obvious, the clichés, assuming them to be only too well known to the audience to which his book is consciously addressed: "the present generation of Faulkner students." And yet one wonders if this generation might not profit from a re-examination of this particular cliché. It invariably sees Faulkner as linked to this or that strand of the total tradition, instead of seeing him as he might more profitably be seen, as

the culminating gathering point of the total tradition of the American novel; the exhaustion of all its possibilities as Shakespeare was of the poetic drama up to his time.

Nevertheless Professor Millgate, in his avoidance of this tradition, brings to bear on his reading of Faulkner some illuminating references from English and Continental literatures that American critics, with their still current over-preoccupation with the native tradition, are likely to have over-looked. Of particular interest in this respect is his pointing out how frequent and how subtle Faulkner's use of classical myth in his novels is.

Professor Millgate clearly has a great deal to teach "the present generation of Faulkner students" about the man and his work. The directness, the lucidity, and impressively informed treatment overcome the perfectionist complaint of occasional signs of haste in the writing and of superficiality in critical evaluation. The autopsy, in the hands of such a surgeon, is not of necessity such a depressing metaphor.

# MICROCOSM OF OUR MOVING WORLD

*Roy Daniells*

*A Choice of Critics.* Selections from *Canadian Literature.* Edited by George Woodcock. Oxford University Press. Cloth $5.00, Paper $2.50.

THIS SELECTION FROM THE critical essays which appeared in *Canadian Literature* between 1959 and 1965 has merits that will attract readers even beyond the confines of Canada. One envisages some curious Swiss or hopeful Hungarian lifting the cover with the thought that here is a conspectus of the Canadian cultural order. This hypothetical reader will turn the pages and seek for schools of criticism — conservatives versus liberals, Romanticism against Realism, exponents of the absurd and seekers after the abstruse. Above all, as he moves from critic to critic, he will be looking for an introduction to the masterworks of our literature, the classics, in which he can walk about, make explorations, return to starting points, without encountering the kind of limits he finds in his own mind. Such expectations on the part of the Swiss, Hungarian or Canadian reader will not, however, be fulfilled.

He will find seventeen essays by twelve critics, three of whom learned their trade outside Canada. If he enquires, he will discover that they live and write for the most part in the conurbations surround-

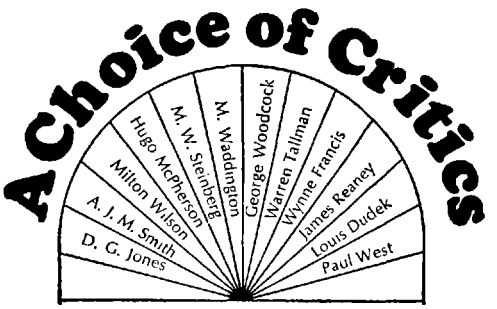
ing Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. A score of poets and novelists is under review. Poetry is the exclusive or main concern of two-thirds of the essays. The novel occupies the remainder. Drama is barely mentioned. The works discussed are the product of some four decades — 1920's to 1960's. There is tentatively claimed for one or two of the writers a seat at the same table where the acknowledged great of the literary tradition sit down. One French-Canadian, whose work has been translated, receives attention. The critics start off in all directions, some pursuing the historical record, others inditing their personal impression of a book or a man, one or two enticing us into a private myth they hold dear. No work under discussion shows the magnitude of, say, *Moby Dick*. It might be thought that the editor — whose introduction is a masterly survey of the complexities of the contents — had deliberately avoided large and crucial issues to attack special smaller problems. Such a conclusion, however, would be totally wrong. This aggregation of interlocking essays is, in fact, a cunningly devised scale model of the Canadian condition, a microcosm of our moving world, a complex of vectors corresponding to the tensions which hold our opposed components together around the voids of our deficiencies.

Canadian culture is analogous to the C.P.R., in that both have been designed to abolish discontinuity, to bridge spaces and to subdue distance. The problems of terrain, temperature and transport have their cultural counterparts. Disorientation, disinheritance and disenchantment are common Canadian experiences. Each society across the globe shows its own variant of the world's malaise; the special contribution Canadians can make to its dissipation comes from their grapple with Canada itself. "The most characteristically Canadian thing is the Canadian landscape," Paul West remarks in his excellent essay on Earle Birney's expertise; "cities on the other hand merge together." And anyone who has herded sheep in the Canadian west will feel the conjunction of actuality and myth in a poem of Jay Macpherson quoted by D. G. Jones, a Canadian variant of the resurrection theme:

> Cold pastoral: the shepherd under the snow
> Sleeps circled with his sheep.
> Above them, though successive winters heap
> Rigours, and wailing weathers go
> Like beasts about, time only rocks their
> sleep.

If in one generation we have passed from enduring rural isolation to coping with urban congestion, the problems are the same. Gabrielle Roy, as Hugo McPherson notices, in recording the death of Alexandre Chenevert, that small defeated denizen of Montreal, lays stress upon the meaning of his name — Green Oaktree.

One still meets people in Canada who can remember when the C.P.R. was completed and we have not yet had time to celebrate Confederation's centenary, reminders of the brevity of our history as a nation bound together a mari usque ad mare. The central group of our novelists, which includes Sinclair Ross, W. O. Mitchell, Morley Callaghan, Hugh MacLennan, Ernest Buckler and Mordecai Richler, are all concerned, as George Woodcock, D. G. Jones and Warren Tallman convincingly demonstrate, to lead us out of the wilderness, turn exile into possession and regain our lost love from the underworld. The poets follow suit. A. J. M. Smith argues that the writer of poetry in Canada enjoys an

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informed freedom of choice as regards subject matter and formal models. Wynne Francis shows where this choice led in the years when *Preview* and *First Statement* sprang up, confronted one another, and merged into *Northern Review*, which died with its devoted editor in 1956. In another part of the forest, Milton Wilson, Miriam Waddington, Louis Dudek and James Reaney argue the values of poetry in the 50's and 60's. All the poets concerned — Smith, Pratt, Wilkinson, Birney, Avison, Souster, Macpherson — evade easy identification. All are struggling with recalcitrant experience to achieve interpretation, whether through protest or by achieving vision. All are concerned, in one way or another, with the limitations imposed on us by our geography — a four-thousand mile stretch from ocean to ocean, remoteness from yet exposure to other cultures, a background of Calvinism and later of Victorianism never adequately vitalized by fresh contact, an uneasy if honourable role as a middle ranking power, a diffusion in our psychic effort which denies us masterpieces. An Old Testament world, to borrow an image from Jones, in which redemption is looked forward to but which waits the actual deliverance of spirits in prison.

