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A SALUTE TO F. R. SCOTT

Articles
BY RONALD SUTHERLAND, A. J. M. SMITH, ROBIN SKELTON, ROY DANIELLS

Poems
BY F. R. SCOTT

Chronicle
BY MARY BROWN

Reviews
BY HUGO MCPHERSON, A. W. PURDY, W. H. NEW, ROBERT BUCKEYE, GEORGE ROBERTSON, ROBERT HARLOW, GEOFFREY CREIGH, S. E. READ, GEORGE WOODCOCK, FRED COGSWELL, ABRAHAM ROGATNICK, L. T. CORNELIUS

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RONALD SUTHERLAND is Head of the Department of English at the Université de Sherbrooke. His essay forms the substance of a paper which he delivered at the 1966 meeting of the Association of Canadian University Teachers of English.

A. J. M. SMITH is at present Visiting Professor of English at Dalhousie University. Last summer he was presented by the Royal Society of Canada with the Lorne Pierce Medal for Canadian Literature, and at present he is working on a new anthology, the *Oxford Book of Modern Canadian Verse*, for publication during the Centennial Year.

Since F. R. SCOTT is so much the subject of this issue, there is little we need say about him except that the four found poems printed here represent his most recent work.

ROBIN SKELTON shares with John Peter the editorship of the new international quarterly of literature and affairs, *The Malahat Review*, which began publication in January from the University of Victoria.

ROY DANIELLS, University Professor of English Language and Literature at U.B.C., is at present working on a book on Alexander Mackenzie.

MARY BROWN, who formerly worked for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, is now teaching English at the University of Western Ontario.

HUGO MC PHERSON, who is now also teaching at the University of Western Ontario, has been a contributor to *Canadian Literature* from the beginning, and writes regularly in most of the other Canadian literary magazines of any importance.

A. W. PURDY, who won the Governor-General's Award last year for his *Cariboo Horses*, has since travelled extensively and thoughtfully in the Arctic and Newfoundland; one of the poems proceeding from these journeys is embedded in the current Hudson's Bay Company advertisement.

W. H. NEW is Assistant Editor of *Canadian Literature*, and has been a regular contributor since he joined our staff. His interests extend beyond Canadian to the other literatures in formerly colonial areas, and he has been associated with the Commonwealth Literature programme at the University of Leeds.

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editorial

CANADIAN LITERATURE AND THE CENTENNIAL

THE CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION is an historical festival commemorating a political event, and it might well be asked what interest it can have for a literary magazine. After all, if one discounts mere polemics, the literature that emerged from the event itself was negligible. Indeed, by 1867 very few books that can now be given serious critical consideration had been produced in any of the provinces which then became Canada. Even the so-called Confederation Poets came many years afterwards and had nothing to do with Confederation considered as mere political event.

Yet political events often have their social and cultural consequences — sometimes, as in the case of the Restoration of Charles II, or the First World War, of profound importance in the re-shaping of literatures. And if, as we believe, a distinguishable literature which can be called Canadian has appeared by the 1960's, it has inevitably been shaped and conditioned by the circumstances which followed from Confederation. It is obviously different from the kind of literature we should have had if the territory which is now called Canada had been absorbed into the United States, or if the constituent colonies had followed separate existences and had emerged into the twentieth century as a mosaic of little nations like the former colonial territories of West Africa.

By now critics have begun to define with growing sharpness many of the elements that do — as a result of Confederation — condition our outlook as a people and hence the way we write. The vertical social mosaic, and the horizontal ethnic mosaic polarized by the duality of English and French cultures; the tenuous strip of human existence along the borderlands, with the nodules of increasingly cosmopolitan cities and the growing lonelinesses of prairie and coastal villages; beyond human settlement, the vast solitude, bearing down from the north, of the

great cold empty land, and pressing up from the south the aggressive world power whose force we repel, because we must, with the small insistence of the limpet shaped to resist the breakers. All these factors have become component elements in our consciousness, and hence in our works of literature and art.

But, however closely linked the building of a nation and the growth of a literature may appear to be, it is the literature that concerns us, not the political event, and during the coming year we shall discuss informally, rather than celebrate, the writing which has taken place in Canada during the past century. Our plans do not mean that we shall ignore that running examination of current and contemporary writing which is perhaps the most important of our functions. Nevertheless, we shall devote more space than usual to broader surveys considering from various viewpoints the past and future of Canadian literature. The first of these, Ronald Sutherland's "Twin Solitudes", dealing with parallels between English and French Canadian fiction, appears in this issue. Others, putting different historical points of view on Canadian literature, by such writers as Desmond Pacey, Ralph Gustafson and Warren Tallman, will follow in later issues. Some past Canadian writers, like John Sutherland, Frederick Niven, Sara Jeannette Duncan and Isabella Valancy Crawford, will be considered for the first time in *Canadian Literature*, and Ralph Connor, whom F. W. Watt examined in our first issue, will be re-viewed by Roy Daniells. One special issue will be devoted to considering the past and present of publishing in Canada.

* * *

The subject of publishing leads us to end with a note of congratulation for the remarkable example of book production provided by McClelland & Stewart in *Birds of the Northern Forests* ($20.00), with paintings by J. F. Lansdowne and text by John A. Livingston. Mr. Lansdowne's excellent colour plates and monochrome sketches show that representational art still has its uses; photographs can rarely present such recognizable or such evocative images of birds, or, for that matter, flowers or insects, as the craftsman of Mr. Lansdowne's proficiency. Mr. Livingston's text is modest but informative, intelligently partisan on the issue of conservation, and written with that spare clarity which still makes the narratives of the great nineteenth-century naturalists such enjoyable reading. For bird-lovers, as distinct from bird-killers who get short shrift, this will be a pleasant book to possess, particularly as it is presented as the first of a series covering the various natural regions of Canada; for those who are interested in the craft of publishing, it reaches a standard that could and should be achieved more often.

TWIN SOLITUDES

Ronald Sutherland

"ONE OF THE FUNCTIONS and responsibilities of literature," says the American critic Marius Bewley, "is to define nationality in the act of describing or dramatizing it." [1] And when one considers French Literature, American Literature, English Literature, indeed any of the distinctive national literatures, it is clear that Bewley's statement is correct. These literatures have accomplished the subtle definition of nationality. However intricate and mysterious the process of recognition, citizens of the various nations are somehow able to recognize themselves as such. Language, philosophy, theology, history, politics, and a variety of other things undoubtedly make their contribution, but in the final analysis it is literature which has up to now provided the definition. Key writers, either consciously or unconsciously, have created their works within particular mystiques. Which is not to say, incidentally, that these works are necessarily regional, or chauvinistic, or even lacking in universal significance, but simply that they have been distilled through the complex apparatus of national myth and national sense of identity. One thinks of Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Chekhov, Molière or Robert Burns.

Then one thinks of Canada and Canadian Literature; and a number of somewhat troubling speculations come immediately to mind.

What about Canadian Literature? Has it succeeded in even suggesting a definition of Canadian identity? If so, what are the aspects of this definition? If not, is it because of a weakness in the literature? Have the key writers not yet emerged? Have they gone unnoticed? Or could it be that there is no distilling apparatus of positive Canadian myth and sense of identity adequate to condition our creative writers? Supposing such an absence, is it detrimental to the creative process? Moreover, and what is probably the most vital question of all, in a country with

two distinct languages and literary traditions, neither one manifestly dominant over the other in terms of production or quality, each one apparently isolated from the other, are we to presume two independent definitions of the same sense of identity, or rather two separate national mystiques each with its separate definition; or, in line with certain pessimistic comments of the last few years, would we be wise to presume nothing at all?

This paper will be an attempt, through parallel analyses of principal themes in the twentieth-century French-Canadian and English-Canadian novel, to shed some light upon these questions. It does not, of course, intend to provide conclusive answers to all or any of the questions posed, but is conceived rather as a prolegomenon to further study.

Of the thousands of novels which have been written in French and English Canada, there are only a few, it would seem, which have had any kind of impact on any segment of the national consciousness. For particular attention I have selected those novels which seem to me to be the most appropriate for the socio-literary study proposed, but I have also tried to select from among those works which have lasting artistic and thematic qualities. When expedient, I shall provide English translations of the French, attempting to preserve what I think is the tone of the original.

Besides brief observations, such as the series of commentaries published in *Le Devoir littéraire* in December 1959, a short article by Naïm Kattan in the forty-second issue of *Liberté*, a pioneering study by Thomas Farley of Ottawa, and remarks by Edmund Wilson, very little appears to have been written in recent years about comparative Canadian Literature. Yet when placed side by side, each of the literary traditions of Canada becomes far more meaningful than when considered apart. For that matter, there are fruitful comparisons possible between Canadian and American Literature, and between Canadian and Russian Literature, but these will have to await attention. If I may submit a conclusion before I have properly begun, when French-Canadian and English-Canadian novels are studied together, it becomes evident that there are many significant parallels, parallels which loom all the more fascinating as one discovers the improbability of inter-influence. It also becomes evident, interestingly enough, that a good number of the accepted differences between the cultures of French Canada and English Canada do not in fact exist. For both English-speaking and French-speaking Canadians, major writers included, are guilty of taking a small segment of the other society, albeit shaped into mythic reality, and using it as a substitute for the complex whole.

BOTH THE French-Canadian and English-Canadian novel have gone through a remarkable evolution in the last forty years or so. During this evolution, three major interlocking themes have emerged:

1) The Land and Divine Order;
2) The Breakup of the Old Order;
3) The Search for Vital Truth.

In French-Canadian Literature, the first of these major themes — "Land and Divine Order" — is illustrated by what has been called *le roman paysan* or *le roman du terroir*. Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine*, of course, is the best known of this group of novels and has undoubtedly had the greatest influence. The climax of the tradition came in the late thirties with the publication of Félix-Antoine Savard's *Menaud maître-draveur* and Ringuet's *Trente Arpents*. *Menaud maître-draveur*, which reproduces passages from *Maria Chapdelaine* throughout its text, is not of the same stature as either Hémon's or Ringuet's work. In a way it resembles Ralph Connor's *The Man from Glengarry*, although it falls far short of the latter in convincing description of the river drives. It has none of the detail characteristic of Connor, such as the loggers all standing around attentively, waiting for the telltale snap as MacDonald Mhor bends a man over his knee, about to break his back. On the other hand, it does not degenerate into a Sunday School tract, as does Connor's book. Nobody, including his adored daughter, converts Menaud into a lover of all men. He remains a psychopath, obsessed with the idea of "the enemy." In Savard's work there is a certain originality of style, incorporating Canadianisms into the prose in a manner which perhaps foreshadows the stylistic experiments of a few very recent French-Canadian novels, experiments which we shall consider later; but *Menaud maître-draveur* is a prose poem rather than a realistic novel. Viewed as a prose poem, its sentimentality, subjectivity and distortion are less detrimental to the value of the work. *Maria Chapdelaine* and *Trente Arpents*, on the other hand, are realistic novels of high merit and penetrating insight.

It has been recognized for years that Louis Hémon succeeded in crystallizing fundamental values of French-Canadian rural society through the characters in the novel *Maria Chapdelaine*. There is a kind of masochism in the father of the family, who will not allow himself to remain on a farm once he has brought it to the point of productivity, but must move again into the wilderness, dragging his family along with him. The mother Chapdelaine, who has always secretly yearned for an easier life, remains loyal to the end, when wasted from years of

toil and deprivation she gives up and dies. Just before her death, which the father obviously finds more annoying than tragic, he tries to cheer her up by saying: "You will die when the good Lord wants you to die, and I don't figure it's time yet. What would he do with you? Heaven is full of old ladies, but here we've got only one, and she can still do a little work, sometimes."[2]

Maria will be like her mother. She has moments of doubt, especially in connection with the handsome adventurer François Paradis. When he is lost in the bush, she takes the appropriate measures. She knows that if one repeats a thousand *Ave Marias* on the day before Christmas, then asks a favour of God, barring extraordinary designs on the part of the divinity, the favour will be granted. Unfortunately, God does have extraordinary designs in this particular instance, and François freezes to death in the forest. At first, it is hard for Maria to accept. "Christ Jesus, who hold out your arms to the unfortunate," she says to herself, "why didn't you deliver him from the snow with your pale hands? Why, Holy Virgin, didn't you permit a small miracle when he stumbled for the last time? In all the heavenly legions, why couldn't he have had an angel to show him the way?"[3] But Maria's doubts do not last long, for like her father and mother she knows the deep satisfaction of being sure. As Hémon put it: "Oh! Certainty! The contentment of an august promise which dispels the terrible fog of death. While the priest was performing the holy rites and his murmur mixed with the sighs of the dying woman, Samuel Chapdelaine and his children prayed without lifting their heads, almost consoled, free from doubt and worry, certain that whatever happened was according to a pact with the divinity, which made the blue heaven sown with stars of gold an authentic blessing."[4] Maria, then, can turn down the offer of Lorenzo Surprenant to go with him to the United States, and accept a continuation of her mother's life by marrying her neighbour Eutrope Gagnon.

Throughout the novel *Maria Chapdelaine*, one is aware of the two major thematic ideas, the land and the divine order. In fact, these ideas merge into one, for the land, with its changeless cycle of seasons, its absolute permanence, its mixture of cruel severity and arbitrary sustenance, becomes symbolic of the accepted divine order. The more a person is in harmony with the land, therefore, the more he is in harmony with God. Or perhaps I should say with a particular concept of God, considering the stern, unremitting nature of the land in question — the Jansenist, Calvinist, Puritan concept of God.

Turning to Frederick Philip Grove's *Our Daily Bread* and Ringuet's *Trente Arpents*, one finds the same thematic ideas of the land and the divine order;

although both books also introduce the beginning of the dissolution of the old order. As a matter of fact, *Our Daily Bread* and *Trente Arpents*, the first published in 1928 and the second in 1938, are so strikingly similar in theme and plot and even in certain scenes, that one wonders if Philippe Panneton had ever read Grove. On the other hand, the two books are entirely different in detail, in atmosphere, in technique, so that in the highly unlikely event that Ringuet did borrow certain ideas, he subjected them thoroughly to his own creative process. *Trente Arpents*, it must be pointed out, is a far better novel than *Our Daily Bread*. Its rhythmic prose, its skillful use of colloquial diction, an accurate representation of French-Canadian *joual*, is vigorous and captivating, in contrast to Grove's stiff, often lumbering style. Ringuet had a genius for selecting the kind of small detail which brings a character alive, engaging the imagination and sympathy of the reader. When Phydime Raymond, for example, visits Euchariste Moisan to negotiate for Moisan's half of a small wood, which he desperately wishes to buy, the ancestral Norman propensity for circumlocution is illustrated in a manner worthy of Maupassant at his best. Raymond explains that he has come to see if the sick cow is getting better. Then the conversation, between drags on their pipes, proceeds to diseases in general, the weather, the ice road which is becoming dangerous, the elections. On his way out the door, Raymond inquires about the fence bordering the two properties and who should repair it that year. Then he, who is the one wanting to buy Moisan's half of the wood, offers to sell his half to Moisan, observing that it isn't worth ten dollars to him. And Moisan, who has not the least notion of buying land, says that such a purchase might be a good idea. And on they go, each somehow divining exactly what the other has in mind. Compared to Ringuet's technique of characterization, Grove's is stark and clinical. Nonetheless, considered as an artistic whole, despite its obvious shortcomings, *Our Daily Bread* does make a deep impression upon the reader, an impression of magnitude of vision. It may well have as permanent a place in Canadian Literature as *Trente Arpents*.

The parallels in the two novels are manifest. Both stories concern a man obsessed with the idea of building a dynasty upon the land, an Old-Testament type of dynasty. Both men, Euchariste Moisan and John Elliot, have loyal, long-suffering wives, each of whom was chosen to bear children and each of whom brings four sons and six daughters into the world. Alphonsine, Moisan's wife, dies delivering her last child, while Martha Elliot is a victim of cancer of the womb, making them both martyrs to their husbands' obsessions. Like Chapdelaine's wife and Alphonsine, Martha has always secretly harboured a sense of

frustration, but she is the only one of the three who gets a chance to express this long denied feeling. In a fantastic scene, perhaps one of Grove's best, she rises from her deathbed and goes to a dance, the loose, heavy folds of her dress draping grotesquely about her wasted body.

Samuel Chapdelaine, John Elliot and Euchariste Moisan have identical attitudes toward the land. Elliot's daughter Cathleen, the only one who makes a successful marriage, chooses a university professor. Of this man Elliot speculates: "Woodrow Ormond, a sensible man, mature beyond his years! But unanchored in the soil."[5] In *Trente Arpents*, speaking of the habitant farm establishments, Ringuet wrote: "La patrie c'est la terre, et non le sang."[6] The land is more important than even the blood. And coping with the land isolates the Elliots, the Moisans and the Chapdelaines from even the most monumental events of the outside world. Hearing of the prospects for World War I, Moisan is completely baffled: "Those people," he says, "how can they think about fighting when the harvest isn't in yet." He begins to see how war fits into the divine order when the local priest explains to him: "La France sera punie; elle a chassé les prêtres." When John Elliot discovers that his son Arthur has joined up, his reaction is "Enlisted? What were we coming to? Meddling in the European war?" At the end of *Our Daily Bread*, Elliot staggers across miles of country, finally crawls the last few yards on his hands and knees, to die on his own piece of land. At the end of *Trente Arpents*, Moisan is still alive, working as a watchman in an American garage and dreaming of his thirty acres, but earlier in the book there is a scene similar to the climax of *Our Daily Bread*. Ephrem Moisan, the uncle from whom Euchariste inherited his farm, is found lying on one of his fields: "Il était mort sur sa terre, poitrine contre poitrine, sur sa terre qui n'avait pas consenti au divorce" — breast against breast, on his land, which had not consented to a divorce.

Moisan and Elliot are both denied the realization of their dreams. Elliot witnesses the complete disintegration of his tiny empire, Moisan is dispossessed by his son Etienne, and as old men they are both helpless and unwanted, compelled to visit children in surroundings which are alien and incomprehensible. Elliot is a sad misfit in his daughter's elegant Winnipeg home, and old Moisan wanders aimlessly around the American town where his son Ephrem has settled. Not one of their many children adopts the values of the father.

It is perhaps Grove who best sums up these values when he has John Elliot say, "I don't want my children and sons-in-law to be rich. But I want them to show me to my satisfaction that they can make their daily bread." In other words,

the purpose of life is not the pursuit of comfort or happiness according to one's lights, but to fit into the design conditioned by the land, to fit into the divine order. Happiness does not enter the picture, no more for John Elliot than for Samuel Chapdelaine or Eucharistе Moisan. As Jean Simard put it in *Mon Fils pourtant heureux*; "On y est pour faire son devoir, voilà tout. La vie n'est pas un roman."[7] When Elliot rationalizes with the words, "If God has ordained things that way, perhaps there was a meaning to it, a purpose", he professes the same almost masochistic resignation as the Chapdelaines, the same "acte de soumission à la volonté divine" as found in *Trente Arpents*.

There is no need to look further than these three novels for clarification of the first major theme, although the theme itself can be found in dozens of novels. The philosophy of life concerned is clear. It is one which could induce a strong power of endurance, a sense of absolute security. Man in harmony with the cycles of nature, with the noble calling of the land, with the divine order. Man constantly reminded of his subordinate status by the caprices of nature, yet assured by this very subordination of a complementary superior force, a Providence, a greater design of which he is a part. There is no need to search for meaning. Within the framework, the human cycle of birth, marriage, death is simple, sufficient and all-meaning.

The conclusion one must come to after considering the observations of these three writers is that rural French Canada and rural English Canada shared the same fundamental values. Despite differences of language, religions and degree of involvement with an organized church, the basic view of man and the land, as detected by three novelists who made a point of analyzing this view, was the same across Canada, and perhaps throughout the Western World for that matter. One suspects, however, that there is a peculiarly Canadian flavour in the determination to embrace a life whose requirements presuppose a sacrifice. Perhaps it has something to do with the inhospitality of the land and the severity of the climate. Perhaps it is related to the spectre of defeat inherited by French Canadians and English Canadians alike. For it is often forgotten in French Canada that the founders of so-called English Canada — the United Empire Loyalists, the Scottish Highlanders, the Irish and Ukrainians — can hardly be said to have settled here on the wave of victory.

