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THE RELEVANCE OF HUMOUR

Articles

BY CLAUDE T. BISSELL, JOHN REID, W. H. MAGEE, PETER STEVENS, L. A. A. HARDING

Translations

BY RINA LASNIER, JOHN GLASSCO

Reviews

BY GEORGE BOWERING, PETER STEVENS, TONY KILGALLIN, WILLIAM H. NEW, ELI MANDEL, LEN GASPARINI, AUDREY THOMAS, H. R. PERCY, AL PURDY, GREGORY M. COOK, ROY DANIELLS, JAMES A. HART

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BY DESMOND PACEY

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editorial

CENTRIFUGAL PUBLISHING

FEW INDUSTRIES are more subject to centralization, with its attendant ills, than publishing. Little important publishing in England, France or Japan goes on outside the capitals of these countries, and, in the United States, Little Brown of Boston are merely the exception which seems to prove the rule that important publishing is concentrated in New York, though the big American university presses, like those of California and Chicago, do help to counter the centripetal tendency for commercial houses to cluster in the same city. Some countries with strong regionalist traditions, like Italy and Germany, do not centralize to anything like the same extent, and here the publishing industry appears to be more versatile, more flexible, and more alive to unfashionable possibilities.

Canada is a case of dual centralization rather than decentralization. Publishing in French is mainly concentrated in Montreal, and publishing in English in Toronto; even the one important university press is Toronto-based. Small, non-profit presses have appeared in other centres, particularly Vancouver, and there are regional printers who have dabbled in publishing to the extent of bringing out books of local interest which have assured markets. General commercial publishing, however, has rarely been tried outside Toronto, and this is why the appearance of a new and vigorous publishing house in the West is so especially welcome.

The man behind this venture is Mel Hurtig of Edmonton, one of the two best booksellers in western Canada. His firm, M. G. Hurtig Ltd., with one large bookstore already established, considered the alternatives of opening a chain of branch stores and going into publishing. Against a great deal of friendly advice, they chose the latter, entered into association with the Tokyo publishers, Charles Tuttle, and went into business.

From the start, they intended to avoid the temptation to pursue exclusively the sure money that is to be earned from local-appeal publishing. At the same time, they did not ignore this field as a support to their other books; they sold, for example, 33,000 copies of a *Natural History of Alberta.* Another supporting activity which has performed a particularly useful service to those interested in Canadian history is the reprinting of classic western travel narratives; Paul Kane's *Wanderings of an Artist*, and William Francis Butler's two pioneer books, *The Great Lone Land* and *The Wild North Land* are among the titles that have already appeared.

But the books by which Mel Hurtig wishes to be most widely known are literary works like Eli Mandel's *An Idiot Joy*, which won the Governor-General's poetry award, and, even more, "books of national interest and a social or political nature". The first of these is *The New Romans*, edited by A. W. Purdy, which has not only sold 40,000 copies, but has also stirred up a great deal of discussion on the burning questions arising out of Canada's relationship with the United States.

> Many of our future publications [says Mel Hurtig] will advocate a more independent Canada. In this category will come books on NATO and NORAD, foreign investment and the future role for Canada in international affairs. . . . In fact, this is the kind of book we intend to concentrate on, even if it means reducing the number of titles we publish each year (seven our first year in 1967, fourteen in 1968).

No-one can fail to welcome a policy with such aims. At the same time it seems an equally important aspect of Mel Hurtig's venture that, while concerned with the independence of Canada, it also asserts in a very practical way the possibility of a healthy decentralization in Canada's literary life. This has happened during the last decade in the field of journals (*Malahat*, *Prism International*, *Mosaic* and *Canadian Literature* all having appeared in the West to compete with Toronto and Montreal publications); it happened for a brief period in the CBC early in the 1960's, when there was an extraordinary regional flowering in radio broadcasting from Vancouver, later snuffed out by the policy decisions and personnel shifts dictated by Ottawa. If it happens in publishing, we may at last have the physical basis for regional literary centres where writers choose to remain without feeling the need to establish themselves in or near megalopolis.

HALIBURTON, LEACOCK AND THE AMERICAN HUMOUROUS TRADITION

Claude T. Bissell

EDMUND WILSON'S STUDY of Canadian literature, *O Canada, An American's Notes on Canadian Culture*, a slight book that was not received in Canada with hosannas, justifies itself, nevertheless, by its very existence: it is the only extended comment on Canadian literature by a major American writer. This would seem to imply that literary relations between Canada and the United States, not to put too despairing a face on it, are tenuous. This would be true if we confined ourselves to critical comment. But if we shift our attention to the imaginative writers, a nobler prospect opens up. The intermingling of people that has marked the growth of the two countries is matched by an intermingling of ideas and attitudes. The movement is, of course, heavily from south to north, modified recently by the impact on American writers of the two philosophical critics, Northrop Frye and Marshall McLuhan.

I shall look at Thomas Haliburton and, at greater length, at Stephen Leacock in the light of the intermingling of Canadian and American ideas. Leacock developed in close relationship to American traditions, but his sense of being a Canadian, which was sharply felt and eloquently expressed, gave him a sense of separateness. A study of his relationship to American cultural traditions reveals the pattern that can be expanded indefinitely — a pattern of indebtedness and independence, of similarity and differentiation, of sympathy and withdrawal. We can see this pattern clearly in terms of Leacock's attitude towards the American tradition of humour and satire, specifically in the use he made of two American writers, Mark Twain and Thorstein Veblen, who, in different ways and different degrees, belong to that tradition. A similar pattern emerges when we look at the work of Haliburton.

There can be no doubt of the centrality of the humourous tradition in nineteenth-century America. Humour was indeed, as Stephen Leacock pointed out,

"one of the undisputed national products of the new republic." He went on to observe: "of American literature there was much doubt in Europe; of American honesty, much more; of American manners, more still. But American humour found a place alongside of Germany philosophy, Italian music, French wine, and British banking. No one denied its peculiar excellence and its distinctive national stamp."[1] The centrality of American humour is not simply a question of a long parade of self-conscious funny men, most of them, including the greatest, absorbed into their pseudonyms; it is a question of the most durable strand in the main tradition. Miss Constance Rourke, in her classical study of American humour, uses as a subtitle "A Study of the National Character." The book is a subtle and eloquent demonstration of how the qualities generated by humourous folk art entered into the imagination of the major shapers of American literature, writers as diverse as Henry James, Emily Dickinson and Edwin Arlington Robinson. She explains that the humourous tradition was bound up with the search for national unity and cohesiveness, given momentum and confidence by the Revolutionary War and by the full realization that the country won from Europe was one of incredible richness. Miss Rourke quotes from Bergson that "the comic comes into being just when society and the individual, freed from the worry of self-preservation, begin to regard themselves as works of art."[2] Post-revolutionary America had entered upon this phase. There was a sense of boundless confidence in the egalitarian faith that had nourished the revolution and could now be given an immense scope. Here was a positive shining norm to be set against effete Europe, or later, with the opening of the West, against an East that had not sufficiently shaken off European ways. The American idea was so triumphant and so universally accepted that it could be presented in an exaggerated, even fantastic way, without inviting ridicule. There emerged a composite character, whose base was the shrewd practical Yankee and whose super-structure was the western teller of tall tales. The character was a theatrical creation who had a special lingo, costume and mask. Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur* was a late, sophisticated version of the type. Hank Morgan had all the New Englander's shrewd practicality, his disdain for what seemed pretentious and unfamiliar, and his unflinching confidence in his own ability. Mark Twain has, however, stripped his Yankee of the colourful garb of the early part of the century, and has clothed him in the sober suit of the businessman. When Morgan finally achieves a position of power at the Court of King Arthur, he is by his own request known as the boss, the designation that for him confers the maximum combination of respectability and power. Morgan has also become an elo-

quent exponent of the theory of republicanism and individualism, and thereby loses a good deal of his appeal as a humourous character. He is, nonetheless, conceived of in the great tradition, a symbolic American who triumphantly and exuberantly exposes the ignorance and cruelty of those who dwell in non-American darkness.

Canada produced nothing comparable to this tradition; no national character emerged to become a symbol of triumph and superiority. The reason for this lies on the very surface of the social and political development of Canada during the nineteenth century. For the apocalyptic revolution, Canada substituted a protracted, largely invisible revolution that stretched from the 1790's when the Loyalists first arrived to the 1850's when the principle of responsible government was finally recognized. Responsible government, which, in brief, is the responsibility of the executive to the elected assembly and through them to the electorate, was a victory of the centre. In the process two extremes were avoided, although not eliminated — toryism, a transplanting of English ideas of an élite based upon property, privilege, and education; and republicanism, American variety, which was the communism of the day. The triumph of the solid centre did not mean any break with European traditions. Indeed, it meant a strengthening of them, since the ideas were derived from British liberalism, and these ideas were not incompatible, for the time being, with colonial status in the Empire. The opening up of the West did not modify the ideology. The West was not, as it was in the United States, a gradually advancing frontier — a front line against the wilderness; it was rather a series of hinterlands or semi-colonies to be settled by careful arrangement and exploited by systematic plan. The settlers were not usually adventurers from the settled east; they were more likely Americans attracted to free land who had already passed through the frontier stage, or Europeans who brought with them a heavy baggage of traditions.

What emerged in Canada, then, was not a single triumphant idea that nourished a confident self-reliance in a new and paradisiacal land. It was rather a consciousness of a variety of traditions that had been inherited from older societies, from Britain, France, colonial America, and the Republic itself. We have a key here to understanding the nature of the humourous traditions in the two countries.

IN THE UNITED STATES the humourous tradition permeates the works of a host of minor writers and has its great classical embodiment in Mark Twain. There is nothing comparable in Canada to the steady flow of

American humourous writing with its vast undergrowth of folk humour. The Canadian tradition is largely embodied in two writers; who were, however, two major English-Canadian writers. The first was Thomas Chandler Haliburton, who was born in 1796 and died in 1865; and the second Stephen Leacock, who was born in 1867 and died in 1944.

Leacock was in no sense a disciple of Haliburton. Indeed in his references to Haliburton, he is uniformly condescending and disparaging. To him, Haliburton was a historical phenomenon of some minor significance. I suspect, indeed, that Leacock never even bothered to read Haliburton; he simply accepts the image of a stuffy colonial Tory who exploited a popular device, but who had no genuine literary power. Haliburton was a much better writer than Leacock thought he was, and Leacock had an affinity with him of which he was not aware.

There were a number of similarities in the backgrounds and careers of the two men. Each was a conscious humourist and is remembered chiefly as such, but each devoted most of his energies to serious historical and social studies that have now been forgotten. By family background, each was in a position to understand and value the multinational nature of the Canadian tradition. Haliburton grew up in a tight little privileged society in Nova Scotia, but he was always conscious of the existence of a great North Atlantic community of which Nova Scotia was a minor part. His father was a Scotsman who had married into a Boston family before coming to Canada, and his mother was a daughter of a British officer who had been killed during the American Revolutionary Wars. The Leacock family traditions had a similar amplitude. His family had come to Canada from England in 1876 when he was seven years old. His parents belonged to two of the basic types of English immigrants to the colonies. His father was a younger son of a family of some means who was, in effect, a ne'er-do-well remittance man. His mother was a daughter of a Church of England clergyman, and the family had numerous ties both with the church and with the universities. There was never any doubt about Leacock's attachment to Canada; but he never lost his sense of sentimental identification with England and, up to the very last, he retained a touchingly robust belief in the indestructibility of the British empire. But as his literary fame broadened, he became increasingly well known in the United States; and he accepted the role of the American humourist who was a lineal descendant of Mark Twain. In his biography of Charles Dickens he sharply criticized the great man for his failure to see the epic quality of American civilization. Leacock had no such insensitivity to the United States, as did Haliburton before him. Both Haliburton and Leacock, then, had a multinational conscious-

ness; they were simultaneously spiritual citizens of Great Britain, the United States, and Canada. They had a sympathetic understanding of the qualities of each; they, therefore, avoided national absolutes and adopted an attitude of cultural and political relativism. It was an attitude that provided the basis for their humour.

Today Haliburton is remembered only for *The Clockmaker*, which is made up of a series of sketches that were brought together in book form in 1836. He introduced the character of Sam Slick, a Yankee pedlar travelling in colonial Nova Scotia, and finding the lazy, unprogressive Bluenoses easy victims of his "soft sawder" and devious ways. Haliburton had a simple propagandistic motive in writing the book. He wanted to arouse his countrymen to the need for some agricultural and commercial reforms. But the purpose is not obtrusive and does not stand in the way of contemporary enjoyment. What is left — and it is by far the greater and more important part of the book — is the humourous commentary on national traits. Despite his profound English Toryism, Leacock was never guilty of naïve anti-Americanism. In a long historical study called *The English in America*, he later argued that American democracy and republicanism were not an outgrowth of the Revolution, but were implicit in the first colonial charters. What had developed in the United States then was peculiarly appropriate to that country. He begins his study of the English in America in this way: "I shall endeavour to explain briefly the complicated mechanism and simple action of the American Federal Constitution, and the balances and checks that have been so skillfully contrived by the great statesmen who constructed it; and also to point out the wonderful combination of accidental causes that contributed to its success, and the ability, unity, energy and practical skill of the people who work the machine and keep it in order and repair."[3] His general attitude to the United States is that it has a point of view that works well within its own boundaries but is not exportable. Although Haliburton is by nature more sympathetic to the English point of view, especially as it is embodied in Toryism, he realizes that it, too, is unattractive in a foreign setting. He fought fiercely against giving the British-American colonies a greater degree of independence from the mother country, but this did not prevent him from inveighing against the arrogance and stupidity of British governors in the colonies.

Sam Slick is the vehicle by which Haliburton's critical judgments of national traits are made. The criticism is triggered in the minds of the reader by the extravagance with which Sam expresses himself. Here are two passages of soaring self-confidence that turn into self-ridicule:

I like to look up at them 'ere stars, when I am away from home; they put me in mind of our national flag, and it is generally allowed to be the first flag in the univarse now. The British can whip all the world, and we can whip the British. It's near about the prettiest sight I know of, is one of our first-class frigates, manned with our free and enlightened citizens, all ready for sea; it is like the Great American Eagle, on its perch, balancing itself for a start on the broad expanse of blue sky, afeared of nothin' of its kind, and president of all it surveys.[4]

* * *

No, I believe we may stump the univarse; we improve on everything, and we have improved on our own species. You'll search one while, I tell you, afore you'll find a man that, take him by and large, is equal to one of our free and enlightened citizens. He's the chap that has both speed, wind, and bottom; he's clear grit — ginger to the backbone, you may depend. It's generally allowed there ain't the beat of them to be found anywhere. Spry as a fox, supple as an eel, and cute as a weasel. Though I say it, that shouldn't say it, they fairly take the shine off creation; they are actilly equal to cash.[5]

At other times, Sam is the humourous protagonist and critic; his racy colloquialisms and homely figures of speech drive home the critical judgment. Here is a passage where he talks about the absurdities of English travel literature about America:

Ensigns and lieutenants, I guess, from the British marchin' regiments in the Colonies, that run over five thousand miles of country in five weeks, on leave of absence, and then return, lookin' as wise as the monkey that had seen the world. When they get back they are so chock full of knowledge of the Yankees that it runs over of itself; like a hogshead of molasses rolled about in hot weather, a white froth and scum bubbles out of the bung-wishy-washy trash they call tours, sketches, travels, letters, and what not; vapid stuff, jist sweet, enough to catch flies, cockroaches, and half-fledged gals.[6]

And, at times, Sam Slick has a premonition of some of the problems inherent in the American nation, and it carries him beyond humourous comment to realistic vision.

You have heerd tell of cotton rags dipped in turpentine, haven't you, how they produce combustion? Well, I guess we have the elements of spontaneous combustion among us in abundance; when it does break out, if you don't see an eruption of human gore worse than Etna lava, then I'm mistaken. There'll be the very devil to pay, that's a fact. I expect the blacks will butcher the Southern whites, and the Northerners will have to turn out and butcher them again; and all this shoot, hang, cut, stab, and burn business will sweeten our folks' temper, as raw meat

does that of a dog; it fairly makes me sick to think on it. The explosion may clear the air again, and all be tranquil once more, but it's an even chance if it don't leave us the three steamboats options — to be blown sky-high, to be scalded to death, or drowned.[7]

STEPHEN LEACOCK did not make use of a spokesman like Sam Slick to express his views about national traits. He is his own spokesman; we can see him smiling ironically or chuckling with enormous relish. One of the sketches in his first humourous book, *Literary Lapses*, which appeared in 1910, the year of Mark Twain's death, was a parody of the English romance of high life. Lord Oxhead's daughter confesses that she proposes to marry an American. The passage continues as follows:

"You surprise me indeed," answered Lord Oxhead; "and yet," he continued, turning to his daughter with the courtly grace that marked the nobleman of the old school, "why should we not respect and admire the Americans? Surely there have been great names among them. Indeed, our ancestor Sir Amyas Oxhead was, I think, married to Pocahontas — at least if not actually married" — the earl hesitated a moment.
"At least they loved one another," said Gwendoline simply.
"Precisely," said the earl, with relief, "they loved one another, yes, exactly." Then, as if musing to himself, "Yes, there have been great Americans. Bolivar was an American. The two Washingtons — George and Booker — are both Americans."[8]

It is difficult to know whether the fun is at the expense of the English or the Americans.

The balancing of the qualities of England and America is the whole basis of one of Stephen Leacock's best books, *My Discovery of England*, which was written following his tour of the British Isles in 1921. The observer throughout is the visiting colonial, the writer from Canada who has managed surprisingly to attract the attention of the literary world. Stephen Leacock relaxes maliciously and plays the two great transatlantic powers against each other. Here is a passage where extravagant humour and sharp critical judgment agreeably jostle each other:

The terrible ravages that have been made by the Americans on English morality are witnessed on every hand. Whole classes of society are hopelessly damaged. I have it in the evidence of the English themselves and there seems to be no doubt of the fact. Till the Americans came to England the people were an honest, law-abiding race, respecting their superiors and despising those below them. They had

> never been corrupted by money and their employers extended to them in this regard their tenderest solicitude. Then the Americans came. Servants ceased to be what they were; butlers were hopelessly damaged; hotel porters became a wreck; taxi drivers turned out thieves; curates could no longer be trusted to handle money; peers sold their daughters at a million dollars a piece or three for two. In fact the whole kingdom began to deteriorate till it got where it is now. At present after a rich American has stayed in any English country house, its owners find that they can do nothing with the butler; a wildness has come over the man. There is a restlessness in his demeanour and a strange wistful look in his eye as if seeking for something. In many cases, so I understand, after an American has stayed in a country house, the butler goes insane. He is found in his pantry counting over the sixpence given to him by a Duke, and laughing to himself. He has to be taken in charge by the police. With him generally go the chauffeur, whose mind has broken down from driving a rich American twenty miles; and the gardener, who is found tearing up raspberry bushes by the roots to see if there is any money under them; and the local curate whose brain has collapsed or expanded, I forget which, when a rich American gave him fifty dollars for his soup kitchen.[9]

The point of this passage is not that the Americans are corrupt but that the English are corruptible.

Leacock was usually the innocent Canadian observing the qualities of the two great Anglo-Saxon powers, but he also liked to turn his humourous eye on the national obsessions of his native country. In *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*, Leacock's nostalgic recollections of small town life in southern Ontario, the action is set against the election of 1911 in which the dominating issue was reciprocity with the United States. It was an issue that aroused lively nationalistic feelings and great fears of being swallowed up by the Republic to the South. The Liberals, who supported reciprocity, were defeated. There was a feeling in the country stimulated by the fervent conservative propaganda, that Canada once again had been saved from the Yankees. Leacock himself was a devoted conservative and rejoiced in the results of the election. But as a humourist he sensed the absurdity that was just below the surface of the national emotion. In the book, he has John Henry Bagshaw, the old liberal warhorse of the local constituency, give this sad farewell speech. "I am an old man now, gentlemen, and the time must come soon when I must not only leave politics, but must take my way towards that goal from which no traveller returns. There was a deep hush when Bagshaw said this. It was understood to imply that he thought of going to the United States."[10]

Later on when Stephen Leacock ceased to use Canadian place names and gave an American setting to his books, he could parody the American well-intentioned

condescension to Canada. Thus, in *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, the fashionable doctor recommends that his wealthy patients should go for a visit to Canada, "perfectly quiet, not a soul there and I believe nowadays quite fashionable."[11] Like Shaw, Leacock knew that a light-hearted display of contempt for one's own country is a sure way of getting a laugh.

Humour in Haliburton and Leacock then depended upon ironic balance as opposed to the triumphant contrast that was the main spring of American humour. But the American manner was not without influence in Canada. Haliburton adopted it even though at the same time he made fun of it. And Leacock, especially as he became in the 'thirties the unofficial spokesman for the American humourous tradition, was attracted to the robust humour of sharp contrasts. Of Mark Twain he said that "his was that characteristic American attitude, at least for the America of his day, of alternating between prayer and profanity, emotional belief and iconoclastic denial, asceticism and a spree, hard work and a bust, cold water and raw rum — with nowhere a happy medium, an accepted path and way. Out of this national phase of development is spun much of the legislation of the United States; and most of the worst of it. Mark Twain was in this, as in all else, a true American." The admiration is that of an outsider who stands in wonder but finds it impossible to participate. Yet with one side of his nature, Leacock wanted to participate. He greatly admired, for instance, the Mark Twain book that he realized was at the very heart of the robust American tradition of contrast and extravagance, *A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*. He recognized that *Huckleberry Finn* was the masterpiece, but, in many ways, he preferred the later book. To him, it was a more satisfying artistic whole than *Huckleberry Finn*. He revelled in the machinery by which Yankee inventiveness and individualism were made to shatter the feudal world of Europe. In an introduction that he wrote for the book, he praised its high purpose and said that "it was inspired by a passion for righteousness and justice which blazes out at times in a flame of indignation."[12] Yet despite his admiration for the emotional intensity with which the book was written, and for its success both as artistic whole and political statement, he had strong reservations about its ultimate implications, particularly about the unqualified endorsement of political democracy and the faith in technological progress. In his final estimate of the book, he wrote as follows: "Such criticism of England, past and present, from a citizen of the American Republic, was a little too much like a child of light reproving the children of darkness. Against the tyranny of aristocracy could be set the rising tyranny of the trust; the criminals and bandits of King Arthur's time (whenever it was)

were soon to be overmatched by the gangsters of the United States; against the power of the church stood the social tyranny of puritanical America; denunciations of slavery came ill from a writer brought up in a slave-holding family in the greatest slave state the world ever saw and the rack and stake of the Middle Ages could be paralleled in the hell-fires of the Southern lynchers. At best, it was Satan rebuking sin, the fire calling the kettle black. Underneath was the insult that Mark Twain really thought America a far superior place to England, a fact of which the next generation were not so assured. But the illusion of American freedom died hard."[13]

Leacock's enthusiasm for the structure and literary effect of *A Connecticut Yankee*, as well as his serious reservations about its political philosophy, can be understood in the light of his finest book, *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich*, which appeared in 1914. It was Leacock's attempt to embody in one coherent structure his comments on the flourishing industrial state that had suddenly arisen in Canada in the opening years of the twentieth century. It was in a sense Leacock's reply to Mark Twain's exuberant response to the flourishing American industrial state that had preceded Canada's by several decades. (Leacock did not see that *A Connecticut Yankee* was a confused book, in which Mark Twain's sense of despair was beginning to emerge.)

For the idea and structure of the book, Leacock may well have been indebted to Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* that appeared in 1899. Leacock had read Veblen's book when he was contemplating graduate work and he had been delighted to find that the social sciences were not incompatible with wit. No doubt the presence of Veblen on the faculty of the University of Chicago was a strong influence in attracting Leacock there.

Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich was almost a fictional companion piece to *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. The argument of Veblen's book is briefly this: In a modern, industrial society, the main function of the wealthy is ownership, along with various subsidiary functions all concerned with the acquisition and accumulation of wealth. The respectable activities are banking, since it carries the suggestion of large ownership, and law which, although it has no necessary relationship to ownership, has "no taint of usefulness."[14] The wealthy are driven by a passion to assert their superiority to others in some clearly observable and recognizable way. This can be achieved by doing nothing conspicuously and spending money lavishly. To be conspicuous expenditure must be on superfluities. Expenditure on the church and higher education qualify because their buildings "are constructed and decorated with some view to a reputable

degree of wasteful expenditure."[15] "The priestly vestments are notoriously expensive, ornate and inconvenient."[16] In both church and university there is a great emphasis on "form, precedent, graduation of rank, ritual, ceremonial vestments, and learned paraphernalia."[17] The clergy and the academic staff are part of the retinue of the rich, and expenditure on them by the wealthy is essentially a form of self-indulgence.