Illumination, throughout this book, is likely to dart upon special problems, as an extra bonus. French-Canadian culture is, by inference, seen as "so truly parallel" to our own that they "can never meet". Real interaction between the two cultures, with enormous potential of mutual enlightenment, awaits some miracle of refraction.

The Jewish contribution to Canadian writing is seen as both more and less than might be expected. More, far more, than the percentage of our total population which is Jewish would seem to make possible. Less, in that international Jewish sensibility has long ago overcome or accepted the problems that afflict Canadians. Hence *The Second Scroll* of Abraham Klein which, as M. W. Steinberg and Miriam Waddington agree, is mature in its understanding of despair and search and hope so as to subsist in a class by itself.

The authors and critics involved in this volume have been, each in his own way, rigorously faithful to the exact rendering of our condition. They have marvellously resisted the temptation to inflate or the inclination to generalize. They have wrapped themselves so closely about the Canadian problem that its contours have become their own. It has been argued that this world we live in is the best of all *possible* worlds, though superficially we might wish for a simpler and more benign one. Similarly we may conclude that Mr. Woodcock has given us the best of all possible conflations of critical viewpoint about Canada. We are obliged to join an intense, pervasive, low-pitched, compelling but open-ended discussion directed to the question, Who are we? And the joy of this book is that each of us may derive from its web of fact and fable, of exposition and description, of evocation and pronouncement, the answer he is able to receive. For this reader it is the knowledge that beyond the waste of snow or the barbed hedge of urban development the land itself sleeps, awaiting one who will lay his head on her breast and hear the heart beating.

# MESSAGE AND MEDIUM

*Malcolm Ross*

A. S. P. WOODHOUSE, *The Poet and His Faith. Religion and Poetry in England from Spenser to Eliot and Auden.* University of Chicago Press. $6.95.

THE LATE A. S. P. WOODhouse's study of religious poetry in England rests on the firm foundation of the Anglican principle of the *via media,* and on an unshakable conviction that in poetry, or at any rate in serious religious poetry, the message is not just the medium.

To speak first of the "æsthetic" of these Weil Institute lectures: Professor Woodhouse is aware, in much contemporary critical thought, "of a flight from affirmation in favor of more indirect modes of suggestion" and "an assertion that where affirmations occur they are in fact pseudo-statements to be judged solely by their emotive power and with no reference to their assumed truth or falsehood". He concedes that such a theory in a post-Christian age may serve to "rescue" the critic from any need for religious commitment. Nor does he deny the relevance of an æsthetic of non-committal to our recent poetry of calculated pseudo-statement. (Let the dead present bury its dead!) "The mistake is to apply the theory to the great body of traditional poetry" — to the poetry of *real* statement.

Professor Woodhouse is at some pains to remind the new theorists — and the new poets — that, inescapably, the medium of poetry is words, that words have (or used to have) meaning, and that poetry, the high art of words, occupies (or once occupied) "some common ground with philosophy, with history, indeed with the whole range of knowledge communicable by — and only by — words". In all serious religious poetry — in Auden as surely as in Spenser — the affirmation uttered, "the poem itself", must command, at least at the moment of utterance, the poet's "wholehearted belief and response".

Yet Professor Woodhouse, with all his concern for the poetry of affirmation and real statement, is never one to slight the medium in favour of the message. In his treatment here of poems as unlike as *Paradise Lost* and *The Wreck of the Deutschland,* he is properly sensitive to image, symbol, pattern, to the total æsthetic effect in which "message" and "medium", while not the same, are nevertheless, as by magic, one.

Perhaps it is not entirely fanciful to claim an analogy between Professor Woodhouse's poetic theory and the controlling religious principle of the book — the principle of the *via media.* Following Paul Elmer More, Professor Woodhouse refuses to regard the *via media* "as just a fine name for compromise", but rather (with More) sees it "as an application of Aristotle's doctrine of the mean". Of great importance for our understanding

of Professor Woodhouse's whole scheme and method is his declaration that in the Aristotelian doctrine "the mean does not simply reject the two extremes but reaches out to comprehend so much of their content as it can assimilate to itself".

Thus it is that in his critical method Professor Woodhouse is able to "reach out" to the technical and tonal values of the new criticism without losing his own firm grip on the idea, or without feeling obliged to reduce real affirmation to pseudo-statement.

But it is in his response to the many varieties of religious experience in the English tradition that one observes most vividly at play the active, creative sensibility of the *via media*. Now there can be no mistaking Professor Woodhouse's allegiance to those principles of a rational Christian humanism first articulated for Anglicanism by Richard Hooker. For it is clearly in Hooker that one finds the principles of thought and value which shape Professor Woodhouse's whole method and cast of mind. In Hooker. Not in Spenser. Not in Milton. Indeed, Professor Woodhouse has been able to discern with such astonishing clarity the relation of the orders of grace and nature in the theology of each of these great poets precisely because, in each, the relation is off-centre, off the centre as defined in *The Ecclesiastical Polity*. Yet it is in the spirit of Hooker's *via media* that Professor Woodhouse "reaches out", "assimilates", and thereby "comprehends" both *The Faerie Queene* and *Paradise Lost*.

Nor is one in doubt, either, that for Professor Woodhouse the truest and sweetest expression of the ethos of the Anglican *via media* is to be found in the poetry of George Herbert. Yet in this book there is no rejection of Protestant and Roman Catholic extremes but again a reaching out, an effort to "comprehend" all that can be assimilated to the mean — from Spenser as from Southwell, from Cowper as from Dryden, from Tennyson and Browning as from John Henry Newman and Gerard Manley Hopkins. Among the unexpected achievements of the book is a warmly sympathetic treatment of the religious element in the great romantics and a just and felt appraisal of Robert Bridges' long neglected *Testament of Beauty*.