THE SECOND MAJOR THEMATIC idea which emerges from a comparative study of the French-Canadian and English-Canadian novel —

"Breakup of the old order" — can be observed in a large number of novels, including the final sections of *Our Daily Bread* and *Trente Arpents*. In other words, many writers have attempted and are still attempting to analyze the transitional period and the process by which one set of values is replaced by another. This process coincides with large scale urbanization, man's removal from dependence upon the cycles of nature, but it would not be correct to distinguish the contrasting values as rural and urban in application. The new values have spread into rural areas, just as the old values generally held true for people in cities. The great urban centre has simply become the spawning ground for our philosophies of life.

In the second group of novels, harmony with the divine order is replaced by the pursuit of security, which during the transition period is conceived in terms of wealth and material comfort. Sex, not yet an end in itself, remains functional, but the function is no longer reproduction. One cannot, of course, give dates to this transitional process; it is actually a state of mind. It has been going on for centuries more or less; although I suspect that it picked up momentum during and immediately after the Second World War. It is a state of mind characterized not so much by a search for new meaning or truth as by the desire to adapt new situations and experiences to the old values, with resulting confusion and often a sense of guilt.

As I have said, a number of novels explore this state of mind: Grove's *Master of the Mill*, Robert Elie's *Il suffit d'un jour*, Ross's *As For Me and My House*, Richard Joly's *Le Visage de l'attente*, Garner's *The Silence on the Shore*, McDougall's *Execution*, several of Callaghan's novels, several works by Robert Choquette, Yves Thériault and Jean Simard, among others. The following five novels are especially significant: Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion* — a book, incidentally, which suffered much in translation, as any Montrealer will immediately realize when startled by a famous old district being referred to in the translation as "the Saint Charles Point" — then W. O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind*, Hugh MacLennan's *The Watch that Ends the Night*, Gérard Bessette's *La Bagarre* and John Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death*.

Gabrielle Roy's *Bonheur d'occasion* mainly concerns a family living in a Montreal slum. Azarius Lacasse, the father, works on and off, and the family never has sufficient for its needs. Always behind in rent, they must shift from one broken-down flat to another every spring. Rose-Anna, the mother, follows the old farm practice of a baby every year or so, pitifully attempting to adapt her situation to the old order of values, satisfied that she has, as she puts it, "enduré son purga-

toire sur terre." Like the child Brian in Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind*, she struggles to achieve a concept of God, and although she does not arrive at anything quite so anthropomorphic as "R.W. God, B.V.D.," she is equally unorthodox when she says, "Maybe he forgets sometimes. He's bothered with an awful lot of headaches." And we are told that "the old crack in her faith came from this candid supposition that God, distracted, tired, harassed like herself, had come to the point where he couldn't pay much attention to human needs."[8] Alex Hunter in Marlyn's *Under the Ribs of Death* echoes Rose-Anna when he muses to himself: "Was there a presence interested enough? Perhaps this being, if it did exist, acted upon motives as inexplicable and capricious as his own."[9] But the child Brian probably expresses what is in the minds of all of these characters when in reply to his grandmother's statement, "The why — that's another thing. That's for the Lord," he says, "God isn't very considerate — is He, Gramma?"[10]

In these novels, then, and in MacLennan's *The Watch that Ends the Night* and Bessette's *La Bagarre*, the notion of God as dispenser of the divine order is disappearing, but there is a lingering doubt, with the result that many of the characters are confused, confused about themselves, about their duty, and about society. The protagonist of *La Bagarre*, Lebeuf, who is working as a tramway sweeper to pay his way through university, does not know what to do when another of the sweepers begs him to help his daughter. The girl, Gisèle, is exceptionally pretty and intelligent, and the father is afraid that the local priest will parley her into becoming a nun. He is careful to add, "Les curées, moué, j'ai rien contre, r'marque ben."[11] Lebeuf finally suggests that the girl take a job and follow courses part-time at Sir George Williams University, for the idea of part-time studies has been only very recently introduced to French-Canadian institutions. But the suggestion of George Williams worries Gisèle's father. "L'instruction, j'sus pour cent pour cent," he replies. "Seulement, l'école anglaise, c'est une autre paire de manches, tsu comprends . . ."

In each of the five novels, two or more generations are presented, and there is usually a contrast of values between the generations. Gisèle, for example, has ideas of her own, which do not include fitting into any preconceived pattern of divine order. She has found out that men notice her. Florentine, Rose-Anna's daughter in *Bonheur d'occasion*, has gone ever further — she has found the possibility of exploiting sexual desire. Sally, in *The Watch that Ends the Night*, because of reasonably affluent circumstances is not quite a budding Sister Carrie like Gisèle and Florentine, but as she tells her stepfather George, she does not

intend to make the mistake his generation made. She agrees with her boyfriend Alan that they ought to go for a weekend up north. "How is he going to know if he really wants to marry me," she asks George, "unless he's found out first if I'm any good?" [12] All these girls are determined to find emotional security and material comfort whatever way they can; each one of them is a remarkable contrast to Maria Chapdelaine.

The young men in these novels are even more determined than the girls. There is Lebeuf in *La Bagarre*, but the characters of Jean Lévesque in *Bonheur d'occasion* and Alex Hunter in *Under the Ribs of Death* are clearer examples. Both are blood brothers of Joe Lampton in John Braine's *Room at the Top*, born on the wrong side of the tracks, tough, cunning, ruthless when necessary, and ready to use almost any means to get to the other side of the tracks. Jean Lévesque can force himself to abandon Florentine when it becomes apparent that she will only be in his way. Alex Hunter can abandon his family, his ethnic group, his very name and identity. But each of these young men must pay the price of recurring doubts, guilt feelings, and isolation.

Along with most of the other characters, they must suffer. They must suffer because a sense of security comes essentially from within, from the kind of conviction of a Samuel Chapdelaine or John Elliot. They replace the land by material goods, and not yet able to divorce their minds from the old system, they presuppose an order which is not there. And worse, whose non-existence is repeatedly demonstrated. Capricious as it is, the land cannot disappear as can worldly wealth during an economic depression, and spring is always sure to follow a winter. With regard to the characters in MacLennan's *The Watch that Ends the Night*, they embrace the supposed new order of socialism, panacea of the sick society, only to be largely disillusioned in the end.

In the five novels, there are many more characters than those already mentioned, a great variety in fact, for each of the authors is especially skillful at delineating character. Common to all of these books, however, is a character who acts as a background against which the anxieties of the other characters can be more readily grasped. In *Who Has Seen the Wind*, it is the Ben, and the young Ben also. In *Bonheur d'occasion*, it is Alphonse, who has been raised in a shack on the city dump. In *La Bagarre*, it is Marguerite, Lebeuf's mistress, although not enough is said about her to make her as obvious as the others. In *Under the Ribs of Death*, it is Uncle Janos, and in *The Watch that Ends the Night*, it is the major character Jerome. What all these characters have in common is that they exist in amoral worlds of their own, essentially unimpressed by the conventions of

the society around them. They can avoid the ordinary problems of living and adjusting, because they instinctively obey some internal animal force. When these people do have trouble, it is because of a conflict between themselves and the immediate society. The Ben must find a new hiding place for his still, and he joins the church so that he can become its janitor and keep his still in the church basement. Alphonse and his father must leave their shack in the dump when the shanty town is burned to the ground by city officials. Jerome, by far the most complex of the group, automatically does what George and other men cannot do: he fulfils the life of a woman with a weak heart by impregnating her and risking her death. And it works, because it is a private affair and the woman has full confidence in him. But in the army and the medical profession he continually runs into difficulties with duty and authority.

The type of conflict which people such as Jerome and the Ben experience, however, is seldom within themselves, as is the case with so many of the other characters. They may be philosophers of a sort, but they are not the creators of philosophical systems, because they function mainly from impulse. They learn by experience, as did Jerome in the war, or as the Ben when he decided to free his caged owl after spending time in jail. There is something of the wild creature in all of them, and they are associated with a wild or natural environment in some way: the lumber camp, the city dump and the prairie for Jerome, Alphonse and the Ben; the dream of Marguerite to set up a little motel in the country with Lebeuf, the stories of Uncle Janos's adventures as a sea captain. All these characters seem to exude an aura of self-reliance and independence which becomes a source of fascination for others. Divorced from external order and concepts of order, they remain basically unaffected by the breakup of the old order, and they serve to underline the instability and artificiality of a society incapable of co-ordinating its own realities with its assumed ethical values.

THE THIRD MAJOR THEMATIC IDEA of the French-Canadian and English-Canadian novel is "The Search for Vital Truth". This idea has revealed itself especially in novels of the last three or four years, in particular Douglas Le Pan's *The Deserter*, Hubert Aquin's *Prochain Episode*, Jacques Godbout's *Le Couteau sur la table*, and Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*. The search for meaning, of course, can be found in a large number of books, but the kind of search I have in mind here is in a special category — it begins at the zero point.

All values have been discarded or cannot be genuinely accepted, and the protagonist attempts from his experience of life to formulate an approach to reality which can supply him with a *raison d'être*. Whereas with Brian in *Who Has Seen the Wind*, or George in *The Watch that Ends the Night*, or Alex Hunter, or Lebeuf, there is primarily a struggle of adaptation, in the works of Le Pan, Aquin, Cohen and Godbout it is a matter of creation, creation from the raw materials of personal experience.

In each of these novels the protagonist has withdrawn from his family and conventional society. Rusty in *The Deserter*, the only central character of the four books who is given a name at all, and the protagonist of *Le Couteau* both leave the army; while the central figure in *Beautiful Losers* is living in a tree-house, and the hero of *Prochain Episode* is in jail for terrorist activities. In Aquin's novel the story shifts between the prisoner's introspection and the narration of events leading up to his arrest.

All four novels dwell upon the influence of what can be called peak moments — brief periods when the character achieves a harmonic of mental, spiritual and physical satisfaction, an experience of beauty which is equated with truth. These periods seem almost independent of space and time, and the descriptions of them in each book involve a type of imagery suggestive of a return to the pristine condition. For the central characters the peak moment is also associated with sexual experience and a particular woman. Edith in *Beautiful Losers,* K in *Prochain Episode*, Althea in *The Deserter*, and Patricia in *Le Couteau* are remarkably similar. Each is physically beautiful; in fact, each of these creatures is simply the embodiment of physical female beauty, special attention being paid by all four authors to the magnificence of the thighs. It is as if these girls has been created by A. J. M. Smith's sorcerer in Lachine, for they can permit an experience removed from thought, morality, lust or inhibition of any kind. But they can not voluntarily permit a repetition of this superb experience. As Cohen writes: "it was just a shape of Edith: then it was just a humanoid shape; then it was just a shape — and for a blessed second truly I was not alone, I was part of a family. That was the first time we made love. It never happened again. Is that what you will cause me to feel, Catherine Tekakwitha? But aren't you dead? How do I get close to a dead saint? The pursuit seems like such nonsense." [13]

Catherine Tekakwitha, by the way, is the venerated Iroquois Virgin, converted by the Jesuits, who died in 1680 from self-inflicted mortification of the flesh. Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, its meaning perhaps somewhat obscured by an overload of sordid detail, which has caused the book to be gravely misjudged by a number

of reviewers, uses this extreme religious fanatic as a symbol of absolute conviction. The conviction is morbid and perverted, but it still represents a vivid antithesis to current nothingness, a condition of mind otherwise only relieved by the peak moment and the kind of conviction associated with Quebec Separatism, the positive psychological value of which is underlined by Cohen, Godbout and Aquin. Cohen goes further than Le Pan, Aquin, perhaps even Godbout, in creating an impression of the spiritual bankruptcy of the age. His pseudo-character F. is symbolic of the physical, sensual aspects of man, and the surface homosexual relationship between the protagonist and F. represents modern man's frantic search for sensual experience, his worship of the body beautiful, the sex kitten, the pop society's conscious or unconscious fascination with the forbidden, the novel, or the perverted. F.'s legacy of soap, cosmetics and firecrackers is symbolic of various sensations, those connected with the World War and family life being appropriately denied the protagonist.

Godbout also creates a strong atmosphere of spiritual bankruptcy, but dwells more upon social, political aspects than upon sex and sensation. His method, however, is very similar to Cohen's. Both authors employ what Cohen describes as "the newsreel escaped into the Feature," a mixture of fact and fiction, abandoning traditional narrative and plot for a numbered series of small sections, each concerned with an aspect of the protagonist's consciousness. Godbout incorporates liberal amounts of English into his text, and Cohen does the same with French. Heroines in both books are crushed to death, and at the end both protagonists enter a self-effacing identification fantasy. Cohen's device of the protagonist's impossible desire for union with the Iroquois Virgin, Catherine Tekakwitha, provides a fascinating dramatization of the search theme.

There is little satire in any of the four novels, for each of the central characters is more concerned with the annihilation of his own identity and the search for a vital truth to justify his existence than with what may be wrong or false in the society around him. The emptiness of the society is communicated, but not satirized. Rusty discovers the underworld of misfits and criminals created in the aftermath of the Second World War. Many of the people he meets are like the Ben, as is the Mexican Pedro in *Le Couteau*; they are able to function on the impulse level and thereby achieve an enviable primitive happiness. "Only be careful not to think, or look closely, or ask questions, or play the intellectual," the narrator in *Le Couteau* says of Pedro.[14] In *Beautiful Losers*, F. writes to the protagonist: "You plagued me like the moon. I knew you were bound by old laws of suffering and obscurity." And Le Pan writes of Rusty: "After his vigil with Steve it cheered

him to think of them feasting and moving on, knowing the world was desperate but not caring, baiting it, challenging it with its own heat, guardians and wastrels of its most essential carnal warmth. They would create festivals in the cold, he was sure, wherever they were. He was glad they existed, although he was shut out of their perfection too."[15] A subtle change in attitude has thus taken place since the novels treating the second major theme: people like the Ben are no longer the oddballs and outcasts, but are now the possessors of a kind of perfection. And the problem for Rusty and for the three other main characters is that they cannot submerge their intellects. They are the victims of their own honesty, intelligence and awareness, stranded without an engagable point of reference. Nor can they be sustained by a projection or continuum of peak moments; they cannot cross the river of meaning by hopping from the stone of one sensual experience to another.

Douglas Le Pan differs from the other three authors in that he concludes *The Deserter* on a mildly positive note. Rusty eventually accepts that life is a shared experience, demanding sacrifice and only occasionally providing a glimpse of self-fulfillment, a complexity of animal, emotional and intellectual aspects, devoid of any superimposed order, yet still permitting the individual through involvement to breed a personal order and meaning around himself. He is a long way from the rationale of Samuel Chapdelaine and John Elliot, for in determining the significance of a human life the emphasis is now on the man rather than an inherited divine order, but there are the common elements of shared experience and sacrifice, and Rusty is finally able to face the world. The protagonist of *Beautiful Losers* comes to a realization of his state, but without Rusty's impetus to commit himself: "O Father, Nameless and Free of Description," he says, "lead me from the Desert of the Possible. Too long I have dealt with Events. Too long I labored to become an Angel. I chased Miracles with a bag of Power to salt their wild Tails. I tried to dominate Insanity so I could steal its Information. I tried to program the Computers with Insanity. I tried to create Grace to prove that Grace existed.... We could not see the Evidence so we stretched our Memories.... we did not train ourselves to Receive because we believed there wasn't Anything to Receive and we could not endure with this Belief." *Le Couteau* and *Prochain Episode*, on the other hand, both end with a deep sense of frustration and it would appear that each of the four authors in his own way is close to social and pyschological reality.

One thing, however, is clear: considering the particular social climate in which Godbout and Aquin wrote their books and deferring for a moment the universal

thematic implications, these two authors are undoubtedly close to Quebec reality. In both books the internal frustration of the protagonists is overtly correlated with recent events in French-Canadian society. Godbout actually incorporates into his text, along with statistics on the American nuclear arsenal and various other tragic world developments, a newspaper report of the F.L.Q. bombing which killed an elderly watchman, William O'Neil. Aquin's *Prochain Episode* has an obvious allegorical level of interpretation: the protagonist is French-Canadian youth seeking self-fulfillment, which is equated with independence for French Canada. H. de Heutz, in his various guises, is the power structure associated with English Canada and the federal government. The girl K, object of the protagonist's adoration, is *la patrie*, Québec. The love affair, then, becomes a highly emotional patriotism, and there is the strong implication at the end of the book that K, Québec, has betrayed this patriotic sentiment. The reader is made aware of the possibility that H. de Heutz has some kind of deal with K, for the protagonist overhears a telephone conversation between him and a girl staying at l'hôtel d'Angleterre. When the protagonist goes to this hotel for his prearranged rendezvous with K, she has already left.

To pursue this train of thought a little further, it seems to me that the level of interpretation of *Le Couteau* and *Prochain Episode* which has to do with the current situation in Quebec is highly revealing, perhaps more revealing than a Royal Commission report could ever be, because a creative writer is free to use artistic intuition and imagination as well as analysis. Both Godbout and Aquin, and Leonard Cohen to a certain extent also, imply that the present unrest in French Canada has really nothing to do with the question of what French Canadians want. A list of wants can be formulated easily enough, no doubt, but to supply these wants will not solve the problem, which is primarily a community projection of the sense of frustration so effectively dramatized in the work of Godbout and Aquin. Moreover, this sense of frustration is hardly peculiar to Quebec, as a number of contemporary novels from several countries reveal, as Godbout himself illustrates with his varied references to the world scene, and as Aquin suggests by his hero's identification with different types of exiles. It has reached, it would seem, a heightened degree in French Canada, but I suspect this is so mainly because in Quebec, conveniently, there are all the ingredients for the illusion of a specific cause and a specific solution. What is not illusionary, however, is that French Canadians sense and fear that they are being steadily overwhelmed by what they call the Anglo-Saxon mentality or way of life, which is precisely the same thing many English Canadians also fear but refer to as

Americanization, which in turn is known to many Americans as the furious dehumanization of the age. In Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, the idea is arrestingly illustrated in a passage where a Danish Vibrating machine comes alive on its own, like a Frankenstein's monster, and succeeds in bringing sexual satisfaction to Edith. Aldous Huxley, an international figure, projected the idea to an ultimate end and called it the *Brave New World.*

But to get back to the common themes of French-Canadian and English-Canadian Literature, it is clear that Douglas Le Pan, Hubert Aquin, Leonard Cohen and Jacques Godbout are all concerned with the same basic problem. Their approaches to the problem, of course, differ. In fact, it is hard to imagine four worlds so completely different as those of the four books in question — Godbout's prairie motels and mobile set, Aquin's Alpine roads and James Bond intrigue, Cohen's Indian legends and sensual fantasies, Le Pan's London dockyards and leftovers of a war. Yet despite these differences, all four novels explore the same emptiness, the same inspiration, the same frustration, and the same major thematic idea of man's quest for vital truth.

IT CAN BE SAFELY SAID, therefore, that French-Canadian and English-Canadian novels of the Twentieth Century have traced a single basic line of ideological development, creating a whole spectrum of common images, attitudes and ideas. They have done so for the most part independently, each in its own solitude, but obviously we have twin solitudes. In effect, recalling Marius Bewley's statement that writers define nationality, it becomes evident that French Canadians and English Canadians are much more alike than many spokesmen have ever dared to suspect. Aside from language, it is quite probable that there are at the moment no fundamental cultural differences between the two major ethnic groups of Canada. Cohen's *Beautiful Losers* could almost be a sequel to Godbout's *Le Couteau sur la table.* We have evolved according to the same prescription. We have outgrown what differences we may once have had, the Rev. Ellis of Hamilton and Canon Groulx notwithstanding.

It should be pointed out, however, that there are certainly well established myths to endorse the supposition of two distinctly different cultures, and that these myths have been perpetuated by writers in both languages. Not counting Hugh MacLennan and Canon Lionel Groulx, there are no twentieth-century French-Canadian or English-Canadian writers I know of who have ventured to

offer more than a gesture of insight into the other ethnic group. French-Canadian characters can indeed be found in English-Canadian novels — there are Blacky Valois in Allister's *A Handful of Rice*, Gagnon in Callaghan's *The Loved and the Lost* and one of the prostitutes in his *Such is My Beloved*, René de Sevigny in Graham's *Earth and High Heaven*, Frenchy Turgeon in Garner's *Storm Below* and a whole family in his *Silence on the Shore*, and a multitude of others; but these characters are either stereotyped or completely out of context. The same situation obtains with the French-Canadian novel. Even Patricia in *Le Couteau* is the familiar stereotype of the wealthy English person from the west side of the Montreal mountain, with a hint of the Hemingway "rich bitch" for colour. Patricia is not in fact of English origin at all, being half Jewish and half Irish according to the author; but then even for French-Canadian intellectuals the word *anglais* has always been a very catholic term.