In *Arcadian Adventures* the dominating theme is the conspicuous expenditures of the very rich — on clubs, ornate summer homes, and bogus religions. The church and the university are useful appendages to this world. The university indeed becomes a great business corporation. Leacock's humour swells into a prophetic vision of the multiversity:

> The university, as everyone knows, stands with its great gates on Plutoria Avenue, and with its largest buildings, those of the faculties of industrial and mechanical science, fronting full upon the street.
>
> These buildings are exceptionally fine, standing fifteen stories high and comparing favourably with the best departmental stores or factories in the city. Indeed, after nightfall, when they are all lighted up for the evening technical classes and when their testing machinery is in full swing and there are students going in and out in overall suits, people have often mistaken the university, or this newer part of it, for a factory. A foreign visitor once said that the students looked like plumbers, and President Boomer was so proud of it that he put the phrase into his next Commencement address; and from there the newspapers got it and the Associated Press took it up and sent it all over the United States with the heading, "Have Appearance of Plumbers; Plutoria University Congratulated on Character of Students," and it was a proud day indeed for the heads of the Industrial Science faculty.
>
> But the older part of the university stands so quietly and modestly at the top end of the elm avenue, so hidden by the leaves of it, that no one could mistake it for a factory. This, indeed, was once the whole university, and had stood there since colonial days under the name Concordia College. It had been filled with generations of presidents and professors of the older type with long white beards and rusty black clothes, and salaries of fifteen hundred dollars.
>
> But the change both of name and character from Concordia College to Plutoria University was the work of President Boomer. He had changed it from an old-fashioned college of the by-gone type to a university in the true modern sense. At Plutoria they now taught everything. Concordia College, for example, had no teaching of religion except lectures on the Bible. Now they had lectures also on Confucianism, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, with an optional course on atheism for students in the final year.
>
> And, of course, they had long since admitted women, and there were now beauti-

> ful creatures with Cléo de Mérode hair studying astronomy at oaken desks and looking up at the teacher with eyes like comets. The university taught everything and did everything. It had whirling machines on the top of it that measured the speed of the wind, and deep in its basements it measured earthquakes with a seismograph; it held classes on forestry and dentistry and palmistry; it sent life classes into the slums, and death classes to the city morgue. It offered such a vast variety of themes, topics, and subjects to the students, that there was nothing that a student was compelled to learn, while from its own presses in its own press-building it sent out a shower of bulletins and monographs like driven snow from a rotary plough.[18]

The climactic incident in the book is the business-like merger between the Presbyterian and the Episcopalian churches. All society has become a vast business corporation whose motto is profits and conspicuous waste.

IT COULD BE SAID then that Leacock had presented a picture of industrial society in the *Arcadian Adventures* which was no less damning than Mark Twain's picture of feudalistic Europe. If we ignore the tone of the book and simply concentrate on what happens, we could summarize the argument of the book in this way: Society is based upon wealth, and wealth derived from inheritance, promotion or speculation, rather than from useful manufacturing. The upper classes are unaware of the world outside their circle and insulate themselves from poverty. Success in this world depends upon cajolery, deception, deceit and simple graft. Among the very rich, there is no intellectual distinction, only an infinite capacity for being impressed by the false and the pretentious. The professions are slavishly dependent upon the very rich; doctors develop a reputation by advocating what the patients most desire — that they be kept quiet in some distant and exotic summer resort; university presidents play the game of separating the rich from their money by flattery and a display of conspicuous knowledge; university professors are content to work in genteel poverty provided they are respected and are free to neglect their classes; clergymen are experts in graceful ritual or are pompous, self-important expositors of an antique and discredited theology. This society seeks its pleasures in expensive and useless ways — in building grotesque and expensive retreats, in fostering absurd religious movements, and in the process is duped by its servants and victimized by those whom it admires.

Such a summary makes Leacock a dark satirist of a much more forbidding nature than even the later Mark Twain. But actually the book leaves no such impact. For the tone is relaxed; the activities of the very rich are seen as comic extraganzas, and not as venal indulgences. Only occasionally does the relaxed smile of the humourist give way to indignation. The bitterness lurks far below the surface. The opening paragraph sets the mellow, ironic tone, and the concluding paragraph pronounces a slightly tart benediction.

> The Mausoleum Club stands on the quietest corner of the best residential street in the City. It is a Grecian building of white stone. About it are great elm trees with birds — the most expensive kind of birds — singing in the branches.[19]
>
> * * *
>
> Thus all night long, outside the club, the soft note of the motor horns arriving and departing wakened the sleeping leaves of the elm trees with their message of good tidings. And all night long, within its lighted corridors, the bubbling champagne whispered to the listening rubber trees of the new salvation of the city. So the night waxed and waned till the slow day broke, dimming with its cheap prosaic glare the shaded beauty of the artificial light, and the people of the city — the best of them — drove home to their well-earned sleep, and the others — in the lower parts of the city — rose to their daily toil.[20]

What I think accounts for the quality of this book, potentially so bitter an attack upon the status quo, actually so genial a recollection of an era that was passing away is the nature of Leacock's social convictions. Here again, as in Leacock's treatment of national traits, it is a matter of recognizing variety, of avoiding absolutes and embracing relativism. Leacock had a lively faith in the businessman and the beneficent powers of individualism. Indeed, he could at times sound like an apologist for unreconstructed competitive individualism. When he reviewed the economic conditions of Great Britain in the early 'twenties, he called for a revival of tough business enterprise.

> The next thing to be done, then, is to "fire" the government officials and to bring back the profiteer. As to which officials are to be fired it doesn't matter much. In England people have been greatly perturbed as to the use to be made of such instruments as the "Geddes Axe": the edge of the axe of dismissal seems so terribly sharp. But there is no need to worry. If the edge of the axe is too sharp, hit with the back of it.
>
> As to the profiteer, bring him back. He is really just the same person who a few years ago was called a Captain of Industry and an Empire Builder and a Nation Maker. It is the times that have changed, not the man. He is there still, just as greedy and rapacious as ever, but no greedier: and we have just the same social

> need of his greed as a motive power in industry as we ever had, and indeed a worse need than before.
>
> We need him not only in business but in the whole setting of life, or if not him personally, we need the eager, selfish, but reliant spirit of the man who looks after himself and doesn't want to have a spoon-fed education and a government job alternating with a government dole, and a set of morals framed for him by a Board of Censors. Bring back the profiteer: Fetch him from the Riviera, from his country place on the Hudson, or from whatever spot to which he has withdrawn with his tin box full of victory bonds. If need be, go and pick him out of the penitentiary, take the stripes off him and tell him to get busy again. Show him the map of the world and ask him to pick out a few likely spots. The trained greed of the rascal will find them in a moment. Then write him out a concession for coal in Asia Minor or oil in the Mackenzie Basin or for irrigation in Mesopotamia. The ink will hardly be dry on it before the capital will begin to flow in: it will come from all kinds of places whence the government could never coax it and where the tax gatherer could never find it. Only promise that it is not going to be taxed out of existence and the stream of capital which is being dried up in the sands of government mismanagement will flow into the hands of private industry like a river of gold.
>
> And incidentally, when the profiteer has finished his work, we can always put him back into the penitentiary if we like. But we need him just now.[21]

Leacock was always severely critical of socialism. His argument was that it would not work; that it depends upon an nonexistent motive power; that it ignores the inevitable corruption of all governments; and that, anyway, its vision of the good society was like the fundamentalist's vision of heaven, dull, desolate and depressing. But Leacock would balance this indictment with a strong critical attack on the dangers of unrestricted private enterprise. He was a passionate humanist who believed that human life must be placed above economic doctrine, and he did not hesitate to recommend strong state intervention to protect society from the greed of individuals and corporations.

Leacock's political and social position is thus central and flexible; he recognizes that truth may rest simultaneously in opposed doctrines, and that there is an inevitable tendency for abstract ideas to foster injustice and a disregard for human emotions. His social criticism, then, is similar in tone to his criticism of national traits. He uses an ironic balance rather than sharp contrast, relaxed irony rather than intense indignation. The *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* might have been a burning indictment; given Leacock's point of view and temperament, it was a series of humourous and exaggerated recollections, with the criticism muted and softened.

Leacock's position, like Haliburton's, is individualistic and uncommitted. He is aware of the tensions between appearance and reality; but he keeps them in playful suspension; he does not resolve them in a burst of indignation. He writes not satires but pastorals with a satirical element. His point of view is not distinctively Canadian — there are plenty of English predecessors — but it is a posture congenial to Canadians. Our political and social traditions have decreed reconciliation rather than polarization, diversity rather than integration, a willing suspension of conviction. This point of view has many political advantages; as both Leacock and Haliburton demonstrate, it has a number of literary advantages as well.

FOOTNOTES

[1] *Mark Twain* (New York: Appleton), 2.
[2] *American Humor* (New York: Doubleday, 1953), 22.
[3] *English in America* (London: Colburn, 1851), I, 5.
[4] *The Clockmaker* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1958; New Canadian Library), 48.
[5] *Ibid.*, 70-71.
[6] *Ibid.*, 45.
[7] *Ibid.*, 44-45.
[8] *Literary Lapses* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart; New Canadian Library), 7.
[9] *My Discovery of England* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1961; New Canadian Library), 58-59.
[10] *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (Toronto: Collins, 1944), 174.
[11] *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1959; New Canadian Library), 84.
[12] "An Appreciation," *The Stormfield edition of The Writings of Mark Twain* (New York: Harpers, 1929), Vol. XIV, ix.
[13] *Mark Twain*, 104-05.
[14] *The Theory of The Leisure Class* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1919), 231.
[15] *Ibid.*, 119.
[16] *Ibid.*, 121.
[17] *Ibid.*, 367.
[18] *Arcadian Adventures*, 38-40.
[19] *Ibid.*, 1.
[20] *Ibid.*, 157.
[21] *My Discovery of England*, 129-30.

JOURNEY OUT OF ANGUISH

John Reid

IN THE FIRST WEEK of the second world war, going on thirty years now, Wyndham Lewis followed me, in ignorance, to Canada. We had met in the last summer of simulated peace, because I had sent him the manuscript of a novel which I had finished that I might do just that: send it to him. He had begun to read and ceased to write; the pages of *There Was A Tree* mounted beside his chair, an intidy pile, while *The Hitler Cult* remained a neat unfinished thesis on a successful paranoiac; a book by which he hoped to redeem his reputation after a disastrous and naïve error in judgement seven years before, when he had sided with a man whose merit was that he, too, was an Outsider. *The Hitler Cult* brought Lewis out on the side of his adopted country.

I had come from the land he had left about fifty-two years earlier. From time to time he had written to relations in Oakville, who were aware that Uncle Charlie's deserted son, young Percy, had become an artist in the Old Country. What I had brought from Canada was a native talent and a vision of a pulp and paper mill town as no different in essence from a state-run community or nation. Like most insights, it had blinded me to much of reality: one had a thesis, also; the characters were victims of it. The simpliste certitudes came easily, since outside them I knew so little. My English neighbour was a fascinating alien; English literature was left-wing ridden, and I had an endemic dislike of the cashing in on sensibility of many English writers — a Stephen Spender of their hoarded inner agonies.

It would have taken some dishonesty not to have become in those days a Lewis fan. I needed him. Tree, River, Mill: so I divided the novel. And to show, in the final part, the apparent nature of a mechanized environment, I mechanized the prose, glad of the Lewis exemplar.

So I sent off to him the typewritten corpse. He responded: in a flat I was visiting within five minutes walk of Notting Hill, the phone rang, a voice was in my ear, declaring that it belonged to Wyndham Lewis. If I had been less naïve, I would have refused to believe it: some catarrhal Indian colonel was putting

me on. Witness the directions to his studio, designed to instruct an idiot or some blind angel who had never visited the earth, and who must be taught to put one foot forward in that alien body and then, with agonized patience (you do follow me?), the next. Later, I would suspect it was a rôle he was forced to play, and that he would find in it an exacerbated humour which one could share at one's peril.

Next afternoon I was, beard and Daks suit and orange shirt, at the end of the long corridor, listening to a dog bark on the other side of the studio door. I heard the scuffle, the whimper, and the lock being released; I saw the broad-brimmed black hat, and under it the stranger who that day invented the myth that I disliked dogs.

Lewis survived the sight of me. We drank gin, flavoured with bitters, while Stephen Spender stared at us from blank eyes: this was the external world. Lewis showed me other paintings, including reproductions for a volume of drawings that never appeared. He told stories of Augustus John; he offered to write an Introduction for my novel; he assured me that with the autumn harvest war would come.

He had known another war. One fruit of it was *The War Baby*, which had appeared twenty years before in a magazine edited by the Sitwells. The story had been buried beneath much activity and a series of timed quarrels, including one with the Sitwells. Pressures of a Catholic upbringing moved where no one saw them. And for a period he had fled that moment of sanity that is *The War Baby*, "developing his intellect", as he said, and seeking conflict.

FROM THE ULTIMATE CONSEQUENCES he was saved, I believe, by a very pretty girl called Gladys Anne. For twenty years, when we first met, her loyalty and support had worn away at the fortress Lewis had constructed. In illness he had surrendered, a few years before, to acknowledgement of her faithfulness — not to the genius, but to a man who knew he could die.

Gladys Anne was Froanna Lewis, the name an anglicizing of the "Frau Anna" that she was called, on an inauspicious trip, by a German landlady. Margot Stamp in *The Revenge for Love* is not Froanna; neither is the Hester Harding of *Self Condemned*; but she was a window through which Lewis saw these characters, that they might impose upon him a humanity which Lewis recognized, without sneering, that they accepted.

Of women in general he was too critical, being repulsed perhaps by his own needs. Shortly after we met he decided to go to Canada. I sent to see him a girl I knew who belonged to the Family Compact that still rules Toronto. I liked her; she told Lewis the truth about me, which he could not accept; she provided introductions. If he had not been Wyndham Lewis, I would have fought back when he described her after her visit. Adulation is a flaw in character.

T. S. Eliot's was the face that launched the Lewises, eleven days after I had left, on their way to Canada: the portrait had been sold to a South African gallery. On the thirteenth of September they arrived at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto. They brought the dog; Lewis left behind his Hallowe'en hat. He suggested that I shave off my beard, as it made me conspicuous.

Froanna possessed still an extraordinary beauty. That first afternoon we all went to tea at the Muirhead's, where the décor was, I considered, modern, but which Lewis diagnosed more accurately as sterile — "like an operating theatre". That night in the main dining room we began our exile. Lewis tried to make their Atlantic crossing sound funny, but it was the account of a roundabout journey into frigid waters, that the enemy might be avoided. He would caricature unwanted encounters in the liner's bar and thus come to grips with — well, at least his own caricatures of them. It was a way, perhaps, of bringing under control an inexplicable world, in which one had learned to put forward one foot and then another. All that was hollow around him he dined on with a certain empathy. Because he understood his analysis, he believed he understood the thing analyzed — even when that thing was a person. Yet, since there was so much hollowness around him there was much he understood, and the analysis matched the unreality. The truths grasped seemed something innate in himself; it was there that value lay, a Cartesian essence; the rest was material, at best, for art.

Lewis needed opposition in order to function. Knowledge can wall one in against chasms of ignorance. In Toronto the target was to become a city and country he could not understand because he could not (O, Canada!) like it; the dross was his; the native product for ever out of reach.

If a plot was needed, so that he might oppose the enemy, one was immediately forthcoming: at a nickel a remaindered copy one of the downtown department stories attacked him with John Gawsworth's *Apes, Japes and Hitlerism*, a fawning book that presented Lewis's vices for admiration. Perhaps telling him of this made me in his eyes part of the plot to render him unacceptable in his homeland. Soon he left for Buffalo.

On the Canadian Thanksgiving weekend I visited the Lewises there. A portrait

of the chancellor of the local university was still unfinished, yet it was what he could do best: a gelid El Grecoesque elongation of the head, the bird-like hands placid against the held mortar-board, gave it a timeless dignity possibly greater than its subject. "I am trying to make it as academic as possible and still keep it a work of art," Lewis stated. The view through the window, to one side of the figure, he later changed.

In Buffalo he was hemmed in by despicable acquaintances. Hence his depression, in a place with no future for him. Back in Toronto, I arranged through T. W. L. MacDermot a meeting with the meat-packer millionaire, J. S. McLean.

Lewis arrived on St. Andrew's Day. Arriving in a taxi to the York Club, his account of an afternoon ordeal at Hart House was funnier than the version in *America, I Presume*, where he had time and the necessity to falsify it. At dinner that night were A. Y. Jackson, Charles Comfort, Carl Schaefer, Terry MacDermot and our host. Later we drove to the McLean estate. Finland had been invaded by Russia, and amid the alcoholic hilarity there was an air of gloom. Lewis left late, displaying his newly-acquired boxer's victory-shake of clasped hands above his head. Next day he returned to darkest Buffalo.

In April 1940 I accompanied my manuscript to New York. The Lewises were at the Hotel Stuyvesant, and as I knocked on their door my nose began to bleed. It was Dan Boleyn, the idiot protagonist of *The Apes of God*, not I who had nose bleeds — through pages monotonous with wasted blood. To Lewis it may have been one more expected and unpleasant blow. He sensed now that America was a land of inopportunity. So he told me that good books had no chance; he described me to someone on the phone as incredibly naïve; he assured me my future was a blank.

THAT FALL, the Lewises were forced back to Toronto. I had written one good story, lived off friends, been tossed out of the National Film Board, and begun a novel, *Puppet's Dream*, which Lewis refused to look at: reading one of my books had done him enough harm. On my birthday that December he endured his twenty-five-year-old fan, while the walls pressed in on our ultimate festivities.

It was the end. Lewis, painting at 22 Grenville Street, was too busy to see me in the new year. I worked less, lost direction, phoned periodically. At last in February I walked to the Tudor Hotel on Sherbourne Street. Froanna was on

her knees, cutting out the pattern of a new black dress. I could wait for Lewis: there was nothing else to do. I noted that Froanna had done a drawing of her work basket; she had been an art student when young. Eventually Lewis returned, complaining of the cold. Yet he was willing to walk back with me to Grenville Street (a couple of miles or more) that I might see his paintings: the offer was the first light in three months of winter darkness. I turned towards the studio as towards the Beatific Vision.

On the blustering street Lewis suddenly turned on me: I was to blame for all his troubles; behind his back I had spread stories about his life in England.

Eliot had forgiven at least as much. I, too, had been a prisoner of the knowing mind, and these false accusations were the beginning of a lengthy and unfinished purgation. Long since, when it no longer mattered, I have seen that the quarrel he was compelled to pick with me was a punishment he endured. Through it I began to know, as I left Lewis at the corner of Church and Bloor Streets, opposite a drug store then called Star, the need to find a way out of exile.

Looking back was no cure. Twice again I saw Lewis. He begged to buy my copy of *The Lion and the Fox,* for some academic acquaintance, but could not resist making me sign a receipt of payment, since I was a dishonest man. Oh well, it made me feel wronged, a useful and dangerous sensation. And yet, a year later, when he came into the office of B. K. Sandwell at *Saturday Night,* where I was then working, I could not hate him. Sandwell paid Lewis double the normal rates, because he felt sorry for him. When introduced, I said, "We have met before," and was silent. Lewis sat on the edge of a straight-backed chair while B. K. rolled a cigarette — a thing he only did when there were visitors; it always, for some reason, shortened their stay.

Ill at ease, "I call this my Tudor period," Lewis said, his hands clasped between spread knees, dark eyes defensive behind glasses, talking around the inevitable cigarette in his mouth. In his grey sports jacket, he was a man one might pass three times a day without noting it. The sense of loneliness came through. There was for me no triumph, which I had begun to realize was the self's petty masquerade to disguise defeat.

The article he had brought was on Morley Callaghan's collection of short stories, *Now That April's Here.* "Apart from the literary merits of the stories it contains," he wrote, "this book is beautifully replete with a message of human tolerance and love. Every one — or almost all — of these discreet miniature dramas ends softly and gently. At the end of some anguish there is peace: at the end of some bitter dispute there is reconciliation.

"All of these creatures are dimly aware that the parts they play — for all the sound and fury into which they may be led by the malice of nature, by the demands of the instinct for animal survival, or by our terrible heritage of original sin — the rôles which they are called upon to take are played according to some great law, within the bounds of rational order."

It was a Lewis no one had seen before. Without the intense loneliness he might never have yielded to truths so foreign to his stance, nor was it likely he would have written these things where those who knew him could have read them.

Suffering is often approved of, for the artist, because it is believed that experience exists to be turned into art —an invitation to exploit one's pain. That makes the true subject of any novel the writer's sensibility. Few can master the act of writing because it is a gift given to the simple; one can no more think a story into being than one can think oneself into being. Lewis kept notebooks of his Toronto days, which ended after two and a half years in which he produced many good paintings, because he had a draughtsman's hand and the white paper bade him speak. Back in England, his exile ended; he was home at last, and he acquired in his final decade an unaccustomed, if somewhat frigid, geniality. It had been for him, too, a long journey, in which at last the man Lewis was born into himself.

EVENTUALLY, TWO YEARS AFTER COMPLETION, *Self Condemned* was published. It was marred, perhaps, by self-laceration, but it was all he could do with that barren sojourn: put it down, an askew vision. Some have called it a *roman à clef*, yet one hardly recognizes the city (it was a composite, including a few inapposite details from my first novel), and if it was his intention to portray certain persons who claim to be in the book, he failed to sketch a true likeness.

No, it was a work of fiction, of which the central plot has been suppressed. If it had been written out of sheer vindictiveness, or as an act of self-therapy (a conviction the sterile have about art), I would have been there, for more than anyone else except Wyndham Lewis I was to blame for his coming to Toronto.

Perhaps it would have helped him if he had known, as I learned years later from one of his cousins, that his secretiveness and suspicions were family traits: he resembled most an uncle whom he had never met. He resembled, also, his father. Uprooted, he married the image of himself, through his talent, creating

a sealed-in false absolute; but he married, as well, a woman. In his blindness the mirror angel withered, and he learned to live, as well as he could, with himself and others. He helped the young; he did not desert Pound; he kept going till the end.

The best work was to come after *Self Condemned*, when he realized that sometimes he had tried to make an idol of his talent, and although he viewed his age without enchantment, he discovered before the end that he also was part of the human race, a man sometimes led by the malice of nature, enduring a terrible heritage, who played out his rôle finally within the bounds of rational order, moving after many bitter disputes towards some semblance of that peace replete with human tolerance and love, which to me at least is more important than literary merits. *The War Baby* shows that art and understanding cure no one; it shows, also, that Lewis was an honest artist when not blinded by his mind. In the decade since his death, Gladys Anne Lewis has not deserted his memory or his cause: that is a sign of a merit more than literary.

POEMS BY A. J. M. SMITH

Translated by Rina Lasnier

Avant-dire

Je ne crois pas que l'on puisse comparer la traduction de la prose à celle de la poésie. De la première on requiert surtout la fidélité et l'aisance de l'expression. De la seconde, on exige d'abord qu'elle se sépare nettement de la lettre du poème pour n'en saisir que l'esprit, l'esprit de nouveauté puisque le poème est toujours "naissance". Et voici la marche ardue: transporter un feu, peut-être éblouissant, et ne pas trébucher, ne pas permettre à son propre souffle de le réduire, encore moins de laisser le prosaïsme le mouiller, en altérer l'intensité.

Si le risque à courir reste grand entre lecteur et poète, combien plus grand celui de poète à poète, et combien plus passionnant. Le traducteur devient un peu ce voyeur, émerveillé et indiscret par fascination, qui cherche dans le mystère d'un autre cette intériorité, cette altérité à la fois si proche et si irréductible; ainsi l'ombre tournant autour d'un corps, comme pour y pénétrer et n'arrivant jamais à l'inventorier, à l'infléchir, sinon dans la marche du soleil.

Traduire c'est aussi une façon de mesurer sa liberté, de la ployer comme on ploie le métal aux arabesques d'un dessin; c'est entrer dans une connaissance spirituelle différente, et plus profondément sans doute que l'acteur de théâtre qui brime son égo pour structurer une présence tout ensemble étrangère et familière.

C'est aussi effectuer un voyage sidéral, car tout se passe en hauteur et tout diffère: la scansion, le rythme, l'ordre, et pourtant la traduction ne doit jamais oublier qu'elle reste la servante-satellite du poème magnétique à transposer.

Transposer, voilà l'expression juste, car comment s'approprier le mouvement de l'esprit d'un autre sans se déprendre du langage fruste et dédoublé de la tra-

duction? Et c'est par l'intuition que s'effectue la saisie d'un chant et ce qu'il y a d'essentiel dans le poème à exprimer.