The specialist will, of course, recognize from earlier Woodhouse essays, ideas which have illuminated for so many of us the greatest poems of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While we may envy the general reader who is now encountering Woodhouse for the first time, we must also marvel at the skill with which the author has abstracted some of his earlier insights and deployed them in a new and expanding context. And if, as some have protested, there is nothing "new" in his reading of the Victorians and moderns, it must in fairness be observed that Professor Woodhouse, without straining for novelty of treatment, has discovered (not devised) a meaningful pattern in which Tennyson, Browning, Eliot, Auden and all the others, brightly harnessed, take their place in order serviceable.

In *The Poet and his Faith* Professor Woodhouse does not, like some of his elders, subordinate poetry to faith. Nor does he, like so many of his juniors, subordinate the faith to poetry. Catholic in reach and range, sane and serene in tone and temper, this is a learned and a wise book from the hand of the finest humanist this country has known, perhaps will ever know.

# SHAVIAN FAITH

*Frances Frazer*

J. PERCY SMITH, *The Unrepentant Pilgrim. A Study of the Development of Bernard Shaw.* Macmillan. $4.95.

ON MAY 26, 1944, BERNARD Shaw wrote the following terse message to the British Museum's Keeper of Manuscripts in response to a request for manuscript material:

> For 50 years past all my works have been drafted in shorthand (Pitman's written legibly without reporters' contradictions) and transcribed by my secretary on the typewriter. As I correct a good deal, and dread the literary ghouls who dig up and publish all an author's mistakes and slips and blunders and redundancies, I ruthlessly destroy every trace of the successive polishings the book gets before I pass it for press.

It was a staggering lie. The British Museum, a major beneficiary under Shaw's will, now possesses reams of exhaustively-revised Shavian play manuscripts, typescripts and prompt copies with autograph annotations, notes for particular productions, and pages of additional dialogue. The Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, and the Hanley Collection of the University of Texas are also repositories of vast quantities of material directly concerned with the formative stages of Shaw's plays and other works. In addition, all of these libraries and the London School of Economics possess large collections of Shaw's letters and business papers — a large proportion directly or indirectly concerned with the massive Shaw canon. In the past few years, "literary ghouls" (myself included), anxious to absorb all the primary material about even one play, have been digging up more bones than they well know what to do with.

On the other hand, Shavians of the hinterland, without access to the manuscript collections or to English newspaper and periodical libraries where as-yet-uncollected Shavian articles are buried have been alternately enlightened and frustrated by selective, edited collections from the seemingly inexhaustible supply: enlightened by previously unpublished pronouncements by Shaw on hitherto murky areas of his thought, frustrated by their recognition that the collectors have read far more than they have published and that even the best-intentioned editor may unconsciously reflect his own biases in his selection. More disturbing still are new critical and interpretive books on Shaw that quote new snippets to support theses, for Shaw was so apt to overstate and misremember in the interests of his immediate cause that contradictions abound in his writing and reported conversation. The critic can quote Shaw to his purpose.

These reflections are prompted by Professor J. Percy Smith's *The Unrepentant Pilgrim. A Study of the Development of Bernard Shaw,* which is a book with a thesis. Not that it is an objectionable

thesis — far from it. Drawing upon standard and recently accessible material as well as several unexploited (by Shavians) biographies and reminiscences of Shaw's contemporaries, Dr. Smith has written a lucid and often charming biography of Shaw's early years to prove that the development of Shaw's socialism coincided with the development of his "religion", which gave the socialism moral foundation and a purpose. The contention seems entirely probable. The book's principal weakness is that, in asserting it, it tends to set up straw opposition and to manipulate Shaviana suspiciously.

For instance, on his first page Dr. Smith sketches the two images suggested by Shaw's public *persona*, G.B.S. — the ascetic, objective critic whose apparent otherworldliness suggests the saint, and the Mephistophelian figure of the caustic eyebrows, assertive beard, and mocking eyes suggestive of a devil's disciple — and suggests that "we" are prone to regard the latter as the more valid. "To do so increases Shaw's entertainment value; and it has the additional merit of giving us the soundest possible reasons for ignoring anything serious that he may say." Dr. Smith goes on to assert that although Shaw was concerned to affirm rather than destroy religion, and said so repeatedly, his biographers give only brief, "embarrassed" or condescending attention to his statements, and the critics who take his mission seriously "see it almost exclusively in relation to *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah*." Like Shaw's assertion in 1900 that the first London critics of *The Devil's Disciple* took Dick Dudgeon's diabolonianism seriously, this simply is not true. Nor is the book's implication that in the general opinion Shaw's religion of the Life Force was not evident in his plays until *Man and Superman*. Shaw's recently-published correspondence with the Abbess of Stanbrook and Warren S. Smith's collection *The Religious Speeches of Bernard Shaw* have surely convinced even purblind readers of *The Collected Works* that Shaw was a profoundly serious Creative Evolutionist. Archibald Henderson exhibits neither embarrassment nor condescension in his treatment of the Life Force. And although the theologian Dean Inge, the philosopher C. E. M. Joad, and the sober layman St. John Ervine have bones to pick with Shaw's philosophy, they do not belittle it. Moreover, I'll lay odds that every freshman exposed to *Candida* has had the poet's "secret" explained to him in terms of the Life Force by textual notes, his instructor, or both. Witness M. W. Steinberg's *Aspects of Modern Drama* (1959): "The play is important in the Shaw canon because it is Shaw's first significant attempt in his drama to present his philosophy of creative evolution. . . ." The fact that G. K. Chesterton's biographer Maisie Ward finds Shaw lacking in joy and belief in God is not imposing.

In plotting Shaw's spiritual history, Dr. Smith takes pains to explain away young Shaw's noisy claims to atheism. Elsewhere in the book he exhibits a fine talent for Shavian paradox: speaking of the G.B.S. myth, he says, "the man who thought himself free of illusion had to turn to the devices of illusion in order to convey his truth." But here he resorts to needless pseudo-paradox:

> You cannot freely believe in a god unless you are also free to deny him; and how can you know this freedom fully unless you commit yourself to denial and face the consequences? Looked at in this way, atheism is not only a dimension of freedom,

> but a dimension of faith, since it presumably takes no less an act of the individual imagination and will to believe in no-god than to believe in a god or some gods.