I mentioned Hugh MacLennan and Canon Groulx as exceptions. Groulx, however, is not really an exception to the general rule of mutual ignorance. His *L'Appel de la race*, a novel written in 1922, does indeed consider English Canada, but upon a basis of racist theories which would hardly be taken seriously except in places like South Africa and Alabama. Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes*, on the other hand, is a unique and impressive accomplishment. It has become, almost overnight seemingly, a historical novel. The author set out to dramatize certain basic concepts which had conditioned French-Canadian society, and he succeeded in doing so. Some readers in French Canada have been dismayed by the ending of the book and its implication that Paul will be assimilated into the English group. But what in fact happens is that part way through the book MacLennan shifts from dramatization of group concepts to characterization of individuals, so that the dénouement should not be regarded as a prophecy about the future of French Canada. One English-speaking novelist, incidentally, did in fact predict that French Canadians would be assimilated, and with great rapidity. That novelist was Frances Brooke, and her prophecy was made in the year 1769.

With Hugh MacLennan's *Two Solitudes* as a partial exception, the two literary traditions of Canada have remained essentially isolated. In a recent issue of *Liberté*, Naïm Kattan suggested that so far as the English-language tradition is concerned, the individual writers are even isolated from one another.[16] But I don't think that Mr. Kattan is entirely correct. Even though geographically separated, the major writers of English Canada are undoubtedly aware of each other's work, possibly as much so as French-Canadian writers living in the same apartment block in Montreal. Mr. Kattan's real point, however, was that com-

pared to English-Canadian novelists, the novelists of French Canada are a far more homogeneous group, which is true. They are also, I might add, so productive that if an outside observer were asked to indicate which of the two language groups in Canada is in greater danger of disappearing culturally, he would very probably pick the English-Canadian.

At the moment, for instance, an intriguing linguistic experiment is taking place. Jacques Renaud in *Le Cassé*, Claude Jasmin, Gérald Godin, and Laurent Girouard in parts of *La Ville inhumaine* have elected to use *joual*, the Quebec dialect, as a literary language. They have done so, presumably, as a symbolic protest. The critics for the most part are either uncertain about the significance of this experiment, or they condemn it outright as a kind of submission to corruption. *Joual* certainly is a conglomeration of corruptions, contractions, archaisms, mispronunciations, loan words and innovations — which, of course, is precisely what French was before the Isle de France standard and the formidable Académie française, or what English was and regional spoken English still is. Any notion of legitimacy in language must perforce be a figment of the purist's imagination. But be that as it may, the recent experiments with *joual* could have far-reaching effect. One has only to recall the influence of Mark Twain on American Literature, or the cultural explosion in Norway with the creation of a distinctive Norwegian language based upon rural dialects. Some French-Canadian critics may well be lamenting the very initiative which might lead to a distinguishing idiom.

To return once more to the comparative novel, one last question remains to be considered, the question of national identity with which we began. It has been shown that in the course of twentieth-century evolution, principal novels in French and English Canada have embraced the same spectrum of attitudes and ideas, albeit separately. What has this phenomenon to do with the definition of national identity? Has our literature produced one, or two, or no definitions?

In the first place, if the notable parallels in French-Canadian and English-Canadian Literature have any significance at all, then it must be because there does exist a single, common national mystique, a common set of conditioning forces, the mysterious apparatus of a single sense of identity. But, nevertheless, I think that our literature has not yet succeeded in providing more than an embryonic definition of nationality. The reasons for this lack of success up to now are probably myriad. We have moved through stages of masochistic resignation and dependence, as illustrated in the works of Hémon, Grove and Ringuet, of confusion and struggle of adaptation, as seen in novels by Roy, MacLennan, Mitchell, Bessette and Marlyn, and we are at the moment groping simultaneously with the

very essence of truth. We have not had an intellectual climate of positive myth and idealism to work within, as the Americans have had for instance. We have always known that this country is not the "garden of the world," and any notions of "manifest destiny" the French-Canadian explorers possessed, long ago went down the drain. There has been too much of the Catherine Tekakwitha in us for our own good. We, French Canadians and English Canadians, have perversely insisted upon isolation and upon stereotyped images of each other, and like the characters in Le Pan, Cohen, Aquin and Godbout, or even in MacLennan's *Barometer Rising*, we know what we are not, but we are either unwilling or still incapable of articulating what we are. Yet, as this paper has attempted to demonstrate, a process of involuntary consolidation of literary efforts has begun to take effect, and an emerging national mystique is somehow dictating the themes of Canadian creative writing.

This process could be strengthened by a greater mutual knowledge on the part of both groups of Canadians and an increase in comparative studies. More and better translations would be useful. But even of greater benefit for French-Canadian novels, so many of which contain excellent colloquial dialogue, would be a series of annotated editions, providing in appendices translations of difficult expressions, somewhat as the standard editions of Chaucer do. In any event, I think that we are now at a stage of genuine mutual interest, which is likely to be sustained. It seems also likely that as mutual knowledge of French-Canadian and English-Canadian Literature increases, as we become more aware of the significant parallels between the two, both bodies of literature will increase in scope and power, and we shall at the same time move toward a positive sense and adequate definition of Canadian identity.

Notes

[1] Introduction to James Fenimore Cooper, *Major Writers of America*, ed. Perry Miller et al. (New York, 1962), p. 280.

[2] Louis Hémon, *Maria Chapdelaine* (Paris-Coulommiers: Le Livre de poche, 1954), p. 193: Tu mourras quand le bon Dieu voudra que tu meures, et à mon idée ça n'est pas encore de ce temps icitte. Qu'est-ce qu'il ferait de toi? Le Paradis est plein de vieilles femmes, au lieu qu'icitte nous n'en avons qu'une et elle peut encore rendre des services, des fois . . .

[3] Louis Hémon, p. 146: Jésus-Christ, qui tendais les bras aux malheureux, pourquoi ne l'as-tu pas relevé de la neige avec tes mains pâles? Pourquoi, Sainte Vierge, ne l'avez-vous pas soutenu d'un geste miraculeux quand il a trébuché pour la dernière

fois? Dans toutes les légions du ciel, pourquoi ne s'est-il pas trouvé un ange pour lui montrer le chemin?

[4] Louis Hémon, p. 218: Oh! la certitude! le contentement d'une promesse auguste qui dissipe le brouillard redoutable de la mort! Pendant que le prêtre accomplissait les gestes consacrés et que son murmure se mêlait aux soupirs de la mourante, Samuel Chapdelaine et ses enfants priaient sans relever la tête, presque consolés, exempts de doute et d'inquiétude, sûrs que ce qui se passait là était un pacte conclu avec la divinité, qui faisait du Paradis bleu semé d'étoiles d'or un bien légitime.

[5] Frederick Philip Grove, *Our Daily Bread* (Toronto, 1928), p. 77.

[6] Ringuet, *Trente Arpents* (Montréal: Fides, 1964), p. 59.

[7] Jean Simard, *Mon Fils pourtant heureux* (Montréal: Le Cercle du livre de France, 1956), p. 60.

[8] Gabrielle Roy, *Bonheur d'occasion* (Montréal: Editions Beauchemin, 1965), p. 89: "Peut-être qu'il oublie des fois. Il y àtant de misère qui s'adresse à lui." Ainsi, la seule fêlure dans sa foi venait de cette candide supposition que Dieu, distrait, fatigué, harassé comme elle, en arrivait à ne plus accorder qu'une attention éparse aux besoins humains.

[9] John Marlyn, *Under the Ribs of Death,* New Canadian Library Series (Toronto, 1964), p. 211.

[10] W. O. Mitchell, *Who Has Seen the Wind,* Macmillan Paperback Series (Toronto, 1947), p. 170.

[11] Gérard Bessette, *La Bagarre* (Montréal: Le Cercle du livre de France, 1958), p. 51.

[12] Hugh MacLennan, *The Watch that Ends the Night* (Toronto, 1960), p. 64.

[13] Leonard Cohen, *Beautiful Losers* (Toronto, 1966), p. 96.

[14] Jacques Godbout, *Le Couteau sur la table* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965), p. 98: Seulement faut pas s'aviser de réfléchir, de regarder, de soupçonner, de jouer à l'intellectuel . . .

[15] Douglas Le Pan, *The Deserter* (Toronto, 1964), p. 226.

[16] Naïm Kattan, "Romanciers canadiens-anglais et canadiens-français," *Liberté,* No. 42 (Nov.-Dec. 1966), p. 479.

F. R. SCOTT AND SOME OF HIS POEMS

A. J. M. Smith

IN FRANK SCOTT we have a figure whom some Carlyle of Canada's second century might write about as The Hero as Canadian Poet or perhaps more soberly as The Poet as Man of Action. Politician, lawyer, teacher, scholar, and public figure, F. R. Scott has been in the forefront of the battle for civil liberties and social justice in Canada. He was one of the doctors presiding over the births of the CCF and the New Democratic Party; he fought and won the legal battles against the padlock law of Premier Duplessis and against the censorship of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*; he has written studies of Canada's constitution, has been Dean of Law at McGill, and is at present a member of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturism. And he has, since his early days as a law student at McGill, been a poet.

The main function of a poet, of course, is to write poems, and Scott has been doing that steadily for more than three and a half decades. But his energy, his generous good will, and his natural self-assertiveness that makes him an inevitable and stimulating leader, were thrown into the battle for the new poetry in Canada as soon as it was joined in the mid-twenties. The now classic satire *The Canadian Authors Meet* was one of his first shots, while his social and editorial participation in the doings of the Preview group and the encouragement he has given to other poets in Montreal have kept up the good work to the present moment. There is hardly a poet in Canada who has not, passing through Montreal, made his pilgrimage to Clarke Avenue, Westmount, and been royally entertained and stimulated with wise and witty talk about poetry and poets; and all of them from the early days of Leo Kennedy, Abe Klein, and myself, through the time of Patrick Anderson, John Sutherland, P. K. Page, and the rest to the overlapping and hetero-

geneous groups that might include Louis Dudek, Ralph Gustafson, Irving Layton, Doug Jones, and John Glassco, felt the charm, energy and good sense that animated Frank Scott and make him one of the leaders in every group.

Ralph Gustafson has expressed in an appropriate and witty piece of verse a judgment that I think every one of the poets I have named would agree is just:

To say
that this man is fantastic
is to be
Frankly wrong.
Real
is the right root
for him.
He bears history,
the lakes
he dives under,
the cold hard sun
he walks in,
Canada perhaps. . . .

Praise
he goes into,
padlocks
he gets well out of
and piety. . . .

Mortality
moves him,
he goes for wrong-doing,
never lets bad enough
alone. . . .

Words
he gets the wear out of . . .
buried with respectable honour
goes
Scott-free.

"He bears history,/the lakes/he dives under . . ." These lines will take us into the first poem in Scott's new book,* "Lakeshore," one of the finest and most characteristic pieces in the collection.

* *Selected Poems*, Oxford University Press, $4.75.

IT WILL SERVE as a gateway through which to enter into an examination of some of his most striking themes and interesting techniques.

Its theme is Man's history, which extends back into pre-history and before man. Its unifying symbol is water as the source of life. The poem establishes through a specific concrete personal experience a contact in awareness with biological history, stretching back to the primordial beginnings of life and all around to the earthbound mechanical *now* of "a crowded street."

By the edge of a lake, the poet — or, better, the sensuous mind that is the protagonist of so many of Scott's metaphysical lyrics — contemplates water, earth, and sky. There is first "the bevelled edge of land," then "the fretted sands" that the eye follows as they "go slanting down through liquid air." Now the regard is fixed on stones below the surface of the water and held too at the surface where the stones seem to be

> Floating upon their broken sky
> All netted by the prism wave
> And rippled where the currents are.

This is exact, clear, and elegant. There is a seventeenth-century grace about these opening lines. One thinks of Cowley's praise: "His candid style like a clean stream does slide." It is a style that admits, indeed invites, Wit — as we see in the next couple of stanzas. The poet (Man-and-Mind) peers into the water.

> I stare through windows at this cave
> Where fish, like planes, slow-motioned, fly
> Poised in a still of gravity . . .

The windows are the surface of the water and the surfaces of the eyes. Note also the hushed gravity of the last line and the gentle punning on *still.*

But the most striking object that confronts the poet is his own reflection.

> I am a tall frond that waves
> Its head below its rooted feet
> Seeking the light that draws it down
> To forest floors beyond its reach
> Vivid with gloom and eerie dreams.

At the beginning of the fourth stanza the sensuous mind dives down into the depths of the water and into the pre-racial æons of the past, and for the four next stanzas we become, like the diver, liquid and loosed and silent, "Stroked by the fingertips of love,"

Too virginal for speech or sound
And each is personal and laned
Along his private aqueduct.

But this return to the all-embracing primordial womb can be only a momentary glimpse of a long-lost freedom, a long since forfeited harmony with our environment.

Too soon the tether of the lungs
Is taut and straining, and we rise
Upon our undeveloped wings
Toward the prison of our ground
A secret anguish in our thighs
And mermaids in our memories.

This is our talent, to have grown
Upright in posture, false-erect,
A landed gentry, circumspect,
Tied to a horizontal soil
The floor and ceiling of the soul;
Striving, with cold and fishy care
To make an ocean of the air.

The physical and sensuous exactness of the beginnings of the first of these two stanzas is admirable, as is the emotional and imaginative rightness of the end. The witty implications in naming our arms "our undeveloped wings" should not go without notice either. In the next stanza, the aptness of the joke in calling mankind "a landed gentry" adds to the laughter of the mind which it is one — though only one — of the functions of this poem to provoke.

But it is not with laughter, however philosophical, that the poem ends, but with wonder.

Sometimes, upon a crowded street,
I feel the sudden rain come down
And in the old, magnetic sound
I hear the opening of a gate
That loosens all the seven seas.
Watching the whole creation drown
I muse, alone, on Ararat.

Here, at the threshold of his book, Scott moves from the poetry of concrete images through wit and metaphysical imagination to myth and magic. A long cool dive into Lake Massawippi and the poet comes up with a rich hoard of racial

memories, dreams, desires and aspirations. All are perfectly fused: earth, water, air; science and mythology; mermaids, Venus, Noah; the I and All-Mankind; a crowded street and "the water's deepest colonnades."

"LAKESHORE" is an excellent starting point for a consideration of Scott's non-satirical poetry. The themes and the motives of many of his most completely articulated poems are seen in it at their clearest and most direct. The fascination with water, as an element and as a symbol; the identification of the poet's Self with Man and of the sensuous perceptive physical being with Mind; and the inescapable tendency to identify or interchange the language and imagery of science (especially biology, geology and psychology) with the language and imagery of religion: all these are here. And they are to be found also, in varying degrees and proportions, in such deeply felt and intellectually stimulating poems as "Paradise Lost", "Eden", "Journey", "My Amoeba is Unaware", and the best of the pieces on India and the Far East — "Bangkok", "Water", "A Grain of Rice", and "On the Death of Gandhi".

"Lakeshore" may also serve as an exemplar both of the "candid" style derived from Imagism and of the witty metaphysical style that, without being in the least derivative, recalls Marvell and Waller — or, if you prefer, Auden. Some of the earliest poems dating from the days of the *McGill Fortnightly Review* already have a simplicity of language and an exactness of imagery which are the firstfruits of conscious discipline, control, and humility. Little pieces like "North Stream" and Snowdrift" or the much later haiku "Plane Landing in Tokyo" exhibit these qualities in miniature splendour.

A pure and naked perception alone could not, of course, satisfy Scott for more than a moment, and most of his poems that start out as an image soon become images, and perceptions soon become concepts and blossom in metaphor, analogy, and conceit. Mind comes flooding in.

Many of the early very simple verses grouped near the beginning of *Selected Poems* are nevertheless quite delightful, though their importance perhaps is mainly historical (they date from the mid-twenties) and technical (they show Scott's later style beginning to form). "New Names" develops in a personal and indeed almost rapturous way the old thesis that writers as different as Mrs. Traill and Mr. Douglas Le Pan have united in expressing — that Canada is a country without a mythology. Scott suggests we must make our own anew. "Old Song"

finds and expresses an austere cadence in the almost-silence of the northern wilderness:

far voices
and fretting leaves
this music the
hillside gives

but in the deep
Laurentian river
an elemental song
for ever

a quiet calling
of no mind
out of long æons

. . . . .

granite lips
a stone throat

Here we are back to the purest imagism and a style that is the ultimate in simplicity and suggestiveness. This poem has a theme and a style that are irresistibly appealing to the Canadian poet, as new poets like Bowering and Newlove show as clearly as E. J. Pratt or W. W. E. Ross. Here, as in "Lakeshore", we have the sense of vast distances in space and time and a view of geological pre-history that goes back even farther than the ages of man-as-fish.

Another poem that rises naturally out of such telescopic probings into the geologic and biologic past and therefore has affinities with "Lakeshore" and "Old Song" is the strange meditation called "Mount Royal". This is a Pratt poem with a difference. One thinks of the vivifying dynamism of the description of the Laurentian Shield in "Towards the Last Spike". Here time is speeded up: the Mountain rises out of the sea; the sea subsides, leaving its deposit of silt and shells; Man walks and builds his muddled cities "where crept the shiny mollusc," and the poet or poet-mind observes it all.

Where flowers march, I dig these tiny shells
Once deep-down fishes safe, it seemed, on sand. . . .

The joke about the fishes building on sand and thinking themselves safe alerts us to the fact that irony and satire are this poet's chosen weapons. The satire

here is directed against man's vanity, pride, and blind self-confidence as in Hardy's lines on the loss of the *Titanic*, where dim moon-eyed fishes stare at the mighty wreck and query "What does this vaingloriousness down here?" The situation is reversed in "Mount Royal". It is the fish who have been stranded and passed by. Now they are cited as an object lesson that suburban and commercial man, who builds his villas on the reclaimed island of the mountain, fails to heed — blindly and foolishly, it is implied, since the forces of atomic destruction are to hand. The poem ends in angry scorn.

> Pay taxes now,
> Elect your boys, lay out your pleasant parks,
> You gill-lunged, quarrelsome ephemera!
> The tension tightens yearly, underneath,
> A folding continent shifts silently
> And oceans wait their turn for ice or streets.

THERE IS A CURIOUS CONSEQUENCE of this geologic view that we can observe in some of Scott's most characteristic poems. He is a man capable of — indeed unable to refrain from — taking long views, both backwards into the past and forward into the future, an idealist in the popular sense of the word. Both in his political life as a socialist and his literary life as a poet he welcomes the new, the just, and the generous — and always in the broadest and most generous terms. Poems that embrace vast cosmic distances, both of space and time, lend themselves to thinking in abstractions. There is world enough and time for all the great abstractions to come into being, to evolve and grow, to change, to grow old, and perhaps to die. The good ones we must cultivate, preserve, and nourish; the bad ones we must kill.

There is a very peculiar class of poems in which these consequences of taking large views are quite explicit. Some of its members are "Creed", "Conflict", "Dialogue", "Degeneration", poems concerned with War or with Love, and a remarkable series of what for want of a better name I will call "defining" poems — among them "Memory", "Heart", "Was", "Caring", and (with a difference) "Stone". Let us look at one or two of them.

"Conflict" is a rather Emersonian poem on the tragic paradox of war. It develops the thesis that men on both sides in any conflict fight for the good they know and die with equal courage for the opposite sides of truth:

When I see the falling bombs
Then I see defended homes.
Men above and men below
Die to save the good they know. . . .

Pro and con have single stem
Half a truth dividing them. . . .

Persecution's cruel mouth
Shows a twisted love of truth. . . .

Here speaks the defender of unpopular causes, the idealist who loves the abstract and the universal. It is the wide application of unparticularized truth that such a poetry seeks to secure. Universals and abstractions are employed with the confidence born of an utter faith in their reality and validity. Such words as *good*, *wrong*, *bravery*, *love*, *truth*, *prison*, *ghetto*, *flag*, *gun*, *rack*, *rope*, *persecution*, *sacrifice*, whether abstractions or collective symbols, are made to glow with the vitality of an individual existence — or are used as if they did so glow.