Plus profonde sera la correspondance, la sympathie, plus heureuse sera la transposition. Ainsi l'oiseau-femelle, aussi racé que le mâle mais moins coloré, se laisse-t-il entraîné dans les courants d'un exil temporaire, mais harmonieux et fécond.

LE ROI DE LA PARABOLE

Ce roi dans l'ire de sa fuite et de son amertume,
loin de l'adulation courtisane et de l'entichement de la reine,
qu'il rejette le sceptre vide et la couronne surdorée;
tous ces liens verts des terres rattachées à lui
qu'il les brise pour en faire un pré de pierre;
que l'espace de l'air inviolé soit son souffle
et le site de son coeur mieux chantant que le cygne;
que son sommeil soit pur et sa joie solitaire
quand il prend pour seule amante sa fierté hautaine.

Ce roi amer, qui m'en dira le nom? Non, non, ce n'est pas moi!

Père, je t'en supplie, laisse-moi me détourner
et mourir de cette royauté excessive et rassasiée,
aussi nu que l'époux dans la proximité de la jeune épouse;
que je garde pour gisante la froide reine de la gloire.

Je chanterai alors le chant nu de la pierre dénudée
et le chant épousera la sonorité hauturière du coeur,
ainsi du vieux roi dressé dans la démesure de sa fable.

(Like an old proud king in a parable)

A UN JEUNE POETE

Si le jour ne lève point le vent
suis le vaisseau à reflets de métal
et son sillage ordonné et grave:
— Iphigénie dans sa légende —

Même si des yeux de pierre te regardent
que ta danse soit grâce et fatalité
mais pure de toute ruse scintillante;
plus dépouillée de toute exaltation

que n'en montre le visage sévère
d'Artémis dans l'impassible automne,
afin que tu connaisses à ton tour
la cruauté de la grâce reprimée.

Pose ta trace dans l'espace étonné
et le marque de l'œuvre achevée
avec cette aisance souveraine
d'un fils de divin lignage.

(To A Young Poet, for C. A. M.)

JEUX D'OMBRES

Toutes ces ombres à peine froissées d'ombre
sont le tissu de l'esprit à ramages imaginaires
gonflement de l'esprit ou sa dure tourmente.

Je les ai vues ces ombres affouillant la mienne
j'ai vu l'horrible flottaison de leur néant dans l'air.

En vain je tends mon esprit pour prédire
quelle ombre formée me cernera au passage,
les ombres prennent l'éclat tranchant du verre.

(Shadows There Are)

RUMEURS

Si déjà le phénix agonise pour une mort
sans rémission, ainsi que le clame le messager,
si la renommée refuse et dénie la rumeur,

qui donc me dépêcha cet annonciateur
me déclarant par la bouche d'un faussaire
le péril conjuré par la mort du phénix?

(News of the Phoenix)

CHEMINEMENT

Un pas et puis l'autre
de plus en plus appesanti
sous un soleil plombé et bas.

De plus en plus lourd
sauf la tête haut levée
cheminement de solitude.

Inconnu le lieu dernier,
sous chaque main le mur parallèle.

De l'issue assurée
et menant le sort
la mort allonge sa foulée.

A la rescousse, ô coeur,
tourne-toi contre elle
fortifie-toi de sa proximité!

Mais le coeur cède sans lutte
et le souffle passe au silence . . .

(Journey)

JE ME SOUVIENDRAI

Toujours, toujours, je me rappellerai
l'hirondelle et sa solitude dérivante
sur la face obscure de la rivière
et l'arc grave de son vol circulaire
ne troublait en rien le ruisseau paisible.

Ainsi de ton sourire
à peine incurvé d'un calme rêve
au long moment de ton ensommeillement
dans le survol apaisé de ton esprit
lorsque rien ne le vient troubler
ni le moindre souffle d'une pensée
ni même l'image de l'oiseau solitaire.

(I Shall Remember)

LA MALEMAR

by Rina Lasnier

Translated by John Glassco

I will descend to the bed of the Undersea where night lies close by night —
to the crucible where the sea wreaks her own affliction,
to the amnesic night of the Undersea no longer remembering the embrace of earth,
nor the embrace of Light when the waters were born into air's meandering chaos,
when God covered the firmament with his two hands — before the contradiction of the breathing upon the waters,

before that kiss laid on the sea to disjoin sea from sea — before the Word spawned fish in the womb of the shallows,

before the division of waters by the blade of light — before the contention of waters through the restraint of light.

*   *   *

All swallowed spittle of silence — I will taste once more the accursed waters of my birth;

faulty water of birth ringing the blood's innocence — you hang from life like the fruit of the tree of discord;

is there a night newer than birth — is there a day older than the soul?

mysterious motherhood of the flesh — shelter open to the doors of the first cry, and death more maternal still!

*   *   *

Betrothed face of the open sea poised on the breath's spiral — Undersea lodged in the sea-pits of fecundity,

open sea! eye painted with the blue of legends — moire of images and burnt-out stars;

water blithe in the deadfall of the brooks — dancer in listless fountains;

plastic flesh of your dance — daring word of your dance and phoenix of your roving spirit in the green flame of the dance;

lover surrendered to the vertigo of cataracts and the slow nuptials on river-beds — faithful to the one zodiacal union as to your primal stature;

circling water with no rein but the play of your circular roads — you are the spoor of our fables and the dryness of our mouth;

reversed clouds, we have seen your metamorphoses — and your sleep of crystal, o mummy couched on the poles;

ascensional water — I have heard the murmur of your falsehood redescending the narrow ear of the sea-shell;

you play at knucklebones with the shellfish — your hands play with the dead wood of corpses on all the shores of the world;

on all the tables of sand — you take the measure of your own might and of your breaking combers;

raider of the sentinel-cliffs — I have seen the girlish shouldering of your tide abrade their stony denial;

fluent fiancée of the hard and precarious winds — how will you escape the doom of your obedience?

Purified by the farthest water — how will you cleanse yourself of the saltness of the dead?

Open sea! I reject your rose of silver strewn on the sands — and your aerial passage dispersed in foam;

I will be no longer the seamew of your mirrors — nor the erect sea-horse of your surging Parnassi;

open sea! I hail the Southern Cross spilled on your breast — and bitterly I descend to the oceanic night of the Undersea!

* * *

Undersea, sea changeless and impervious to the lightning as to the bird's wing — sea heavy with young and blind to what you bear,

carry me far from the current of remembering — and from the long drift of memories;

tow me into your tactile night — into your darkness deeper than the double blindness of eye and ear;

undersea, you that no longer climb the flowery hummock of the meadows — like a thought weary of images,

you that no longer plough the shore in a clashing of pebbles — a stirring of thought at the whim of vocables,

you no longer chained by the tides — nor by the shortlived honour of vertical revolts,

let me become your ritual and recumbent swimmer — like a secret swathed in the folds of soundless cloth,

with an unfettered step — may I walk your shoreless roads,

undersea — erase my features and drown this tear where the clarities are reviving,

may I forget in you the wavering frontiers of my own day — and the lucid range of the sun.

STEPHEN LEACOCK

Local Colourist

W. H. Magee

MOST OF STEPHEN LEACOCK's surprisingly few durable pieces of humour gain their solidity from characters and themes of the type prominent in the tradition of local colour fiction. In turn, his unique blend of humour, as well as a rare insight into life, make his version of local colour memorable. Both the local colour tradition and his special strengths contribute, for example, to the success of "My Financial Career", the first story in his first volume of humour, *Literary Lapses* (1910). The timid young man who momentarily loses his wits during his first visit to a bank reflects the small town dread of big city sophistication which underlay both American and Canadian local colour at the turn of the century. Henceforth he will save money, but he will keep his savings in a sock. He represents all the virtues admired by the tradition, which treated naiveté as innocence, stubbornness as perseverance, dullness as sobriety, and moral conformity as integrity. Consequently Leacock does not look on the hero as a fool at all. Instead he presents him to us as a friend, a companion for genial humour rather than a target for satire.

Local colour dominates only the one story in *Literary Lapses*, which is a medley of jokes, sketches and stories — some genial spoofs and some sharp satires — drawn from literature as well as from real life. In his second volume, *Nonsense Novels* (1911), Leacock devotes himself to one type and one topic only, the spoofing of literary fads. These parodies are by nature totally unrelated to real life in general or local colour in particular. In such a context it therefore comes as quite a surprise to find a direct reflection of two dogmas dear to the local colourists in "Caroline's Christmas: or, the Inexplicable Infant". Although this parody spoofs the Victorian melodrama of a villain harrying a heroine with an expiring mortgage, it becomes briefly something more than that when the Good Book turns out to be Euclid, and a fearsome temperance roots out buttermilk:

" 'John,' pleaded Anna, 'leave alone the buttermilk. It only maddens you. No good ever came of that'." Here Leacock is enjoying, but not satirizing, the automatic religion and Puritanical morality of the little towns dear to the local colourists. Temperance is after all in great degree a fad, like that of the health addicts who idolize buttermilk, and fads delight Leacock. What delights him still more is the comfortable seriousness of the whole way of life of the small towns in which such fads flourished, and to this delight he devotes his third book of humour, *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town.*

LOCAL COLOUR, as developed by Maria Edgeworth and other Irish and Scottish novelists early in the nineteenth century, had attracted novelists of manners who wanted to exploit the untried literary topic of special ways of life as opposed to the typical manners of London society. Later novelists like Anthony Trollope in the Barsetshire series revelled in a local way of life as superior to that of London. In the works of the masters the artistic dangers of a concentration on local manners and a theme of local perfection were overcome and hence not evident. Both new interests in fact resulted in a totally new kind of storytelling, one which stressed peculiar rather than representative traits. As a result characters by design look provincial rather than universal. In principle at least, the incidents which provide them with conflicts should involve distinctively local concerns. Descriptions need to point up the unique, which usually means taking pride in the manmade environment rather than the natural. Themes typically show the way to a "perfect" society, in which, as it is pictured, pastimes only too often cause more concern than work, and moral dogmatism underlies the portrayal of manners.

As developed in the United States and Canada late in the last century, local colour told of the life of the many small towns in countrysides where the frontier had been closed for at least a generation. In the United States hosts of local colourists described all the older regions of the country in the last generation of the nineteenth century. Writers like Sarah Orne Jewett brought out the distinctive features of New England life, and George Washington Cable recreated the special life of the Creoles in the Old South. In Canada too the local colourists were numerous and prolific. L. M. Montgomery idolized the quiet life of Prince Edward Island in more than a dozen novels. Duncan Campbell Scott wrote *In the Village of Viger* in praise of the self-contained life of a French-Canadian village

soon and lamentably to be swallowed up by Montreal. In Ontario E. W. Thomson and Ralph Connor praised the manliness and moral integrity of Glengarry folk, and many another local colourist ransacked the rest of Southern Ontario for ideal small towns. So pervasive was this preoccupation in life and in literature that Hugh MacLennan a generation later chose the small town outlook and its moral Puritanism as his distinctive Canadian trait in *The Precipice.*

In the local colour fiction the small towns appear as islands of perfection in a generally undirected or even misdirected civilization. Behind this pride and optimism centred on small town life, there lurks in the more perceptive writings a dread of the changes appearing in the new big cities. No doubt, industrial routine and mass housing seemed to the small town onlookers to banish happiness, and, worse still, to lead to a flexible morality. Storytellers took two approaches to their topic. Militant local colourists like Ralph Connor used their fiction as a pulpit to preach the way of perfection to less fortunate people in the cities, or sometimes on the frontier. They wrote vigorous stories tightly unified by their underlying sermons, so that often their works understandably became best-sellers in those Puritanical times, even outside the small towns. The other local colourists, like L. M. Montgomery, D. C. Scott, and E. W. Thomson, were complacent and gently humorous. They crammed their stories with the placid atmosphere of the society they loved. They were the local colourists who had no moralizing motives to interfere with a purely artistic aim.

As artists these complacent local colourists faced two dilemmas. First, their absorption with features peculiar to a way of life invited them to stress the local rather than the universal, and usually they chose the superficial rather than the essential and permanent. In characterization they often stressed the quaint, in customs the bizarre. They were content with the charming in scenery and the dogmatic in morality. Ministers and housewives also were drawn as charming rather than devoted, except when the perfection of their lives was stressed. Special customs like gathering maple syrup provided incidents and scenery at once, and so did special moral problems like the tavern, or social phenomena like the Sunday School.

As a second dilemma, the complacent local colourists lacked any obvious pattern or device to unify their stories. The staple unit of local colour fiction is the self-contained anecdote or vignette, in which an odd character does something peculiar. The most obvious structure is a volume of independent sketches or loosely connected stories, which when bound together can radiate the desired atmosphere of a charming and unchanging way of life. But the novel with its

larger plot requires a dynamic development rather than a series of static situations. A plot depends on conflict and its conflict must lead to change. Neither is inherent in complacent local colour, and few if any of the writers who practised it at the turn of the century had the ingenuity to invent an appropriate large-scale plot on their own. Traditional if alien patterns were of course available. The tried plots of Victorian fiction tempted many a local colourist, but they shifted rather than solved the problem of unity. They belonged to conventions which were at odds with local colour, since they stressed the representative rather than the eccentric in human behaviour. Nor were their typically melodramatic conflicts a suitable mode for the complacent local colourists. Duncan Campbell Scott spoiled much of the unity of *In the Village of Viger* by concocting plots about madmen and murderers which clashed incongruously with the charm of his atmosphere and his French-Canadian characters.

The local colourists wanted to record a society in which neither disaster nor evil occurred. Tragic patterns were unthinkable, and so too was robust satire: there were no evils, it seemed, to attack. For, luxuriating in the best of all comfortable worlds, genial humour naturally became the staple mode. Again the local colourists were tempted into a difficult artistic form. Genial humour is fairly rare in literature; it is much more elusive than satiric wit. Several local colourists, like L. M. Montgomery, managed plot and humour nicely at the level of children's stories, particularly when growing up was the unifying device. But most, including L. M. Montgomery, were childish when they turned to adult life. It took a great genial humourist to meet the varied challenges — a Mark Twain or a Stephen Leacock.

SUNSHINE SKETCHES OF A LITTLE TOWN contains all the familiar ingredients of typical local colour, although in this version they look a little strange because the most memorable characters are more elaborated and more integrated into a larger purpose than usual. Yet in the background there are several quaint characters who have not been developed. The village drunk — here schoolteacher Diston who never gets a raise — is a staple of local colour fiction; and the undertaker Golgotha Gingham is similarly extraneous to plot and theme. More developed but still peripheral vignettes include Yodel the auctioneer, Mullins the banker, and fiery Judge Pepperleigh. A local custom which comes

right out of the tradition appears in the opening chapter, when the steam merry-go-round comes to Mariposa town and the calculating innkeeper Josh Smith treats all the children. Such characters and incidents justify the claim of the opening sentence that there are "a dozen towns just like it", but they also recall Canadian literature as much as Canadian life. They help to evoke the familiar golden atmosphere of "a land of hope and sunshine", as Leacock put it in his preface. But the atmosphere gains much more strength from the more developed incidents, which are all Leacock's own.

From the first Leacock presents Mariposa not so much in the usual formless collection of odd characters and bizarre incidents as through a pervading sense of a whole life. With a typical sense of being at the centre of the universe, the townsfolk talk of "main street" and the "lake" from the first page on, ignoring the proper Indian names. They display their self-centred pride even more actively by comparing the width of Main Street favourably with that of Wall Street. These mannerisms are merely amusing, but Leacock uses other special customs and features of the environment to help define the four seasons of the year in Mariposa. By winter the electric light is as strong as coal oil lamps, by spring the farmers from Missanaba County stroll through Mariposa like dangerous lumbermen, by summer the seven cottages on the lake are rented, and by autumn the Salvation Army sings on street corners under naphtha lamps. In such a description Leacock goes beyond typical local colour, and beyond his typical humour too, using both as a means of comprehending a whole society.

In terms of characterization, the simply quaint figures like Diston the drunk schoolteacher merely lurk in the background of the stories. For the two bank clerks, in contrast, Leacock uses a sort of inverted quaintness by stressing their city-like similarity (the one with the cameo pin and the face of a horse, and the other one with the other cameo pin and the face of another horse). A central figure like Josh Smith may look at first like "a character" (and "an over-dressed pirate"), but he quickly becomes a rounded, vigorous and amiable representative of the small town at its best. Most unexpected of all, the town barber Jefferson Thorpe plunges right through the layers of quaintness and reveals a pathetic man of high principles who automatically assumes the money losses of townsfolk who have speculated foolishly on his advice.

This example of exceptional integrity indicates both a final trait which Leacock shares with the lesser local colourists and at the same time the insight which makes his version great. Like them he assumes that no evil or tragedy worthy of the label is possible in the small town of the story. Leacock can be funny on

this topic too, putting the perspective of humour between himself and the small town. When the *Mariposa Belle* sinks in six feet of mud in the "lake", he tells us that disasters such as mass drownings never occur in Mariposa. The quip sounds satiric, but in effect it is whimsical. Leacock clung to his love of the small towns for a lifetime just because dreadful things really did not happen in the "land of hope and sunshine". Yet he had the insight to recognize that men can be double-faced in Mariposa just as they can be anywhere. The most successful citizens are in fact hypocrites: Judge Pepperleigh orders the tavern shut down because he was kept out after hours, and Josh Smith ensures that it keeps operating by banqueting the leading citizens daily in his restaurant until his liquor license is renewed. Leacock laughs at both men, but he laughs with kindness. He recognizes human traits which almost every local colourist pretended did not exist in his town, yet they do not infuriate him as they do most humourists, who unlike him are satirists. To him they do not, cannot, constitute evil.

There is in fact a rare perception in *Sunshine Sketches* that has fundamentally nothing to do with humour, which is only the means of expressing it. In contrast to the typical thin glimpses of small town life, Leacock's view comprehends all of small town life, giving us for example a sense of the whole town, rather than just a family at play, on the occasion of the annual picnic of the Knights of Pythias. At a more serious level, nothing fires interest in a real small town more than an election, but very few storytellers besides Leacock have told about one. Josh Smith wins the riding of Mariposa with a typical double-dealing trick, but deservedly, for he is also the ablest candidate. Smith is in fact a hypocrite using his talents to serve the best interests of Mariposa, as when he solves the crisis of the church building fund by setting fire to the old building for the insurance money. In drawing him Leacock has indeed made hypocrisy a neutral quality, which can even end in benevolence, as when Smith keeps the lavish restaurant open after his liquor license has been renewed.

This local colour is in fact both positive and mature. For Leacock the small town offered the best of all practical worlds. The sad, ruined Jeff Thorpe is really fortunate not to have gained the means to leave Mariposa:

> It seemed to spoil one's idea of Jeff that copper and asbestos and banana lands should form the goal of his thought when, if he knew it, the little shop and the sunlight of Mariposa was so much better.

The real tragedy is that of the old boys who have left and, in their prosperous old age in the city, long for small town life. *Sunshine Sketches* in fact ends on

this unhappy scene, with their dissatisfied dreams of a better way of life back in Mariposa, and of the trainmen calling out the station:

> And, as we listen, the cry grows fainter and fainter in our ears and we are sitting here again in the leather chairs of the Mausoleum Club, talking of the little Town in the Sunshine that once we knew.

Independence and Leisure were the keystones of Leacock's philosophy of life, and he tells us in his "Preface" that he enjoys "more in the four corners of a single year than a business man knows in his whole life". That is why he escaped as often as he could from Montreal to his country home near Orillia.

When applied to such a heart-felt purpose, the nonsense humour is also unusually positive and mature. Although a few of the quips and brief character sketches in *Sunshine Sketches* are as gratuitous as some of the background local colour, most of them serve the larger purpose. The humour itself can penetrate the degrees of pettiness in the citizens, but its genial tone provides for an acceptance of them all. Thus the sinking of the *Mariposa Belle* reveals the shallow faith of the lesser citizens, as when the student minister in the lifeboat assures the passengers that they are "in the hands of Providence", but "he was crouched and ready to spring out of them at the first moment". Meanwhile Josh Smith with his more practical faith corks the hull, lets the ship float, and sails it home before the lifeboat passengers can walk back. In the same incident, Leacock with his nonsense combinations extends his perspective momentarily to make fun of the national image: the boat began to sink just as everyone was singing "*O — Can-a-da*"; but those who stay with the ship are still singing it when Smith steers the refloated *Mariposa Belle* into harbour. Here a rare symbolism adds to the maturity of the humour. At the same time the sense of latent determination here and in almost every sketch, however oddly implied, builds up the mood of stability necessary for a positive presentation of the small-town way of life, and gives an exception to Carl Van Doren's sound criticism:

> The local colourists were not very realistic observers. Ordinarily provincial, but without the rude durability or homely truthfulness of provincialism at its best, they studied their world with benevolence rather than with passion. Nor were they much differentiated among themselves by highly individual ideas or methods.

And yet at the same time technically Leacock's humour is still the same combination of incongruous extremes as in his score of other books. Anthologists can select individual sketches from *Sunshine Sketches* and print them side by side with ones from all the other books without jarring a single tone of humour. Nevertheless the anthologists do injustice to *Sunshine Sketches*. It does develop an

over-all unity which goes far beyond the unity of tone in *Nonsense Novels*. Leacock's philosophy of the happiest way of life makes the chief contribution to this larger unity. Yet although the special Leacock humour produces a unified tone, and the sense of wholeness in the local colour scene a unified atmosphere, both are essentially static, and although a single set of characters and incidents may unify as many as three sketches for a change, and Josh Smith and others recur in several different stories, *Sunshine Sketches* is still episodic. Nor does Leacock show any inclination to develop original plots in the individual stories. Chiefly he borrows conventional patterns like those he had parodied in *Nonsense Novels*, still inverting them amusingly. Not only does the sinking ship fail to sink, but the bank robbery is after all not a robbery, and the hopeless romance of young lovers turns out to have been prearranged by the parents. The effect just suits *Sunshine Sketches* with its happy balance of many interests, but it promises little help for future books. Leacock created a great book because his concern for his topic absorbed his regular talents and gave them direction. He did not hit on a plot pattern or a philosophy which offered a means to overcome his continuing problem of disunity and shallowness.

The anthologists also do injustice to *Arcadian Adventures with the Idle Rich* (1914) when they isolate its separate sketches. This volume too has an over-all unity of atmosphere, this time the sense of city rather than of small-town life. Yet, with the larger scope, Leacock did not create so comprehensive a sense of varied sections of society as in *Sunshine Sketches*. Instead he concentrated on the life of the plutocrats in their twin bastions of the Mausoleum Club on Plutoria Avenue and the Grand Palaver Hotel downtown. Nor did he suggest the bustle of city life, but only the slumbering leisure of the Club, the Avenue, and the Church of the rich with rooks in the elm trees. What he did suggest admirably is the economic essence of big city success. The financiers, and their financial manipulations of their social, educational, religious and political lives, provide stories through which Leacock both comprehends urban life and laughs at it. This time, however, the laughter is unfriendly, harsh, satiric. Leacock saw plenty of evil in the city: in dishonest finance, in materialistic ministers, in ruthless politicians. The city leaders are hypocrites, and in this context Leacock is not gentle with hypocrisy. *Arcadian Adventures* offers only a negative attitude to the life it depicts, and so it achieves none of the deeper insight of *Sunshine Sketches*.

Indeed, *Arcadian Adventures* shows up in every way the brilliance of *Sunshine Sketches*. The negative attitude to city life lacks the intensity which the positive philosophy gives to the earlier book. Nor is there any advance in formal unity, although once again characters recur from sketch to sketch, and some plots run through several sketches. Most damaging of all, Leacock lost control of the tone of his humour, in a situation in which, given his satirical perspective, he could not afford to be affable or sentimental. Tomlinson, the farmer whose simplicity fools the tycoons into regarding him as a wizard of finance, looks absurd in his thousand-dollar-a-day suite in the Grand Palaver Hotel, but there is no satire directed at him. He is really as sad as a Jeff Thorpe who succeeds in getting away to the big city and finds it appalling. He is the product of a different literary outlook from that which exposes the arid materialism of the business leaders who dominate most of the sketches, and it is an anomaly to find him in the same book with them. When the satire and the nonsense humour appear inside the same sketch the jolt is even greater and the result may indeed be nonsense. The spoof of the religious fads of bored wealthy housewives in "The Yahi-Bahi Oriental Society of Mrs. Rasselyer-Brown" is merely silly. The women really want to escape from their unhappy city life, and so does Tomlinson, who is contented when he can in the end return to his dear old farm. Ultimately, *Arcadian Adventures* shows up Leacock's dread of big city life just as thoroughly as all his most earnest writing does, starting with the timid young man of "My Financial Career".