Granted that a refusal to believe in the Green Hornet implies the presumption that there are things to be believed in, where does this passage get us? And it is surely unnecessary, in view of Shaw's own statement in Sixteen Self Sketches:

> I preferred to call myself an Atheist because belief in God then meant belief in the old tribal idol called Jehovah; and I would not, by calling myself an Agnostic, pretend that I did not know whether it existed or not. I still, when I am dealing with old-fashioned Fundamentalists, tell them that as I do not believe in this idol of theirs they may as well write me off as, for their purposes, an Atheist.

Thesis also intrudes peculiarly in Dr. Smith's discussion of Shaw's early career as a critic of the arts. In a strangely slanted chapter, Shaw is found guilty of shallow art criticism and a failure to appreciate the Impressionists, a lapse compounded by his later claims that he had been their early champion. The drift of this chapter seems to be that Shaw's emotionally impoverished boyhood left him inhibited and disabled with regard to the visual arts, whereas his early immersion in music made him thereafter responsive to ideas and feelings conveyed musically, and that this state of affairs was fortunate for his spiritual potentialities:

> The effects of the strange emotional milieu of Shaw's boyhood were not all admirable ones; but in turning the currents of his feelings into the channels of music, it at least saved him forever from the critical blunder of valuing style above sentiment.

Dr. Smith certainly has Shaw cold *vis-à-vis* the Impressionists. But do Shaw's first hostility and subsequent self-deception prove his incompetence as an art critic? Was he really almost always concerned with subject matter and naturalistic technique? (Here selective quotation comes into question.) And, even assuming that he lacked appreciation of painting, can this weakness be attributed as heavily as Dr. Smith seems to attribute it to an unhealthy fastidiousness and timidity born of deprivation? — especially as the deprivation did not, according to Dr. Smith, preclude a passionate involvement in music.

As I have said, as a whole *The Unrepentant Pilgrim* puts an unexceptionable case, and frequently puts it with economy and grace. The book's tendency to psychologize flimsily and to fight with shadows is a handicap. But Dr. Smith is surely right in seeing Shaw as a fundamentally religious artist inspired by a joyous philosophy and expressing it in dramas about beginnings. His quotations are often pungent, refreshingly new ones, and he can sum up an argument with aphoristic succinctness.

books in review

# CONVINCING CANADIANA

ALAIN GRANDBOIS, *Born in Quebec.* Palm Publishers. $3.95. *Selected Poems.* Contact Press. $3.00.

IT IS A SATISFACTION to write that Alain Grandbois' *Born In Quebec* lives up to the claims of its dust-jacket. The book is one of those infrequent instances when what appears to be hyperbole turns out to be reassuring fact. Roger Duhamel's praise is not an exaggeration. The book is distinguished in every way. This poetic re-creation of seventeenth-century French Canada centres on the life and exploration of Louis Jolliet, the first Canadian by birth to contribute substantially to the further exploration of North America.

The book moves one on several levels. In terms of language alone the English translation of Evelyn M. Brown admirably indicates the evocative power, freshness and intrinsic poetry one would expect of the original. *Born in Quebec* is a poet's evocation of history and therefore moves one in the manner that poetry moves one. It is not a question of language alone, it is essentially an attitude towards the past and implicitly an attitude towards life. The essence of this attitude could be summed up in the word "valour". The book rings with the sense of the courage and the hardship of the Canadian past, epically conceived. Character and event emerge with dramatic clarity. The portraits of historical personalities, Champlain, the heroic Brébeuf, the astute Talon, Frontenac, the Indians: the total milieu is precisely and vividly realized.

What is delineated even more clearly is the country, the breathless solitude, the dense foliage of the Canadian wilderness, the sublimely pristine lakes and rivers, that sense of the north that is our country. "Our country" — this is what emerges explicitly in the accounts of the voyages and explorations described by Grandbois. He convinces the reader who happens to be Canadian that he *has* a country, and a past, and that both the country and the past are of epic proportion.

Those in the mass media who are concerned with projecting an image of the Canadian identity might do well to look at this book. It was first published twenty-five years ago in Paris and except in Quebec has caused little stir. Yet it affected this reviewer (who responds to the word Canadiana with a feeling of guilty boredom) as the distinguished work of a distinguished mind. It proves unequivocally that Canadian history has moments of epic exploit and epic achievement which stir the heart and mind with their essential heroism. Dollard's stand against the Iroquois is a French Canadian Battle of Maldon.

Grandbois' verse seems to have met with a similar unanimity of response. The *Selected Poems* reveal a sensibility more civilized and more complex than is usual among French-Canadian poets. Grandbois' work is marked by a synthesis of theme and poetic technique which produces an effect not unlike music, specifically that of organ music. Herein lies much of its cumulative strength and some of its weakness. For Grandbois, it is the fact of death forever lurking at the

core and centre of human experience that gives to life its very cherished fragility. The same awareness of vulnerable mortality exists in Pope's phrase on the game birds of Windsor Forest who, "fall and leave their little lives in air". Yet for both poets it is this very awareness of death that heightens life, bringing to it the flavour of the rare and the uniquely precious.

Hence the poetry is by nature of its very theme more universal than particular. It is in no way ostensibly Canadian or even French Canadian except in language and in so far as both French and English Canadians share (whatever else they may refuse to share) a common mortality.

Grandbois' central metaphor is that of the traveller, the poet-voyageur; the most frequent device is that of memory. The book finally meshes into a metaphorical journal, a memoir, the record of yet another great excursion of a mysterious, complex earth. Grandbois' images are those of cosmic vastness, stars, space, the abyss, water, the desert. The influences one can detect are those of Verlaine, St. John Perse, a certain surrealist cast, Baudelaire and occasionally Rimbaud. The final result, however, that of an incantatory, bardic style is entirely Grandbois' own. This style is not without a certain monotony, the constant tendency toward personification and apostrophe produces an effect of abstraction and vagueness. The poet's landscape is often a mysterious unspecified one. Lines like, "Ah, c'était le soir des cris et des violons", which promptly evoke Verlaine's more precise, "Les sanglots longs,/ Des violons/ De l'automne," are frequent.