How this is done, the eight quatrains entitled "Dialogue" may demonstrate. In structure and language this poem is as taut and concentrated as "Conflict", but its movement is in the reverse direction — from sensation and particularity (from the concrete, that is) to the universal, a universal which is equated with the spiritual — "spirit takes communion/From every living touch." The progression is straightforward. "Sense is more than mortal." Our bodies are the gateway to a supra-sensual world. Eye, ear, and hand contribute to the synthesis of a new form "to house a new conception."

Desire first, then structure
Complete the balanced picture.
The thought requires the form.

The poem's rhetoric is serpentine, for we have now reached — this is the fifth of eight stanzas — the point where the poem begins:

The hour is ripe for union,
And spirit takes communion
From every living touch.

The end in the last two stanzas is surprising and unheroic. The serpent cannot rear back and strike; instead it sinks down and seem to collapse.

For us, how small the power
To build our dreams a tower
Or cast the molten need.
For us, how small the power.

So few, so worn, the symbols.
No line or word resembles
The vision in its womb.
So few, so worn, the symbols.

Truth, not wishes, hopes, or evasions, is the business of poetry; and this poem would be a lesser one if it ended any other way.

What is needed always is a new language, new images, and a new technique. Scott has been trying all his life — and sometimes with heartening success — to find these. Some of his notable successes are moving love poems that have been placed in this collection immediately after "Dialogue". Their newness and hence their effectiveness lies in nothing more strange than an absolute fidelity to the occasion and the emotion that has brought them into being. One, called "Meeting", begins like this:

If what we say and do is quick and intense,
And if in our minds we see the end before starting,
It is not fear, but understanding that holds us.

Here the conciseness of the syntax contributes potentialities to the meaning. It is not fear that holds us apart but understanding that holds us together.

Other poems that approach or achieve the new style are "Will to Win" — a deceptively light and witty *jeu d'esprit* in which the lightness enables the poet to keep control of the situation and the wit serves to define it; "Vision" — beautifully rhymed quatrains in which the "newness" or rightness comes from the clarity with which the sharp edge of every idea is defined; and "A l'Ange Avantgardien" — the explicit statement of a romantic view of poetic creation according to which the emphasis must always be on the making never on the made.

One of the most striking paradoxes of Scott's poetic life is that the ceaseless flow of energy which throws up poems of all kinds and in all modes should nevertheless be able to shape them with extreme care, whether the work in hand is a piece of impressionistic and typographical experiment or a closely knit web of thought, like the fine late poem "Vision" — a true metaphysical lyric that begins:

Vision in long filaments flows
Through the needles of my eyes.
I am fastened to the rose . . .

I am clothed in what eye sees.

and ends:

Tireless eye, so taut and long,
Touching flowers and flames with ease,
All your wires vibrate with song
When it is the heart that sees.

Here is song that is as well written as prose — a poem that reiterates the validity of the "candid" style of "Lakeshore" and the earlier imagist pieces.

This style is seen at its most purely intellectual in what I have called the "defining" poems — lyrics that perhaps have developed out of Scott's training as a lawyer. Lawyers, like poets, are involved with words, with definitions, and with subtle quibbles. Some of these pieces, as for example "Memory", are apt and ingenious metaphor:

Tight skin called Face is drawn
Over the skull's bone comb
Casing the honey brain

And thoughts like bee-line bees
Fly straight from blossom eyes
To store sweet facts in cells . . .

Within the waxy walls
Lifetimes of sounds and smells
Lie captive in the coils . . .

Others, like "Was" seem merely verbal, until we notice that here the universal and the abstract are made concrete and immediate, the ideal transformed before our eyes into the real:

Was is an Is that died
    in our careless hands
and would not stay
    in its niche of time.

We crumble all our nows
    into the dust of Was . . .
forgetting Was

    cannot be shaken off
    follows close behind
    breathes down our neck . . .

One day we shall look back
    into those staring eyes
and there will be nothing left but
        Was.

Another "defining" poem of the same sort is the one beginning "Caring is loving, motionless," but the lines entitled "Stone" show an interesting difference. In these what is being defined is not an abstraction or a state but an object, a solid item, "a still of gravity". The method is entirely different from that of imagism. The purpose of an imagist poem is to perceive and to present perception, but here we go further in an effort to grasp the idea of the thing and of its place in history. The motion too is just the reverse of that in "Was", where an abstraction was made concrete; here a concretion is seen in the light of thought — the remarkable thing being, however, that the thought is made to seem to radiate from the stone itself:

A stone is a tomb
with the door barred.

A still picture
from a flick of motion.

A stone is a closed eye
reflecting what it saw. . . .

In these distichs we come back to the sense of time in which Scott is so deeply immersed that it recurs in poem after poem. Here the mind moves from the glacial epochs of pre-history to the bursting stone that falls on Hiroshima.

Perhaps in coming to a close I should return to the personal. But actually I have not been away from it. The old dictum that the style is the man has never been more clearly illustrated than in the poetry of F. R. Scott. All his poems, from the gayest and lightest expression of delight in life through his pointed and savage satires to the profound lyrics I have been mainly considering, are informed and qualified by a sense of responsibility and an inescapable sincerity, which is serious but never solemn and rich without ostentation.

FOUND POEMS

F. R. Scott

BRITISH INDUSTRIALIST APPROVES APARTHEID

Is the headline. Sir Francis de Guingand
Chairman of Rothman's of Pall Mall, Ltd.,
(substantial cigaret and tobacco holdings in South Africa)
said black Africans in general
are "just too immature for self-government".
While admitting
"It's an immensely complex problem, of course",
he said he was "all in favour of separate development".
Apparently the Portuguese colonies
are doing "awfully well, you know",
while black Africans
"are killing each other".
"Those Somali chaps —
they're bound to cause trouble.
Same thing in the Congo.
Awful mess.
And Burundi,
Urundi,
or whatever you call the place.
Killing each other by the thousands.
Dreadful,
just dreadful".
And as for Nyerere of Tanzania,

he is "playing far too much
into the hands
of the wretched Chinese".

(*Montreal Gazette*, 10 Oct., 1966)

ONE CURE FOR LONELINESS

Noted
the recent letters
from people who are lonely
and find time hanging heavily
on their hands.

Some form of hobby
can serve to interest
such folk.
Such a hobby need not be expensive
nor demand undue space
or equipment.

News events
or stories and articles
from the press and magazines
can be clipped and pasted
in a scrapbook.

This book could be
I am told
as cheap as a five cent copy book
and a jar of paste
is mentioned
at about
19 cents.

(*Montreal Star*, July 15, 1965)

FROST-BITE

The term *frost-bitten*
denotes the effect produced by extreme cold,
accompanied by a sharp biting wind.
In such weather, persons are liable
to have the nose, toes, fingers, ears,
or those parts where the circulation of the blood is
scanty and slow,
frost-bitten,
without being made aware of the change by their own sensations;
often they are first informed of their misfortune
by a passing stranger,
who observes the nose becoming quite *white,*
while the rest of the face is very red.
In such a predicament it is at first startling
to see an utter stranger running up to you
with a handful of snow, calling out
"*your nose, sir: your nose is frost-bitten:*
and, without further ceremony,
rubs without mercy at your proboscis —
it being the first time, perhaps,
that anyone has ever dared to tweak and twinge
that exquisitely sensitive organ —
which some have considered the seat of honour.
If *snow*
be well *rubbed in*
in due time,
there is a chance of saving
the most prominent feature of the face;
if not,
or if *heat* be applied,
not only is the skin destroyed,

but the nose,
and a great part of the adjacent surface,
are irrevocably lost.

(From a *History of Upper and Lower Canada*, by
L. Montgomery Martin, 1837, p. 186)

ADVERTISEMENT

Thin-film decoder
for high-speed pulse code
modulation systems
converts binary pulse sequences
into analog signals.
Circuit consists
of precision resistor network
and multiple-encapsulated control diodes.
Precision resistors
generate reference currents
that are switched into
resistive ladder network.
Output voltage is proportional
to binary code
applied to diodes.
Precision sufficient for decoding
9-digit binary codes
is obtained,
at code rates up to 12 mc
(108 mb/s pulse rates).

(*Scientific American*, 1965)

A POET OF THE MIDDLE SLOPES

Robin Skelton

AT A TIME WHEN frenetic symbolism and rhetorical gesticulation are running neck and neck with pseudo-imagist reportage and structureless colloquialism in the race towards a Canadian Parnassus, it is enormously rewarding to turn one's glasses on a poet of a different colour, and one whose measured steady progress has been unattended by ballyhoo and self-dramatization. F. R. Scott's *Selected Poems*[1] brings together the best work of over forty years, and the result is impressive.

Mr. Scott has not chosen to date the poems in his collection, so that it is impossible, without doing a good deal of research, to discuss the poems chronologically. I am sure this is deliberate; what matters about poetry is not its development but its identity. This book represents, not a history, but a poetic personality, and the varying viewpoints and tones are better seen as complementary portions of one pattern than as stages upon a journey.

As one reads the book the pattern emerges very clearly. It is, I think, the pressure of intelligence that dominates and moulds Mr. Scott's poetry. This intelligent, rigorous, even sceptical, approach to experience is most obvious in the satirical poems, of course, for there the intelligence must have the last incisive and derisory word. It is also, however, present in the most lyrical and most symbolic poems. Thus, when we read the final stanza of "Old Song":

> only a moving
> with no note
> granite lips
> a stone throat

while we are affected by the associative power of the imagery, we are equally moved by the economy and rigour of the language; the poem displays its decisive-

[1] F. R. SCOTT, *Selected Poems*, Oxford University Press. $4.75.

ness as an essential part of its perception. Thus again in "Trans Canada" the implications of the opening images are witty as well as sensually vivid.

> Pulled from our ruts by the made-to-order gale
> We sprang upward into a wider prairie
> And dropped Regina below like a pile of bones.

If, here, the implications of the ascent of the spirit from the body, and the hint at the hackneyed after-life image of happy hunting grounds, have, like the "made-to-order gale", sardonic overtones, this does not in any way destroy, but rather enriches the validity of the speaker's emotions. Scott, like Donne, like Carew, and like Marvell, speaks as a complete man; his passions involve his intelligence, and his intelligence gives rise to passion.

IT IS, PERHAPS, characteristic of any poet addicted to the precise counterpointing of intelligence and passion that he should also be inclined towards neatness of form. Scott has handled most kinds of verse in his time, and his sense of form is such that he can make the most of free as well as of highly disciplined patterns. He knows the possibilities of colloquial ease as well as he knows the opportunities of formal rhetoric. Thus, looking through his work one can gather examples of technical expertise in almost every manner.

Compare for example the deftly Whitmanesque opening of "Audacity" with the gnomic traditionalism of "Advice".

> They say we lack audacity, that we are middle class, without the adventurousness that arises from the desperation of the lower classes or the tradition of the upper classes.
> They say we are more emphatically middling than any country west of Switzerland, and that boldness and experiment are far from our complacent thoughts.
> But I say to you, they do not know where to look, and have not the eyes to see.
> For audacity is all around us,
> Boldness sits in the highest places,
> We are riddled with insolence. ("Audacity")

> Beware the casual need
> By which the heart is bound;

Pluck out the quickening seed
That falls on stony ground.

Forgo the shallow gain,
The favour of an hour.
Escape, by early pain
The death before the flower. ("Advice")

This type of control leads sometimes to a self-consciousness that militates against passion and over-emphasizes the virtue of order. Certainly there are very few instances of emotional excess, and even the visionary poems rather suggest a disciplined contemplation than a blinding illumination on the road to Emmaus.

This is, perhaps, healthy. The Romantic heresy that the philosophic importance of an experience is the greater the nearer it gets to hysteria finds no support in F. R. Scott; he is clearly inclined to reverse Blake's dictum and say "Bless braces, damn relaxes". Nevertheless, there is great emotional power in many of his poems; the power is expressed by the tautness of the verse and the poised tension of the language, thus "Coil" begins:

Coil is a tense
a caged thing
coil is a snake
or a live spring

Against the tension, however, is balanced a sense of calm and a feeling for slow organic movement. Thus "Departure" concludes:

We shall find, each, the deep sea in the end,
A stillness, and a movement only of tides
That wash a world, whole continents between,
Flooding the estuaries of alien lands.
And we shall know, after the flow and ebb,
Things central, absolute and whole.
Brought clear of silt, into the open roads,
Events shall pass like waves, and we shall stay.

Mr. Scott's imagery is rarely very novel, though it is almost invariably appropriate. He deals in images of the natural landscape and the seasons more than in those of the city, though his satirical poems are inclined to be both urban and urbane. The third stanza of "Boston Tea Party 1940" runs:

The Harvard pundit's tea is brought
Amid the ample female forms.
He quits his crevices of thought
To taste the soft and simpler norms . . .

This, in syntactical structure and in cadence, is very close to Eliot, and I am sure the closeness is intentional. Here, however, as in some other cases, the result is rather a predictability of tone than an enriching ambiguity of reference. A poem that operates simultaneously in terms of two sensibilities, one ostensible and one implied by allusion or pastiche, requires an all-embracing, all-including originality of vision if it is not to become merely a pleasing game. It must be admitted that many of Mr. Scott's poems become games. Sometimes these are delightful, and yet such trivia as "The Canadian Authors Meet" and "Saturday Sundae" impose a superficiality upon the total persona of the book; the former jibe has point and still applies, but even here there are moments of mere facetiousness. "Saturday Sundae" is worse, being both arch and insensitive.

Him of the front-flap apron, him I sing,
The counter-clockwise clerk in underalls.
Swing low, sweet chocolate, Oh swing, swing,
While cheek by juke the jitter chatter falls.

The sensibility portrayed by the poem's speaker seems to me to be even less attractive than that of the world he mocks.

My brothers and my sisters, two by two,
Sit sipping succulence and sighing sex.
Each tiny adolescent universe
A world the vested interests annex.

There is an element of potential pathos here which undermines the whole poem, and makes the final verse appear both imperceptive and heartless.

The satirical poems of F. R. Scott, though much praised, seem to me too often to lack that hunger after the ideal, which animates the best satirists, whether of the radical or other persuasion. There is more cleverness than vehemence about them; they relate to the great satires as the grotesqueries of Leech relate to those of Goya.

It is, perhaps, by way of the satires that I find myself coming to a conclusion about Scott's work. He is a splendid versifier, an intensely intelligent writer, a wit, and a man of deep feeling; nevertheless, though his stated opinions are often

radical, liberal, and sophisticated, his modes of operation are so dependent upon already established modes and attitudes that poetically (and in the context, not of Canada, but of the English-speaking world) he must be regarded as a conservative. Nevertheless on the Canadian scene he is an important figure, he represents emotional discipline, intelligence, and craftsmanship, and must be reckoned one of our four or five finest living poets. His work may not place him alongside the greatest of the twentieth-century poets of England and America, but poets should be judged by their excellences not by their limitations, and Scott has made a number of poems that ensure his survival down the years. He may not have reached the highest peak of Parnassus, but he is assured of a place upon the middle slopes. Only a very few can ever hope to climb farther.

GLENGARRY REVISITED

Roy Daniells

RALPH CONNOR'S WORKS fill a whole shelf in any Canadian library and, though worn bindings on multiple copies show that someone has pulled them down pretty often, we should not be much tempted to do so now were it not for *The Man from Glengarry*, published in 1901. It has slowly assumed the status of a minor classic, after a period of immense popularity followed by total neglect. Reprinted for the New Canadian Library in 1960, with a brief but enlightening introduction by Ross Beharriell, it can stand alone as Connor's testimony, but is usefully thrown into relief if flanked by his autobiographical *Glengarry Schooldays* (1902) and *Postscript to Adventure* (1938) and illuminated by an occasional dip into the other novels. Readers pursuing the Glengarry theme should, however, disregard *The Girl from Glengarry* (1933); it is a story of the stock market in the 1920's and demonstrates how bald and superficial Connor could be when his daemon deserted him.

"All that is set down in *Glengarry Schooldays* is true." This avowal answers for the author's entire work. There is in fact no change of persona between the Reverend Charles Gordon and the pseudonymous writer of stories. For most Canadians, the minister of St. Stephen's Church in Winnipeg, chaplain on the Western Front during the First World War and afterwards Moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly, is quite simply Ralph Connor. Born in Ontario's eastern county of Glengarry in 1860, he looked out into the Glengarry farms and forests from the vantage point of his father's manse during the first ten years of his life. It is to this decade that we must turn for the primary pattern from which

all his works unfolded. Familiar outlines are here superimposed: the Canadian bush, the Scottish clan, the doctrines of Calvin and the archetypes of a child's dream. Connor's perception of greatness, in this life and beyond, is directed down immemorial vistas.

His Glengarry lies at the heart of the most primeval of all forests, a Schwarzwald antedating even the stories Grimm preserved. "It lines up close and thick along the road, and here and there quite overshadows it. It crowds in upon the little farms and shuts them off from one another and from the world outside, and peers in through the little windows of the log houses looking so small and lonely, but so beautiful in their forest frames." At the end of a perspective of time past, Connor sees this landscape of his childhood, simplified, stylized and lighted by a glow of warm affection. It is a fairyland, more solid and real than actuality. "A dim light fell over the forest from the half-moon and the stars, and seemed to fill up the little clearing in which the manse stood, with a weird and mysterious radiance. Far away in the forest the long-drawn howl of a wolf rose and fell. . . ." Or Spring is breaking: "The bare woods were filled with the tangled rays of light from the setting sun. Here and there a hillside facing the east lay in shadow that grew black where the balsams and cedars stood in clumps. But everywhere else the light fell sweet and silent about the bare trunks, filling the long avenues under the arching maple limbs with a yellow haze." This luminous veil belongs to *le temps perdu*, living only in memory: "The solid forests of Glengarry have vanished, and with the forests the men who conquered them."

Instinctively Connor brings his great Highlanders on stage as woodsmen rather than farmers. Salient ceremonies of this self-contained world in the heart of the forest are the sugaring-off, an annual tribute from the maple groves, and the logging-bee, a mass assault upon the brulé. The forest, moreover, is a main source of livelihood. Each winter the shanties are filled with Glengarry men who will fell the huge pines and with broad-axe square the timber ready for rafting down river to Quebec. When the scene shifts to that city or to the far West, there is a marked loss of intensity and loosening of texture. It is only in the forest world, where custom makes life sweet, that Connor is fully at home and his daemon fully functioning.

In Canada the Scottish unicorn retains his crown; compare the English coat of arms with that of Nova Scotia. Immigrants from Scotland have, from the earliest days of settlement and in all parts of the country, found Canada congenial. Connor's Glengarry takes its name from a region in north Perthshire, on the southern edge of the Highlands. The confluence of the Garry and Tummel rivers

lies just above Pitlochry, from whose streets the Canadian visitor looks northward into familiar landscapes. Glen Garry is part of the Atholl basin where a floor level of about fifteen hundred feet is ringed by mountains more than twice as high, pierced by the opposed passes of Drumochter and Killiecrankie. From this species of environment the transition to eastern Canada was an easy one. The Scottish inhabitants of Connor's Glengarry are "mostly from the Highlands and Islands" and their cohesiveness is strengthened by pressure from Irish and French-Canadian settlements bordering their territory. In Glengarry Macdonalds can comfortably coexist with Campbells although the latter have perpetrated "the vilest act of treachery recorded in any history, the massacre of the Macdonalds of Glencoe." It is as though a new Canadian clan with Glengarry as its patronymic had been, by agreement, created. Connor, as chaplain of the 43rd Cameron Highlanders of Canada, wore appropriately enough the "Glengarry" cap.

A strong family likeness marks the forest people, the Canadian clan. The hero, Ranald Macdonald, remains "the man from Glengarry", individualized only by the intensity with which the common flame burns in him. Connor's life and works in general abound with evidence that he shares with his hero this incandescence. In *The Doctor*, we see the Southern belle Iola Lane, "possessed of a fatal, maddening beauty" which works destruction among her lovers, closing her brief life by Loch Fyne in the West Highlands, where the sacredness of the soil and the scene are conducive to an edifying end. Connor's own feeling of rapture when first he visited Scotland is brilliantly captured in *Postscript to Adventure*. The loyalty, strength and seriousness of Connor's heroes; their pride, élan and willingness to stand on a point of honour; their instinctive implementation of the Scottish regimental motto "Nemo me impune lacessit!": everything shows them to be Highlanders at one remove, their clan feeling intensified rather than diminished by the migration.