Arcadian Adventures provides a measure of the limits of Leacock's ability. He had tried his hand at a second study in depth, and he had failed in comparison with his earlier triumph in *Sunshine Sketches*. Afterwards he abandoned himself to being an incidental funny man without much of a philosophy or a theme. As a result his twenty later volumes of humour lack both the depth of vision and the formal unity which gave substance to *Sunshine Sketches*. By his last volume *My Remarkable Uncle*, the small towns are only a sad memory, sad because modern Canada is so much less comfortable than they were (cf. "The Old Farm and the New Frame"). Even in *Sunshine Sketches* the love of the small town way of life sounds a little nostalgic, a longing for a way of life which is already past, the same sad love which dominates Ralph Connor's Glengarry (in the preface to *The Man from Glengarry*). But in *Sunshine Sketches* Leacock still had enough faith in his theme for it to intensify his people and plots and humour and so produce a living book. Ultimately, Leacock could be great only when his characters and his jests were vitalized by the ideals, and even the quaintness, of the local colour tradition.

ON W. W. E. ROSS

Peter Stevens

THE DEDICATION of *New Wave Canada* by its editor, Raymond Souster, to W. W. E. Ross as Canada's first modern poet confirms to a large extent the recognition of Ross as a pioneer in Canadian poetry, a fact which was recognized by Souster in 1956 when he published some of Ross's early work in the volume, *Experiment*. With the renewed interest in imagism by the younger poets of the 1960's it is obvious that any Canadian poet who seems to grow out of imagist ideas and apparently uses the American rather than the English voice-box will be hailed as a hero and fore-runner. Frank Davey's article in a recent *Tamarack Review* (Spring 1965) assembles a glorious and very mixed array of Canadian poets whose careers have been influenced by Black Mountain, a movement arising in part from imagism, W. C. Williams, Ezra Pound and, latterly, Creeley, Olson and Duncan. Davey casts a wide net and lands many strange fish in the Black Mountain catch; Daryl Hine, Milton Acorn and Alfred Purdy all apparently have fallen under its influence. Davey's chronology seems sadly misplaced, for he also includes the careers of F. R. Scott and W. W. E. Ross.

Both of these poets, of course, have used imagist techniques, and Scott has been receptive recently to new ideas in poetics. Ross's contribution to Canadian poetry, when he has been "placed", has nearly always been in the field of imagism; only in this sense can Ross be linked with the Black Mountain movement, and we shall see that Ross attempted many different things in his poetic career. *Experiment*, although an important collection of his work, is misleading, as Ross maintained that Souster was only interested in his "native" side. Time and again, Ross states that those poets now revered by the younger poets of Canada, were never real influences on his work. "I felt hostile to, and irritated by William Carlos Williams".[1] The patterns of verse he uses in *Laconics* he himself "felt consciously ... as antagonistic to the tone and form — if any — of the poems by William Carlos Williams I saw in The Dial," so that any influence came from "Williams somewhat adversely, Pound quite adversely."

However, Ross insists on things in his poetry; a hard straight look at things around him as part of a search for reality is present in many of his poems. He was really the first poet in Canada to use real factual things unadorned by metaphor. The 1914-18 War taught some poets to look objectively at the facts of war but according to most text-books and anthologies Canada managed to produce only the Brooke-ish "In Flanders Fields" and a few patriotic poems by F. G. Scott. Certain English poets managed to look at landscapes ravaged by war in an objective and factual way; it can be seen in some poems by Edmund Blunden, Robert Nichols and Robert Graves. The nearest approach to this kind of writing by a Canadian was "The Village 1915" by H. Smalley Sarson which appeared in *Soldier Poets* (1916):

> The nave, choked with charred rafters from the roof,
> Pleads untended to the wind and rain
> Mutely; shelter even bats despise.
>
> Standing stricken, the weary shrapnelled houses
> Seem skeletons, grim and ghastly shapes
> Beckoning with scraggy fingers to the sky

Ross wrote a poem of this kind, "Poperinghe 1917", indicating his early search for a hard reality in his poetry:

> Night in the town
> and not a light,
> but a glimmering
> behind drawn blinds
> and gleams for a moment
> from opened doors . . .
>
> The street paved
> with cobblestones
> winds narrowly
> across the town;
> this street leads
> up to the line
> to Passchendaele,
> and the battle in mud.

One characteristic tone runs through this piece; the scene is pared down to its basic simplicities. Each line is self-contained, yet each line elaborates, or qualifies the preceding line so that although on the surface the poem is presenting a static

scene, it, in fact, is a constantly shifting pattern with the focus moving in to pick up a detail, then altering to a different viewpoint, in order to show a wider panorama, making the poem specific and general at the same time. The movement of this poem is also characteristic of Ross. Essentially each line has two beats but the stresses are variable, appropriate to the changing perspectives within the poem.

His early verse arose out of an admiration for E. E. Cummings and Marianne Moore: "it was these two that really excited me most keenly among contemporary poets (though I was already acquainted with Lindsay, Frost, Pound (a little), Amy Lowell and Sandburg, not to mention the Untermeyers and Sara Teasdale!)" He first submitted poems to *The Dial* as a result of seeing some Cummings poems in that magazine in January 1926, and his poems appeared in the April and August issues of 1928. At first, there seems to be little connection between the verse of Cummings and Ross but perhaps Robert Graves' and Laura Riding's phrase about Cummings — "a deadly accuracy"[2] — helps to show the connection. Many of Ross's early poems have a kind of exactitude, centred in unfrilled reality and they are expressed in strict patterns of variable metre. Graves and Riding illustrate in their book that Marianne Moore's concern in poetry is with discipline, an attempt to reduce poetry's mystery: "enigmas are not poetry." This must have been why her poetry appealed to him. Ross's poems, then, are statements of hard accuracy rigidly disciplined. Time and again, in his attitudes to poetry, he maintains he is looking for "cleanliness (aesthetically speaking) from the Canadian poetry mess." He objects to "prettified" verse and finds it a "disheartening experience" to read through the collected poems of Sir Charles Roberts. Of his own contemporaries in the 20's he liked only Raymond Knister and in recent years he seems to have admired Daryl Hine and Jay Macpherson. Of the older poets he thought Heavysege underrated, for in him he found the "sharpness" and "cleanness" he himself reached in some of his poems:

> Tree tops move
> to and fro in the afternoon breeze,
> delicately covered
> with small new green leaves,
>
> against the white
> of rounded clouds, slow-passing
> across the great blue
> expanse of the sky

sunlight-filled
and filled with moving air
invisible
yet strong to sway the tree-tops.

This poem uses the method of self-containment within each line, and yet each line is adding a further detail to the one preceding. We have noted this method in the poem, "Poperinghe 1917", but this poem also shows an extension of this technique. The poem is circular in its movement, for the same detail opens and closes the poem. The movement of the tree tops has been set in relation to different segments of the motion: the breeze turns the leaves, the colour of the leaves is set against the white of the clouds which in turn move across the blue sky, bright with sun, an indefinite brightness contained in the invisible air which is causing the movement of the tree-tops. Each separate word carries an equal amount of weight within the meaning of the poem, although the rhythm of the poem varies between two- and three-beat lines to suggest the rocking motion of the trees. Our attention is fixed in the first stanza by the equally heavy stresses on all the syllables of the opening line and those in the last line of the stanza in "small new green leaves." These stand out against the other details in the poem until they are caught in the sense of flux of the whole scene and the trees' motion is "placed" by the more regular rhythm of the closing line. Thus, it is not a mere return to the same detail but a coherent extension to make us see the whole simultaneously. Here again we can see the connection between Ross and Cummings in their search for simultaneity, Cummings by fragmenting syntactical elements, Ross by fragmenting the scene itself to re-assemble it in a new presentation to the reader. This is obviously connected with part of the technique of the Black Mountain group, but Ross was already doing this in the 1920's. Many of Ross's poems in *Experiment* and *Laconics* use this method including such anthologized pieces as "The Fish" (*Penguin*) and "Pine Gum" (*Oxford*), and such a poem as "A Night":

A summer night,
a tall pine
black against
the cold starlight...

After these opening lines the poem adds details of the tree outlined against the sky. Silence and cold prevail and the scene is reflected in the quiet lake. These details then lead into the closing stanza:

The sky, star-brilliant,
is doubled below
in the still water
of the lake;
the pine-tree stands
against the sky;
through its branches
are seen the stars.

It is this kind of writing which led Raymond Souster, quite correctly, in his remarks "About The Author" in *Experiment*, to link Ross with W. C. Williams, for as a later critic has suggested about Williams: "Many actions are going on at once in a perpetual present, the poetic space, and though the images are necessarily sequential they form a chord which exists in a single moment."[3]

But ROSS ARRIVED at these ideas independently and through a reading of other poets. He mentions in a letter that he had been influenced to some extent by a minor French poet, Fernand Divoire, who is described in a survey of modern French poetry as working with the principles of "simultaneism," which had been formulated by Martin Barzun in 1912.[4] Ross also tried other methods of achieving simultaneity by fragmenting the lines themselves, building delaying pauses into the structure of the poem, as can be seen in various poems from *Experiment*: "Flowers", "Lions", "Spring", "Stars", "Death" "The End", "In The Ravine" (*Penguin*) and a few others. In two poems in *Experiment* he split his poem into two distinct columns: "Good Angels" and "Spring Song". Both of these poems can be read in separate columns, but each column adds a further detail when read side by side, apparently in an effort to break down the sequential nature of poetry. This method works particularly well in "Spring Song" which opens:

One day	in the spring
walking	walking
along	the railroad track
the track	near the town
I passed	looking at
a pond	a pond
slimy	of greenish water
greenish	a large pond.

Another technical aspect of Ross's search for cleanness and accuracy is his deliberate lining in one or two poems to give equal weight to all words, for, he seems to suggest by this method, if all aspects of a scene are of equal importance in presenting the whole experience, then every word must have equal value. Thus, lines can end with prepositions and definite articles for they must have the same emphasis as all the naming and acting words. Such a method also involves the reader more in the poem as an action itself, running the sense of the words from line to line, opening a moment into a larger poetic space: Ross tries to capture sound, not by alliteration, but by this method in "Pines." It can be seen at a relatively simple level in "The Creek"; it is used well in *Experiment* in "Wandering", "Winter Scene" and "Butterfly." It is particularly suited to the subject of this last poem:

Butterfly
making for
flowers to
suck the sweet
juice of the
blossom

how great
then is your
pleasure in
all your
wandering

course among
colors and
greenery
through the sweet-
scented
aerial

path of your fluttering
wings —
now in the
languorous
summer!

He also uses a longer-lined pattern to present his view of certain scenes. Again there is an element of splitting by a kind of staggering of the lines, perhaps slightly similar to the staggering of lines we find in some of the later poems of Williams.

There are several poems of this nature in *Experiment*, including his presentation of Sunnyside:

> A train goes rumbling on along
> the viaduct. Across the bridge
> of gaunt black iron people pass
> in autos or in streetcars, packed,
> for this is Sunday afternoon
> and everybody out of doors.

Not all of Ross's poems of this early period are concerned with simultaneity of experience. Sometimes the sequence of events is a necessary part of the experience. His most-anthologized poem, "The Diver" (*Penguin* and *Oxford*), falls into this category and he has written several others like it. He was an admirer of Wallace Stevens and perhaps this method of writing is related in some way to Stevens's insistence on continuing change and fluidity. In "The Diver" the poet searches the various levels, "into the green" the "strange light", drifting "among the cooler zones" finally breaking

> from the green glimmer
>
> Into the light,
> White and ordinary of the day.

This insistence on colour is also reminiscent of Stevens, and in his search for reality, Ross uses similar images to Stevens: the moon, water, mirror — reflections, clouds, and sky among others. Ross seems to sense other worlds beneath the intensely factual world of much of his poetry and this may explain the change that comes over his verse after *Experiment* and *Laconics*.

Before examining that later verse, however, there are still other things to be said about these two volumes. I have already indicated that it is a simplification to label Ross an imagist, because of the experimental nature of his verse, particularly in the direction of technical innovation. Most of his anthologized poems tend to be what could be called scenic or descriptive pieces and indeed many of the poems of interest technically speaking can be classed in this way. But the two volumes under discussion contain other material. There are one or two reflections on mankind in a Stephen Crane manner:

> It appears
> that our fears
> are well placed,
> are well based;

we must now
kill one another
because Cain killed
Abel his brother.

There are translations from Greek and Latin that, without being outstanding, stand up well in comparison with other translations appearing in anthologies. These translations are related to his interest in classical themes and there is a section of poems in *Laconics* concerned with classical figures. Ross had always tried to adapt classical metres to his own verse; the movement of his poems does not necessarily come out of the imagist demand "to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase," although he always kept in mind the oral rhythms within poetry. He always read "poems simply by the natural rhythm, or stresses, of the language." I remember him, when I visited him in July 1966, getting heated about stress in verse and demonstrating what he meant by making me read a poem by Goethe, then reading it himself. Many of his metrical experiments are based on Greek metrics. The series of poems, of which "Sunnyside" (quoted earlier) is a part, was written in 1925 as a "middle stage between Greek metres — Aristophanes, I think, and the 'Laconics' form which I have always called 'Two-beat'." He also wrote a series of about a hundred poems he called "Allegro" in an adaptation of Greek hexameters which he called "light sixes". The poem, "Narcissus", is one of the poems in this series and although it is printed in short lines in *Experiment,* each stanza an approximate hexameter, I will print it here in hexameter form:

Now you are reaching to grasp it, now touching the unruffled water.
Ah! but the image is gone and the water lies ruffled and broken.
Where, where now is the image that held you thus silent in rapture?
Gone is that vision. You could not attain to the joy of its capture
Know now that image was only your own face Narcissus.

There are other sections in *Laconics* devoted to the city and machinery, including "The Saws Were Shrieking" (*Penguin*), a poem arising out of his experience in a sawmill when he was a student in his last year of high school, and a section he later named "Garden" (in copies of *Laconics,* the last section is called "Various", but Ross asked booksellers to ink in the title "Garden" in its place) which contains his view of art, and presumably his view of poetry:

What is it, then,
a work of art?

> A work of art
> is a consistency
> among incommensurables,
> or it is that
> which remains equal
> to itself.

But it is probably the opening section of *Laconics*, entitled "North", which most readers in Canada accept as the truly Canadian note in Ross. It is this opening section that seems to fit his concern with "North American" style and "the sharper tang of Canada" that he mentions in the Foreword to the volume. These poems are full of rocky and wind-swept landscapes, akin to A. J. M. Smith's "The Lonely Land":

> The iron rocks
> slope sharply down
> into the gleaming
> of northern water

and

> Harsh, stern this tree
> whose branches are bare
> and twisted by the
> savage wind
> of northern winter.

Ross's knowledge of northern Ontario was gained on two surveying trips in the summers of 1912 and 1913. The first trip took him to Algonquin, to the area from which Tom Thomson had started his first canoe trip into the wilderness the year before. In 1913 Ross went to the area to be made famous in the paintings of the Group of Seven — the northern shore of Lake Huron in the Algoma district. The poems themselves were written, according to Ross, on a single night in April 1928, after he had had a long conversation about Canadianism with some friends. However, it is obvious that he found this subject-matter congenial to the kind of verse he was trying to write at that time. The hardness and cleanness of landscape fitted his conception of verse, free but controlled, close to natural speech rhythms but "deliberately patterned" on Greek metrical systems. In fact, the first poem in this series of northern poems is at one and the same time an invitation to the reader into this new clean world of both poetry and the north,

to be accepted for what it is, devoid of romanticism and enjoyed as a novel venture into undiscovered realms:

> Plunging into
> the shining water
> one will feel
> a shock of coldness,
> sudden, striking
> his body's every
> part, with the coldness
> of northern water.

There is delight in the sudden awareness here, akin to the new realms expressed in "The Diver." It is close to D. H. Lawrence's remark in his essay "Making Pictures": "It is like diving into a pond — there you start frantically to swim. . . . being rather frightened and very thrilled . . . The knowing eye watches sharp as a needle; but the picture comes clean out of instinct, intuition and physical action." There is fear and thrill in these poems. His eye sharp as a needle is firmly on the object. His reactions are clean out of instinct, and the land holds within it, as the poems do by the nature of their technique, physical action:

> As one plunges
> venturesome into,
> timorously into
> the beautiful water
> invitingly lying —
> the northern water —
> the water is chill,
> but what does it matter?

ROSS'S TRAINING AS A SCIENTIST helps him to avoid any discursive material. He is trying to gauge his own sensations to these external scenes as accurately as possible, so that the movement of the poems not only lends itself to direct and simple naming of things but also is sensuous enough to include personal reactions. He may have the eye of a scientist, but it is an eye which is also aware of itself and what it records. Marianne Moore's review of *Laconics* in *Poetry* (August 1931) contains several statements that best sum up Ross's work up to 1930: "these poems . . . are evidently disciplines in the art of poetic exactitude. . . . Science's method of attaining to originality by way of

veracity is pleasing, and it is here enhanced by the considering conscience which feels as well as sees; . . . The artist's tendency is always to be seeking better explicitness and simpler simplicities, and the studious imagination that Mr. Ross has gives pleasure, besides suggesting a method." (pp. 280-1).

Marianne Moore also reviewed Ross's next volume, *Sonnets* (1932), for *Poetry* (May 1933) and found it a good volume with just "an occasional defect." This is a very kind view of this volume; even Ross himself regarded it in later years as a mere series of technical exercises, although there are times when the language and movement of a poem retains some flavour from his earlier verse, as in "Andromeda":

> The large sun sinks. Across the wide calm sea
> Its red reflection creeps toward the rock
> Where, pale as a narcissus on its stalk,
> Is bound the maiden gazing fearfully.

In "Sappho" there is a command of sonnet structure in the description of Sappho herself in the octave emphasized by the restlessness of the metre contrasted to the closing calm of the sextet. There are occasional arresting lines; when, for instance, the human soul is described as being "Soft-hidden deep in matter as in wool." Marianne Moore quoted the whole of "Prometheus" as an example of Ross's sonnet writing but this is the best sonnet in the volume. There are too many poems in it which are loose in structure, wordy, repetitious, full of strained inversions for the sake of rhyme, and sometimes heavy with tinkling adverbs.

It is interesting to note, however, that Ross was writing some of these poems at the time he was writing the "native" ones; obviously he was keeping his poetic mind open. The publishing history of *Sonnets* is a little unusual: in the early part of the Depression, the Heaton Publishing Co. kept on a few printers to do day-to-day jobs and to keep the machines in operation. A director of the company asked Ross for some poems to print as a book to keep his printers busy between ordinary printing jobs. Ross's decision to publish a selection of the sonnets at that time is illustrative of his character, quirky and slightly crabby in a good-natured way. He said the poems were "a sort of reaction from a 'North American' style after the Declaration of Westminster (in 1932?)."

One group of these sonnets, however, does give a clue about the direction Ross's poetry was taking in the early 1930's. This group is concerned with spiritualism (using the word in a very general sense) and it was this aspect of Ross's poetry that John Sutherland singled out for attention in his Preface to the projected publication of some of Ross's poems by Ryerson in 1953:

> Mr. Ross thinks of the natural world, not as the embodiment of spirit, but as one medium through which spirit may make itself known.... His method is to combine motion with stillness, the melodic run with the hushed pause, in a kind of ritual of silence. In a spell of silence, enhanced by ripples of movement, we establish communion with the "kindly daemons" who are "ever near and ever real." And through silence we are led again to motion.

Ross himself did not agree with much of what Sutherland said about his poetry: "As an enthusiastic R.C. convert he almost sees me as one, which is quite wrong." The sonnets Sutherland is alluding to here were based on a drawing by Blake, but there is no doubt that Ross was intrigued by the relations between spiritual states and the world of reality, and the connections between the unconscious mind and what images emerge from it beyond our conscious control. He maintained that he was "much closer to the medicine man than Diderot." And indeed by 1932 he was intensely preoccupied with the movement of surrealism. He was indirectly associated with a surrealist magazine in the States, *Fifth Floor Window*, which only ran for four issues in 1932. It published two of his poems (translations from Max Jacob) in the May issue.

A group he published in *Poetry* (July 1934) bears the general title of "Irrealistic Verses", even though it contains poems to be printed later in *Experiment* or in anthologies: "Reciprocal", "If Ice" (*Oxford*), "The Flower" and "The Diver." The other three poems in this group are all related to the spiritual or surrealistic side of Ross. The surrealism does not emerge in the form of these poems; two of them are, in fact, regular in rhythm and rhymed but, in a paradoxical way, this regularity tends to emphasize the strange states he is attempting to indicate in the poems. Two are very slight: "Love's Silver Bells" touches on mysteries in terms of music, but it is a kind of inner music, a music that appeals to something intuitive in man:

> For, bound within a hollow cell
> And older custom's chain,
> He did not hear the silver bell —
> His deafness was in vain!

The poem, "A Death", however, is worth quoting in full. It has the simplicity of a Blake lyric and it is a poem that seemed to be important to Ross himself, for when he talked to me about spiritualism, he showed me a copy of this poem in one of his copybooks, explaining that he himself found it a very strange poem, implying that it was a kind of automatic poem and that he was not too sure of its meaning himself.

Often in times before
He wandered through that wood.
He entered it once more.
His path was red with blood.

Some mystery there must be —
Solution is not known.
He entered carelessly,
At set of sun, alone.

Mysterious things were seen
In the shadow of the night,
And leaves no longer green
In the feeble failing light;

While spirits from the tomb
Gathered around his way —
"You too will come to us soon,
And you have come today."

No signs of life were seen
But signs of death were known.
The night came down between.
The hunter was alone.

His side was wet with blood
In the bitter chilling air,
And he lay with side all bare
In that murderous dark wood.

Ross has caught that indefinite sense of déjà vu, of repetitions in life carrying resonances into the inner life (or vice-versa). The place is perhaps like Blake's "forests of the night". This is a poem like "The Diver" concerned with other zones but there is no breaking out into the white and ordinary light of day here. The figure in the poem accepts his place "in that murderous dark wood"; he has been there before but, this time, he dies into the wood. He has had glimpses before of this region, he has gained knowledge previously but darkness envelops him and the hunter has become the hunted, with "His side . . . wet with blood/In the bitter chilling air."

Ross was writing prose poems indebted to Max Jacob and Franz Kafka at this time. His method of writing prose poems was somewhat unusual. They started as ordinary poems in the Laconics manner but then he

wrote them out as prose. He gave them the general title of "Distillates" and it was under this name that they were published in *Canadian Accent* in 1944, although they actually date from 1932 and first appeared in *New Directions* in 1937. I have the original manuscript of "The Spring", "The Animals All", "The Boat Ride" and "The Tower" in their Laconics form, all dated February 1932. Here are the opening lines of "The Spring" as they appear in this form:

> I watched the spring
> come flowing down
> the steep hillsides
> over the stones
> turning here
> and there among
> the masses of moss
> by the roots of trees

These "Distillates" still are recognizably written by Ross in the clarity of some of the images, most notably in "The Boat Ride", "The Spring", "The Voices" and occasionally in "The Fact":

> The tree spreads itself in the sunlight
> unknowing. . . . Let us find if we may the
> philosopher's stone. Perhaps it is at
> the bottom of a mud-puddle somewhere
> along the road to the farthest country
> where the moon shines backward and
> the grass is black.

Even the rhythm of this piece is characteristic of the early Ross poems, yet the subject-matter has undergone change. He is dealing with "unreal" states, "the farthest country", so that, although these prose pieces contain straight-forward language and images usually associated with his verse, they also abound in deliberately and vaguely evocative scenes and descriptions: a ruined castle, a tower, a band of sufferers emerging "into the secrecy of the startling night and the stinging stars." They also contain cryptic, rather epigrammatic phrases in much more abstract terms, as if these unknown states cannot be correctly named but in some way can be fastened to abstractions, coloured perhaps by words carrying symbolic associations: "Water is a profound and secret thing," "Regret, regret will come and may return like old year's pain," "Yet death is a white night, a wide night," "Let the rope no longer hang suspended," "Be dutiful toward the demons of gloom and doubt" and

> But there are some who may deny all
> reality, even the plainest, preferring
> to keep themselves within the rigid
> contours of outmoded seats of
> thought, where thought dwelt
> once but no longer; where the
> acute eye can perceive now
> only remnants, dust, and a dullness
> too.

These prose poems Ross labelled as "hypnogogisms," coming to him during the clairvoyant state between sleeping and waking. He wrote some (although, to my knowledge, these have never been published) which were pieces of automatic writing. The interest in these irrealistic states remained with him; five of a group of six of his poems published in *Northern Review* (April - May 1951) draw to a greater or lesser degree on this source. (These poems may have been written at roughly the same time as "Distillates," of course, but the fact that he chose to submit them for publication in 1951 suggests that his mind was still fascinated by these problems.) These poems I find more successful than the "Distillates" because he links the ideas to a more specific landscape; even in "The Creek" (*Oxford*) there is a glancing reference to these unknown states at the end of the poem. "View" is a poem which suggests that things exist "to the eye of man forbidden" but our other senses, in this poem our hearing, can take cognizance of those things. This same idea is taken up in "The Spring", perhaps the best of Ross's poems dealing with these states.