The continual apostrophizing, "O Fiancée", "O beaux doights", "O Terre", "O solitude", "O faiblesse des doights", "O beaux soir d'or", robs the verse of much of its impact. The over-articulateness is a devitalization rather than an intensification of effect. The end result (as with Whitman, another poet with bardic tendencies) is that of an emotional monotone. Nevertheless, despite these limitations, the poetry succeeds as a totality, a distillation and summation of experience, one man's personal exploration in terms of spiritual time and space. Peter Miller's English translation is accurate and intelligent.

MARYA FIAMENGO

# LITERARY VENTRILOQUISM

FRANCIS SPARSHOTT, *A Divided Voice*. Oxford University Press. $4.00.

IT IS NOW A COMMONPLACE of the publishing of poetry that Oxford's Canadian branch is sponsoring volumes which are holdovers of an unchanging poetic past. Conventional concerns, traditional formalism, make *A Divided Voice*, on the whole, an irrelevant book of poems. This has been also partly true of another recent Oxford volume, *A Point of Sky* by John Glassco. There are literary considerations which justify the selected volumes of A. J. M. Smith and F. R. Scott, who grew out of the formal traditionalism of the thirties, but there is no reason why competently stale verse written much later, and curiously in the same manner, should be encouraged today. The interest which some may muster for *A Divided Voice* is not unlike archæologists' curi-

osity in a fabricated Roman villa made of brittle cardboard.

No matter which way we may look at this collection — neatly arranged in six sections, neatly sanctioned stanzas — it is verse; brittle verse that exhibits a mind which is far from being one of a poet's. The skimpiness suggests a ping-pong indulgence — light, fashionable. A glance at the titles suggests the gaucherie which attempts to disguise itself in the sombre and sober categorical name-plates. The contrivances in the poems, "The Categories," "Moving Away," or "Shekaina" are, not surprisingly, Eliotic and Yeatsian — worn out idioms by now, at least. "The Worlds We Live In" has no sense of any real presence though shoes, coalyard and scum are named:

> I do not wish to reside in this world
> Where tonight's lover may be last season's hat
> Or a pair of heelworn shoes.

The language is frequently rhetorical and the effects obvious in the self-conscious manner such verse affects. Ideas not tested in the bloodstreams of living echo falsely in the language. The etiquette of such verse becomes irritating, as in one tete-a-tete, "Conversation Galante". But the refrain in this poem may be telling: "A dumb echo ridicules my speech." These poems are not "speech" but literary ventriloquism that hardly convinces in its kind of didacticism. But on some rare occasions the ventriloquy can be delightful. One of Sparshott's poems which I remember from a magazine anthology in *Pan-ic*, a number of years ago, is probably the best of this verse. "The Song of Rolland":

> My mother called me a graceless lump,
> But I could whistle, and fart, and jump;
> And I have been to the courts of kings,
> Engaged to do those very things.
>
> Now I am shrunk to bone and gristle,
> But still I jump, and fart, and whistle,
> Till, leaping through my proper stink,
> Into a whistling tomb I sink.
>
> My soul weighs heavy in the balance,
> For I, good servant, used my talents;
> And if I whistle, and jump, and fart,
> My Lord will take me to His heart.

Is this an allegorical Ars Poetica?

SEYMOUR MAYNE

# POEMS OF TRIVIAL COMEDY

JOHN S. MOIR, ed., *Rhymes of Rebellion*: Being a Selection of Contemporary Verses About the "Recent Unpleasantness" in Upper Canada, 1837. Ryerson. $3.95.

DEFICIENCY IN LITERATURE may be just as useful a subject for criticism as greatness; it only needs to be taken seriously. We Canadians should have discovered this long ago; but we have spent so much time hopefully incubating our mediocrity that the serious analysis of non-literature has never occurred to us.

*Rhymes of Rebellion* is a collection of very mediocre verse, newspaper poems of the Rebellion of 1837 in Upper Canada. Even the Editor, John S. Moir, who collected the poems for his own amusement in the course of his researches into Canadian history, makes no claim as to their literary merit. The poems are partisan, comic, and trivial; many of them are doggerel; they were intended as ephemeral "poetical propaganda" for a cause, and so they remain. Dr. Moir has presented the poems as documents of history or as curiosities of a by-gone age, not as poetry. All this is taken for granted.

But having said so much, is that all there is to say? I don't think so. Unless we consider the existence of art, at any

## *George Johnston*

# HOME FREE

'Veterans of loving are wary-eyed and scarred / And they see into everything they see,' writes George Johnston in one of the poems in this book. These lines well describe his own insights into the human condition, which are expressed in *Home Free* with the inimitable grace and gentle irony and wit that have brought him a large and devoted audience (his first collection of poems, *The Cruising Auk*, is now in its fifth printing). *Home Free* confirms Mr. Johnston's reputation as a remarkable serious light poet and reveals him as a philosopher who may be disillusioned but is never disenchanted. In addition to the short poems in this book, most of which are here published for the first time, *Home Free* contains two important long poems: 'Under the Tree' and 'Love in High Places'. $4.25

## *Miriam Waddington*

# THE GLASS TRUMPET

The essence of Miriam Waddington's poetry is what one critic of her work has called 'the dream that outreals reality'. She is preoccupied with the relation between reality and illusion — 'the inner vision' — and with the power to act on and transform reality. The idea of Utopia as a creative and determining force, the sense of the miraculous in discovering new connections between old and familiar things, and a fervent candour about the experiences of love are all richly present in this book, which contains the best of the poetry she has written since she published her last book in 1958. $4.50

## *Robert Weaver (Editor)*

# CANADIAN SHORT STORIES

This collection of short stories, which established itself in the World's Classics Series as a most popular anthology, is now reissued in paperback format. It includes stories by Charles G. D. Roberts, Stephen Leacock, Thomas Raddall, Mordecai Richler, Morley Callaghan and many other writers, both English and French-Canadian. *Oxford in Canada Paperback* No. 7. $1.95

## *Oxford*

time, as extraordinary, and its absence normal. On the contrary, we know that artistic expression is normal, even in savages and little children, and it is the absence of art which is strange, which needs to be explained. *Rhymes of Rebellion* ought to be a book of great and moving political poetry. Why is it not?

Political idealism, the struggle for liberty in the Mackenzie rebellion, should have produced noble and enduring poetry. Actually it has produced doggerel and unconvincing jargon; and the loyalist cause, too, has produced mere jingoist nonsense:

> And now that the rebellion's o'er
> Let each true Briton sing,
> Long live the Queen in health and peace,
> And may each rebel swing.