Other matters such as the virility and patriarchal authority of the men, the purity and noble compassion of the women, are perhaps best considered in the context of Glengarry religion, for it is hard to know where the clansman ends and the Calvinist begins. Connor's own degrees of emphasis should be taken note of: "The men are worth remembering. They carried the marks of their blood in their fierce passions, their courage, their loyalty; and of the forest in their patience, their resourcefulness, their self-reliance. But deeper than all, the mark that reached down to their heart's core was that of their faith, for in them dwelt the fear of God." Gradually we come to agree that it is the third strand, of religion, which twisted against the other two produces the magic thread, fastened to some

archetypal bole in the depth of Connor's dream forest and giving him in all subsequent times and remote places a sure tug of orientation toward his centre of reference.

REGION, RACE AND RELIGION: this is Connor's perpetual trilogy. We see Ranald (clearly Connor's alter ego), become a successful business man and sportsman, idol of the Albert Club in Quebec, encountering the minister's wife, Mrs. Murray, who is there on a visit. "Then they began talking about Glengarry, of the old familiar places, of the woods and the fields, of the boys and girls now growing into men and women, and of the old people, some of whom were passed away. Before long they were talking of the church and all the varied interests centering in it, but soon they went back to the theme that Glengarry people everywhere are never long together without discussing — the great revival."

As we enter and re-enter the closed world of the forest we become aware that the little clearings, hewed out by a physical labour not less than heroic, are ruled by heads of households, each a tower of strength in his own domain. We listen to old Donald Finch when he learns that his son has resisted the schoolmaster: "Woman, be silent! It is not for you to excuse his wickedness. . . . Your children have well learned their lesson of rebellion and deceit. But I vow unto the Lord I will put an end to it now, whatever. And I will give you to remember, sir," turning to Thomas, "to the end of your days this occasion. And now, hence from this table. Let me not see your face till the Sabbath is past, and then, if the Lord spares me, I shall deal with you." The close association of parental and divine authority is no accident. Calvinism and the clan were two concepts upon which rested the whole fabric of Glengarry society. They were naturally complementary.

"Religion in Glengarry in those days was a solemn and serious matter, a thing of life and death." Calvin's conception of God as beyond reason, inexplicable, omnipotent and requiring no justification of his ways to men, suited perfectly the Highlanders' psyche. But the individual's reaction to so overwhelming a presence is not simple or single. God was viewed, rather remotely, as ruler of the universe, author and disposer of every man's being; predestinating some to heaven, leaving others for damnation; all this for causes which no discussion of foreknowledge could ever render acceptable to human reason. More immediately, God appeared as a super-ego, demanding all but impossible physical and moral effort from the elect — primarily from the minister of each presbytery — "He

must be a man to whom God is more real than his universe." And since we tend to ask of others what has been asked of us, the same demanding quality, the same intention to dominate, possessed all relationships. "The Glengarry folk were a fighting people. The whole spirit of the school was permeated by the fighting motif. Every recitation was a contest. The winners went joyously to the top, the failures remained ignominiously at the foot... The gravest defect in our educational system was the emphasis laid upon feats of memory.... In all my Glengarry school days I never drew a map." What need of maps when purpose runs in linear progression from one point of decision to the next? Bunyan's Christian was given no map to show his way to heaven, only the directive, Keep to the straight and narrow path!

Counterbalancing the imperious paternal figure is the female ideal, whether virginal or maternal, filling the roles of Beatrice and Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Here Connor's very limitations become strengths. Sexuality rises into an immense romantic sublimation, completely convincing because it must have corresponded to Connor's deepest experience and firmest belief. Mrs. Murray, the minister's wife, and Kate, the girl whom the hero wins at the close, are essentially the same. Spirited, radiant, resourceful, devoted, they are without weakness or lapse, but true to the experience of the idealist. Watching the sun set behind lofty crests of the forest, which gleam like spires against the light, it is easy to believe that "the streets of the city are pure gold" and to know toward what city Mrs. Murray is directing the gaze of her son. Connor's intensity of vision makes his stereotypes convincing; they reveal themselves as embodiments of some Platonic or Christian reality of an ultimate kind.

His conception of excellence is single and closely focussed. For those who fall outside its narrow range there is little comprehension. English, Irish and American characters are not denigrated; they simply and visibly fail to measure up to Scottish standards. Methodists, Baptists and Roman Catholics are not evil; they are denied the Calvinistic virtues. But what he lacks in breadth is made up in his capacity to rise to an O altitudo! The schoolmaster, Craven, is telling of the death of old Mrs Finch: "... but believe me, sir, that room was full of glory.... There were no farewells, no wailing, and at the very last, not even tears. Thomas, who had nursed her for more than a year, still supported her, the smile on his face to the end.... I had no need to fear. After a long silence she sat up straight, and in her Scotch tongue she said, with a kind of amazed joy in her tone, 'Ma fayther! Ma fayther! I am here.' Then she settled herself back in her son's arms, drew a deep breath, and was still. All through the night and the next day the

glory lingered round me. I went about as in a strange world. I am afraid you will be thinking me foolish, sir."

For reasons hard to formulate but lying deep in his own experience, Connor's stories are shot through with the idea of violence. From past generations of wild Highlanders the Glengarry men inherit a fighting spirit. And their pride as clansmen is strengthened by their sense of being among the elect, predestined to victory. From strength of will, to intense individualism, to boastful competitiveness, to open violence is an easy progression. Connor's imaginative involvement is complete, though his attitude is necessarily ambiguous. He may be a minister of the gospel but his delight in violence is almost ineradicable. He relates, in *Postscript to Adventure*, how "the tales of the fierce old days survived down into my time, stirring my youthful heart with profound regret that deeds so heroically splendid should all be bad. For in spite of the Great Revival we were of the same race, with ancient lust of battle in our blood." He records with pride how his brother, "stripped to his shirt on a winter day", dared any man from the next settlement to step out. "He had the strength of a bull."

How does this pride in primeval strength, barely out of touch with primeval ferocity, square itself with Connor's vocation as a servant of Christ? One searches for answers on several levels and amid some confusion of ideas. Macdonald Dubh, crippled by a dastardly blow from the Frenchman LeNoir and slowly dying as a result, not only forgives his enemy but persuades Ranald to forego the idea of vengeance. Each renunciation is arrived at after long inward agonies of father and son. The moral glow which ensues leaves certain shadows undispelled. LeNoir repents, after being saved from death by Ranald, but can we assume all scoundrels will do the same? And, initially, are we to believe that a straightforward blow delivered by an aggressor does no harm, least of all to a Highlander? And how are we to reconcile the God of vengeance, inhabiting the recesses of Connor's creed, with forgiveness of enemies, when Connor's own sentiments of Christian mildness are neighboured by his delight as, after a hockey game, the foul player is knocked senseless by one splendid retributory blow? The fact is that violence and competitiveness are instinctive and therefore inexplicable: "Glengarry folk, being mostly of Highland stock, love a fight." Connor's autobiography records how he could not refrain from striving to beat his own brother as a binder at harvest time and how for ten years after his overstrained heart showed the effect. The competitiveness at all levels appears meaningless and even the violence has an air of unreality, like the combats of Milton's angels. Connor's effort to take the sting out of vengeance by Christian forgiveness succeeds only in one exemplary

case, where vengeance would mean murder. His tacit assumption that the good, like Milton's Abdiel, are basically invulnerable fails to convince. His concept of muscular Christianity finds us wondering with De Lacy, the Englishman, "Ye gods! psalms and hymns; and how the fellow knocked those Frenchmen about." Or we remain poised like the dialogue between Kate and Mrs. Murray: "But isn't it awful, Auntie? They might kill him." "Yes, dear, but it sounds worse to us perhaps than it is."

Connor's plot is a string on which to thread significant incidents. His characterization is of significant types, with some variation within a type. These combine within an intensely realized physical and ethical setting, a boyhood memory preserved with that shining intensity of which the Victorians alone seem to be capable. "We will always be thinking of you," says Macdonald to his nephew, "and more than all, at the Bible class and the meetings she will be asking for you and wondering how you are doing, and by night and by day the door will be on the latch for your coming." For all its quality of dream, this is also the realistic record of a particular period and locale of Canadian sensibility. The more one reads the Glengarry trilogy, the less separable do fact and fiction appear. "The tales of the lumbermen in *The Man from Glengarry* are from real life."

THE ULTIMATE QUALITY of Connor's writing, which puts him almost in a class by himself among our novelists, is his capacity for transcendence. It absorbs his absurdities, renders innocuous his irresolution about violence, and lifts him above the ranks of regionalists and deployers of local colour. His vision of greatness is compelling because he was himself compelled. The immense dignity of the homeward coming of Big Mack Cameron, drowned while trying to save a Frenchman among the logs, is in danger of being dissipated by an anxious sway of opinion among the mourners keeping the wake, as to their dead friend's calling and election, when Macdonald Bhain, grown calm and looking intently into the darkness, has a vision — "And yonder is the lad, and with him a great company, and his face is shining, and oh! it is a good land, a good land!" Abrupt but authentic, this surge of insight dispels all doubts. For Connor there is a dynamic even in memories of the departed. Ranald finds in Mrs. Murray "a friend whose influence followed him, and steadied and lifted him up to greatness, long after the grave had hidden her from man's sight." These solutions are typical of Protestantism, in that enormous stress is laid on the salvation of the individual, on

his integrity and moral effort; of Calvinism, in that all action on the part of the elect is ipso facto portentous and determining; and, supremely, of primitive Puritanism, in that insoluble problems are transposed into a higher stratum, an eternal world, an ultimate vision. It has been recalled that among hymns sung in St. Stephen's, in Winnipeg, "Fight the Good Fight", "There were Ninety and Nine" and "Onward Christian Soldiers" held pride of place. And with reason there was appended to Connor's autobiography the familiar envoi Bunyan wrote for Mr. Valiant-for-Truth: "So he passed over, and all the trumpets sounded for him on the other side."

Connor's story, whether presented as fiction or related as personal experience, finally opens out into the expanse of the Canadian West, a mundane equivalent of his drive toward transcendence. "Wherever there was lumbering to be done, sooner or later there Glengarry men were to be found, and Ranald had found them in the British Columbia forests." Connor's imagination gives them a role beyond that of felling timber on the Pacific slope. They are the visible link between East and West, which have been politically united in Confederation and now, through the building of the C.P.R., will become one society. They are the bearers of an ethos of truth and honour without which Confederation is meaningless, "a common loyalty that would become more vividly real when the provinces had been brought more closely together by the promised railway." Such is the theme of Ranald's speech to a mass meeting in New Westminster and the crowd hails him, "Glengarry! Glengarry!"

It is natural to ask whether Connor's conception of life is relevant to an understanding of Canada. Without question he interprets reliably the dynamic of the four or five decades following Confederation, with special reference to Ontario and the opening West. His own role was not inconsiderable; his concepts of Christian truth, personal loyalty and political responsibility were shared, in varying degrees, by unnumbered Canadians. He did more than provide a locus classicus of the forest image, a uniquely Canadian *recherche du temps perdu*, and a synoptic view of the Scottish-Calvinist ethos. He rose above the particulars of his creeds into a vision of Canadian domain and destiny. The little world of rural virtues and rural violence, of skills learned in forest and farm, of individualism strengthened by clan loyalty, was precisely — in historical fact — a microcosm which could expand to become the larger world of Western Canada society and enterprise, before the pattern was again modified by rising immigration. Physical strength and adeptness played an overwhelming role in a world of railway construction, homesteading on prairie quarter-sections, and felling of great trees on

mountainsides. The drive toward violence was absorbed in labour, deflected into hunting and field sports, transposed into construction, and sometimes, as Connor hoped, channeled into an assault upon wickedness in low places. It is worth remembering that our westward expansion was, in historical fact, accomplished with incredibly little open violence. The record of territorial acquisition, of Riel's suppression, of the Pacific gold rush and the opening of communications, is one of confused moderation, a collective desire to remain innocent of outrage and excess.

To the latent issues of French-speaking versus English-speaking cultures and of Catholic versus Protestant Connor turns an unseeing eye. Readers of *The Man from Glengarry* may make what they will of the opening scene where the Irish-French gang is blocking the mouth of the river but gives way to the demands of the Glengarry gang for free passage of their logs. They can, if they wish, read significance into LeNoir, the French-Canadians' leader, who moves from murderous hostility to outright co-operation with Macdonald. Connor's own emphasis is on western expansion as absorptive of all energies, a cure for all enmities. The imperial theme of the dominion fills his imagination, transcendence enters as his solution, and "Glengarry forever!" becomes more than a cry to rally a clan: it is the talisman, all suggestive and all sufficient, of Connor's sense of greatness.

chronicle

EXPERIMENT IN CANADIAN THEATRE

Mary Brown

LAST SUMMER, when most amateur theatre groups were struggling to find *one* Canadian play for the 1967 Dominion Drama Festival, some young theatre buffs in London, Ontario, jumped the centennial gun by finding and producing five Canadian plays. They called the project "Summer Theatre 66 — An Experiment in Canadian Theatre". Five nights a week for five weeks in July and August they performed in the Althouse College of Education auditorium (no wings, no flies, no air conditioning) to an average audience of two hundred. The experiment was subsidized by faith and by a small number of patrons who paid twenty-five dollars for a series ticket.

Even in professional theatre, I am told, directors encounter opposition to the use of Canadian scripts, and in the amateur theatre the resistance is formidable indeed. London, a rich, conservative, provincial town of 180,000, is no exception in this respect; most theatre goers here will heave a sigh of relief when the 1967 DDF Canadian play festival is over and they can go back to recently released Broadway shows and Shakespeare in the summer at nearby Stratford. I say this to make it clear that the idea of a festival of Canadian plays in London, Ontario was daring indeed. It engendered a good deal of hostility on the one hand, and some remarkable dedication on the other.

Unfortunately, the decision to do Canadian scripts was made just a month and a half before the season started. A more conservative bill was discarded, and a week

later Summer Theatre 66 announced it would produce plays by Dan Daniels, Jack Cunningham, James Reaney, John Coulter and a revue by "Company Authors". This decision was partly the result of two seminar sessions which preceded the season. At one seminar David William, one of the directors at Stratford last summer, spoke about his production of James Reaney's *The Killdeer* for the Glasgow Citizen's Theatre in November '65; at the other John Hirsch, also at Stratford last year, enthusiastically argued the need for a company to define its function. Subsequently, in Stratford, he suggested to the Summer Theatre executive an all-Canadian bill.

With a great sense of mission, the executive decided to provide "some rather neglected authors" with performances of their plays. Producer Keith Turnbull said, "There will never be any hope of improving the quality of Canadian plays unless the audiences are given a chance to see them. However, vision itself is not enough; the audience must see them, and then they must present their criticisms." Part of the "experiment" was to invite the audience to stay after the show and talk about the play and the production with the author and director.

The two moving spirits behind Summer Theatre 66 were Keith Turnbull, a recent graduate from Western, and James Reaney, poet, playwright and professor of English at the University of Western Ontario in London; Dr. Reaney was Resident Author for Summer Theatre 66, a position he also held concurrently with the Stratford Shakespearean Festival. They were supported by a company of about thirty, a few of whom had had professional experience, most of whom were under-graduates or high school students. A few older actors were imported from the London Little Theatre and half a dozen were academics. The Technical Director, the Publicity Manager and the Director for one show were paid.

The Audition by Dan Daniels opened the season. It has a small cast (4m. 2f. 1 int., as they say) and is about an actor who arrives backstage to audition and gradually loses the sense of his own identity through the machinations of the director, his wife and a stage manager. Each act, according to Mr. Daniels, is a complete unit and he believes that, collectively, the three acts bring about an additional value. He attempts to set up a contradiction between the action and the dialogue and he does it in the language of the theatre of the absurd. The first act is fascinating theatre. The second and third acts suffer from too much undigested Camus. Daniels himself says that these two acts were written "at a more intellectual level and that is their weakness". *The Audition* won the best Canadian play prize in the Western Quebec Region of the DDF in 1965. Daniels has also scripted two films, the first of which, *Footsteps in the Snow*, was pre-

miered a year and a half ago. The second, *How to Avoid Sex*, is in production. The author lectures in creative writing at Westbury College.

Marise by Jack Cunningham, like *The Audition*, "was conceived as a three-act play in which any one act could be produced independently from the others". There are two characters, a man and a woman, who appear in each act; they are the same two characters with different identities, "as all men's identities change with every major confrontation". Brecht and Camus again. Marise is the name of the girl in the first act and in the London production the same actress played the girl in each of the other acts while the men were different. This was a mistake since the theme of the play is revealed through the variations in dialogue in each act.

Cunningham is a twenty-four year old graduate of Sir George Williams University, co-founder and former producer of Instant Theatre (lunch time productions) in Montreal's Place Ville Marie. He is currently attending the new playwrighting course at New York University.

In the middle of the season we had a revue by "Company Authors" called *Down Wellington*. Wellington Street in London is rich at one end and poor at the other. Members of the company interviewed a variety of residents and the revue script was based on these interviews, glued together under some pressure by the resident author, James Reaney. The programme notes for *Down Wellington* included a few samples of the raw material.

Q. The Canadian Indian is under strong social pressures to stay on the reserve. Should these pressures be maintained or should the Indians be gradually taken off the reserves?
A. The Indians will become just as extinct as the buffaloes; that's why we should keep them on the reservations.

Q. What do you think about the national Centennial plans as they stand now?
A. Well the way I see it we are going to have a concert hall every twenty miles from Vancouver to Halifax, and I mean, we don't have that many concerts!

Q. What do you think of This Hour Has Seven Days affair?
A. Actually, Pearson is afraid of LaPierre who is bi-lingual and wants to become P.M. — that's why Pearson had to get rid of him. LaPierre would be a good P.M. I would certainly vote for him because he is not lazy like most French Canadians.

Unfortunately, the revue script failed to live up to the standard of these samples of regional humour.

BY FAR THE MOST EXCITING EVENT of the season was a play by James Reaney called *Listen to the Wind*. It takes place in an Ontario farmhouse sometime during the thirties. Acted in front of a blue cyclorama, on a bare stage, with a laden properties table in full view, *Listen to the Wind* made unexpected but eminently reasonable demands on the imagination of the audience. A boy named Owen (the young innocent who appears in other plays by Reaney) spends his summer putting on plays with his cousins, his relatives and the neighbourhood children. The play within a play is their adaptation of a Victorian novel *The Saga of Caresfoot Court*. There are two lines of action in the play. Owen fights illness and tries to get his parents together again; Angela Caresfoot threads her way through a world of evil manorhouses and sinister women. The two stories illuminate each other as the ten characters in Owen's story double in the Caresfoot Court episodes. Like Reaney's other plays, *Listen to the Wind* has a comic framework within which acts of violence and horror are perceived with an innocent eye. Reaney also directed the play and brought to that task a highly unorthodox and individual theatricality. Fourteen children acted as a Chorus to become trees in the forest, the wind, a pack of mad hound dogs or village children as the needs of the script dictated. They also manipulated property, scenic, music and sound effects (recorders and coconut shells) in full view of the audience. One of the most successful pantomimes involved a boy who cantered across the front of the stage with a wagon wheel under one arm to suggest a horse and carriage. Other actors trotted along behind him in a delightful simulation of a Victorian carriage ride. The railway train was a janitor's dolly; a stepladder was the ancestral oak tree. The effect was of children's games played out ritualistically on an open stage.

In a programme note for *Listen to the Wind*, Reaney talked about plays.

> We've had theatre of cruelty (the rebirth of tragedy — the imitation of our death-wish); we've had theatre of absurd (the rebirth of comedy — the imitation of our bitter laughter); we've had the theatre of detachment (the rebirth of the miracle play — Mother Courage drags her cross). The one thing we never imitate enough is just — games, play — imitation itself. The instinct to just "have fun" — to make a pattern simply because like a whooping crane we can't help doing a spring dance with our bodies. Look at kids playing hopscotch.