At the opening of the poem, the spring is invisible but in darkness and silence "The ear extends its view/Deep into regions not attained by day." However, these sources of unseen states do not come always unasked: the ear must be a "searching heedful ear." On such occasions a new world of possibilities opens; "the ear knows a flow begun/Under an earlier sun." This may lead to a further search, and the poem continues with a description of a boat-ride to find, in order to understand, the source of the sound. There is an obvious connection between this part of the poem and the search for the Naiad in the prose poem, "The Spring"; in that poem the spring may hold the answer but to the ear of man it is "obscure syllabification" and "confused utterance." In many ways both these pieces arise out of the same kind of experience, if not the same actual experience. In the poem in *Northern Review*, the sound is still not understood well, and what in the prose poem is expressed merely as the spring "striving" to communicate with man, here is developed and made more explicit:

Not understood well

As of some creature held in a spell and striving
To be free of that bondage, impotent however,
And uttering a complaint
Although its means are faint,

As if attempting to speak and not succeeding
But strangled in utterance, making that utterance vain;
Yet only brief must be
This disability

Of words enchanted to meaninglessness, yet once
Filled with meaning, and perhaps once again
These syllables of fire
To meaning may aspire,

Be understood. Ours is the lack of hearing.

If we become really receptive to these messages from "the farthest country,"

We again may understand
The springs beneath the land.

Ross once thought of writing a long study in verse, "On Dreams" but as far as I know, none of this has been published. I don't know how much was completed, although I have a manuscript version of the opening, confusedly dated; one date, Fall '36, has the '36 crossed out and it has been replaced by '45? Ross also sent me a legible copy of the original manuscript but dated it only Fall '45? The poem begins:

Dreams are an
inconvenient reminder
of something that is being
overlooked in
the straight-line
rationalistic view
of things.

They seem to be
on the edge
of other regions
that are of greater
significance
and depth.

Here is another poem, then, in the Laconics manner, and Ross might eventually have decided to write it out in rhythmic prose in the manner of "Distillates."

Another little-noticed side of Ross also comes out in the prose poems. One of them is a rather bitter humourous parable called "The Animals All," and it is interesting to note that the last poems Ross had published in his lifetime were a set of humourous poems, including a parody of Robert Frost and a long sequence, "Air With Variations," (*Canadian Forum*, April 1957), a series of "squibs" (Ross's own term) based on versions of a stanza from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" ("Water, water, everywhere" etc.) supposedly written by different poets. The range of his reading is well illustrated by this sequence, for the names include many contemporary Canadians as well as Pope and Wordsworth, Crabbe and Pound. This is his "version" by W. C. Williams:

> I must show you
> the ocean
> salt
> not seen but it's there
> it is just what
> it is
>   salt.

He even parodies himself:

> Day after day with weary eye
> We searched the sea and searched the sky,
> Fearing we'd made a bad mistake,
> For this was no fresh water lake.

This element of humour is also apparent in a straightforward little poem, "The Hart House Theatre" in *Northern Review* (Summer 1956).

Ross submitted nothing to magazines from 1938 until about 1952, apart from material solicited for various anthologies and by John Sutherland for *Northern Review,* although he did write a few book reviews for *Canadian Forum* between 1944 and 1958 as well as two short essays on poetry for *Northern Review.* He confided to me in a letter that "I've done nothing (that I think of any value) at poetry since 1958 and completely lost touch with what is going on," and in another letter, "recently I've done nothing but satirical bits," the kind of thing that appeared in the last issue of *Delta* and this one he included in a letter last year:

> With Lester's vacuous face
> Plastered all over the place

I find it a relief
To watch the demoniac Dief

I have tried to show that it is an over-simplification to label Ross a minor imagist. There is more in his poetry than a species of Canadian imagism, although his early work will still perhaps be his most important poetry. There is a mass of unpublished material, and it is very good news for Canadian poetry that Raymond Souster and John Colombo are preparing a selection of his poetry for future publication. This selection should give a much clearer insight into Ross's place in Canadian poetry.[5] It is time that not only the best of his unpublished poetry should be collected in book form but also those poems in periodicals, the majority of which I have tried to mention in this article, should be given a more permanent life. Copies of the short-lived *Here and Now* are fairly rare; one of Ross's best later (?) poems, "Cotton Mather," was published in this magazine and although he did record it for inclusion on a Folkways record of Canadian poetry, it has not been collected elsewhere. The second section of this poem reads:

Whenever he heard
the wind rushing in the forest
he muttered "The devil
is abroad!"

He trembled at
thought of this strange land
and its strange
dwellers among

deep woods hiding
from the white man's honesty.
He longed to burn
the forest and all within it

where, thinking, he saw,
driven by the wind
witches flying
like dried leaves.

It is this note of sharply defined clarity and non-discursive exactness that Ross bequeathed to Canadian poetry and that makes his work an example of his own definition of a work of art: "a consistency/among incommensurables."

FOOTNOTES

[1] Information about his poetic career and all prose quotations from Ross about his work (unless otherwise stated) are taken from letters written to me in 1966 or written to Ralph Gustafson over the period 1940 to 1957, in the Gustafson Literary Papers in the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. Where one of his poems has appeared in *The Penguin Anthology of Canadian Verse*, or *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse*, I have indicated that fact by including the words *Penguin* or *Oxford* in parenthesis after the title of the poem.

[2] *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*, p. 63.

[3] J. Hillis Miller, *Poets of Reality*, p. 301.

[4] Marcel Raymond, *Baudelaire to Surrealism*, p. 247.

[5] Since this article was accepted for publication, the volume of selections from the poems of W. W. Ross has appeared. It is *Shapes and Sounds, Poems of W. W. E. Ross*, selected by Raymond Souster and John Robert Colombo. (Ed.).

YANKEE AT THE COURT OF JUDGE HALIBURTON

L. A. A. Harding

MUCH OF HALIBURTON'S HUMOUR derives from his constant and skilful use of the anecdote, retailed almost always by Sam Slick, the critical and knowledgeable Connecticut clockmaker. The anecdote is bent — and often bent a long way, pleasure-bent one might say, to the ends of Haliburton's humour, and then again to the Judge's satire, and it is often masterfully ironic.

One should never despise the anecdote, because it gives a sudden glimpse, as when a flare explodes, into the past, or into character, or into manners and *mores*, such as one rarely gets in the history books or in official biographies. The same is true of the anecdotes about or of any famous man — collect them and one has a close-up of him, and his life and time, which may not necessarily be the true picture, but which will have much truth in it and that of a very human kind. One thinks, for instance, of the revelation of character in the Duke of Wellington's famous "Publish and be damned!" to a blackmailing mistress. They are also interesting in themselves. Sam Slick himself appreciated them, saying of Harriet Martineau: "... she seemed mighty fond of anecdotes (she wanted 'em for her book, I guess; for travels without anecdotes is like a puddin' without plums — all dough)."[1]

The anecdote is defined, in the plural (*anecdota*) as being the "unpublished details of history", and more broadly as "things unpublished". This however is not quite adequate for our purposes. The anecdote ranges through seven possible definitions, from the trivial detail of biography to the barnyard joke (not always purified by Haliburton's humour) to the "tall" tale beloved of the Yankee, and all are put to use by Haliburton. Obviously then the term is fairly inclusive, and is meant to be, since the anecdote, thus loosely defined, forms much of the basis of Haliburton's humourous observations of character and life, and indeed of his whole method of, and approach to, writing.

Sam Slick, the travelling salesman, would never have held his huge public (comparable contemporaneously to that of Dickens) without the anecdotes sprinkled so liberally and seemingly haphazardly through his adventures, for the Slick books are built upon Sam's remembered experiences and he is the only unity. For instance the celebrated tale of the Elder Grab trying to pass off a toothless, thirty-year-old horse on what he thought was an ignorant French-Canadian farmer and getting a blind horse in exchange, is told by Sam Slick at Tattersall's Horse Market in London.[2] On the wings of the anecdote, however, we are suddenly and illogically transported from London to Acadia for the rest of the chapter and the Haliburton reader realizes it is almost always the anecdote which is important, not Tattersall's, or wherever Sam and the Squire may happen to be. If Haliburton was congenitally unable to leave a pun alone — there is, for instance, one whole, unseemly chapter of nerve-wracking punning in *The Letter Bag of the Great Western*[3] — he was also a connoisseur, and amateur, of the humourous anecdote, and he does much better with it; he has Sam Slick express his own point of view: "Truth is, Squire, I never could let a joke pass all my life without having a lark with it. I was fond of one ever since I was knee-high to a goose . . ."[4] Many of these humourous anecdotes are very skilfully worked in with both point and humour and often with delightful irony. If one feels that for the former he deserved the critical punishment he has received, one cannot accuse him of anecdotage. For sometimes he will illustrate a character, or a national character or characteristic, or criticize British, American or Nova Scotian society, or footnote a period in history, and at the same time amuse the reader with one skilfully turned, and often shockingly slanted, anecdote.

Anecdotes then have a fascination for most readers and yet surprisingly, literature, apart from certain *genres*, does not make as much use of them as one would expect. They interrupt the main flow of the narrative and they are therefore generally inartistic, an offence to the unity of the chapter in hand, or even the book. There are, of course, as always some exceptions: one thinks of Chaucer, Fielding, Sterne, the picaresque novelists especially, and biographies in general, but a scrutiny of a few great novels will show that the anecdote is a rare phenomenon because, Haliburton excluded, it takes the reader's attention off the main themes, characters and action. However there are doubtless many incidents, or ideas, or characters worked into the latter, which came to the author originally in anecdotal form. In other words, if he did not believe them to be true or even partly true when he heard them, he considers them "fictionally true" or likely — they *could* have happened — and Haliburton for one puts them in entire as

part of the lively, legal, civic, political, social background, and general Nova Scotian — U.S. folk tradition, which he knew, shaping them, sometimes brilliantly, to whatever satiric or humourous point he has in mind.

The Judge, a natural *raconteur*, knew hundreds of them; in fact he collected them, knowing how interesting they were to others like himself for the sidelights they threw on "human natur' ". (He appears typically before us, for instance, lighted up by a single anecdote when, on being told in court that one of his jurymen could not sit because of the chronic itch, he gave the judicial order: "Scratch that man!" The Judge was found guilty once again — of a pun.) He also put his beloved anecdotes, appropriately enough, in the mouth of a man who would be of all people most likely to have heard a wide and varied assortment of tales of other people's lives — a mercurial and ubiquitous travelling salesman of loquacious and gregarious nature, who possessed a highly developed sense of the ridiculous and a critical appreciation of character and psychology, before the latter was known as such.

NOW TO CONSIDER some specific examples. One of the simplest is perhaps best illustrated by the plain anti-American anecdote. The Honourable Alden Gobble, the newly-appointed American Secretary to the Legation at the Court of St. James in London, a very wily, wide-awake Yankee diplomat, almost sharp enough to cut himself, has been suffering from "great oneasiness arter eatin' ", or "dyspepsy", as he calls it, and he goes to the famous Dr. Abernethy of London town for a cure, only to be told that his troubles are over. The Hon. Alden Gobble is surprised: "I don't see that 'are inference," said Alden. "It don't foller from what you predicate at all, . . ." "But I tell you it does foller," said the doctor; "for in the company you'll have to keep, you'll have to eat like a Christian."[5]

This is obviously one of the simplest ways to use the anecdote against the much-despised but much-feared, wily and aggressive Yankee republicans to the south. It is really nothing more than an anti-Yank story, but it reflects the contemporary Loyalist and British disapproval of Yankee manners as shown also by Dickens in his *American Notes*. It is not very subtle, and perhaps grossly unfair, but amusing enough if you happened to be Nova Scotian or British — both of which Haliburton was. One point worth noting is that Haliburton manages to tell the story through Sam himself. He does this by having Sam pour it out while seething

with indignation against British manners, and British disrespect for the "everlastin' republic".

Another kind of Haliburtonian anecdote concerns Sam's expedition from Slickville, Connecticut, to Italy, in search of quick, "instant" culture in the form of Italian art. The Governor of Connecticut and the local General have just come into Sam's clockmaking workshop where he is painting on his clocks angels equipped with rifles, led by one tall, distinguished angel, with a bowie knife. They are leaving Heaven to emigrate down to the United States — where conditions are better. His visitors ask what the mystic letters "AP" and "HE" stand for in the painting and are told that "AP" stands for "Airthly Paradise" and "HE" stands for "Heavenly Emigrants". The emigrating angels evidently see more future in the States, and have come fully equipped for the country. (If Haliburton had Milton in mind, they could represent a second wave, descending into Hell.) The Governor and the General then offer Sam, as an artist in his own right, the job of going to Italy and buying up some real good art, the genuine stuff, for the Slickville Art Gallery; but the Governor cautions him that, since the statues imported the year before were all stark naked, and therefore had to be clothed from head to foot before Slickville could study them, Sam must be careful in his selection of Italian masterpieces: "So none of your Potiphar's wives, or Susannahs, or sleepin' Venuses; such pictures are repugnant to the high tone of moral feelin' in this country."

Sam then tells the Squire how he put it over the Italian art dealers:

"A very good man the Governor, and a genuwine patriot too," said Mr. Slick. "He knowed a good deal about paintin' for he was a sign-painter by trade; but he often used to wade out too deep, and get over his head now and then afore he knowed it. He warn't the best o'swimmers neither, and sometimes I used to be scared to death for fear he'd go for it afore he'd touch bottom agin. Well, off I sot in a vessel to Leghorn, and I laid out there three thousand dollars in pictur's. Rum-lookin' old cocks them saints, some on 'em too, with their long beards, bald heads and hard featur's, bean't they? but I got a lot of 'em, of all sizes. I bought two Madonnas, I think they call them — beautiful little pictur's they were too; but the child's legs were so naked and ondecent, that to please the Governor and his factory gals, I had an artist to paint trousers and a pair of lace boots on him, and they look quite genteel now. It improved 'em amazin'ly; but the best o' the joke was those Macaroni rascals, seein' me a stranger, thought to do me nicely (most infarnal cheats them dealers too — walk right into you afore you know where you be). The older a pictur' was, and the more it was blacked, so you couldn't see the figur's, the more they axed for it; and they'd talk and jabber away about their Tittyan tints and Gauido airs by the hour. "How soft we are, ain't

> we?" said I. "Catch a weasel asleep, will you?" Second-hand farniture don't suit our market. We want pictur's and not things that look a plaguy sight more like the shutters of an old smoke-house than paintin's, and I hope I may be shot if I didn't get bran new ones for half the price they axed for them rusty old veterans. Our folks were well pleased with the shipment, and I ought to be too, for I made a trifle in the discount of fifteen per cent., for comin' down handsum' with the cash on the spot. Our Atheneum is worth seein' I tell you; you won't ditto it easy, I know; it's actilly a sight to be behold.[6]

This needs no comment, except perhaps that the satire on Slickville, Connecticut, would have applied equally well to Haliburton's countrymen in Windsor or Halifax, or in fact to Montreal in 1966, where Michelangelo's *David* had somewhat the effect of a fox in a hen-roost. One is also reminded of Samuel Butler's "Oh, God! oh, Montreal!"

After the previous anecdotes, the anti-Yankee story, and the satire on Yankee jingoism and philistinism in art, we next see Haliburton on the now threadbare theme of the almighty dollar and the consequent slave-driving of the ignorant Irish immigrant who is democratically called a gentleman — and then worked to death for a canal contract. He gives us a typically propagandistic and didactic anecdote describing what happens to Pat Lannigan, an Irish immigrant as yet imperfectly metamorphosed into a Nova Scotian, who had been tempted by the greener grass on the other side of the American-Canadian fence and had gone to the land of opportunity to make his fortune, as Pugnose, the lazy and shiftless Bluenose innkeeper, had just been talking of doing. Pat Lannigan has now returned to Nova Scotia. This story is typical of one of the main trends of Haliburton's patriotic, anti-American satire, of which the central theme might be defined: "There is no place like home — as long as you work hard. And at home they're a lot more honest."

Sam is talking about Pugnose's plan to sell his inn and go to the States, a common idea then as now. Nova Scotia, Sam opines, is fine, farming country compared to the cold, thin soil of New England. The land between Salem and Boston would "starve a flock of geese", and yet the stout and prosperous inhabitants of Salem, through hard work and thrift, have made so much money they figure they might as well buy Nova Scotia from the King, whereas the Bluenoses, rather than buckle down to work, can think of nothing but emigrating to the Land of Promise in order to live an easier life, like the ambitious Angel with the bowie knife. They had better not, says Sam, who has himself left the "Airthly Paradise" of Connecticut for Nova Scotia, where the pickings are easier, and he underlines his point with an illustrative anecdote:

> I met an Irishman, one Pat Lannigan, last week, who had just returned from the States. "Why," says I, "Pat, what on airth brought you back?" "Bad luck to 'em," says Pat, "if I warn't properly bit. 'What do you get a day in Nova Scotia?' says Judge Beler to me. "Four shillings, your Lordship," says I. 'There are no lords here,' says he, 'we are all free. Well, says he, 'I'll give you as much in one day as you can airn there in two; I'll give you eight shillings'. "Long life to your Lordship," says I. So next day to it I went with a party of men a-diggin' of a piece of canal, and if it wasn't a hot day my name is not Pat Lannigan. Presently I looked up and straightened my back. Says I to a comrade of mine: "Mick," says I, "I'm very dry". With that says the overseer: 'We don't allow gentlemen to talk at their work in this country.' Faith, I soon found out for my two days' pay in one I had to do two days' work in one, and pay two weeks' board in one, and at the end of the month I found myself no better off in pocket than in Nova Scotia; while the devil a bone in my body that didn't ache with pain; and as for my nose it took to bleedin' and bled day and night entirely. "Upon my soul, Mr. Slick," said he, "the poor labourer does not last long in your country; what with new rum, hard labour, and hot weather, you'll see the graves of the Irish each side of the canals, for all the world like two rows of potatoes in a field that have forgot to come up." [7]

Sam agrees that America is a land of hard work, and Pat's migration gives us an interesting, historical glimpse behind the scenes at this work. One is always amazed at the vast labours of our grandfathers without the machinery which we now accept like electric light without comment. Unknown men laboriously built the canals and railroads by the sweat of their brows and a hundred thousand horses of one-horse power each. The only slaves available were wage-slaves, who were largely Irish; they were expendable and they died, of course, in their thousands, finding the hot American summer very different from the mild summers of Ireland or Nova Scotia and, if the anecdote gives a true picture, also finding American working conditions twice as hard.

The moral of the story is obvious, as usual in Haliburton, particularly since he is here addressing an unsophisticated audience made up of many Pugnoses. The New Englanders had got what they had got through hard work and initiative and the Nova Scotians could do the same, and better, if they would only bestir themselves. It is the old, sound advice but like most sound, old advice it is not very entertaining to the man who is getting it; nor was it to the frustrated workingman of Nova Scarcity, thinking of emigrating to the States where the sun shone gold. What does stand out clearly, however, is the character of the simple, rather pathetic Irishman, and the glimpse of two other characters, Judge Beler, and the foreman of the American bull-gang, with its mixed bag of immigrants,

mostly no doubt Irish. The foreman, one notices, speaks as very few gang-bosses have ever spoken in this rough world; unless they were intending some ponderous sarcasm at the unfortunate labourer's expense. When Pat straightens his back and says to his comrade Mick, "I'm very dry", the overseer, the slave-driver employed by the nineteenth-century Yankee Pharoahs, cracks his whip gently, informing Pat that "gentlemen" are not allowed "to talk at their work". Pat is called a "gentleman" in the land of promise, but he is working twice as hard as he ever worked in Nova Scotia, or Ireland, making twice as much money and being charged twice as much to live. He is, moreover, helping to bury rows of his fellow-workers beside the canal as it pushes across the enormous country — so different from their small green island. And, with the pathos always underlying humour, their graves grotesquely resemble the troughs and hills of a blasted potato field.

The word "gentleman", applied to Pat Lannigan by a Yankee gang-boss, seemed more amusing to Haliburton's contemporaries than it does to us in the middle of the twentieth century, and it demonstrates what Haliburton considered the lunatic topsy-turviness of the great American social experiment. His use of such a term was a mockery of the American so-called classless society where Jack was supposed to be as good as his master and where every Jack became a gentleman and every Pat became a Jiggs, complete with top hat and cigar. He therefore satirically shows Pat finding that fine words do not make a democracy any easier on the man with the shovel. Haliburton asserts that American democracy, that would-be league of gentlemen, observing all the forms of equality between Pat and his gang-boss, and between the "gentlemen" who were working on the canal and Judge Beler, nevertheless buries great numbers of the gentry as they go along; but not the Judge Belers, and probably not many "overseers" either. Americans, he intimates, are calling each other *citoyen* in theory — *citoyen*, in spite of its connotations in that post-guillotine age, translated into English, is a favourite word of Sam Slick's — but working their less fortunate citizens to death — for the dollar — in practice. In the anecdote citizens ironically become "gentlemen", an absurd idea to Haliburton; even today, one would rather expect "Hey, you there!"

However, though the justice of the story does not much concern us, its psychological, historical, and satirical implications do. America was the second Promised Land where the streets were all paved with gold; but only the strong and fit and the unencumbered were able to pick some of it up, and button it up firmly in a hip pocket. Thousands, Haliburton warns, find early democratic graves in the

slums or beside the canals and railroads. The satire has humour, pathos, irony, and considerable truth. One notices the American judge, of which class Haliburton thought little as we shall see in the next and final anecdote, standing upon the letter of democracy ("there are no lords here") while "sweating" Pat Lannigan and his comrades into an early grave; one also notices that Judge Beler is contracting, or sub-contracting, for the building of part of the canal, instead of occupying himself exclusively and more enthusiastically with the maintenance of the laws of the great republic. The law is therefore also engaged with gusto in the pursuit of happiness and the dollar, instead of keeping a closer eye on how other citizens obtain theirs. The picture presented, heightened by such Biblical terms as "overseer", is of another land of the Pharoahs, where the slaves are paid, and by implication of course Nova Scotia is a much more civilized place to live.

HALIBURTON THOUGHT very little of American courts, of their procedures or of their judges, as the following ironic anecdote shows. Sam is attending a court in Nova Scotia with the Squire, and a Yankee is on trial for theft. Sam says:

> We have a great respect for the laws, Squire; we've been bred to that, and always uphold the dignity of the law. I recollect once that some of our young citizens away above Montgomery got into a flare-up with a party of boatmen that lives on the Mississippi; a desperate row it was too, and three Kentuckians were killed as dead as herrin's. Well, they were had up for it afore Judge Cotton. He was one of our revolutionary heroes, a starn hard-featured old man, quite a Cato; and he did curry 'em down with a heavy hand, you may depend — he had no marcy on 'em. There he sot with his hat on, a cigar in his mouth, his arms folded and his feet over the rail, lookin' as sour as an onripe lemon. "Bring up them culprits", said he, and when they were brought up he told 'em it was scandalous, only fit for English and ignorant foreigners that sit on the outer porch of darkness, and not highminded, intelligent Americans. "You are a disgrace," said he, "to our great nation, and I hope I shall never hear the like of it agin. If I do, I'll put you on your trial as sure as you are born; I hope I may be skinned alive by wild cats if I don't." Well, they didn't like that kind o'talk at all so that night away they goes to the judge's house, to teach him a thing or two with a cowskin, and kicked up a deuce of a row; and what do you think the neighbours did? Why, they jist walked in, seized the ring-leaders and lynched them, in less than ten minits, on one of the linden trees afore the judge's door.[8]

This lynching episode is couched in broad but very amusing irony which both

explains the immediate and early popularity of *The Clockmaker* and anticipates Twain's style. From the first words, where Sam proudly claims that his countrymen have a "great respect for the law", we see a caricature of what Haliburton considered the Americans' attitude to the law: no understanding of it, no dignity in its administration, no qualified men to uphold it and, when in doubt, a marked propensity to speed things up with a lynching. A Shakespearean disorder reigns supreme. (The justice of this picture once again does not concern us of course, but November 22, 1964, in Dallas, and particularly its aftermath, springs to mind. In any case that was the way Haliburton saw it. One can hear him say: "Of course . . . I told you so.")