The question, surely, as Raymond Souster once put it, is "why we're such second-rate sons of bitches"; and the answer to this question, rightly framed, might be just as profoundly revealing, on literary grounds, as any explanation of literary genius.

The failure is a failure of humanity, of true seriousness and moral conviction. We find much talk in these poems of "God", "loyalty", "liberty" and other elevated idealisms; but in actuality it must be these and such great convictions which are lacking, and the appeal to them in word must be in some way a deception. How else are we to explain the hollow sound of these words in the poems? The one passage in the entire book which rises above triviality and touches the truth of poetry deals with death, the authentic lament of Samuel Lount the blacksmith, hanged on April 12, 1838:

> The nights I saw, the griefs I bore,
> Shall unto me return no more,

Farewell dark prison, iron bands,
And the sad cords that bound my hands!
Farewell to all that round me stood,
To all earth's joys; 'tis blest and good
To give my life, by God's command,
Farewell distressed and troubled land!

If it is true, then, that in all the rest the conviction has something lacking, what are we to conclude? That the Rebellion itself was a farce, as it appears to many readers of history, for this very reason? That all our history, as well as literature, is trivialized by some fundamental inadequacy? This Canadian "rebellion", for instance — referred to as the "Recent Unpleasantness" — in which less than half a dozen lost their lives; in which a raid for "axes and pork" constituted a major exploit of heroism; in which even the leaders were fated to bear such names as Nils Szoltevski von Schoultz — surely it was bad poetry from its very origins in creation!

It is not the poetry alone that has failed us, but something in the reality of life. If the poet, or artist, is to "hold the mirror up to nature" and reveal "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure", then nature and the time must be true to their highest potential. If not, all art will be as shoddy as the manikins who pass for men; and all their claims to human heroics will sound like the jingling of Petroushka.

Clearly, we must be critics of life as well as of art; at least that is one thing we can learn from these *Rhymes of Rebellion*, sad poems of our Canadian past which fail to raise Canadian history to the scale of genuine drama, or political epic, and reveal it again as the trivial comedy it tends to remain.

LOUIS DUDEK

# POLITICS NEGLECTED

MORDECAI RICHLER, *Son of a Smaller Hero.* McClelland & Stewart. New Canadian Library. $1.75.

DURING THE 1950's Mordecai Richler wrote fiction very steadily, witness novels published in 1954, 1955, 1957, 1959. The last of these, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* established as considerable a reputation for him as it is possible for a serious young writer to achieve in Canada where the literary vistas are relatively sparse even for the King of the Mountain. Richler reacted to his fame like the bear, going over to England where he has been writing mostly for magazines, movies and television while producing only one novel, *The Incomparable Atuk*. Obvious is obvious, and the main reason for much of the writing he has been doing thus far into the 1960's has to be money, an old story for artists. One goes without eating in order to write, and succeeds, only to discover that one must go on writing in order to eat. Sing for your supper. But on rereading the New Canadian Library edition of *Son of a Smaller Hero* one suspects deeper reasons for the markedly diminished output of fiction.

In his introduction, George Woodcock spells out the extent which the strength of the novel traces to Richler's acute awareness of ghetto life in Montreal. And certainly the main drift of Noah Adler's choices turns on his attempts to get off a ladder from the top of which the maddening power and superior yet impotent vision of the grandfathers crushes down on and helps create the humiliating

banality of the persecuted and persecuting fathers and mothers on the middle rungs as the whole weight comes to bear on the badly rattled sons and daughters at the bottom. Noah, the incipient artist, has intelligence of all this, so he twists and twists, trying to get neither up nor down but clear, out from under, on to some other ladder. The main points of Noah's awareness, particularly the way in which his intelligence turns both towards and away from the grandfathers, echo ahead to more of the same five years later in *Duddy Kravitz*. But where Noah is sentimental, vaguely idealistic, and essentially soft though strong, Duddy is tougher, more materialistic, and though less sensitive, more exuberant. The changeover could indicate a diminishing involvement for Richler, no longer dear to his heart those awful scenes of his childhood and youth.

Yet, as Mr. Woodcock points out, the strength of Richler's writing is a strength of involvement. And if the story of the two novels of the 1950's, *The Acrobats* and *A Choice of Enemies*, is also one of disengagement — from various political alternatives — their strength is also one of involvement, that ability to become so wound up with what one is writing about that talent is released, the golden thread that transubstantiates writing into art. Certainly the thread is missing from *The Incomparable Atuk*. However much Richler may have enjoyed shafting pathanded Toronto, his involvement isn't there, and though the skill is the talent isn't, his mouth for molten words.

The arithmetic of all this begins to read that during the 1950's Richler may have written himself out of touch with the two chief sources of his talent: the old home town and the old corner-store politics (Panofsky's communism in *Son of a Smaller Hero*) that once-upon-a-time could warm in him the glow beyond itself of human community, brotherhood. Charles Olson has pointed out that politics and city stem from the same word, polis. And Olson has added that "polis is eyes," is individuals, is I. This certainly is a more possible politics than that of parties, governments, prime ministers, premiers and presidents, who are by now no more than managers in the huge hospital of the world as the atomic virus continues to spread. Almost the only workable polis in our time is words, speech, language, because they are a plane at which communications, community, communion are still possible. When the city re-occurs as speech, writing becomes an office, and the election falls on the man with his heart in his mouth. Near the end of *Son of a Smaller Hero*, Noah, having finally made the break with his mother, is feeling good:

> He was immensely happy. He had spent the previous evening with Panofsky. They had sat in the kitchen drinking beer and listening to the music of Vivaldi. Even Aaron had been cheerful. He had given Noah his old suitcase. He had told him stories about Madrid. Panofsky had had lots of beer and had said that he might turn the business over to Karl next summer and come to Europe himself. Aaron had laughed. He had said that the old man was getting lecherous in his last days and that he would be fleeced by the first D.P. he met up with. Noah had laughed, too. But he had known that Panofsky would never quit City Hall Street. A new crowd is arriving, Panofsky had said. Perhaps this time things will work out better. What do I need Europe for? Noah will write us everything.

All this would seem very close to home base: The music of Vivaldi which had earlier caused Noah to feel "... something like pain. He had not suspected that men were capable of such beauty."