For the final show of the season, the executive hired a young professional Tim Bond, who had been apprenticing at Stratford, to direct John Coulter's *Riel*. If you saw the CBC TV adaptation in 1961, which starred Bruno Gerussi as Riel,

or the New Play Society production starring Mavor Moore in 1950, you will know that the play has a great many scenes. The cast has twenty-seven speaking parts plus settlers, surveyors, half-breeds, Orangemen, demonstrators, British and Canadian troops and an audience for the trial. Mr. Bond gave us a reasonably tight production of this dramatic documentary, achieved in part by extensive cutting. The trial scene, however, failed and Riel emerged as a neurotic prophet rather than a sad, courageous leader of his people.

In addition to the five Canadian plays, there were three subsidiary productions. Two of them, *Noah's Flood* and *The Farce of Poor John*, were produced by Summer Theatre 66 in a downtown park and subsidized by the Chamber of Commerce. An open air production of *Comus* ran for three nights in a natural amphitheatre behind one of the Colleges and was subsidized by the Department of English at Western.

Many good things came out of the season, one of which was the October revival of *Listen to the Wind* in the University's brand new Talbot College Theatre and subsequently at McMaster University in Hamilton. The play will also get a new production by another group for competition in the regional festival of the DDF. Tim Bond, the director of *Riel*, returned to London last fall to direct the first play in Western's new four hundred seat theatre. The Summer Theatre 66 season also gave support to the autumn production of two French Canadian plays in London Little Theatre's Second Theatre, under the direction of Yves Gelinas of Montreal.

Financially unstable, artistically uneven, Summer Theatre 66 was an impractical and spontaneous eruption. May there be many more of them all across the country. Amateurs have the tremendous advantage of being able to work for love and operate on a shoestring. And talent has never been confined to union houses.

review articles

MEN AND WOMEN— RED ALL OVER

Hugo McPherson

HUGH GARNER, *Men and Women*. Ryerson. $4.95.

"ONE OF MY NOVELS was given a back-handed compliment by a critic of the psuedo [sic]-literary sort," writes Hugh Garner in his Preface to *The Yellow Sweater*, 1952: " 'Mr. Garner has made only a slight compromise with commercialism here.' " "Let me tell that guy," Garner comments, "that Mr. Garner has only made a slight compromise with commercialism, *and* literary styles, anywhere or at any time. With the exception of deleting profanity from a few stories, none of them have ever been changed in order to comply with the shibboleths of a specific market."

In diction, syntax, tone, and meaning this passage suggests a great deal about Hugh Garner's approach to writing. He rejects alike the nuanced psychological dialogue of Henry James, the cool strategy of Hemingway's best style, and the incandescent fever of such "first person" writers as Kerouac or Hubert Selby Jr. Yet Garner won the Governor General's award for fiction in 1963 for his contribution to Canadian letters, and his best work lingers in the imagination with a persistence that defies both the hipster taste for dream-it-now, and the intellectuals who scorn all but highly self-conscious narration. What, then, is the secret of Garner's peculiar power?

His new collection of short stories, *Men and Women*, falls short of such earlier achievements as "The Conversion of Willie Heaps", and the celebrated "One-Two-Three Little Indians", but it reveals anew the range of his observation: his spectrum reaches from British Columbia lumber camps to the gaudy entrails of E-t-n's Christmas Toyland where a superannuated worker plays Santa Claus for dreaming children. Hugh Garner has recorded more facets of Canadian life than any other writer of his generation, yet *range* is not his secret; he would no doubt say that a thousand other journalists have encountered as many curiosities as he has.

Plot is an equally unsatisfactory index to his peculiar gift, for he relies on structures that range from O. Henry to J. D. Salinger. In "Black and White and Red All Over," for example, we meet the

abstemious "Bob" who has gone to a roadhouse to get drunk. He reflects on his daughter Brenda, who asks such childish riddles as "What is black and white . . . ?" and on his model wife Lillian who married him "on the bounce" from an affair with Clyde. Then business friends, the Herridges, arrive, and Bob is finally drunk enough to tell the piranha-like Mrs. Herridge that her Clyde-boy will not join their party tonight. Lillian, he confesses, died in bed, but Clyde made it to the kitchen where he wiped-out on the newspapers that Lil had spread on a freshly-washed kitchen floor. And that's the end of the O. Henry riddle. In "Not That I Care," an adolescent hero, Arthur, misses his chance with lovely Debby, mainly because he was too shy, and ends up treasuring a crumply newspaper picture of her bridal announcement. Tough beans for Arthur (Salinger), and no plot at all.

The difficulty in *Men and Women* is that Garner borrows stereotypes from Lever Brothers and Lux and frequently fails to improve on the white-whiter-whitest, or grey-greyer-greyest pattern of those moralities.

Yet despite his obsessive interest in the situations of soap-opera, Hugh Garner is able to make many of his people come alive. They are ordinary people who have no sophisticated reactions to politics, manners, food, or sex. They are the people who live just down the block, in the apartment above, or out on the back concession. They are Canadian versions of Everyman: their commonest sin is pride, and their greatest weakness is ignorance. At moments Garner judges these characters: for example, the salesman "hero" of "Mama Says To Tell You She's Out" casually goes to bed with the estranged wife of his wartime buddy, and then — because her children have witnessed the encounter — decides that he has seen "delinquincy and God knows what else being made . . . Surely, even away out here [Calgary?], there was such a thing as the Children's Aid Society, and neighbors who would be more than happy to report what they couldn't help but see, by phone or letter?" Yet the hero-judge in this context is self-condemned; he is outraged that children should suffer, yet quite prepared to enjoy the embrace of his buddy's wife. *C'est la vie.* The morals which Garner draws usually expose the weakness of the moralizer. In his heterodox world nobody is free of guilt, and his most pious heroes, as in "Stumblebum" (probably the cruellest allegory in the book), are the worst self-deceivers of all.

Garner's secret is that he is a genuine moralist — a writer who tells us as much about our *real* moral habits as Hawthorne told his New England audience a century ago in *Twice-Told Tales.* The difference is that Garner has no clearly-defined code, such as Puritanism, to challenge. Instead, he sees man in naturalistic terms as a creature who seldom understands his deepest motives; yearning for love and self-justification, he suffers and inflicts suffering on others. Thus the idealistic young minister of "Dwell in Heaven, Die on Earth" sacrifices the middle-class principles of his wife to his obsessive wish to redeem alcoholics and junkies; then, recognizing that his addicts *use* him unscrupulously, he decides that he had better go bourgeois and take a comfortable parish. But that solution will probably be equally false and painful.

Garner's vision of average experience has no room for those who find their

operative values in art, thought, spirituality or good cooking; he sees even his own literary pursuits as a trade or "craft". Value, then, rises out of such basic matters as sex, family ties, and shared experiences. Significantly, the only really optimistic tale in the volume is "The Decision", the concluding story. Mrs. Tanner, recently widowed, wants to adopt a baby. Her paunchy, conventional lawyer reveals that the child is her husband's by-blow. But Mrs. T. has long been conscious of her husband's infidelities and is prepared to nurture the child of the one man she has loved. That is Hugh Garner's tribute to the eternal verities.

The most evocative tale of this collection, however — "You Never Ast Me Before" — deals with high school lovers who have just consummated their passion in a park. She is worried that her harridan mother will see stains on her coat, but she tells him: "I never done it before 'cause you never ast me before, that's why." He "couldn't remember asking her at all . . . It just seemed to have happened, that's all."

For these innocents the ordeal of being Men and Women has begun. Their anguish is that they live in a newspaper world where social forms and deep instincts seldom balance. The outcome, for Garner, is likely to be neural bleeding, or the terrible violence of "red all over."

PROSE BIRNEY

A. W. Purdy

EARLE BIRNEY, *The Creative Writer.* Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. $1.25 softbound.

NINETEEN SIXTY-SIX has been a good year for Earle Birney. His *Selected Poems* appeared in the spring, focusing the full panorama of a lifetime's work between the covers of one book. In July a musical play, based on the novel, *Turvey*, was produced at the Charlottetown Summer Festival. And now seven of Birney's radio "talks" have been published by C.B.C., entitled *The Creative Writer.*

The book is a compendium of the author's attitudes towards everything from the creative process itself to the education of a writer. The chapters are not literary essays in a conventional sense, each with a point to hammer home (although they do have points), and there is nothing of preaching or forcible imposition of the writer's own opinions. And the book's origin as radio talks for the "listening pleasure" of the general public is plainly visible in its simplicity and "openness" to anyone who wants to let Birney's speaking voice flow into his mind.

And yet the book's simplicity is partly an illusion. The subjects discussed are not simple or easily resolved, in fact are frequently controversial, which means

that the writing is an object lesson in good prose — interesting, easily understood, and presenting ideas whose depths require further mental sounding on the part of the reader (or listener).

Well, what does Earle Birney think about creative writing courses, for instance? As might be expected, since he headed such a department for several years at U.B.C., Birney approves — with reservations. But: "he [the creative writer] should not stay around after graduation, however many of his fellow artists are there in academic chains around him."

Of course the writer of those words has stayed around universities himself, though one is inclined to let him off this self-created hook, because he has somehow escaped or transcended the "academic chains" of his own warnings. And one cannot imagine Earle Birney shackled or gagged in any sense.

In his first chapter Birney deals with "Reasons and Unreasons for Poetry" — both the objective value of having poetry at all, and personal reasons for writing the stuff. Since poetry seems to me its own objective justification, Birney's thoughts on the poet's compulsions seem more interesting. Among them, the habit, like a drug habit or collecting postage stamps and match folders. And there is the additional reason of not knowing what your thoughts are, about almost anything, until you get them down on paper.

Birney himself, he tells us in Chapter II, writes as a form of exorcism for some experience or thought in his own past. He describes the genesis and reasons for writing three of his poems: "The Bear on the Delhi Road" (partly guilt); "Aluroid" (he was haunted by the drama of a living cliché); and most fascinating of all to myself, "Bushed". Once I wrote a 1,500-word analysis of "Bushed", describing it as primarily a poem of personal change, internal metamorphosis from the outside. Now Birney tells us it is a simple description of the mental processes of an old trapper who went bush-crazy from too much solitude. All my complicated explication gone down the drain! I am double-crossed and literarily betrayed!

But elsewhere in the book Birney says something to the effect that the mental processes of a poet work in such a way as to make the reader aware of all sorts of allusions, symbols, inferences, and interpretations that he (the poet) may not have been thinking about when he wrote the poem. I.e., if you see something different in the poem than I put into it, then your vision is still valid 20-20. Or, if you saw only my vision, that's all right too. Therefore, I (the reviewer) may still insist that "Bushed" is about personal change. "Only among other things!" — I hear Birney interject in his most magisterial voice.

"A poem, a painting, always requires all, more than all, the maker has —." In other words, the ordinary self of the poet couldn't have written the poem. But for a little while, during composition, the writer is somewhat more than himself; brief flashing thoughts occur to him, that must be committed to paper immediately; he is stretched to his limits, has become very different from his ordinary self, which may be a university prof., a social worker, or a bank clerk. And this is no sooner consciously realized than the experience is gone.

Birney also discusses experimentalism (including the Black Mountain boys and "found poems"), the feasibility of a writer having his wife support him (tem-

porarily), and the vicissitudes of writing his novel, *Turvey*. It seems that a real "Mr. Turvey" turned up to paint Birney's house, a man who possessed some of the fictional Turvey's background. And then the publisher nearly went crazy, wanting to get "Mr. Turvey" to sign legal waivers precluding future lawsuit.

Fortunately I disagree with Earle Birney on one or two factual points. If I didn't this review might sound like a Hollywood eulogy for the genius of the great dead Sam Goldwyn. Birney says: "— nobody reads the lyrics of the Hittites and the Sumerians, because they are crumbled into non-existence." Well, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is admittedly narrative, but I think it also includes lyricism. And so do the god-myths of Sumer, in Frankfort's *Before Philosophy*.

And re. prose-writers being only that, and poets narrowly poets: "— the tradition is that Callaghan, Gabrielle Roy, MacLennan, Richler, and so on, write what is called prose, while Souster, Anne Hébert, Acorn, Purdy, etc., write what is called verse, and never does one species whistle in the other's territory." While the generality may be true, the specific instances, apart from Souster, are not. Anne Hébert has written short stories, among them being "The House on the Esplanade"; Acorn has written many short stories, and I myself perhaps a hundred plays, among them being a dramatization of Birney's own poem, "David". But in general I suppose the generality is true.

And the general thesis of this book certainly holds true: that in a continuing age of war, racialism, abuse of individual freedom, increasing conformity, the

writer and artist can hold up a mirror to humanity and advocate sanity by portraying insanity. And yet, Birney insists, the writer is not a preacher or a man with a mission. He serves his own peculiar gods, iconoclast though he may be in other respects.

Towards the end of his book Birney says: "Personally, I want to be a creative man, not a bee nor a rat nor a grizzly nor a mouse. Which means that I strive, in this herding age, to remain a cayuse, an unbroken horse, who will have to be dragged, or ridden and broken to arrive at the roundup or the horse butcher's. I'll even settle for the role of the coyote, that lonely yapping ornery stinking enduring snooty creature, that wild-to-hell-with-conformity dog, that prototype of the damn-you-general critter we call a writer — howling alone, yet hoping to hear one other yip-yip start up over the next hill." Which is pretty dramatic, but I don't think he over-states his case.

And beyond all this, past such personal credos, on the other side of talk, remains the puzzling paradoxical as-yet-unwritten-down Birney, perhaps a cipher even to himself, still working on his ideas and still examining and re-examining his own entrails; from the perspective of both floor and ceiling, trying to decide what everything means, if it means anything. And with the death of any of us unlikely to be more than fifty or sixty years away, the question still seems important.

CLICHÉS AND ROARING WORDS

W. H. New

CHARLES E. ISRAEL, *The Hostages*. Macmillan. $5.95.
CHRISTINE VAN DER MARK, *Honey in the Rock*. McClelland & Stewart. $4.95.
ROBERT KROETSCH, *The Words of my Roaring*. Macmillan. $4.95.

CHARLES ISRAEL'S new novel *The Hostages* should prove (justifiably) to be popular in paperback, but it so depends on topicality for its effect that it is likely to prove ephemeral as well. Easily readable, suspenseful, and giving the impression at once of absolute values and relative standards, it has all the virtues of the fairytale, the thriller, and the adult western. The fairytale emerges in a kind of Hansel-and-Gretel story of Innocent Children discovering Fear but prepared to attack Evil. The accoutrements of the Western include a good-but-tired hero and a bad-but-sincere villain, who, here, encounter each other when the children are kidnapped, and establish the conflict that the book in thriller fashion successfully resolves.

Apparently, then, the skeletal parts of the novel are all borrowed, but this should not disturb us. The suspense itself is real. What, exactly, causes suspense in any book is not just the plot, of course — the arrangement of events; also involved is the ease with which the reader will accept the plausibility of those events, and *The Hostages* depends for any success at

all upon our willingness to believe that extreme right-wing and extreme left-wing beliefs CAN lead to extremist actions. So far, this is so straightforward as to appear superficial. But Israel offers us specific events.

The book opens with a school bus collecting sons and daughters of various international U.N. employees, but it quickly reveals that something is not right. The driver is different; the bus itself is different; the route to school is followed for only part of the way. One mother alone is suspicious, but bureaucracy stands in the way of her enquiries being answered satisfactorily — a bureaucracy which shows itself not only in the self-protective verbiage of the school, telephone, and bus company officials, but also in the workings of the U.N. itself. An unwilling Red China has just been allowed a seat in the General Assembly, and, though it secretly plots war against the western world any way, the delegation is presently on its way to New York. A schizophrenic group of Rightwing Americans, meanwhile, kidnaps the children, to hold them hostage till the U.N. indicates it will reverse its stand and bar entry to the Chinese, or else to kill them. The time-honoured suspense device of the whodunit combines, then, with the timely question of moral choice. There are values: the children are good, peace is good — yet to make any choice is to deny at least one of them. To opt for the delegation makes the chooser party to murder; to bar the delegation would lead inevitably to international war. A kind of Aristotelian sense of "fear" builds up, and the reader becomes involved in making the decision.

But all this works only up to a point — strangely enough, only as long as Israel deals in groups. The U.N. delegations are fine as long as we can leave them in the abstract, but the author has to create individual people, and when he tries, the types lose their credibility and become trite. One must put up with a Haitian delegate shrieking at (naturally) a Dominican: " 'He steal my daughter! He kidnap her!' " Then there is a (typical) Arab versus a (typical) Israeli, and a (typical) drunken American virago with a (typical) milktoast husband. Even the children cease being credible when the author looks at them individually. The ostensible adolescent jealousy which is supposed to divide Arturo and Steve, for example, simply makes them ostensibly adolescent. The novel departs too often from the reality of its generalizations, and too often, therefore, losing the vigour of its opening pages, it bogs down in maudlin detail.

To work acceptably with types is difficult, for the generalization and the cliché do not radically differ from each other. Some difference does exist, however, and unfortunately — and all too obviously — Christine van der Mark, in *Honey in the Rock*, has been unable to make use of it. To reread her earlier novel, *In Due Season* (1947), is to reacquaint oneself with the promise she showed, the ability she had to evoke a sense of place and to create a strong central character. This new novel is about southern Alberta, and about religious bigotry, but it has none of the power of Rudy Wiebe's *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, nor any of his careful way with words. None of Miss van der Mark's characters breaks out of the language surrounding them — not Fenna, the most rebellious and most unhappy of the five Leniuk sisters, who at one point, "chilled and lonely", "wept bitterly, the

hot tears burning her freezing face". Nor the humanitarian and more likeable Reuben Zwick, who is made to look at everything "with his clear intrepid gaze". Nor Dan, the naïve teacher, who has "a skinny arm, wiry and strong", and who, with such words as " 'Time will help' " and " 'Get some sleep' ", supports Philip, the naïve preacher, and causes him to respond " 'There's a light in you, Dan Root' ", before his heavy lids drop and he turns his face to the wall. Not any of them. And so none of them truly exist as people, nor does the novel acquire any life.

Even Robert Kroetsch, in *The Words of my Roaring*, burdens himself with imitative and hackneyed phrases, which is sad, because his work undoubtedly is the worthiest accomplishment of the three books under review and clearly demonstrates a capable talent. The plot is slight: Johnnie Backstrom, the young undertaker, politically opposes Old Murdoch, the country doctor who had delivered him, in an Alberta provincial election during the depression. But the plot can *be* slight when the central character is as interesting as he is here. We see everything from the undertaker's point of view, and the quality of the irony can be seen in such a deceptively flat statement as this: "I said something about old Doc bringing you into this hellhole mess, but what was he doing to get you out of it?" All the political acumen of an old campaigner, and all the innate rural conservatism of the electorate are on Murdoch's side, but the time, and naïveté — and the sanctimonious radio perorations of the new leader, significantly named Applecart — are on Johnnie's. So, somewhat unwillingly, are we.

The reservations are all caused by the stereotyped catch phrases we keep stumbling into. J. Backstrom is really Holden Caulfield in disguise, grown older by twenty years, but not having traded in his vocabulary in the meantime. "I have this amazing set of teeth," he tells us. "I was trying to protect her. I really was." "I have this magnificent set of teeth." Even (so help me): "I'm an undertaker.... I'm dead serious." Fortunately Kroetsch overcomes this, and Johnnie survives it all to become a real figure — cynical, bawdy, brash, and profoundly innocent. Maybe this makes him even more like Salinger's character, but it relates him also to the tragicomic figures in several recent films: *Morgan*, *A Thousand Clowns*. What begins as farce takes on another tone, another depth, and another sensitivity to the dilemma of being human.

Johnnie, like other contemporary "heroes", is really a little man who finds he has to choose, who commits himself without thinking, who thinks too late and discovers that all choices have effects. Specifically, he has averred, in the midst of drought, that rain will fall before election day, and finds to his mixed horror and delight that his claim is accepted as a campaign promise. The delight is part of what propels him forward: "Good God, life is short... my body cried. So live, it said. Live, live. Rage, roar." The horror is his consciousness that he also destroys. As Helen Murdoch, the doctor's daughter, tells him: "You talk. You hunger and thirst. You stride and thunder and roar.... But in the end you smash." He knows he lives in chaos, and for that reason his stability lies in hanging on to "the old chaos" — yet he finds he has promised change, rain, instead. The rain comes, and with it,

ironically, a death which, as undertaker, he must respond to. With the rain, too, comes his certainty of election and his growing sensitivity to what people are like — truths which he could perhaps have found anyway but which have been related to the rain and so related to a kind of deceit. They bring, therefore, not a joyous illumination but a sense of despair. Coupled with an equally strong sense of duty, this promises a future for the man with huge hands and the magnificent teeth, though a paradoxical one — inevitably related to his need for chaos and his ability to survive it. If this doesn't exactly seem rosy, it does seem real, and the words of his roaring — racy, flippant, simple, and sad — ring true.