In this anecdote several citizens are on trial for the peccadillo of killing three fellow-citizens in a brawl. There follows an exquisite picture of about as unlikely a judge as one could wish for, our Judge Cotton — "quite a Cato", in Sam's opinion. He has no legal illusions about listening to the evidence, or wasting time weighing the pros and cons of the case. "Bring up them culprits," he says, quickly knocking the law and legal ethics into a cocked hat. He is as severe in tone as we have been led to expect, though not quite a "Hanging Judge", since he is satisfied with giving them a sharp browbeating and warning them that if they do it "agin", that is, kill any more people, he will certainly put them on trial next time. Once is quite enough. He is distinctly testy about the three killings. A browbeating however, in such harsh words, offends the citizens who feel that their breach of decorum does not merit such language or such threats, and they go up that night with a "cowhide" to teach the judge what democracy means. However, as Sam points out, all's well that ends well; the dignity of the law is upheld and once again American justice prevails; order is quickly restored with the help of the linden tree "afore the judge's door."

Sam, in the first anecdote, discounts the killings, he is impressed by the appearance of the judge, he appreciates the firm way the judge tells them to stop it; in fact he feels that perhaps the judge was a *little* hard on them, and that the lynching settled everything nicely and demonstrated the law-abiding qualities of his fellow-countrymen. It was, in fact in Sam's own phrase, "a caution to sinners", and oddly enough such a point of view is not absolutely incredible. In a small country town where education was lacking and passions were apt to run high, about not very much, a home-spun judge might perhaps be unwilling to make much fuss about mere outsiders (Kentuckians) who got themselves killed in a routine Saturday-night brawl. After all it was not murder, but only manslaughter multiplied by three, and hanging was not the punishment for fighting, even with

bowie knives. There are all the elements of farce in the anecdote, although it is close to tragic farce.

Haliburton, as a judge in his civilized and peaceful colony, is comparing the British or Nova Scotian legal system with what he considers an adolescent and violent system of punishing the wrong-doer. Much of his comedy stems from a comparison between the two societies, the one basically conservative, the other revolutionary, and Haliburton, being a humourist, was perhaps doubly a conservative, as conversely, revolutionaries, taking themselves with the utmost seriousness, are unhumourous. There was a long tradition of swift and sometimes rough justice in the United States, which was founded on necessity where there was no machinery to enforce ordinary law. People pushed on ahead of the law, and if one of them stole a horse and got caught, he might well end up inside a noose, which to Haliburton, from the comparative peace of Nova Scotia, was a travesty of the law.

Haliburton ingeniously interweaves and contrasts two anecdotes to demonstrate how much better was the British, or Nova Scotian, court procedure than Judge Cotton's tradition. The second about the Yankee thief, Expected Thorne, is also of course recounted by Sam, and Sam's observations on the two legal procedures point up the contrast ironically. Haliburton says a great deal with the careful juxtaposition and interweaving of the two incidents.

Sam tells the Squire how an "almighty, cantin' rogue" and a countryman of his, Expected Thorne, is arrested for stealing a watch in Annapolis, Nova Scotia, from one Captain Billy Slocum. The court does not at all come up to Sam's democratic ideas of a court. There is far too much dignity, far too much ceremony, and althogether too much respect is shown for the judge; the lawyers are all got up in black gowns with white bands, and when the Sheriff calls for order, instead of the familiar, gradual, democratic subsidence of noise, all is suddenly "still as moonlight." This is altogether too much pandering to authority for Sam and it is just not "free-and-equal" enough. It strikes Sam as very formal and rather mediaeval; like the black and white bands:

> Them sort of liveries may do in Europe, but they don't convene to our free and enlightened citizens. It's too foreign for us, too unphilosophical, too feudal, and a remnant o' the dark ages. No sir; our lawyers do as they like. Some on 'em dress in black, and some white; some carry walkin' sticks, and some umbrellas, some whittle sticks with pen-knives, and some shave the table, and some put their legs under the desks and some put 'em a-top of them, jist as it suits them. They sit as they please, dress as they please, and talk as they please; we are a free people.[10]

Haliburton uses irony to deal with such democratic obnoxiousness. His dual nature, his two characters which come out constantly in the Judge and Squire on the one hand and Sam on the other, and his two sympathies for the New World and for the traditional British Old World, merged into one when it came to the Law. The Law was sacrosanct and British Law was the best law, even if the guilty man walked away whistling.

Expected Thorne is brought before the Nova Scotian judge and Sam notices that the wily Expected (anyone familiar with Haliburton will note the "dissenting" name) has dressed for the role:

> He had his hair combed down as straight as a horse's mane; a little thin white cravat, nicely plaited and tied plain, garnished his neck, as a white towel does a dish of calve's [*sic*] head; a standin'-up collar to his coat gave it the true cut, and the gilt buttons covered with cloth eschewed the gaudy ornaments of sinful, carnal man. He looked as demure as a harlot at a christenin' — drew down the corners of his mouth, so as to contract the trumpet of his nose and give the right bass twang to the voice, and turned up the whites of his eyes, as if they had been in the habit of lookin' in upon the inner man for self-examination and reproach. O, he looked like a martyr; jist like a man who would suffer death for conscience sake, and forgive his inemies with his dyin' breath.[11]

The judge finds insufficient evidence to convict, though Sam saw immediately that his compatriot was guilty, and on his acquittal Expected boasts to Sam how he pulled the wool over the eyes of the "onsarcumcised colonials", little realizing that his countryman was deeply shocked at any free-and-enlightened citizen of the univarsal everlastin' United States descending to stealing when there were so many other ways of getting Slocum's watch, if he felt he really needed it. Sam Slick's comments ironically underline the theme which Haliburton uses the two anecdotes, in skilful combination and contrast, to demonstrate — that there is very little regard for or understanding of law and order south of the border, compared with the dignified and scrupulously just procedure of the Nova Scotian courts where insufficient evidence is enough to free a criminal on the principle that it is better that ten guilty men go free than that one innocent man be hanged. Haliburton's double sympathies for the New World and the Old, in other words roughly for Sam's viewpoint and the Squire's, are clearly single here.

Sam however does reprimand Expected Thorne, underlining the irony:

> ... they ain't such an enlightened people as we are, that's sartin, but that don't justify you a bit; you hadn't ought to have stolen that watch. That was wrong, very wrong indeed. You might have traded with him, and got it for half nothin';

> or bought it and failed, as some of our importin' marchants sow up the soft-horned British; or swapped it and forgot to give the exchange, or bought it and give your note, and cut stick afore the note became due. There's a thousand ways of doin' it honestly and legally, without resortin', as foreigners do, to stealin'. We are a moral people; a religious, a high-minded, and a high-spirited people; and can do any and all the nations of the univarsal world out of anything, in the hundreds of millions of clever shifts there are in trade.[12]

The anti-American irony is adroit, even though the final code of conduct with which Sam chides Expected Thorne becomes pure farce.

Both of these anecdotes demonstrate character. Sam Slick's character is clear, of course, with every word he says and every tale he tells, as is the Squire's; but clear also is that "onripe lemon", Judge Cotton, and the free-and-easy democratic characters of the judge's law-abiding, local supporters who irritably lynch those citizens whom the judge had injudiciously failed to hang, thus setting everything right again. One sees as well the character of Expected Thorne, and the impartial, anonymous and dignified character of the Nova Scotian Judge and court who did not find evidence enough to convict. The anecdotes also underline the contrasting situations: in the American scene, three deaths, an undisciplined law court, an illegal acquittal, followed by a well-meant, neighbourly lynching; in the Nova Scotian court a stolen watch, a dignified court, an ultra-legal acquittal, followed by the admission of guilt by the thief. Haliburton gets a great deal into an anecdote.

Never in fact has a writer used the anecdote more creatively — or more destructively.

FOOTNOTES

1 T. C. Haliburton, *Sam Slick, the Clockmaker* (Toronto: The Musson Book Company, 1918), p. 170.
2 T. C. Haliburton, *The Attaché* (New York: Stringer and Townsend, 1850), pp. 162-75.
3 T. C. Haliburton, *The Letter Bag* (New York: William Collyer, 1840), pp. 37-41.
4 Haliburton, *The Attaché,* p. 128.
5 Haliburton, *Sam Slick*, pp. 23-24.
6 *Ibid.*, p. 200.
7 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
8 *Ibid.*, pp. 191-192.
9 Mody C. Boatright, *Folk Laughter on the American Frontier* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 125.
10 Haliburton, *Sam Slick*, p. 193.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 195.
12 *Ibid.*, p. 196.

review articles

ELI AND IRVING

George Bowering

ELI MANDEL, *An Idiot Joy*. M. G. Hurtig Publishers.
IRVING LAYTON, *The Shattered Plinths*. McClelland & Stewart. Cloth $5.00, paper $2.50.

IT'S HARD to realize that Eli Mandel has published only 3 1/3 books, and it is all too easy to remember that Irving Layton has published 19 1/3. Mandel's latest, *An Idiot Joy*, justly shared 1967's Governor General's award in poetry with Alden Nowlan's *Bread, Wine and Salt*. Layton's *The Shattered Plinths* could be the worst book published in Canada in 1968.

There are other differences too. Mandel's book is remarkable for a language and thought that seek to strip away anything of rhetoric or metaphor in order to arrive at pure honest disclosure, of emotions, of ideas, of the poet's condition. Layton's language is a careless and ego-bound betrayal of the poet's charge to care for the words and remind others to care for the sanctity of each other as people.

Maybe one reason for the difference is that Mandel is still trying to find out what he wants to say, and how to say it. The received Canlit image of Mandel is probably still the 1950's U. of T. Northrop Frye image of the poet as assembler and interpreter of classical myths — post-Graves, post-Jung. In what the jacket blurb calls his "new rhetoric," he moves here deeper into the first-person meditation, striving with open forms to bring forth not only strikingly personal thoughts, but also their cadences, their singular contours as they touch the mind and tongue:

> the book speaks: arrange yourself in the
> form
> that will arrange you

In paying so much attention to the poet's craft as a way of understanding himself, he often writes about the business of making poems, something readers often object to — without remembering Shelley and his way of getting to the world that way. It is a little embarrassing to hear Mandel say "I am crazed by poetry," or maybe it is that he sounds too unembarrassed. But the sharpened attention to language pays off. I can hear his curious deliberate voice, seeking not to persuade or perform, but to comprehend his own arrivals and expose them for the view of others.

Not that he always succeeds. The book gives evidence in its quarrel with itself of his desire to tear away from the cloistered

poetry of Eli Mandel's Sunday Castle, to break open fresh places, even if they exude terrible odours, to wrest poetry from vulgar life, but to ask life to reveal its poetry to his faithful practice. The shaman, after all, does not arrange literary allusions, but actual sticks and stones. The poet starts with simple and honest first person declarations: "But I have always wanted to be a good man."

So he does still approach the mystical, but now through the materials of sustenance:

> the grass is scripture...
> I speak of what I know...
> It is metaphor I distrust...

Although sometimes he still uses metaphor bravely, he reminds himself: "I wish there were no allegories/ I wish the doctors could do something about my forked tongue." In the longer poem, "Pictures in an Institution," we can watch him as he struggles to put phenomenal human care before metaphorical detachment.

He is beginning to sound like a biblical prophet-poet, using at-hand objects, most simple metaphor, and incantatory structures—not abstracting, but generalizing from the concrete, as Jesus and the earlier spellbinders did. Sometimes he invokes his Jewishness overtly; other times he imitates the most graceful of Jewish literature. Only rarely in the book (and I suspect, partly from their prosody, that these are the earliest poems here) does he sound like the U. of T. poets, pasting up a scrapbook of mythologies. See "House of Candy". I am also a little put off by his oldtime habit of placing an adjective between the noun and the verb.

But he's winning the struggle. And along with the opening toward unembellished speech and at-hand materials comes a desire, in many of the poems, to turn the ammunition of literature against the public enemies of the spirit (Mandel has always been strongly aware of Blake) such as the Alberta government, the new colonialist masters, the false authoritarian evangelists. So his message to the Canadian Poets: "my spoiled beautiful girl-boys singing your songs, come with me to the farm of the premier and the house of the prime minister, let us together set bonfires, let us no longer be syntactical and grammatical. [I understand his impulse here, but disagree with him as surely as EP is my teacher.], let us unencumbered embrace the grace of our frenzy and recite to children the solved riddles of our being...."

Irving Layton's solution is rather to send hate literature and bullets after anyone wearing Russian or Arab uniforms and names. Eli Mandel is a private man who wants to be free of institutional cant, who wants to bring it down. He says "let us save our country."

Mandel has the Canadian poet's habit of composing short poems on (or addressed to) momentary subjects, such as here a girl on a high wire, an African carving, a streetlight. But here, not to impose his will on them — rather to give witness to his curiosity and the gentle bond it makes between poet and subject.

M. G. Hurtig, who already runs the country's best bookstore, is to be congratulated on his new publishing venture, and for having the sense to get his book printed by the Coach House Press. They have made a book of poems that demand attention—you know you're being offered something more than meat and potatoes. Eli Mandel realizes and teaches the most important job for the poet — that as the mind and body practice great

care for the art will the spirit be opened honestly to the world in which it is formed. Mandel says it more truly:

> poetry is crime when we legislate against
> perception:
> the doors of perception become mouths of
> police chiefs mayors premiers ministers of
> public health
> but poems belong to young singers who
> lie down
> to see who they might become in earth upon
> earth and speak hebrew and chinese
> in the criminal west and
> teach the romans love

Irving Layton is not much interested in perception. In fact, his ends are served when perception is dulled. The publisher's blurb on the dust jacket of *The Shattered Plinths* says: "Irving Layton is a celebrity in his own right. He is a frequent contributor to letters - to - the - editor columns of daily newspapers, and often appears on radio and television programs as a panelist and personality." I was struck by that, and I hope it was conceived in irony, unlike Layton's sincere dedication of the book to Lyndon B. Johnson.

Yesterday's favourite iconoclast offers his standard Foreword, first, this time, reasoning that the brutalization of human feelings since World War II requires a parallel insensitivity in our poetry. He then sets out to illustrate. We are treated to the usual slapdash couplets with the ever-increasingly ridiculous end-rhymes, the patent awkward *abab* stanzas, and other cranky rhyme schemes usually found in volumes of comic verse. One of the results is "The Red Moujhik," the worst poem ever published in Canada, in terms of both poetics and sentiments. In addition, Layton is still fond of using words such as "peruse," though this time I didn't see any references to "phalli."

There is a lot of prose in which the author describes himself with arbitrary similes, usually flattering (and as usual the book is festooned with photographs of the author). Pieces such as "Iroquois in Nice" are successions of pedestrian thoughts not moved by any lyric sense or feel for prosody. The grammar isn't much better: "A general's brains/ is being auctioned."

But in these days no one expects Layton to be an artist. The more interesting thing is that he proves Mandel's position, that poor use of language makes for inadequate and sometimes immoral thought. On the milder side, Layton makes the point made by most middle-aged security-folk, that nature teaches competitive private enterprise ("Heraclitos"). The trouble is that he goes further than that — he calls for hatred and killing in the name of property and patriotism. A number of the poems are hideously extreme in support of Israeli expansion; many of them celebrate killing and maintain that killing with gun or knife is a poet's act. In this he sounds like Hideo Kobayashi, the Japanese philosopher used by the Imperial Army in its mobilization for invasion of Japan's neighbours in the thirties. Kobayashi wanted to swing artists behind the army, so he said that the soldier and the poet were almost identical. For similar reasons, Layton seems to agree with him. It gets most disturbing when Layton also commingles murder and sex.

I guess with all those knives and machine guns, Layton is still thinking of his phalli.

THE POETIC VOCATION

Peter Stevens

LOUIS DUDEK, *Atlantis.* Delta Canada. $4.00.
ELDON GRIER, *Pictures On The Skin.* Delta Canada. $4.50.
D. G. JONES, *Phrases From Orpheus.* Oxford University Press. $4.50.

Atlantis DESCRIBES a journey through "a wild turbulence of possibilities" in a search below the surface in order to make life anew. The reality of life is a making to break through chaos to the "laws of freedom". Thus, the poet undertakes the voyage to find the secret that will disclose the reality of human nature and the reality of poetry, "an epic mode unrevealed".

These ideas are mentioned in the Prologue and are elaborated in the three central sections of the poem, each one devoted to speculations about and details of Italy, France and England. The poem is unified by constant reference to the theme of reality, but it sags into too much theorizing and moralizing, particularly in the section dealing with France.

Reality is presented in the poem by a series of catalogues in a Whitmanesque fashion: catalogues of the abundant life of Naples, of an aquarium, of trees, of plants, of animals. The poem works from this surface to find the Atlantis of meaning, which in simple terms is a belief in living life to the full in the present. In spite of degradation, slums, inequalities, the pressures of the past, absolute slogans, class structure, man continues to exist, love and art persist and the poet, like most men, must rummage through the twin realities of good and evil to strive for their Ideal to live by.

But Louis Dudek is no Platonist: "I've never liked Plato", he says. The Ideal can be reached only through the real, and reality is in flux, "change is all we ever know". Thus, the form of the poem, loosely lined to suggest irregular currents of thought and life and spaced on the page to fall readily into a breathed pattern, suits the theme. The poem's length, however, militates against its succeeding, for one comes away from the poem admiring certain sections, mainly those about the insistently 'real' things within the poem:

> We lean in a shadowy world when
> the organ peals
> like a slain bull
> and the great windows bleed.

But the ideas behind the things too often develop into rather abstract meditations and thus, set against the reality of detail, seem somehow vague. At only a few times in the poem do the meditative statements rise to the level of poetic statements:

> Someday, in the great future, perhaps
> there will be men
> no longer torn,
> for whom time is one eternal now
> and change an ever-changing change,
> who see the permanent in the impermanent
> and the same rose in every dying rose.

Atlantis is an uneven poem, filled with sections of sweep and movement, pulled down by rather prosaic, meandering and

haphazard intellectualization. And yet it is almost saved by its summation contained in the Epilogue, which is full of hard direct images, gathering the central theme and ideas together into a few pages. It is the best sustained piece of writing in the poem and makes the reader wish that the poet had managed to succeed at this level throughout the poem.

Eldon Grier speaks of the influence on him of "the chaotic permissiveness of the Twenties". By this I take it that he means a kind of general surrealism works through his poetry, particularly as he also maintains that "poetry is basically a perversion of language". Certainly the Surrealists broke down time, space and conscious logic but their objects, although existing in a dream or chaotic landscape, were nearly always clear and precisely outlined. Think of the objects in paintings by Dali, Magritte, Tanguy and Ernst. In comparison, the poems in *Pictures On The Skin* are curiously blurred. There are few precise images. Illogical juxtapositions make their own kind of sense but often the succession of images seem mere collocation of things with little real associative power either singly or in juxtaposition. Occasional memorable phrases stick in the mind: in one poem Picasso is described as having eyes "perpetually awake like a pair of perching owls" and an "old man's tomcat head". There is one succinct and clear surrealist poem:

it would be a joke
if I managed to live beyond
some terrible physical upheaval
the floors gone
the stars invisible until further notice
the helmets of beauty parlors pushing out
of the mud
like Easter eggs.

However, the effect of the book, handsomely printed with collages, coloured pages and drawings interleaved with the poems, is one of blur and fuzziness, a collection of fragments that never focus on any kind of reality (surrealist or otherwise); even the poems on some other artists and musicians — Giacometti, Morrice, Messiaen, who work in terms of reality — become vague figures. The photographs and collages concentrate on negatives and pieces of the human face. There are no real features; everything is masked and isolated but it is not an isolation which suggests the alienation of the artist fighting desperately to uphold an anarchic vision of the world but rather an isolation which arises from chopped-up experience, the reader cut adrift in a muddy and blurred world with little indication given by the poet just how the poems, in his terms, "reflect the curious slides and sequences which lie behind the printed word."

The title of D. G. Jones' volume indicates that the poet is speaking with an Orphic voice, with the tone, if not the manner, of someone like Robert Duncan, "making private worlds public and / digesting the public / privately — making them real". The poet sings about his personal grief, the resulting poems being rather like a tongue probing the cavity of a decayed tooth, an excruciating search "to find words for what we suffer" and finding some delight in the sensation of suffering and the discovered words, "to enjoy what we must suffer". The poetic vocation becomes human fate, for an Orpheus now must insist that the universe and its elements, perhaps doomed, must sing in spite of fate, in spite of pain and death, like hunters:

> Happy, they grieve
> The dead birds, and everywhere round them
> The universe bleeds into darkness.

Human love existing in this process creates both happiness and pain, often inextricably mixed: "And death / foraging galactic wastes / is but a door / open / to love, makes / love dear".

The poet as Orpheus investigates the lower depths of his own life, dredges up his losses and griefs and, examining them, retains some sense of life, so that the poet can bitterly reject his Eve, leaving the garden as "ember and ash and scarred rock", yet still haunted by "a memory of flowers"; thus, when Eve returns in another poem, he can rejoice, for there is nothing to fear,

> Because you are beautiful, dying,
> And because there is nothing —

The Orphic attitude is central to this collection, but the first few poems in it make it difficult for the reader to immerse himself in this world. There is a curious poem to begin with; it establishes the idea of loss and the tone of lament: "For the mind in time / Is a perishing bird, / It sings and is still", but it seems somehow too derivative, containing unassimilated fragments of other poets (Blake, Yeats, Stevens), as if the poet's own Orphic stance is nothing but a pose. Once into the volume, however, the reader finds that the stance is not assumed, although the long title poem, an attempt to weld together separate elements by staggered indentations, is too difficult to read. There are short sections within the poem that work but I think the four real sections of the poem could be printed separately as a linked series and the reader would not be confused by the typographical layout. Because his per-

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sonal universe is bleak, the insistence on images of the four elements and stone works better in the shorter poems. The doubleness (and duplicity) of life is caught in the shorter poems like "At The Edge of the Garden", "Putting on the Storms", "The Stream Exposed", "Pastoral" and "For Spring" with their terse phrasing and sparse images. In the landscape of these poems the poet sees his own fate and the fate of all humans and human relationships.

The breaking of his personal life releases some kind of poetic energy, an energy as timeless and indestructible as the elements of earth. A "two-bit creek" suddenly makes sense because in any final act of universal destruction "The water will remain / And rock". It is in these shorter, more direct poems that D. G. Jones' Orphic vision of the world seems genuine as poetry. In the longer poems and those in which the lining and the use of capitals seems arbitrary and even whimsical, the poetic stance seems merely a pose when placed against the terse impressive statement in the short poems I have mentioned. It is in these, not in the rambling, worked-up rhetoric of the title poem and some other longish poems, that the real strength of the volume resides.

PETER STEVENS

LOWRY POSTHUMOUS

Tony Kilgallin

MALCOLM LOWRY, *Lunar Caustic*. Clarke Irwin. Hard cover, $3.20; paper, $1.50. *Dark as the Grave Wherein My Friend is Laid.* General Publishing. $6.95.

LOWRY WAS 25 when he began to write *Lunar Caustic* and dead before the work attained its present shape. He had put *Ultramarine* and a few leftover short stories behind him to follow his newly married and newly deserted wife, Jan Gabrial, to New York in 1934. Here he entered Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital, voluntarily he claimed, for research material, but was discharged as a foreigner and as a fraud, since he was only a drunkard. As the friend of a fellow-Englishman, Eric Estoick, he shared his New York apartment while completing a rough draft entitled *The Last Address.* This was published in French in three issues of the magazine *Esprit* in 1956. "It's not very good", Margerie Lowry told me, "but Malcolm didn't want to risk losing it as he had already lost the first draft of *Ultramarine* and the 2,000 page novel-in-progress *In Ballast to the White Sea.*" Before he died, a year later, he had changed the title first to *Swinging the Maelstrom* then to its present title to link it with *Under the Volcano* and *Ultramarine.* For war correspondents like Hugh Firmin lunar caustic consisted of silver nitrate formed into pencils which were used for cauter-

izing. But he was unable to use it on the wounded Indian and thus could not be the needed Samaritan.

Sigbjorn Lawhill with *Moby Dick* in his pocket enters the Psychiatric Hospital under his own steam, or rather liquor, in *The Last Address.* His hysterical sense of identification with Melville (who fathered a Malcolm) increases upon spotting from a window 28th Street, Melville's last address, where he wrote *Billy Budd.* Lawhill's potential Samaritan is the psychiatrist Claggart, but like Hugh he is unable to save Lawhill from himself. "Drop by caustic drop", to quote Hart Crane, Lawhill's dependency upon alcohol increases.

Lowry changed Lawhill's name to Bill Plantagenet, a character the Consul remembers in *Under the Volcano* from Cambridge, where he too identified himself with Melville. The theme of *Lunar Caustic* in embryo form Lowry found in a Chekhov letter to Suvorin wherein the latter is advised to write of how a "young man squeezes the slave out of himself, drop by drop, and how waking one beautiful morning he feels that he has no longer a slave's blood in his veins but a real man's."