Panofsky's son, Aaron, crippled in the Spanish war, victim of the old politics. Panofsky himself, the man in the novel with whom Noah seems most fully at ease, a true communist, believer in human community, still with hope that "this time things will work out better." And Noah, about to depart for Europe from which he will "write us everything," heart in mouth, the molten words, the golden thread. But as of now, 1966, Panofsky or some other of those chiding elders whose superior humanity got caught in a wrong place, might with some justice complain, "Mordecai, you haven't been doing your politics."

WARREN TALLMAN

# WORD GAMES AND WARS

R. G. EVERSON, *Wrestle with an Angel.* Delta. $2.00.

GLEN SIEBRASSE, *The Regeneration of an Athlete.* Delta. $1.50.

GLORIOUS has become a word that almost demands "technicolour" to follow it, and perhaps this is why the revisers of the King James Version altered one passage in which it appeared. The new rendition, however, is "effulgent splendour" — which is no more illuminating and (for all its abstraction) makes the idea rather less than more tangible. At times, concrete precision can emerge from abstract words, and at their best, such writers as Douglas Le Pan and Daryl Hine wrestle with the intellect in such a way as to let this happen. Even the ambivalence of a word like "logomachy" in Hine's "Doppelgänger", for example, is precise, for the word-game/word-war conflict is part of the Doppelgänger conflict and hence an inherent part of the poem.

Such control is unfortunately all too rare in R. G. Everson's fourth book of poems, *Wrestle with an Angel.* Portraits and fragments of remembered experience form the substance of the book and the portraits themselves are all right, but in too many cases — "Outside Joe Beef's", "Above High River, Alberta", "Mrs. Mallory's backdoor face" — the poems shift direction and end in wordiness. Such phrases as "man's ungovernable spirit", "ineffable meaning", and "Moore's invention of reality/conjures effulgence" are too prevalent. The contrasts which give many of the poems their point, moreover, are too little revealed and, instead (too easily), merely announced. The child's misapprehensions of word meanings in "Wonderful Uncle Roy" are handled better, but even they seem laboured beside Ethel Wilson's prose treatment of the same experience. Only in poems like "In praise of the Saint John River Valley" or "Bringing home the baby" do the words acquire spirit; only then does the poet approach the standard set by his earlier volumes.

It is, however, always pleasant to be able to enjoy the graphic presentation of a work as well as the quality of the writing (the sterile book covers of the New Canadian Library, for example, need immediate attention in this regard), and Delta is to be commended for the design of its series, in which both Everson's book and Glen Siebrasse's *The Regeneration of an Athlete* appear. Colin Haworth's drawings in *Wrestle* are particularly evocative, but the roman type in *Regeneration* is the easier to read. The type is not the greatest virtue of this book, for in spite of a remarkable num-

ber of clichés, Siebrasse has at times integrated his ideas and his language. Narcissism and aging are the two main themes, and in a sense they are related: "faith begins in the mirror", the poet says at one point. Again: "Love without reason then, without pity/ yourself"; "I go/to build a house/in one of the middle lands"; "I learned . . ./to know duration and/the measure of our passing." These are all out of context and so perhaps misleading when presented in this order, but in the book they do gradually unite into one picture. A man in search of a beauty which equals order finds time instead, and his difficulty, as the title poem points out, is that "regeneration" must not become permanence at the expense of vitality. Ultimately the animal in him remains, his love becomes his landscape ("love, my city"), and he locates a kind of order which, if not perfect, at least exists in the present. In his own words, if it "please the child's eye:/ that is enough". The idea is not a new one, nor is it presented with outstanding flair, but any exploration of a difficult country is a worthwhile poetic task.

WILLIAM H. NEW

# ART OF THE ESKIMO

GEORGE SWINTON, *Eskimo Sculpture.* McClelland & Stewart. $12.50.

I MUST CONFESS that I approached this book somewhat gingerly. There was a time when I longed to own an Eskimo carving, and it was most frustrating to realize that these small but powerfully massive creations could only be obtained in eastern Canada. Since then however, with a flood of mediocre work upon the Vancouver market, I have come to feel that one walrus is pretty much like another.

It was no doubt to combat such disenchantment that George Swinton undertook to reinstate current Eskimo sculpture. He has made four trips to the Arctic and being himself a fine painter, and professor of art at the University of Manitoba, he brings to his subject a cultivated sensibility.

Before examining his exposition, however, one must pay tribute to the book itself, which was published with the help of the Canada Council. The high quality of paper, expert layouts, sixteen pages in colour and more than two hundred illustrations in black and white, make this a luxurious production; as far as art books go, the Gutenberg Galaxy has never burned more brightly.

George Swinton gets to the heart of the matter in the second sentence of his main text. During the past seventeen years, more than half of Canada's Eskimos have become dependent for their livelihood, either directly or indirectly, upon sculpture. It is ridiculous to expect that such a high percentage of any people should be artists. Some make souvenir carvings, some folk carvings — which George Swinton defines as characterized by a collective style — and some works of art. Even so he maintains that "proportionately, there are many more good Eskimo artists than there are white artists in North America or Europe."

In his eagerness to destroy what he considers harmful myths, he weaves back and forth a little tediously over the same ground. One myth is that all Eskimo carvings prior to 1949 were small. The other is that they all had some magico-

religious content. George Swinton has undertaken considerable research to prove that in the nineteenth century Eskimos made carvings as souvenirs for white explorers, traders and whalers. He thus establishes an important link between the economic motivations of today's Eskimo and of his ancestors.

But why spoil a *mise au point* by being so thesis-ridden? James Houston, the man who sparked the whole tremendous development of contemporary Eskimo art through his trips on behalf of the Canadian Handicrafts Guild, wrote an epoch-making article in the Spring issue of *Canadian Art*, 1952. George Swinton quotes from it where it suits his story, but omits other passages. I would like to restore two of them:

"In the past, and to some extent in the present, the carvings were made as miniature likenesses to bring good fortune in hunting, to be placed in the graves of the dead, to be worn or used as protective amulets, and to serve as toys or games."

And: "The Eskimo carver is inspired with the coming of each season, and by the migration of game. In some subtle way it is thought good luck to carve the animal one is about to hunt."

At the time he recorded these observations Houston had made five visits to the North.