NOUVEAU ROMAN MADE EASY

Robert Buckeye

MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS, *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel.* Farar, Strauss & Giroux. $4.50 U.S.

THE WORLD OF THE WORKER in Zola's fiction had no exit. Dominated by the Church and a matriarchal family structure and restricted by growing industrialization and a rigid class hierarchy, he rarely escaped exhausting drudgery. Few paths led upward. He could exchange the country for the town but his condition did not noticeably improve. The Church offered education and an easier life; but the learning was fragmentary and parochial, while sexual repression, normal in society, often resulted in perversion among clergy practicing enforced celibacy. Alcoholism, prostitution, thievery, and murder were the only sure means of freeing oneself from the imprisoning society, and these were self-defeating.

Such is modern Quebec of Marie-Claire Blais' *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel.* The farm family of the novel, controlled by the eternal grandmother, is typical: its lump-like sons and placid daughters live like draft animals. In contrast, three of the children more sensitive than the rest struggle against this existence. Héloïse, who early mistakes a sensual impulse for a religious ecstasy, joins a convent; Fortuné-Mathias — called Number Seven — goes to work in town; and Jean-Le Maigre, beaten by the father for reading and writing, is sent to the Noviciat against his will. Predictably, Héloïse becomes a prostitute and Number Seven a thief, while Jean-Le Maigre dies tubercular, a young poet whose writing is viewed by the clergy as a temptation of the devil.

All of this is implicit in Miss Blais' novel. Her concern is not sociological criticism nor a psychological study. Rather

she wishes to render the texture of this world as æsthetic. Her juxtaposition of scene and image, shifts in point of view and time, and presentation of varying levels of consciousness for a montage which distances itself from the actuality of the world it is describing. The reality of the novel, its experience, is itself. Its subject is poetic creation in Wallace Stevens' sense of the term — the imaginative faculty's attempt to create the outside world in its image, an effort doomed to failure unless it conspires with the reality outside it. The poetic aspirations of the novel's characters are in their turn modulated by Miss Blais' own poetic sensibility.

Language as always is a measure of perception, and in this respect, Miss Blais betrays both her æsthetic concerns and the psychological demands of her characters in writing which neither illuminates them nor itself. Metaphors are confused if not actually impossible, images are banal, and point of view, inconsistent. Generally, her language conveys nothing except its own poverty, and her characters, finally, are unbelievably stock, innocent of any real complexity, not because life in Quebec is so unreal or elemental but simply because this is how they have been rendered.

Edmund Wilson, who writes the introduction, and others review the book favourably. Given a comparatively fresh subject (a farm family in Quebec province) treated in a relatively familiar manner (despite poetic intentions, naturalistic elements are present) by a new young writer (this is Miss Blais' fifth book at age 27) with avowed æsthetic and moral ambitions, the clichéd judgment of many could be expected. But why critics of Wilson's calibre value Miss Blais needs to be examined.

Never before has fiction removed itself as far from its bourgeois origins. A majority of writers now see form in fiction serving the same function it has in other arts. Language is the writer's paint or tone scale, something to be arranged, placed in certain relations for æsthetic reasons. As Robbe-Grillet, Hawkes, and William H. Gass illustrate, it is possible to talk about fiction in terms analogous to abstract painting, atonal symphonies, poetry. Form *is* content and meaning not an adjunct to it nor something to be disposed of before understanding can occur.

If the dominant concern of many writers is the exploration of form and language, the impulse of others like Mailer and Kesey is the search for new modes of consciousness through drugs, sex, violence, and jazz. A third trend is discernible in the novels of Grass and Pynchon who, in their parody and satire, loosely combine the aims of Mailer and Robbe-Grillet to create a protest which is both a negation of traditional æsthetic and moral values and an exploration of new ones. It is only necessary to consider the reaction to Burroughs' writing, at once a protest of what is as well as an exploration of form and consciousness, to understand how inimical and obtuse this fiction is to the bourgeois critic. By nature a humanist, he finds little in modern fiction to appreciate. Mailer is distasteful, Burroughs obscene, Grass immoral, Hawkes unintelligible, and even as conventional a thinker as Nabokov is precious, sometimes perverse, even perverted. Miss Blais occupies an anomalous position among these writers. She is clearly a serious writer not to be compared with the likes of Françoise Sagan as Wilson takes pains to point out; she

has affinities with the *nouveau roman*; it is easy to take her for her contemporaries.

But if her intention is serious, her achievement is not. The effect of *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel* is that of a television documentary. It appears artistic; it seems to explore something new; it protests against an evil. Upon reflection, it is somewhat less. The conflicts are too nicely balanced and the struggles too easily won; the whole has been distanced from its reality so that it exists inspected, packaged, clean. It is intellectually simplified and morally uplifting, fit fare for our living rooms. And we need devote only half our attention to it. But for the humanist, the novel is generally intelligible, it is moral, it is to a degree artistic. It is, in fact, *positive*.

The connection with Miss Sagan is not entirely spurious as Wilson contends. No one would think of comparing Grass or Mailer with her, and Wilson's choice in this regard suggests some shared affinity. If Miss Blais is a better writer than Miss Sagan, this does not imply that she is of a different order. *A Season in the Life of Emmanuel* is for midcult consumption; it is Zola made pleasant, the *nouveau roman* made easy; and it may very well be the last refuge of the bourgeois critic from a fiction where art once again outstrips criticism and, perhaps, begins to return to its pre-bourgeois origins.

books in review

MIDDLE OF THE WAY

MICHAEL SHELDON, *The Unmelting Pot.* Hutchinson.

MICHAEL SHELDON is an English writer now living in Canada, and *The Unmelting Pot* is his second novel. The first, *The Gilded Rule*, about an English emigré who takes a job as a PRO for a Canadian bank, received good notices in England and little enough attention here. His second book is a variation on the same subject: the world of the "New Canadian" in Montreal. It is an unusual theme at a time when so much writing about present-day Quebec is conerned with relations between the French and the English. It is a useful reminder that Montreal, as well as Toronto and Vancouver, is an ever more cosmopolitan city, and this flavour has not been diluted by the strength of the tensions revolving about the two major races. There were times when I felt Mr. Sheldon was almost perversely avoiding that topic: it is, after all, the obsessional theme of the mid-sixties in Montreal. Yet *The Unmelting Pot* sets out to tell another story, and one can hardly fault its writer for being faithful to it. Nor are his characters themselves unaware of the currents of the new Quebec that swirl around them.

The device that links his characters together is a house, a converted Victorian mansion now broken up into four apartments in an area, one supposes, like Westmount. Now if there is one device in fiction that is liable to push the most painfully truthful story into the cozy regions of soap opera, it is the device of drawing together the separate lives of several different people by putting them under the same roof. It immediately challenges you to look for coincidence, paradox, and sentimentality. Mr. Sheldon skilfully avoids these excesses. His characters do bump into one another occasionally, as people must who live in the same house, but in a world of fictional contrivance, what is the odd bump in the night? In short, he gets away with it. The house is real, without being personified, and his characters are real too, with varying degrees of success.

Stephen and Ghislaine Wiener live in one flat. He is a quiet, gentle, hopeless man, an intellectual who is called upon from time to time to talk on the CBC about "international trends and events". His wife who lives with the disappointment of a life that should somehow be better, if she could only go back to the days of her youth in Belgium where her parents were pro-German and before she began sleeping with allied soldiers. They have an 11-year-old son, Paul, who — as is frequently the case — is a totally assimilated Canadian, and is therefore growing farther and farther from his parents.

In another flat live the Anghelescus. Like Stephen, Grigor is a Rumanian. He is also promoting a real estate deal. His wife is of an old and influential French-Canadian family. Anghelescu has got money out of Stephen to put into his scheme, the success of which depends on where the government decides to route its new highway. It is now (!) the Quebec of the Quiet Revolution, and patron-

age is hard, if not impossible, to come by, so there is a real danger that the highway may be routed, after all, without regard to all the political pressure that the syndicate is attempting to mount.

In the two remaining flats live Brian, a young-executive-on-the-make, and Rosemary, an English girl who works in a gallery and is a suppressed lesbian. Brian seduces Rosemary, an experience hardly more pleasurable for him than for her, and they commence an "affair". Mr. Sheldon is very good with the attempts at conversation, the discussion of films and books, the sheer passing of time, between two people of totally different temperament. He is also very good at dealing with Brian's attempts on the ladder of corporate success. And I am sure he has captured the flavour of emigré conversations in cafes between Stephen and his European friends, conversations which, as one of them says, they have imported from the coffeehouses of Vienna.

The characters are well-drawn and plausible; their interactions reasonable, their dialogue accurate. Why then is *The Unmelting Pot* so much less than it promises? I think the answer lies in the disturbing neatness of the contrivance: which is another way of saying, its predictability. It is as if the author were content to scoop out only the top half of his characters' lives, and has left a richness and complexity, while hinted at, still undiscovered. There is, overall, a sense of disappointment at what does come close to being a first-class evocation of a certain kind of life, and then misses. The author has made believable people, but he has not asked enough of them, he has not pushed them to the limits at which their fundamental souls are revealed. Or is he suggesting that this, too, is part of the Canadian experience?

In fact, Mr. Sheldon has either done too little or too much with his supposed theme. There is much talk of finding a Canadian identity.

> "No," Stephen argued. "This is the unmelting pot. Because we who come here do not change. All the time we try to adapt the environment to our own tastes and customs."
>
> "I would like to change," Ghislaine said. "I would like to feel I am just as Canadian as my son is."
>
> "I wonder," Rosemary found herself commenting, "how much it matters anyway."

Perhaps it does matter, but the author has not made us feel that it does, one way or another, and such conversations, so frequent in this book, are really overlaid on the characters, and have nothing to do with that which moves us about them. People do not embody a theme by talking about it, and one is left with the uncomfortable feeling that the theme is here only to give the look of seriousness to a very competent piece of fiction. This may be an unkind judgment. Unfortunately, Mr. Sheldon has written a book right down the middle of Publishers' Row: neither serious nor original enough to be really good, nor trivial enough to be really popular. He can, and must, do better.

GEORGE ROBERTSON

LACK OF DISTANCE

MARGARET LAURENCE, *A Jest of God*. McClelland & Stewart. Cloth, $5.00. Paper, $2.50.

AFTER THE STONE ANGEL it was easy to feel that Mrs. Laurence had it made. Sight had become insight; natural ability

had hardened into style; and her voice, so important in a novelist, had begun to sing above the solid drumbeat of her narrative. Good things were happening, and it was wonderful to know it and to applaud. Now, with the appearance of *A Jest of God*, I find myself suddenly applauding with only one hand. It is an unfortunate gesture for a reviewer to find himself making, because it has a noise of its own, one which drowns out easy casual responses and demands other, more precise ones which will both explain and justify this private sound and public gesture as something other than arrogant dismissal.

The book is written in the first person and in the present tense, a difficult and demanding technique, but one used by many writers whose concern is alienation and whose antecedents are perhaps traceable to Camus and Kafka rather than to Dostoyevsky or perhaps, closer to home, Dickens, Hardy, Arnold Bennett. These writers tend toward hard edges and defined surfaces which reflect a disinterested universe if not always an actually absurd one. Mrs. Laurence's novel is about a kind of alienation too. But it is about alienation from the Self, from a possible identity, rather than from society or the world at large. Her protagonist is involute, confined by personal fears, embarrassments and inabilities. Her milieu is a small town, a cramped set of quarters, and her view of the world is correspondingly, and necessarily, narrow. Herein, it seems to me, lies the problem. The cosmic joke promised by the title, the technique and the bare-bones narrative structure is never delivered. Indeed it cannot be delivered because a cosmic joke demands a cosmos for the punchline to rattle around in. In this novel the clash between techniques and the intention precludes jokes, cosmic or otherwise.

The intention (which is achieved) is to tell the story of Rachel Cameron, who is a prairie-town grade two teacher, trapped in a life she never made. Her dead father was an undertaker, her mother is a hypochondriac and a sweet-mouthed tyrant, and her sister was bright enough and selfish enough to have left to marry. Rachel is stuck with supporting and living with mother. When we meet her she is in her middle thirties, a woman who must act now or be doomed. Her first move is toward Calla, a fellow spinster, who has found some relief in religion. Calla makes a pass at Rachel, and this betrayal leads to her second move, toward Nick, a teacher from the city, who simply uses her sexually. The counterpoint theme to those two outward movements is provided by Rachel's mother who cannot let her go. These outside conflicts scrape rawly against Rachel's inner needs, and she is propelled toward a crisis which harbours in it the seeds of victory.

Rachel is shy, awkward, embarrassed, self-absorbed to the point of hysteria. "I feel so apprehensive now that I can hardly sit here in a pretense of quiet. The muscles of my face have wired my jawbone so tightly that when I move it, it makes a slight clicking sound. Has anyone heard? No, of course not. Their minds are on the preacher and — the hymn. The hymn? I can stand. I seem to be taken to my feet, borne ludicrously aloft, by the sheer force and the weight of the rising people on either side of me." Nothing in Rachel's life is unconcerned; the simplest acts *require* worry. "How cold the wind is getting. I should have worn a scarf and my gloves." But

ARCTIC RHODODENDRONS

BY A. W. PURDY

They are small purple surprises
and after you've seen them
a number of times
in water-places
where their silence seems
related to the river's rumble
you think of them as 'noisy flowers'
a matter of association I guess
But that doesn't explain it
the vivid blue-purple
and white foam zig zagging
from flower to flower
on their moss-green islands
—and no one has seen them here
but the loud river
and the land itself
Like the Stations of the Cross
if a man were religious
—but the feeling I have
for something like this
replaces God

Pangnirtung, N.W.T.

she is also capable of becoming literary. "I could see myself . . . on every side road and dirt track for miles around, over the years. *I wandered lonely as a cloud* — like some anachronistic survival of romantic pantheism, collecting wild flowers, probably, to press between the pages of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*." The sorrowful moan is constant. Visits to friends, her mother's bridge parties, her first sexual experience, the possibility of pregnancy, of cancer — all are given nearly equal emotional weight. Rachel is monolithic. Her character is carpeted wail-to-wail with her failures. Unable to be loveable, she is not loved; physically unattractive, socially inept, sexually fearful, one could imagine a psychiatrist giving up and uttering that famous line: "Let's face it, you *are* inferior."

What is lacking — and even the difficult first person present tense technique, if properly used, could handle this fault — is objectivity, distance, irony. One simply gets tired of listening to Rachel taking pot-shots at herself. The reader, instead of identifying, finds himself (herself, too, I should think) silently shouting at her to get some eye-liner, save for a mink, strong-arm a man, kill her mother and stop bitching. In short, what worked for the author in *The Stone Angel*, with its more leisurely pace, its sense of time and place and character, here betrays her. Hagar swims strongly in the last full tide of her life. Rachel drowns as a character in the first flood of her experience. It is a familiar story Mrs. Laurence is telling, and a good one: but, in bringing it off, technique is everything, and when it fails, the novel fails.

And it fails in very important ways. Because of the way the story is told, the mother can have but one characteristic, and when she speaks or acts she is able to strike only one chord in Rachel: duty. Still, she is more successful than the other two main characters in the book. Rachel knows who her mother is, what she is, and where she came from. But when Calla and Nick are introduced, the problem of narration, of exposition, has to be faced. The only way the author has of explaining these people is through dialogue, and dialogue cannot be successfully used in place of narration. It becomes talk; worse, it becomes an exchange of information. Both Nick and Calla suffer from having to explain themselves, being forced to strike poses and sometimes even to orate. Here is Nick just before he makes out with Rachel. "There isn't anyone like me, darling. What you're trying to say is that you envied Ukrainians. What I would like to know is why." Question and answer sessions. One yearns for the third person point of view and the omniscient author — old-fashioned techniques for an old-fashioned story of a fellow creature who goes through the great crisis of her life, learns to love, learns to forgive all of her betrayers (even herself), and understands, perhaps, that if life is given in jest, the joke is hers to live.

If the precise response must be that this book is a failure, one reads it with the awareness, all of the way through it, that he is engrossed in a Margaret Laurence novel. Only she could have written — and placed perfectly — the long scene between Rachel and Hector, the undertaker who has modernized her father's business. Few, if any others, could depict with such stunning accuracy the kind of sensitivity Rachel has. If she made a doubtful decision about *how* to tell the

story, one must admit that she does get it told, and that it has — especially in the last fifty pages — the power to move. One-handed applause is perhaps not enough.

A parting shot must be directed at the publisher. McClelland & Stewart should be ashamed of themselves. The book looks and feels as if it were left over from the Second World War, and the dust jacket is a jest indeed.

ROBERT HARLOW

CAMPUS CARICATURES

DENIS GODFREY, *No Englishman Need Apply*. Macmillan. $5.95.

NOVELS ABOUT ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS written by members of English departments have proliferated in the last few years. Mr. Denis Godfrey's recent book, *No Englishman Need Apply* shares with many of them a failing which is almost a characteristic of the genre: it confines itself so exclusively to the activities and problems of a specific professional group that it becomes claustophobic.

The hero of the novel is a young Englishman, Philip Brent, who accepts a position at a western Canadian university only because the academic system of which he is a product cannot accommodate him. The novel endeavours to chart Brent's progress towards integration into an academic community whose standards of personal and professional conduct differ markedly from those to which he has been accustomed. Much is made of Brent's initial contempt for the provincialism of Canadian academic life, and also of the mistrust and suspicion occasioned in the university community itself by his apparent assumption of superiority. In an intensive analysis of the conflicts and tensions which arise from the central situation, the novel finds its principal theme.

Though there is much of interest here, the novel does not finally succeed. Neither Marston, the fictitious prairie university town where the greater part of the action is set, nor Brent, described in the novel as "the standard English academic product", is thoroughly credible. Each is a humourless caricature. The contrived typicality of both community and individual is much too obvious and is a source of continual irritation to the reader. The elaborate sub-plot, which principally concerns Brent's wife, Lucy, and her attempt to rejuvenate her marriage and to discover on a new continent a future for her child, is over-sentimental and its integration with the main plot is highly artificial. The consequence is that the overall structure seems very wooden indeed.

The novel, however, contains sufficient that is sensitive and perceptive to cause the reader to regret the general deficiency of craftsmanship. The presentation of some of the minor characters, particularly the academics, is effectively handled and the dialogue is occasionally good. Mr. Godfrey is himself an academic, and the best thing in the novel is undoubtedly his portrayal of some of the corrupter aspects of university politics and of the various ways in which academic intrigue gradually undermines the principles of those continually engaged in it.

Deficient in structure, over-solemn in tone, and almost entirely without humour, this is a disappointing book. Al-

though it occasionally achieves some momentum, the novel never really gets off the ground.

GEOFFREY CREIGH

MAVERICK NOVELIST

RUDY WIEBE, *First and Vital Candle*. McClelland & Stewart. $5.95.

RUDY WIEBE is something of a maverick. He is, by inclination, part theologian, part sociologist, part moralist. He has not as yet clearly branded himself as a novelist. The evidence is in his writings.

In his first novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962), he dissected the anatomy of a small Mennonite community. Though a Mennonite himself by upbringing, he went about his task with courageous honesty. After stripping off the community's respectable outer skin, he revealed cankerous sores — greed, brutality, and intolerance — that were thoroughly repugnant. His ruggedly powerful story incensed more than one righteous critic. Mr. Wiebe is no longer the editor of a Mennonite journal in Winnipeg. He now teaches English at Goshen College in Goshen, Indiana. The climate there is, I believe, tolerable.

But Mr. Wiebe is a young man not easily dismayed. The hostility he created in some quarters was closely followed by critical appreciation in others. So he went to work on a second novel, *First and Vital Candle*. He found the title for his new work in lines from Gerard Manley Hopkins:

> Come you indoors, come home; you fading fire
> Mend first and vital candle in close heart's vault:
> You there are master, do your own desire.