Plantagenet's unsuccessful pilgrimage to freedom frustrates his desire for rebirth. Instead he turns his attention in the hospital to a young boy who reminds him of "Rimbaud at twelve", Garry, the murderer of a little girl, and to Garry's father figure, Mr. Kalowsky, "the Wandering Jew". But these two eventually spiral away from him until they are lost, while Plantagenet only reverts to his whisky bottle after leaving the hospital.

Lowry lost all the notes for *Lunar Caustic*'s expansion when his cabin burned to the ground. Thus the work which was to have been Purgatory perished with the intended Paradiso, *In Ballast to the White Sea,* while ironically the Inferno, *Under the Volcano,* never faced the flames. Lowry wrote in 1952: "I can believe *Lunar Caustic* was too gruesome for anyone's consumption. I can even now believe my unconscious made it too gruesome for anyone whatever but I cannot believe there is no merit in it."

There is no doubt of the work's merit. It stands with Joyce's short story *Grace,* Charles Jackson's novel *The Lost Weekend* and Faulkner's little known story *Mr. Acarius* as an honest and frightening descent into the black hole of an unreal reality where to drink life to the lees is to be a "lonely soul falling featherless into the abyss": where to imitate Rimbaud's descent into hell one must run the risk of never resurfacing to a normal life. Like his kindred spirits Baudelaire, Poe and Melville, Lowry fathomed depths that eventually cost him his life. With his dead hand upon them, Margerie Lowry and Earle Birney have reproduced in this Cape Edition of *Lunar Caustic* the text they edited for *The Paris Review* in 1963. The introduction is by Conrad Knickerbocker, Lowry's onetime biographer before his regrettable suicide.

Dark As The Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid shares some of the flaws of *Lunar Caustic.* Posthumously and posthumourously spliced together by Margerie Lowry and this time Douglas Day, Knickerbocker's successor as the "official" Lowry biographer, it fails to measure up to the Everest proportions of *Under the Volcano.* The sequel is never as good as the original especially when it lacks the finishing touches of its creator. In this

case Lowry risked this failure by choosing to return to the setting of *Under the Volcano* where he sought to exorcise the ghosts of his past.

Sigbjorn (sea-born) Wilderness is Lowry's persona who returns to Cuernavaca and Oaxaca with his second wife, Primrose, who is seeing Mexico for the first time. His novel, *The Valley of the Shadow of Death*, has yet to be accepted by a publisher and he fears that his writing days are over. The return trip is thus both flashback and feedback, with echoes, overtones and anecdotes of *Under the Volcano* throughout. To apply McLuhan, the 1947 novel is the old environment which becomes the content and context for this new novel.

The title, as Day fails to point out, is a line from an elegy by the British poet Abraham Cowley for his boyhood friend at Cambridge, Lowry's *alma mater* also. Sigbjorn's friend is one Juan Fernando, a six foot three inch Zapotecan who served as a Good Samaritan to Lowry in Mexico in the thirties. He was the original for Juan Cerillo and Dr. Vigil in *Under the Volcano*, though still a young man of 24. He is both the beginning and the end of the novel as the fixed focus for Sigbjorn's quest.

The book opens very slowly with the plane trip south from Vancouver where the wandering two have settled in Eridanus (Dollarton). The flat character of Primrose and the stilted dialogue are offset by Sigbjorn's musings. "Wrapped in the tentacles of the past, like some gloomy Laocoön", he is doomed to observe life as "lost prose sliding past the window". As a Rip Van Winkle figure he prepares himself for *Under the Volcano Revisited.*

The descent into Mexico then is simultaneously a descent into self, and a descent into the past for Sigbjorn, while for Primrose it is little more than a vacation with a knowledgeable guide. Unfortunately this story is little more than the thinly veiled diary of the Lowrys' trip to Mexico in 1945-6 when he wrote his famous letter to Jonathan Cape and shortly thereafter attempted suicide. When the Wildernesses finally learn that Fernando had been killed several years ago the book attains only the weakest of climaxes. Basically then Lowry's drafts for this novel were still little more than a transcription of life rather than a dramatization of it. The transmutation of life into art has not materialized as it did so well in *Under the Volcano.*

The book is closer to Mann's *The Story of a Novel*, his account of the writing of *Doctor Faustus*, than to Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, Huxley's *Eyeless in Gaza* and other novels about novelists. It is also comparable with Aiken's *Ushant* as an autobiographical exegesis and *roman à clef*. But unlike Aiken, Lowry died while still in the midst of life with half of his total works still in fragments. To his first master he once said, "Conrad, you ought to decorate the page more", an embellishment he practised on *Under the Volcano* for ten years. Here lies one of the faults of *Dark As The Grave*'s allusions: they provide few depth charge explosions in the reader's mind, as they did in *Volcano*. Similarly, the absence of the unities of time and place associated with *Volcano* prevent the reader from firmly stabilizing himself. Passages of beautiful prose alternate with banal conversational links. The editors' problems are evident here for they had to choose among variant versions of sentences time and time again without

using any non-Lowry originated words. One might wish for the alternative — that is the 705 page "bolus" of three distinct texts — but the publishers chose an ungelled novel rather than the work frozen in progress.

Under the Volcano remains as the sun in Lowry's solar system. *Ultramarine, Lunar Caustic, Dark As the Grave Wherein My Friend Is Laid, Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place, La Mordida* and *October Ferry to Gabriola* are the planets, each different and fascinating yet all part of one plan and one man.

COCK AND BULL STORIES

William H. New

JACK LUDWIG, *Above Ground.* Little, Brown. $6.95.
ROBERT HUNTER, *Erebus.* McClelland & Stewart. Paper, $2.95.
MORDECAI RICHLER, *Cocksure.* McClelland & Stewart. $5.95.

AT FIRST GLANCE Jack Ludwig's most recent novel, *Above Ground,* reads like *In Praise of Older Women* rewritten in order to praise only slightly older women. The central character/narrator is a young man, Joshua, who recalls his early ill childhood and, beginning with the hospital nurses, recounts his subsequent flight from woman to selected woman. He exempts a spastic girl from his attentions; and Ludwig is a little unclear about the extent of Joshua's relations with the mad sister of his friend Gersh; and if we add the fairy chemistry professor to the list, it still leaves Joshua with a lot of running room for his active organs. There is Maggie, whom he marries; Zora, the dark passion of his life, who grows older; Alvira, the fat girl who obsessively loses weight for him, and when he is not permanently attracted, puts it back on in order to hate him adequately enough; Nina, who abandons him for politics; Gyla, who is all women and all suffering Russian Jews to his all guilty (because of Hiroshima) American maleness; and Mavra, a curiously wistful sad case of a woman, whom, like the others, Joshua says he loves. So goes the book, and it would be magnificently forgettable if all there was to it were these (what the book jacket calls) "stunning characterizations". Some of them are clever, certainly, and Ludwig knows a smart phrase when he sees it, even if more of them should have waited for another book. But "stunning"?

What the many portraits are supposed to do, if we judge from Ludwig's recurring use of a word like "palimpsest", among other things, is join together to illustrate the Eliotian epigraph: "so all women are one woman". The trouble is that even Joshua knows it isn't true; they all grow old separately, and they all must die alone. Even the spastic girl,

who first seems a casual aside, apparently haunts Joshua's imagination through the course of the book, till he is forced into announcing as a kind of expiation that she died long ago, in her sleep. Death frightens Joshua; he doesn't like talking of it. And so his father's sudden death, and the spastic girl's unplanned one, and the fat girl's reckless fatness, and the birth of his own child all force him to recognize his own age. And age can seem as much of a trap as the hospital in which his youth was expended. Hence the present hectic activity. Hence the girls.

All of this is told at a breathless pace, which is admirably sensitive to Joshua's frantic transcontinental life. Dangerously, however, it tempts readers to parody. The very first page produces passages like "The first strange man in my life was a doctor. He came to ask me what hurt. I said my throat." and "My father came in. I was bleeding. He fainted." The Dick-and-Jane innocence is so real by the end of page one that we expect Spot and Puff to bound into the novel on page two. Fortunately they don't, and though it is predictable that Joshua remains "above ground" at the end of the story, hoping to welcome the sunrise, having encountered the problems of life but not having solved them, Ludwig's overlong book is still one of those rarities that a second reading will improve.

Difficulty with clichéd situation is what also afflicts Robert Hunter's first and (that unfashionable epithet) promising first novel, *Erebus*. It amasses, in fact, just about every variation of the *Bildungsroman* that the twentieth century has contrived. A young man recalls his first sexual experience; he participates in a gang bang; he gets drunk; he almost has a homosexual relationship; he does have assorted heterosexual ones, including a Great Fulfilling one with an Older Woman; he manfully withstands a seductive attempt by an attractive drunken Indian girl, who later thanks him; he saves the marriage of a friend, who subsequently writes him a confessional letter; he is desolated when another friend, a gentle political liberal, is viciously blinded by some small-town reactionary hulking hicks; he runs home to Mama, which is No Good; and he finally commits himself to teaching in a Progressive school, learning what he can from his sensitive blind friend, Konrad, and plunging forward through the icy water. So this is Winnipeg? And the reader is left at the end of the book conscious of all the clichés, conscious of all the sentiment, and wondering why the Dickens he's been so moved!

Obviously what Hunter wants from his readers is a gutsy reaction, so (presumably) he uses the situations he does because for all their triteness they are humanly true. What most disturbs his characters and himself is not the animal part of man at all, though that alone is not much — a small and insignificant "spastic shudder", the narrator thinks. The narrator is shown to be both sensitive and insensitive to other people, dirty and concerned about cleanliness, lustful and moral, stupidly jealous and conscious of friendship, or in other words normal. "Realism" doesn't deny aspiration here, however, nor does license replace freedom; for all the impoliteness of the novel, it doesn't advocate immorality or chaos.

What does disturb these people is rigidity, in its many forms: masks of piety and righteousness, which hide nar-

row minds and inhibit sympathy; or intellectualism which in the throes of categorization grows sterile; or "philosophic, political, emotional, and ethical" refusals "to accept *change*"; or sight which is blind. Konrad when blinded, for example, becomes even more sensitive to the world than he was before; Darryl when he finds his marriage more important than his book of criticism becomes more of an intellectual giant; the narrator himself when he tries to help others to see the world can see it better too. Hunter would probably feel that these statements themselves were "rigid", that the "life" of the book lay in the response to it, rather than in the attempt to talk about it or in any attempt intellectually to comprehend one's response. So be it, for one does respond. But that doesn't make the book better than it is; it still leaves us conscious of huge purple patches of prose, largely in the first half of the book, when the "ovate orange sun" rises, the "day batters itself into a stunned silence", the sunrise "stains the sky into a great red membrane", and the narrator "floats belly-up in the steaming red-soup of dawn". Maybe so, but all the characters sound like the same character, and hopefully in his next novel, Mr. Hunter will make his people speak like the individuals he says they are.

Then there is Mordecai Richler's new novel, *Cocksure,* which from its title sounds as though it ought to turn into a similar sort of book, a Great Quest for Initiation, phallus leaving Wonderland for a Happy Hunting Ground. Yet Richler, whatever else he does, eschews the cliché. His central character is a good-looking married father, beyond adolescence, who has discovered that his moderately liberal views make him thoroughly square in a with-it world. So Richler has it out with with-it-ness. Mortimer Griffin, denying he is a Jew, is charged with anti-semitism; his wife, conscious of his good looks and morality, attacks him for being an unliberated product of Madison Avenue standards. Their preteen child is sent to a school so progressive that sex and swearing are on the curriculum and the Christmas play is *Marat/Sade.* And Mortimer's old strait-laced school-teacher, Agnes Laura Ryerson, turns out to be giving her little boy students blow jobs to keep them in line (but is fired because this encourages competition), while his boss, a saintly publisher who excuses the Nazis because of their tenderness, sells out to Star

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Maker, an American mogul whose immortality is guaranteed because of the efficacy of kidney, heart, skin, eye, and other transplants. Mortimer is being eyed for his "marvy lymph system", in fact, and the novel ends with him being besieged, his one hope for survival depending on a recently-acquired girlfriend summoning the police in time. She won't, because she lives in a Hollywood world, more conscious of the reel than the real and so unable to appreciate a personal threat. There are even more characters, all eloquently differentiated, and all in the same extravagant vein. And all ought to be gloriously comic, whereas after a while the book just wears. Richler, obviously having a go at assorted sacred Canadian cows, mostly succeeds in milking them dry, and the readers who have already encountered bits of the novel in *Tamarack Review* may find them better the first time round.

The difficulty about the book is the sort that the ironic ending of Richler's 1959 work, *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz,* implies. At that point, Duddy's unorthodoxy has got him some land; he becomes an Owner, wins Recognition, and presumably for all his idiosyncrasies obtains a seat in the establishment. But to extrapolate further: what then? Is he contented with himself, does he rock conservative boats, or does he become the resident joker, accepted and despised? Richler's stinging satire, brilliant as it can be, swings in two directions — against the old conservative world which he's had to do battle with, and against the new crowd of pseudo-sophisticates whose very with-it-ness is simply a new brand of narrow conservatism. Robert Hunter can see this; so can Jack Ludwig, though he's a little more cynical about it. Richler seems a lot more trapped than either of them, for his book suggests that he's at once conscious of the recognition he wants, aware of where the "important" recognition comes from, attracted by that group, and repelled by even the genuine tinsel that lies under its shallow false surface.

In "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape", Abraham Klein talks about the poet's predicament and the temptations that face him:

> *Fame,* the adrenalin: to be talked about;
> to be a verb; to be introduced as *The*:
> to smile with endorsement from slick
> paper. . . .
> It has its attractions, but is not the
> thing. . . . .
> Rather it is stark infelicity
> which stirs him . . .
> to walk upon roofs and window-sills and
> defy
> the gape of gravity.

Either way it's a vulnerable position. Richler's book, which will prove screamingly funny among the cocktail set and be *The* Richler to appear on shelves and side tables, is neither as human a book as Hunter's, as comic as anything by Günter Grass, nor as stirred by stark infelicity as Bellow or Barth. Maybe in the short run this doesn't matter, but for those who walk constantly through slick paper, a different gape of gravity awaits.

books in review

POET OF THE OBVIOUS

DAVID HELWIG, *Figures in a Landscape.* Oberon Press (Ottawa, 1967), pp. 217. $3.00

To BEGIN with a line about doilies guarding chairs: there must be some sort of risk in that. And riskier still to go on to Auntie Cis and Uncle Will, to picnic chairs and dragon-flies, to Katie and the carousel, samplers, perch and teal, grapefruit trees in art galleries, and the Orange Lodge parade. It all sounds dreadfully like low-grade Betjeman, or minor-Reaney, or the inverse snobbishness of Larkin and "the Group". Precious stuff. Yet, this is the stuff out of which David Helwig chooses to make his poems, and in *Figures in a Landscape*, a collection of 82 poems and three plays, he shows, among other things, what a poet can do with seasons and memories. Surprisingly, for all its domestic, Victorian clutter ("Bisque Figurines in a Landscape", one is tempted to retitle it), and despite a confusing five-part organization, *Figures in a Landscape* leaves the impression of lucid poetic intelligence and a sharply-defined sense of particular time and place.

Helwig is a poet of the obvious: falling leaves speaking of the transience of all things; the loneliness of broken fences and backyards; mutability in the sand. But he has his reasons for reworking traditional themes and courting a hometown muse. Presumably, he seeks a ground for poetry in imperfection rather than in prophecy, in the impermanent rather than in an absolute, in a resolute, if sometimes clownish, self rather than in wayward distortion. If any one poem can serve as an example, Helwig's fine meditation on "A Shaker Chair" might do. For here, refusing "To turn away to the light of God's solitude", he puts against the "stillness turning, stillness moving" of the Shakers' prophetic creed his "scrap of sense", his "now and never, one unperfect love". The powerful oxymorons run throughout the poem for more than technical exercise or display: imperfections yoke together as many opposites as we might find in the paradoxes of perfection, and "plain speaking", itself a pun on the planed wood of the chair, provokes equally the tensions of inner light and of sense experience. Plain speaking, then, the language of wood or silence or sense, is the virtue Helwig seeks so that he might play out his themes of flux and stasis, desire and loss, innocence and experience. And if the plain world is the ground of poetry, it can be made present only in a language appropriate to its homely objects, homeliness, and homilies.

For his uncles and aunts, then, for his Maggie and Kate, or for his Liverpuddlian scenes of scrabbling landladies and cold babies, Helwig employs, deliberately and skilfully, a clear, simple, active language. I haven't counted words, but I'd guess he almost invariably chooses common adjectives ("black", "white", "soft", "slow", "neat", "warm", "green") and simple action verbs ("drop", "poured", "climbed", "clutched", "stare", "runs", "stand", "wash"). The impression, certainly, is of a clean, supple line, of direct perception, and open awareness. Water and fire, images of motion and flowing,

appear obsessively, along with softness, wind, and dark. But Helwig does not relax into comfortable Ovidian metamorphoses, "locked in the soft prisons of aphrodite". If his world burns in a transforming fire, it is still a world of dry, brittle, reedy matter. If "Old Eden was an unknown, unthought sea" of eternal moments, there *is* a "staying light", a "world of paradigms and greed". And if all things plunge down the mill race, still it is "stone and beam" that are moved by "the heavy currents of air and water".

I am trying to suggest how in his lucidity and directness, and as the justification of his apparent plainness, Helwig manages to generate terrific tensions. Partly a matter of language, the tensions derive as well from the constant interplay of motion and stillness, painted and live figures, memory and sense. Curiously, Helwig is not unlike Edward Hicks, another preacher of the "inner light" to whom he turns more than once. Like the "stiff animals gentle" in the peaceable kingdom painted by Hicks' "violent hands", Helwig's figures stiffen into the artificial life of paintings; alternately, they move out of stiff art into life itself: stuffed birds live secret lives; a vixen freezes into the "still, hard fire" of the sun; a great lion stands in the park unmoved:

> all bronze his mane, eye and bag
> of seed, dead to the sun's folly.

Out of forests or from east of Eden come strange creatures, naked and soft, or fuzzy and shambling. In the Orange Lodge parade marchers become ghosts, move like dead men. So it is, too, that against the merely local and personal, domestic and quaint, Helwig balances poems of art (from the Baroque, Canaletto, Matisse), and sometimes with extraordinary effect, poems of madness, artifice, and dream, as in "Mad Songs", or "Warning" in which a lover becomes a dynamite-man, an anarchist, or "Reflections" in which we encounter a blood-chilling arsonist. And while two of the plays, *The Dream Book* and the ambitious *A Time of Winter*, suggest some reticence about peculiarity and bohemianism, the third, *The Dancers of Colbeck*, shows a gift for the grotesque that one would gladly see developed further.

It is probably unfair to suggest that vision and life are at odds in Helwig's poetry. He might well say that madness, dream, and art are simply ways of perceiving, equal to, not different from, one's sense of the plain, burning world of Ontario — and there are poems to prove this. Anyhow, his point is precisely not to use a fashionable rhetoric of violence or to seek out single-minded excesses. Still, I, for one, would be happy to see the Flemish realist in Helwig turn into that "thin man", John Bunyan, who "walks like a heron / in the swamp of decay". Enough of "chrome kettles that hold the kitchen" and Helwig as an "empty cup". If there's a Shaker in him, or a Breughel, crying to get out and be heard, let him be heard. Meanwhile, I suppose, we must have nothing but admiration for a young writer whose craft is so sure that he can write with equal skill a simple lullaby, a mad song, a dream vision, or a lament, or tell us plainly of a fire great enough to burn the world and all the trembling creatures in it.

ELI MANDEL

POP POETRY

F. R. SCOTT, *Trouvailles*. Delta Canada. $2.50.

THE TITLE OF F. R. SCOTT's book of poems from prose is *Trouvailles* — the French word for "discovery" in the plural. (Why didn't he just simply call it *Eureka! Found Poems*?) In any case, before I naïvely succumb to circumlocutions I would first like to quote Louis Dudek's definition of the "found poem" in his pragmatic Introduction to this book. "The found poem is really a piece of realistic literature, in which significance appears inherent in the object — either as extravagant absurdity or as unexpected worth. It is like driftwood, or pop art, where natural objects and utilitarian objects are seen as the focus of generative form or meaning." Good! Very relevant in view of its realistic connotations — but so is technology. The "found poems" in Scott's volume are taken from magazines and newspapers, and they make dull reading indeed. Not even one sex scoop. Mr. Scott, however, finds it necessary to add a Foreword wherein he theoretically constructs the few fundamentals of "found poem" aesthetics. Are there any? "There are various ways of presenting a found poem. In the strict manner no words should be added or subtracted; the original should be reprinted with only a change from the prose to a free verse form." Is he serious? He must be putting us on. As a poet, who believes in the gift of the Word, I am naturally opposed to "concretism" in poetry, and the foolish, decadent fad of finding poems in the pages of the fourth estate. Moreover, I am not only disgusted, but bored. I have an uneasy feeling that McLuhan and his cohorts are conspiring to launch a literary fall-out. I can hear them laughing in their book-walled shelter. "Found poems" are soon lost. They are quickly written, quickly read, and quickly forgotten. Scott's discoveries are no exception. At best, they rank among such entertaining parlour games as Scrabble and charades. If you're fed up with the TV routine and would like to exercise your intellect for a change — find a poem in your local newspaper. It's inexpensive, and more than one person can play. Perhaps "found poetry" may replace poker on the husband's night out.

Mr. Dudek calls F. R. Scott a positivist and a rationalist. I agree. He is the Thomas Paine of cerebral pleasure. He is also one of our first modern poets, and his books, *Events and Signals*, *The Eye of the Needle* substantially testify to his witty and satirical originality. It would be an unpardonable blunder to cross-examine his integrity as an artist in this review, but as for buying his Do-It-Yourself Poetry Kit — well, I'd rather translate the haiku of contemporary Japanese dreamers. I don't dig the commercial brainwash. It doesn't turn me on. It's funny/pun-ny, but it's disappointing too. As a proletarian who dropped out of high-school, I personally advocated a new kind of poetry for my colleagues; poetry that truck-drivers and factory workers could easily understand. This was a few years ago — I'm sorry now. Why drag poetry down to their level? Let's keep it esoteric but not pedantic; let the imaginative magic remain. And what I've been saying is apropos of "found poetry"; it's too damned easy! Like pop art and popsickle sticks and whatnot. Because we have more leisure

time, credit, hospital insurance, etc. Scott must discipline himself anew. He's a masterful satirist, but reprinting obvious inanities won't help. The other Canadian practitioners of this sort of thing are fooling themselves. They possess a great appetite for the printed word, and when they find themselves unable to produce — they start finding poems. There are also poets who, like Rimbaud, remain silent. And sometimes silence is the discovery of its own voice. Tragic to think that there are journalists who unknowingly fulfil the role of Muses.

LEN GASPARINI

"SHE'S ONLY A GIRL," HE SAID

ALICE MUNRO, *Dance of the Happy Shades.* Ryerson. $6.95.

OF THE FIFTEEN STORIES in this collection only one is told by a man, or, to be exact, by a small town hood who'd like to think that's what he is. It is, perhaps, the least successful story in the book. Of the other fourteen twelve are actually narrated by a feminine "I", and two, "A trip to the Coast'" and "The Time of Death" (to my mind two of the best) are told about women or definitely from a woman's point of view. In this sense Hugh Garner's incredible remark (meant as a compliment of course) that "these are women's stories," has a modicum of relevance. And true it also is that women seem to write more exclusively about women than men do about men. (And maybe worry about it less — can one think, quickly, of a masculine counterpart to Emma Bovary?)

But to say these are women's stories is to say very little indeed and at the same time to imply, perhaps, things about these stories that simply are not true. In actual fact the *tone* of the stories is curiously detached and *un*-feminine, *un*-emotional and *un*-involved. And the work is never sentimental or sentimentalized. On the contrary, it struck me that this may be the one weakness here: one is almost aware, sometimes, of the writer consciously holding herself in, too much afraid that if her voice becomes passionate, even for a moment, she will be accused of writing "women's stories" and told to get thee to *Chatelaine,* or the *Ladies' Home Journal* (which is why Mr. Garner's fatuous conclusion is so funny — and so dangerous to this particular writer.)

But first and foremost Alice Munro is a stylist and a professional in the very best sense of the word. One reads these stories with awe and (as a writer) with not a little envy. Listen to this description of the unmarried daughter in "A Trip to the Coast":

> She had a trunk full of embroidered pillowcases and towels and silverware. She bought a set of dishes and a set of copper-bottomed pots and put them away in her trunk; she [the young girl in the story] and the old woman and May continued to eat off chipped plates and cook in pots so battered they rocked on the stove.

and of the old grandmother in the same story:

> She got a pitcher of milk out of the ice-box, sniffed at it to make sure it was still all right and lifted two ants out of the sugar bowl with her spoon.