It is true that in a later section of the book George Swinton shades his case and admits that magic was not only associated with the old sculpture but still is, in a sense, with the new. Through it the Eskimos, engulfed in a rapidly changing culture, with motor boats, motorized sleds and wooden houses, seek to retain their identity. As they carve the traditional hero-figure of the hunter, they feel that they remain the Innuit — The People.

Unquestionably it is when the author comments upon individual pieces, grouped according to motif, that he is most felicitous. His words caress the stone, bringing out a resemblance now to German Expressionism, now to the art of ancient Egypt, now to early Roman bronzes. Here the reader enters a region of pure joy. Not only is he amazed at the variety but he learns, through numerous reproductions of the work of the same carver, to distinguish that artist's special sense of form.

However, the ending is sad. George Swinton sees the Eskimo threatened with spiritual annihilation and criticizes, quite rightly, the merchandising policies which have encouraged the production of Eskimo art as an industry.

Perhaps this book, with its magnificent photographic evidence of the intense individualism and high standards of the genuine artists among the Eskimos, will bring about a change of thinking. At least we may hope that more museums will consider assembling collections by sculptors of the calibre of Erkoolik, Tudlik, and Johnnie Inukpuk.

JOAN LOWNDES

# ANGER ADMIRED

LUELLA BOOTH, *For the Record.* Fiddlehead Books. $2.50.

LUELLA BOOTH has defined her own poetic statement in the first three verses of "Truly":

between thunder
and the lightning's tooth
the world is worthy.

A surge of riotous colour and sensuality thunders passionately through her "story told as only a poet can tell it," intimidating the meek, but leaving a residue of positive assertion for the tough-minded.

In Miss Booth's poetry, anger belongs to the admired: an impressive grandfather "in the pulpit, exorcising", a courageous mother "fighting my father's virus-ridden brain/ for its castrated brilliancy", and a Milton Acorn "Because/ when you are not using your eyes as hammers, they suffer". She herself has not "learned to hate". With a clear vision she recognizes the world around her, whose "suburbs do not encourage Byzantiums". Yet, doggedly, she does "not doubt the April air . . . or/ man's right to dreams". Flowers in untended gardens, in confining pots, in dark corners, but nonetheless alive, strain towards the light and, like the poet's senses, "rear up/ to plunge against the sun".

Love is the dynamic motivation in *For the Record*. Balancing perilously close to sentimentality and sensuality, it, nonetheless, provides both the centre and the periphery of a world always lost and always found. It moves "in/ toward dark, the flame's centre, out into life, light and the poem/ bright round her shoulders". Miss Booth's simple concluding credo then, "I do believe/ love", asserts a faith in love, life and poetry at once; "To love = to be".

The somewhat self-conscious tendency to write Canadian poetry has had its usual ill effects. Trite comments like "In a country without history", "Canadian cradles", and "Niagaras of prayers", strain needlessly against a context of genuine poetic creativity. Ostensibly disparate, the imagery fundamentally merges into a rigorously ordered affirmation that "Life in all the seasons/ is ripe and rich and full".

HELGA HARDER

# THE VERGE

EVERY YEAR there are many books published in Canada which it is hard to classify, and among them are a fair number which have no literary pretensions (or, if they have, do not fulfil them), yet have something to say about the world in which the real writer lives, and therefore deserve to go not entirely unnoticed. On the other hand, to review them according to the criteria we seek to maintain would be to impose standards which such books do not even attempt to meet, and in any case would encroach on space that should be devoted to works which at least make a claim to artistic merit. The only solution, apart from a completely uninformative "Books Received" list, is to provide a regular column in which such books can at least be briefly noted. With this issue we begin.

*The Trial of Steven Truscott* by Isabel le Bourdais is by now too well known to need introduction, but one cannot stress too often the services which its author has done by revealing, albeit somewhat stridently, a shocking series of facts which opens some yawning chasms of doubt about cherished institutions like the jury system and the courts of appeal and makes one wonder whether the Criminal Code should not be given teeth to bite severely

those officers of the law who regard too lightly the rights of a man who is innocent until the court has found him guilty beyond the possibility of doubt.

In another McClelland & Stewart book, *A Choice for Canada*, Walter L. Gordon states, with none of the indiscretions one might have expected, the case for a left-wing nationalist liberalism; no walls will fall to this flat trumpet call.

But dulness is no closed preserve of politicians; there is always enough to go round, and particularly in those Gobi deserts of the mind from which university administrators propound their views to the public. Information abounds; inspiration is elusive; literary grace never puts in an appearance. *Higher Education in a Changing Canada*, a Royal Society symposium edited by J. E. Hodgetts and published by the University of Toronto Press, and *New Universities in the Modern World*, a series of statements by University Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of recently founded Commonwealth universities, edited by Murray G. Ross and published by Macmillan, survey the difficulties of higher education in a world where the young are becoming proportionately more numerous and absolutely more demanding. The problems are real, the concern is earnest, but the prose is execrable. There is a place for the ghost writer even in the groves of academe.

One wishes such members of the scholastic community could take lessons from James Eayrs, who makes a silk purse of eloquence out of an unpromising subject in his Plaunt Memorial Lecture, now reprinted by the University of Toronto Press, on *Right and Wrong in Foreign Policy*. He brings wit and style to the service of a most intelligent and sensitive discussion of the morality of international relations, and presents one with the kind of manifesto for civilized commitment which, these days, is so often needed and so rarely encountered.

*Making of the Nation* is a pleasant picture book, a coffee table keepsake volume of Canada's Hundred Years published by *Weekend Magazine* as the first-fruits of their Canadian Centennial Library, with some good antiquarian photographs and a text by William Kilbourn which, having no pretensions to being a real history, fulfils its purpose as a tasty but insubstantial salad of tidbits from the past, sauced with that peculiar flavour of provinciality which one associates with the well-seasoned Ontario mind.

At one point Professor Kilbourn expresses whimsically the thought that having no national flag might have its advantages, a salutary caution, but clearly not one heeded by Dr. George F. Stanley, who takes flags very seriously indeed, so much so that in *The Story of the Canadian Flag* he relates in detail their history — national and provincial — in France, Britain and Canada, and even adds an appendix on flag etiquette. A useful volume for those who march behind banners.

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