Perhaps this choice of title is a reassertion of his own theological position, perhaps, also, a reaffirmation of confidence in himself. Be that as it may, *First and Vital Candle* certainly contains a strong undercurrent of theological argument and, like the earlier book, uses a small, closed, and disintegrating society for the scene of the action. This time, however, the community is Indian — Ojibway — and the location is in northern Ontario, not far from the cold waters of Hudson Bay.

The only fully-treated character is Abram Ross, an "Arctic man in all his hirsute splendor", a restless bachelor, who, after years as a fur trader among the Eskimos, is transferred by the Frobisher Company to its small store at Frozen Lake, an Ojibway settlement. His express orders are to salvage an operation on the verge of failure. His opposition comes from Sig Bjornesen, an independent trader, a "big grey-haired brute", who, by his encouragement of regular orgies of drinking, has completely undermined the morale of the community. Facing Bjornesen and supporting Ross are two pallidly-sketched missionaries, Joshua Bishop and his wife Lena, and the new teacher, Sara Howell, a spinster of some physical charm, much given to the reading of the Bible, and, like her friends the Bishops, holding firmly to the belief that salvation can be achieved only by God's grace (and this through the acceptance of Christ the Saviour) and not by good works; for "when weighed in the final — God's — balances our very best, or what we think it is, is little more than scum."

The outcome of the struggles is inconclusive. The Frobisher store is closed and Abe, with perhaps some flickerings of a

new belief implanted in him, is flown out to civilization. Bjornesen fades into nowhere. Sarah, more commonly called Sally, is drowned when the spring break-up of the river floods an isolated cabin where she has gone to pray. And the Bishops (unsupported by any church), having baptized a few hesitant Indians, remain at Frozen Lake in the hope of baptizing more.

But this inconclusive conclusion does not seem, really, to matter much. For the book, as a whole, is not successful. Its architecture — or rather its lack of good architecture — is in my view the greatest weakness. The core of the story is the struggle at Frozen Lake. But the reader does not even get to Frozen Lake until the ninety-ninth page, and he must wait for another forty-two pages to meet the proper Miss Howell, the only female character worthy of more than a passing glance in the entire story. This failure to get down to the main business results in part from an unbalanced opening movement, set against the background of a superficial Winnipeg society, and in part from flashbacks, in which Abe (using the first person singular) reflects on the brutality of life in the Arctic, the unhappiness of his own rigidly-controlled Presbyterian childhood, and his experience in the war. Further, the structure throughout is weakened by peripheral events that add little to the heart of the matter, and by theological, moral, and ethical debates that are strangely misplaced.

But all this is not to say that *First and Vital Candle* is a total failure. Wiebe composed his work only after considerable study of a particular problem in a particular society. Somewhere along the line, he has gained considerable knowledge about the Ojibway — their language, their traditional mythology, their daily lives, and the problems they face in a changing world. About them he writes with conviction and sympathy. Moreover, when he is at his best he can write superbly. His descriptions of outdoor scenes, handled with poetic sensitivity, are often memorable; and his depiction of violence — the violence of the river as it breaks its normal boundaries, or the violence of the drunken group in Bjornesen's store — are dramatically convincing, and make for exciting reading. And, for readers more devout than myself, I grant the possibility that the portrayal of the Bishops and Miss Howell, even with their stilted sermonizing, may well carry considerable impact.

In brief, this novel as an attempted artistic whole does not succeed, but it does contain certain of the ingredients of greatness. Mr. Wiebe is still a young man (he was born in 1934); he is a serious and an energetic craftsman; and he is highly intelligent, perceptive, thoughtful, and humane. He is already at work on his third novel. In time's fullness he may well make a significant, perhaps even a great contribution to the corpus of Canadian fiction. That time will come when he ceases being a maverick, and clearly brands himself with one word only: Novelist.

S. E. READ

FRENCH INDIVIDUALISTS

ROBERT FINCH, *The Sixth Sense: Individualism in French Poetry, 1686-1760.* University of Toronto Press. $8.50.

ROBERT FINCH, up to now best known to the general literary public as one of

our better poets in the traditionalist vein, has now, in *The Sixth Sense: Individualism in French Poetry, 1686-1760*, turned to criticism. His approach is historical, and his book is drawn together by a definite thesis; he sets out to demonstrate that French eighteenth-century poetry has been both misunderstood and underrated. Its quality is much higher than has been generally granted; its approach was not nearly so closely wedded to the dogmas of neo-classicism as insufficient study has usually led us to suppose. To the contrary, he suggests that the *individualistes*, whose theories and practice in some ways anticipated those commonly associated with romanticism, were more important than has usually been assumed, forming a counter-movement to the poetic establishment of the time rather similar to that which men like Chardin and Watteau represented in painting.

The existence of a trend, rather than a movement, Professor Finch demonstrates admirably by his study of the poets themselves and of a number of critical theorists who provided a justification for their practice and, in general, for the liberation of poetry from neo-classical limitations. He also illustrates his thesis by numerous quotations from these relatively unavailable poets. It is here that his advocacy thins out, for, read as one may through his extracts, it is hard to convince oneself that these poets were as good as Professor Finch sometimes suggests, or that, in quality at least, he has uncovered a literary peer for Chardin. If he makes the eighteenth century seem a little less of a poetic desert, the flowers he gathers are humble.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

SENSIBILITY AND EVANGELISM

JOSHUA MARSDEN, *The Narrative of a Mission to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Somers Islands, with a Tour to Lake Ontario.* S. R. Publishers and Johnson Reprint Corporation. $9.00.

ALL CANADIAN HISTORIANS, both literary and otherwise, should be grateful to the Johnson Reprint Corporation for making available this scarce, but important book. *The Narrative of a Mission* is, it seems to me, important in several senses. Firstly, it is a classical illustration of Eli Halèvy's thesis, linking romantic sensibility and evangelical religion. Secondly, it is important for the first-hand account it gives of conditions on the frontiers of the New World more than a century and a half ago. Thirdly, it demonstrates how the Methodist Church was able, by filling a gap in the barren life of the colonies, to stamp its distinctive ethos — emotionalism held in tension by a rigid moral code — upon the ethos of the Atlantic Provinces for over a century after it began operations in that region. Finally, to the researcher the book is a first-rate source of facts and names with respect to missions in general throughout the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth.

As literature, *The Narrative of a Mission* is not very successful. Marsden was later to refine his style and write much better books. In this, one of his earliest, he was writing with an eye on his middle class (one suspects his middle class female) audience. The result is a peculiar blend of crisp narration, sentimentality, and religious ejaculations that — a generation earlier — Richardson's Pamela would have loved. The poetry

also, although it keeps better than that of most pioneer versifiers the form, antithesis and point of the classic heroic couplet, is hackneyed in thought, diction, and image. The following passage is Marsden at his poeticizing best:

> Here purple grapes in swelling clusters grow,
> There milk-white arrow-root abounds below:
> See rich in juice the musky melon lies,
> Aloof the bread-roots, green cassadas rise:
> The savoury onion, and the yellow squash,
> The pumpkins green, and bowl-formed calabash,
> In the green woods now beauteous to behold,
> The yellow orange pour the flaming gold;...

The most entertaining aspect of *The Narrative of a Mission* is the transparent picture it gives of the often muddled but well-meaning thoughts, hopes, fears, and deeds of a genuinely good man. The following passage is an example:

> I spoke to one of the sailors about giving them some bibles I had procured for the purpose; the honest fellow observed, "that sailors sometimes spoke bad words, but meant no harm, as it was a custom that they could not prevent." What a pity these honest tars should consider swearing as a part of a sailor's calling. One of the cooks, a black man, desired me to find him a chapter, that he might get it be yeart, and live up to it. Honest African, how many have it at their finger's ends, but want thy unaffected simplicity. I put a bible in the other cook's pocket, which I hope he will use to his eternal advantage; heard the second mate swear and gently touched him by the arm; he smiled. "Alas, how many smile at what the world should weep."

If Goldsmith had not already created Dr. Primrose, Joshua Marsden would have — a little more tediously and a little less attractively — done so.

FRED COGSWELL

MODERN ART DEFENDED

JERROLD MORRIS, *On the Enjoyment of Modern Art.* McClelland & Stewart. $2.50.

DO WE NEED YET another volley of words from the embattled camp of defenders of twentieth-century art? Yes, if it is despatched with the clarity and simplicity of which Jerrold Morris is capable.

The notion "that you either 'dig' or you don't" is rejected impatiently by Morris, who sincerely believes in the power of persuasion. This faith has helped him to produce one of the best-written, most easily read, and — if he is right about persuasion — one of the most persuasive of defenses for the artistic behaviour of our times.

Courteously apologizing that his own work was not meant to supersede others of its kind, the writer nevertheless admits that "the temptation for the erudite critic to turn his exposition into a work of art for its own sake" has not helped to stimulate the interest of the intelligent layman.

Morris has written this essay for the layman. It could easily become required reading in every high school — or at least for every high school teacher. In less than forty pages of text, including the captions under the reproductions, the reader is offered a fine thumb-nail history of History of Western Art, a fistful of simple, yet profound criteria for a philosophy of criticism, and a quite adequate survey of the areas and ideas which have been attracting the attention of artists during the past century.

The only quarrel one might pick would be with the "Gallery of Canadian Art" series which may be leaning precariously backward in order to add Canadian con-

tent to this particular volume which doesn't require it. Thus, although the text deals with a discussion of world movements implying universal import, and with a description of ideas which have originated in many places other than Canada, the illustrations are discovered to be exclusively of works with a "Made in Canada" stamp upon them. It would be deplorable should this embarrassing nationalism discourage non-Canadian readers.

There is further irony in the fact that Morris recently blamed the economic failure of his highly respected "International" gallery in Toronto on the inability of his Canadian clients to appreciate non-Canadian art.

The author agrees that his "explanation", though it may help one to respect modern art, will probably help no one to "understand" it, nor even to enjoy it, and he reminds the reader that "there is no substitute for looking". We might add that looking at reproductions is no substitute for looking at the real thing, especially when the reproductions are of the pocketbook size and pinch-penny quality which are inflicted upon us here.

Morris makes many references to artists and works of the past, suggesting that "the interested reader may refer to them elsewhere". Yet, this book prepared for the uninitiated might better have been illustrated with some of those older "background" works pointedly referred to in the essay. The reader could then have stepped out of his own door to seek in local galleries examples of the contemporary to study in the light of Morris' text.

ABRAHAM ROGATNICK

NEW FRENCH STUDIES

JOHN G. LAPP, *Zola before the Rougon-Macquart*. University of Toronto Press. $5.00.

JAMES A. LEITH, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France, 1750-1799: A Study in the History of Ideas*. University of Toronto Press. $4.95.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO Press Romance Series seems now to be an established publishing venture, since the books under review are its seventh and eighth volumes, and others are already appearing.

Zola before the Rougon-Macquart is a notable addition to the series, and also to the growing company of recent studies which have considered Zola on his literary rather than on his moralistic or propagandistic merits. The long period when Zola was dismissed as a merely sensational writer or as a rather dull realist is at last ended. Critics are beginning to agree — more or less — with Gide's estimation when he placed *Germinal* among the ten great French novels. Above all, it is being recognized that, whatever Zola's literary theories, and whatever curious methods of work he based on them, his novels were not in fact realist in any strict sense of that term. Where they are most effective it is because of a massive symbolism which transforms their characters into personifications of human passions and social urges, and which gives their key incidents a metaphorical quality.

These aspects of Zola are evident in their most dominant forms in the greater novels of the Rougon-Macquart series, where — in books like *Germinal* and *Le Débâcle* — an apocalyptic intensity of

vision irradiates Zola's rendering of the climactic events. But his early, and often disregarded writings, many of them belonging to a period before Zola had even the pretension to be a realist, contain, in their poetic fancies and their Gothicist horrors, the roots of those very aspects of Zola which are attracting the present generation of readers and critics back to his major works. In *Zola before the Rougon-Macquart* it is these aspects of the French novelist's work on which Dr. Lapp concentrates, and his book is an excellent pioneer monograph in the study of the early Zola; it will undoubtedly open the way to more extensive studies of the novelist's lesser but by no means always insignificant writings.

Dr. Leith's book, *The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France,* covers an important subject because, in many respects, the French Revolution marks the great watershed that divides the last vestiges of the Renaissance world, with its discovery of the individual's importance, from the first stages of the totalitarian world which, in various and often disguised degrees, reverses that attitude. It is a time of choice and indecision, and in many ways one finds the individualistic and the proto-totalitarian attitude closely mingled.

This is particularly the case in the approach of the French revolutionaries to art, and Mr. Leith has carried out a very useful service in describing attitudes during and before the Revolution towards the function of the artist in a society dominated by the crisis of fundamental political change. He begins by reminding us that art had already in the past been considered from two widely varying points of view; in the middle ages its usefulness in educating men in religious truths had been recognized, and something very near to a propaganda art had flourished; the Renaissance, on the other hand, brought with it a strong movement towards a completely æsthetic view of art and towards a view of the artist himself as "a lonely genius pursuing a special vision."

The men of the eighteenth century were divided between these two viewpoints, and, as Mr. Leith shows convincingly, writers like Diderot and the other Encyclopedists were inconsistent in their attitudes, something stressing the moral content of a work, sometimes concerning themselves solely with its æsthetic qualities. This inconsistency continued to the Revolution, and Mr. Leith shows that at this period, though the theory of art as propaganda was thoroughly worked out by those who concerned themselves at this period with the public function of painting and sculpture, in fact nothing approaching the control over artists exercised by modern totalitarian governments was ever achieved. Art in practice almost always continued to delight rather than to instruct.

The Idea of Art as Propaganda in France is a contribution to the whole subject of the role of art in political life, but it is also a most interesting demonstration of the split mind of the French Revolutionaries, who in many fields sketched out the theory of a totalitarian society but were prevented by their heritage of individualism from ever working out in practice any aspect of that society.

L. T. CORNELIUS

PAPERBACKS

DURING RECENT MONTHS yet another Canadian paperback series has begun to appear. This newest venture is the Ryerson Paperbacks, and one volume which will be of particular interest to readers of *Canadian Literature* is a reprint of Desmond Pacey's *Ten Canadian Poets* ($2.75). The essays it contains begin, oddly, with one on Charles Sangster, whom all Dr. Pacey's persuasion cannot convince one is a figure worth resurrecting; they then proceed to the so-called Confederation poets, revealing clearly that the author's preference — like our own — is for Duncan Campbell Scott, and end with a group of five essays — the best in the book — on the leading elder poets of the modern movement in Canada, from Pratt, through A. J. M. Smith, F. R. Scott, and A. M. Klein, to an Earle Birney who has since passed beyond his early bounds and needs reconsideration. Other volumes in the Ryerson Paperbacks include Grant F. O. Smith's *The Man Robert Burns* ($3.25) (hardly a book at all but rather a bulky file of useful source material unassimilated and badly arranged) and Alan Easton's recollections of the wartime Canadian navy, *50 North* ($2.50).

The Clarke Irwin Canadian Paperbacks continue to produce volumes that fill in the gaps in available modern Canadian classics. Sometimes their merits are historical rather than intrinsic; for example, though one is interested to re-read Robertson Davies' *The Diary of Samuel Marchbanks* ($1.50), it is only to wonder that so many good plays and novels have emerged from a beginning of such meagre facetiousness. *The Book of Small* ($1.50) combines two small reminiscent works by Emily Carr, the title book and *A Little Town and A Little Girl,* a kind of child's guide to early Victoria. Neither conveys the same intensity of experience as her classic *Klee Wyck. Bousille and the Just* ($1.25), the best-known play by Gratien Gélinas, still strikes with chilling intensity. But perhaps best of all this bunch of Clarke Irwin Paperbacks, for its vivid reconstruction of a modern man's immersion in a primeval way of life, is Doug Wilkinson's *Land of the Long Day* ($1.90), in which he gives a clear and very moving account of his year of life as an adopted Eskimo in a hunting family.

Particularly welcome among other paperbacks are the reprint (which the publishers oddly call "An Original Publication") of Leonard Cohen's first book of verse, *Let us Compare Mythologies* by McClelland & Stewart ($2.50) and the Canadian University Paperbacks edition of J. Mackay Hitsman's military history, *The Incredible War of 1812* ($2.50), a scholarly and at the same time highly readable account of a war in which comedy was continually overbalancing tragedy. (Why, one wonders, has nobody ever written a *Turvey* of 1812?) Drier, but no less worthy fare, is W. M. Whitelaw's *The Maritimes and Canada before Confederation,* whose reprinting after 30 years by the Oxford University Press ($1.95) is given topicality by the Centennial. Finally, two most un-Canadian classics have appeared in paperbacks, edited by Canadian scholars. One is a new and abridged translation of *The Works of Mencius* (entitled merely *Mencius*), prepared and introduced by W. A. C. H. Dobson in the Canadian University Paperbacks ($2.25).

The other is the Doubleday Anchor reissue of Sismondi's one volume version of his *History of the Italian Republics* ($1.95) with a long introduction by Wallace K. Ferguson of the University of Western Ontario. It is good to see this great book back in print; time has worn away surprisingly little of its stylistic lustre and invalidated surprisingly few of its 130 years' old arguments.

G. W.

THE VERGE

GOOD AND BAD BOOKS alike demonstrate in some way the personality of their creators, although sometimes the revelation is an inadvertent one. However, Gordon Sinclair's *Will the real Gordon Sinclair please stand up* (McClelland & Stewart) quite consciously depicts himself as himself sees him. The many who know him on television will hardly expect him to be humble, and if this is a valid reaction, then in his book the real Gordon Sinclair is standing up all the way through. Still, it does have some interest as a social history, for the sketches of Toronto in the 1910's and 20's are honest and blunt.

A Party Politician: the Memoirs of Chubby Power, edited by Norman Ward (Macmillan), is also a retrospective view of a personal involvement in a political world, but here the politics involves Ottawa and government rather than newspapers and the economics of buying food. After an overly extended and slow start, Senator Power's book moves on in a rather more lively way with his assessments of conscription, provincial politics in Quebec, and Mackenzie King. In his preface, he eschews any claim to call this work either autobiography or history; in some sense it is both — of a frankly partisan kind. The partisanship amply characterizes the author himself, and rather than detracting from his picture of the period, it supplies the vantage point from which we can get what appears for a time at least to be a clearer view.

The retrospective assessment is perhaps easier than the contemporary one, and this difficulty afflicts Pierre Berton's *The Cool Crazy Committed World of the Sixties* (McClelland & Stewart), a series of television interviews which deal with such subjects as birth control, James Bond, and civil rights, and range from the pop intellectualism of Ray Bradbury to the confessions of a confession-magazine writer and a witch. Berton has tried to picture society by showing us the people it has produced; the publishers have tried to sell us Berton by including in the purchase price a mini-record of unbreakable plastic, immortalizing the voices of the original interviews. Cool, crazy, and committed indeed. It is a book in which the misprint *Normal Mailer* seems less an error than a symptom of the scale of values of the world that Berton presents.

Readers of *Weekend Magazine* will already have met some of Stuart Trueman's *The Ordeal of John Gyles* (McClelland & Stewart), the story of a Puritan boy enslaved by Indians in 1689. They will recall that he learned to understand both Indian and French ways of life and became invaluable as an interpreter when he was returned to Maine eight years later. *Weekend* obviously published the best bits. Trueman has unfortunately tried to make his biography "popular" by inventing long pieces of seventeenth-century conversation, and

these are merely incredible. When he now and again relies on Gyles' own journal, the book returns to life.

The Clear Spirit: Twenty Canadian Women and their Times, ed. by Mary Quayle Innis (University of Toronto Press), is the Centennial project of the Canadian Federation of University Women, and presents brief biographies of twenty deceased important women by fifteen live ones. One therefore approaches it as a kind of anthology, delighted to find there an essay on the vigorous and relatively unknown agriculturalist E. Cora Hind, but deeply grieved to find that the Canadian schoolchild's idol, Laura Secord, has been left out. It is disturbing, too, to note how inconsistent the quality of the prose is, for it varies from the Sarah Binksian clichés in Ruth Howe's "Adelaide Hunter Hoodless" all the way through to two essays that deserve special note: Clara Thomas's study of the Strickland sisters and Dorothy Livesay's study of Mazo de la Roche. These two demonstrate the apparently effortless combination of fact and personality that one always hopes to find in biographical writing, and that illuminates our glimpse both of the people and of the age in which they live.

W. H. N.