Neither of these is an actual *physical* description of the character, but the secondary characteristics enable us to *see* both May and the grandmother just the

same. And the sentences as sentences are beautiful in themselves. (Indeed, if one were a purist, it might be possible to love Mrs. Munro for her sentences alone, they are so carefully considered and so beautifully in balance.)

She also has a keen eye for significant detail: the party dresses of the retarded girls in the title story are of "grey-green cotton with red buttons and sashes" (as if red sashes can hide the institutional dreariness of that terrible grey-green); the portrait of the terrible Mr. Malley in "The Office", a huge thing "with its own light and gilded frame" and yet also in the room one of those awful photos of a poodle and a bulldog "dressed in masculine and feminine clothing." (We *know* Mr. Malley from these details — or at least we have some uneasy suspicions.) The children on the fox farm find their feet "incredibly light" after a winter of heavy galoshes and "the shaggy bushes along the fences" are "thick" with birds. The writer's outer and inner eye keep pace throughout, and if there is any conscious symbolism (the blood-streak on Laud's arm in "Boys and Girls" or the Star of Bethlehem quilt in "The Time of Death"?), it seems to flow directly out of the story and never obtrudes.

Mrs. Munro refers to the "crumbling world" of the ageing piano teacher in "Dance of the Happy Shades." In a sense this phrase could also be used about the traditional forms and techniques of literature. In fact the short story may be one of the last bastions of the sequential beginning, middle and end. And there has not been very much significant experimentation in this genre. Garner calls Alice Munro a "literary artist" because she has mastered the classic short story. It would be hard to disagree with anything here except the curious terminology. I would, however, like to see what she could do if she really let herself go. In "The Time of Death", with its sudden and disturbing plunge into the middle of things (the opening paragraph is almost Faulknerian) she gives us an exciting hint of what might happen if she tried.

But this book is very fine and the stories are good reading always. I don't however, recommend the introduction.

AUDREY THOMAS

COLD AND WARM TRUTHS

GEORGE JONAS, *The Absolute Smile*. House of Anansi. $1.95.
Collected Poems of Red Lane. Very Stone House.
FRED WAH, *Mountain*. Audit/East-West.

BOOKS THAT ARRIVE in batches always seem to do so fortuitously, as if to convey a message which severally they do not contain; as if to lend perspective to enthusiasm and depth to judgment; even to act as antidotes, as do the lyrical abandon of Fred Wah and the compassion of Red Lane to the clinically-controlled acerbity of George Jonas. For certainly the enthusiasm of one's first encounter with the work of Jonas needs pulling into perspective. And just as certainly, emerging shaken from his spell, drenched in his raw and mordant cynicism, one needs an antidote.

There can be no doubt that Jonas far outruns the other two. He outdoes them in the skill with which he wrings from his adopted language the last acid drop of nuance, in his artistic self-assurance, and above all in the sureness of his irony,

honed to such an edge that the cut often passes unnoticed until another atrophied limb of smug certitude falls away. He creates the impression of a nihilistic St. George, slaying resolutely and with great vigour all the dragons of folly and futility but without knowing why, seeing no prospect of reward (there are no fair damsels left in his world), and discovering at last that the dragons are within himself:

> I hurl sharp poems at the world
> And keep looking at the wounds in my skin
> At their point of penetration.

One is carried along with all this, excited by the sparks of cold truth that fly off in every direction, nodding agreement with every line (but not too vigorously lest one's head fall off); and, though Jonas resents being understood, understanding him up to the hilt.

Only in surfacing from these depths, where the cold is refreshing but mortally chill if over-indulged, and clutching for a little respite at the other books, did I remember that Jonas speaks only for himself, that other part presumed dead from the abrasions of a wartime Hungarian childhood. Within the range of perception of his living part he writes as well as anyone in Canada. Could he but revive the dead, the part that feels as well as sees, he would write better than any.

Everything in Jonas is dispassionate and low-key, as if written in post-coital depression. This makes for superb irony, but it leaves out of account the fact that the inverted emotions it awakens have meaning only in relation to the feelings they lacerate. Such a line as: "But it is against the law for some people to hurt me" is only significant if one believes in the possibility of justice. And one can arrive at a condition to feel the sting of "It makes sense for me to die for Barbara" only by travelling the emotional road the poet took to get there.

> Perhaps my coloured pebbles will rise to significance
> but it is equally possible that money is of value,
>
> wives are to love and parents to obey.
> I eat. But first I look at my food with compassion every day.

If a little of that compassion could be saved for people, saved perhaps even for the poet himself, the coloured pebbles might rise to even greater significance. For this quality it is, too precious to be squandered on food, that makes the difference between a Jonas and a Tagore. "I am past certainties," writes Jonas. And this is admirable: too much damage has been done by people's certainties. But cynicism and despair are themselves forms of certainty, no less damaging than those others.

It is possible to overstress all this, however. Jonas will write as Jonas must. Let us be thankful for a very good book, and hope (though the word is not in his vocabulary) that he will find the resiliency to write a great one.

In turning to the work of Red Lane, it is the similarities to Jonas that first impress: then, more slowly and lastingly, the differences. Often on the surface there is the same cynicism and the same low-key tragedy. There is also a hint of the self-pity that Jonas betrays. But almost in spite of himself, it seems, Lane extends to humanity the compassion that Jonas reserves for his food. And in the extremity of his despair there is still a place for hope, for search:

and only the night brings hope
of the new land
I search for.

And even when hope languishes, there is undying resolve:

And I am saving my feces
and fingernail clippings
and building a stairway
to the top of the wall.

Perhaps what emphasizes their difference most is that Lane was capable of writing for children. God forbid that George Jonas should ever try!

The knowledge of Red Lane's youthful death conditions one's reading of his work, even to the extent of persuading one that the event is there foreshadowed. It is easy and perhaps even trite in the circumstances to proclaim his promise and say that had he lived, he would have gone on to produce important work, but it is probably true. There are a few poems in the book that amply justify the efforts of the poets who gave their time and talents to make publication possible.

Fred Wah's long poem "Mountain" tends to reduce all the weighty subjectivities of the other two to molehills. Man and his sickly problems are thrust aside by a joyful word-orgy. It is a sort of Black Mountain "Kubla Khan", content to be its own justification, its own message. The Mountain stands immense, many-facetted, its sudden chasms sometimes inducing vertigo, and man gets into the act only by identifying with it:

stand in it turn cover the ground
take off the thought's eyes
go in
go in
go in the flaming base
sink in the skins of the Mountain's earth
along the road
far from the road
in gravel
stand through the twist in desire the
gravelled road inward
to the base of the upright Mountain

It is not a great poem but it offers beauty and a sort of existential joy, and in these days of lost bearings and foundering faiths these things may be more important than we know.

H. R. PERCY

POET BESIEGED

MARGARET ATWOOD, *The Animals in That Country*, Oxford, $5.00.

I READ A REVIEW of this book a short time ago which ended with: "Being a woman can't be that awful": meaning, I suppose, menopause et purgatorio, or mea culpa sansculotte, etc.

But these are not "women's poems," not in the way that term is generally applied anyhow. Certainly not about babies, kitchen sinks and ding-dong husbands. But they are pretty black, yes. The writer seems besieged from without by her own inner perceptions.

In connection with these poems I think of those old western movie meller-drammers: the ones where all the defenders of the frontier fort are messily killed by anti-WASP Indians, except one. This lone survivor runs around like mad on the log stockade, re-loading and firing the rifles of his dead comrades one after the other, giving an illusion to the Indians that the fort is fully manned and bristling with defenders. In the real world this lone survivor dies like a dog; in movies the U.S. Cavalry (Vietnam Regiment) rescues him with appropriate ta-ra-boom-de-ay, and the lights come up.

Well, in Atwood's poems the lights stay down and will finally go out altogether, as they should and must for both Indians and ephemeral settlers. And the writer is besieged from both within and without:

> The idea of an animal
> patters across the roof.
> In the darkness the fields
> defend themselves with fences
> in vain:
>   everything
>   is getting in.

But the animals in "that country" are obviously at home in this country, though their name-tags are missing. Simplistically, all you have to do is fit the poems over ordinary situations with people, but stereotyped labels on the real-life situations won't help identify the poem-situations: and we have not been here before.

Did Margaret Atwood once say to me that in my poems I made simple things complicated, whereas she made complicated things simple in hers? Or did I say that to her? I guess it hardly matters which said what to whom, but the idea has relevance. In a poem about the tourist centre in Boston, Atwood talks about the model of Canada under glass there, and speculates that there's more to her country than this indicates, suggests that the simple model is really complicated. Which is a switch (and if you're getting dizzy, so am I).

I suggest that most of Atwood's poems really do make complicated things simple, and people being animals do have the same simple motivations of animals — except that the Atwood-animal is pretty damn self-conscious about the whole business. In "What Happened" the Atwood-animal says to others in the menagerie that they (read we) are just that, and our communications don't amount to more than a grunt on a row of beans, a delayed reaction grunt, probably misinterpreted first and last. As animals we are unaware of the possible results of our actions in "It is Dangerous to Read Newspapers." And in "Arctic Syndrome: dream fox," the Peggy-animal metamorphosis is complete as she attacks the man-animal, tearing at his throat with her teeth (as I suspect she wanted to do all along).

"Backdrop Addresses Cowboy" might be about the animal territorial idea, naturalists affirming that birds and animals occupy and defend a particular territory: the unsapient man-animal also defends

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his territory, but attacks and destroys that of others as well. Or the poem might be about the U.S. Marines, or technology. Take your pick.

There isn't a belly-laugh or even a sly chuckle in any of these poems. I think Atwood has not yet really fired off all the muskets in the stockade she defends. Perhaps she is too terrified of the Indians (animals, dammit!) on the outside of her stockade (skin). Perhaps sooner or later she'll begin to laugh helplessly as the seventh or seventeenth musket misfires, and the Indians will all run away, scared to death by the silence.

The imagery in the poems amounts to the poems themselves, and no vivid distortions of reality are undertaken in brief — only in the total poems. No complicated rhetoric either, if you take rhetoric as a series of piled-on exaggerations. Almost any prose writer uses more. But these are poems, and very good ones —: tremendous, soul-stirring, awesomely analytical, penetrating, complicated —uh, simplicities?

A. W. PURDY

THE SUBJECT OF POETRY

JOHN NEWLOVE, *Black Night Window.* McClelland and Stewart. $4.95.

REVIEWERS TEND TO ALIGN young poets in the context of a few of their familiar national predecessors with a brief nod to Eliot, Williams or Creeley; but John Newlove's *Black Night Window* represents perhaps the most important evidence in Canada of Wallace Stevens' influence (from "Poems of Our Climate", 1942):

> There would still remain the never-resting mind,
> So that one would want to escape, come back
> To what had been so long composed.
> The imperfect is our paradise.
> Note that, in this bitterness, delight,
> Since the imperfect is so hot in us,
> Lies in flawed words and stubborn sounds.

There is Stevens' "Domination of Black" in these 70 poems by Newlove. The unmistakeable tone of negativism is set by the title poem. From his window (one of Newlove's displaced poses) all appears to be dead or dying "in this valley, / in this recession" ("Mendelism"). The title poem signifies the perspective of the poet: he is not "an outsider", looking into windows, but a man disengaged enough to find his special vision and to make his judgement. Newlove achieves this same distance, of the displaced person or stranger, when he strikes his pose "on that black highway" as "The Hitchhiker" en route from Montreal to Vancouver, through dreams and along the route of his own genealogy. These are the poses of the autobiographical poet, but there is more here than the hobo's dashes of local colour or the confessional poet's subjectivism. He usually remains disengaged enough to achieve smooth transition from the subjective to the objective, with a concentration that is unrelenting, yet well-composed, as in "The Drinker": "... There are things I like. / Like not confessing. Or the phrase / from some book ...", or as in "She Grows Older",

> ... & history-frigid me,
> I could not help thinking through her hurting flesh
> of the aged imperator Augustus
> dying in Nola ...

Although his tone may be dark and negative, it is not defeatist in purpose. Echoing Plato, Diogenes and Nietzsche,

Newlove admits in "Show Me a Man" that "there are too many liars, / myself among them." This "dithyrambic" poem to destruction, defilement and debasement of all human stature and innocence, from which no restoration seems apparent, concludes:

> the death
> that surrounds us,
> believe that,
> but do not love it.

In a poem that contains the poet's central statement, Newlove dismisses a stance of Eliot (as he does in "Lacking Any Plan"); he writes "In This Reed",

> there there is life, though
> once I should have denied it, thinking
> my somnolence clever evidence
> of a wearied intellectuality;

and then he picks up the Stevens "order" theme:

> it is imperfection
> the eyes see, it is
> impreciseness they deserve,
>
> but they desire so much more,
> what they desire, what they hope,
> what they invent,
>
> is perfection, organizing
> all things as they may not be,
> it is what they strive for
>
> unwillingly, against themselves,
> to see a perfect order, ordained
> reason —

and he concludes with an implication that the imagination grasps reality and its order, despite itself.

But Newlove has overcome one of the weaknesses of Stevens: he is not primarily a philosophical poet whose language is abstract. He is an autobiographical poet who believes that poetry is the subject of poetry and he is perhaps a more effective example of Stevens' own dic-

Carnival

"*Carnival* is a brilliant and remarkable story, full of clear, clean hatred and fun . . . a delightfully witty and bitterly pointed book" — Nevill Coghill

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Carnival/a novel by Nigel Foxell/2nd printing/softcover/ $2.50

Oberon Press

tum: "There can be no poetry without the personality of the poet." Newlove's language is concrete, immediate, precise and particular, as he writes in the exceptionally fine "The Double-Headed Snake":

> As one beauty
> cancels another, remembrance
> is a foolish act, a double-headed snake
> striking in both directions, but I
> remember plains and mountains, places
> I come from, places I adhere and live in.

Perhaps no poem in the collection better demonstrates his ability to make transition from the immediate act of writing, to personal recollection, to his immediate perspective, to myth (Canadian here) than "Crazy Riel", which opens naïvely,

> Time to write a poem
> or something.
> Fill up a page.
> The creature noise,

and progresses convincingly to the profound conclusion:

> The knowledge waxing.
> The wax that paves hell's road,
> slippery as the road to heaven.
> So that as a man slips
> he might as easily slide
> into being a saint as destroyer.
> In his ears the noise magnifies.
> He forgets men.

There are surprises in *Black Night Window*; all is not Stevens. There are short-line poems, pounding out the rhythm of their drama (like "Indian Women"), the image-expanding "The Pride" and the long dramatic narrative, "Letter Two". Occasionally Newlove reminds the reader of painters, such as the shadowless dimensions of "Palazzo Vecchio" (Picasso). Throughout the book there are surrealistic overtones — nowhere more startlingly than in "Like Counting Sheep", "tribes of wild indians / telling time by jello clocks", which is reminiscent of Dali's "The Persistence of Memory".

There are touches of humour in Newlove's book, but they are not light. The main weight of the book is strongly moral. As Stevens argues in *The Necessary Angel*, "the consciousness of his function, if he is a serious artist, is a measure of his obligation." One of the statements of "function" is made in "Ride Off Any Horizon":

> it is not unfortunately
>
> quite enough to be innocent,
> it is not enough merely
> not to offend —
>
> at times to be born
> is enough, to be
> in the way is too much —

John Newlove's sixth, but first major commercial, collection of poems is simply designed and highly priced, but it is worth the $4.95, not only because these are poems of a legacy left by Wallace Stevens, but because they are truly "Poems of Our Climate" — the climate of Newlove, Canada and Western civilization.

GREGORY M. COOK

PURGED WITH PITY AND FEAR

The Collected Poems of Anne Wilkinson, edited by A. J. M. Smith. Macmillan. $4.95.

READING ANNE WILKINSON'S POETRY without benefit of personal recollections of her, without impulse to apply the dry wringing of the New Criticism, without preconceptions or premature hypothesis,

reading for the pure pleasure of it, if that is any longer permissible, — what do we make of the poems in this collected edition?

They are without doubt persuasive, if only in keeping one's finger always under the next page. We do not want to leave this path so gently skirting so many potentialities. A retreating love and an approaching death appear among the trees of the garden, this changed paradise of remembered sensuous pleasure and the certainty of impending pain. There is some recollection of peace, but many heavy perplexities and doubtful portents.

There is also a certain progression and clarification of mood as we read on from poems of her earliest volume, *Counterpoint to Sleep* (1951) to those written closer to the time of her death, ten years later. At first we note a constant sense of identity with the cyclic life of nature and so with ancestors and with the same falling leaves and flowing waters they in their own time knew:

> My skin is the leaf of the willow,
> My nerves are the roots of the weeping willow tree.
> My blood is a clot in the stone,
> The blood of my heart is fused to a pit in the rock. . . .

Yet much of this sense of identity is with things fading and dying. There is not much free soaring or careless shepherding or unclouded gaiety or golden hope in Anne Wilkinson's world. Relations of parent and child are disturbed:

> "You're bruised near to dying, my schoolboy, my son,
> Your nose is all bloody; who bullied my man?"
> "The girls are so rough; Mother, wash my face clean
> And stay close beside me and feed me ice-cream."

Relations of lovers are even less reassuring:

> When last I'd news of them
> One lover looked to morning, one looked west.
> When one lay down to sleep, the other fell.
> For all I know they lie there yet.
> On the home sweet hearth of hell.

In later poems, these griefs deepen:

> Who killed the bridegroom? I, said the bride,
> With a nail in his pride, I killed the bridegroom.
> Who killed the bride? I, said the groom,
> I fashioned her tomb, I killed the bride.

And a first-draft stanza, later cancelled:

> Who'll bear the pall? We, said the children,
> Heirs to their burden, We bear the pall.

Love without true happiness, children without real pleasure, life without substantial hope, — such is the world of Anne Wilkinson's imagination. (We must not, of course, jump to the inference that these are dominant in her actual biography.) What, then, is her imaginative escape? Certainly in poetry itself, in the act of writing:

> I damp the fire with purposeful breath,
> Stare at ash, sharpen
> My pencil on stone at a cold hearth.

Very occasionally there is a projection of ideal happiness, generalized rather than given as experience or expectation. On the shores of a "Greek Island", hungry children are seen casting their nets for a fabulous catch, "Scenting, in fumes of salt and honey, / Things to come and the NOW in all things past." Or, in the fields of an Ontario farm, "Lovers, touching, lie, / A church of grass stands up / And walls them, holy, in." But these are the objectifications of desire and happiness and the world of inward grief persists. "Around my neck" concludes her

Christmas carol, "The hangman ties the holly", and this phrase gives its title to her second, 1955, volume. A brief poem called "Italian primitive" gives a clue to these painful struggles with life:

A narrow virgin droops
In newborn blue,
Lips folded in, lines following
The path of stilted tears,
Medieval mother of men
Holding in her inept hands
Her little mannikin.
Enamel butterfly and bee,
The polished pear, sing
Beside the bearing olive tree.

This image of life is intensified by its remoteness from our own scene, by its use of the ready symbolism of Christian faith and Italian painting. It has a cameo clarity. Yet neither virgin mother nor divine child offer any abundance of life. The painter's symbolic accessories of insect, leaf and shining fruit provide it. Intensely visual and tactile, they are both real and representative.

Reaching into history or to the Canadian landscape, to the Mediterranean world or back to earliest recollections, Anne Wilkinson perceives this shining fruit in "Countries where the olive/And the orange ripen." She desires a world of Keatsian sensation and thinks she should have said to her children, "Mind the senses and the soul/Will take care of itself." But what a heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed this spirit desiring freedom. There is such sadness in her realizations of herself: a boy and girl are seated with her in the park, —

They yawned and rose
And walked away. I moved
To go but death sat down.
His cunning hand
Explored my skeleton.

She is beyond measure wearied by the pain of life: "so tired I do not think/ Sleep in death can rest me." She and God miss each other or when, like seventeenth-century poets, she has fought against God and come to the limit of her strength, her end is not like theirs, but a terrifying transformation of being. She sees herself God's falcon, tamed at last:

Regard me now; I quiet sit,
Brooding on the skulls I'll split.
Or watch my flight; its easy pause,
Angle of incidence inclined
Against the bitter wind
Before I dive, God's mercy in my claws.

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? What shall we make of a poet for whom, when the clock strikes,

It strikes, 'NOW is forever.'
These are the sounds that murder....

for whom

Time is tiger.
NOW is wooly-witted lamb....

for whom death is "ultimate defeat"? She has passed God on the stair, yawned and seen him fade away; she meets no comforter, but only "The striped, discerning tiger of anxiety." Her remembrance of pleasant things is of things departed and irrecoverable.

Children wet with birth
Remember to their dying dust
The lost aquarium of Eden.

Our appreciation of this poet is in the pity. Though neither pitiable nor piteous nor pitiful, she does evoke that enriching emotion understood in the phrases "The poetry is in the pity" and "purged with pity and fear". She never pities herself, being totally free of self-purveying or self-regarding egotism.

She is also quite free of stridency, of the tone of explanation and advice, and of all desire to shock. Free also of "social

significance", of puerile protest and of useless outcry. A pleasing decorum, not inconsistent with frankness; a faithful correspondence between expression and experience; a superb discrimination among the shades of colour of her somewhat narrow band in the spectrum of life: these are her virtues. She concedes that "the white radiance of eternity" is not for her.

Honesty, clarity, persistence, detachment; some care for the reader, so that self-expression becomes true communication; great courage, the courage of one who, whether as poet or person, must have been much alone. Our thanks to Macmillans and to Arthur Smith for a volume to be kept on a close, accessible shelf, to be reached down whenever our sensibility to life is dulled.

ROY DANIELLS

THE FICTION OF WAR

STANLEY COOPERMAN, *World War I and the American Novel.* Johns Hopkins Press. $6.50.

THE TITLE OF Stanley Cooperman's study, *World War I and the American Novel,* may suggest only another examination of a handful of famous war novels, but the author attempts much more than this. He first summarizes the historical and sociological background of the period and then discusses with considerable acumen not only the well-known *A Farewell to Arms* and *Three Soldiers,* but also such lesser-known works as Theodore Fredenburch's *Soldiers March!* and Elliot Paul's *Impromptu.* Even when discussing the classic novels, he has fresh things to say. Indeed, the subsection dealing with Frederic Henry, "Death and *Cojones,*" is particularly illuminating.

He is also successful in relating the World War I novels to earlier war books, such as *The Red Badge of Courage,* and to the literature of World War II. He confirms, for instance, the common opinion that whereas the writers of the period 1914 to 1918 express a strong sense of outrage and horror, in the later conflict these reactions are less evident, perhaps through numbness or cynicism.

Less successful are the first and second chapters, "The Bold Journey" and "The Broken World." Here the use of misleading, if not inaccurate, statements may result either from a deliberate intention to provoke discussion — a good seminar technique — or a fondness for generalization and simplification. (E.g. "Once the war was given an ideological basis there was no room for chivalry, for any concept of the 'gallant foeman'; and this ideological basis was the only one which the American people would accept in the year 1914 [sic] to 1918". The alert reader will then surely ask, who were "the American people?") At times, Professor Cooperman succeeds in reshaping an accepted, even axiomatic judgment of popular behaviour into pronouncements that are both provocative and illuminating. For instance, "Perhaps the most memorable — and pathetic — selections are those written by the literary men like Belloc, who from a sort of medievalism and equally obsolescent romanticism, blamed the Germans for ending the image of war as a recreation for gentlemen . . ." At other times, however, the author falls victim to his own rhetoric. It is also disturbing to find the writer of a scholarly book quoting evalu-

ations from *Dissertation Abstracts*, or statesmen's opinions from secondary sources.

It may be churlish to voice these complaints since the author has read extensively and intensively in the fiction of the time to provide numerous sound literary evaluations in the succeeding chapters, and it is for these chapters that most students of literature will use the book. He is able to relate a minor work (e.g. Faulkner's *Soldier's Pay*) to the rest of a writer's canon, and to be as critical and informative about the oft-despised pro-war novels as the anti-war works. As he rightly points out, both kinds are bad when unassimilated material, whether a panegyric of France or a bitter record of trench fighting is used. War and sex are meaningfully entwined in this pronouncement: "Despite her inability to deal with army and combat realities far removed from her own experience, Willa Cather in *One of Ours* created a study of erotic war motivation unequalled until John Hersey's *The War Lover* appeared in 1959".

Thus, in spite of the somewhat reckless style of the early chapters and an excessively reiterated attack on John W. Aldridge and other critics in an otherwise very good concluding chapter, Professor Cooperman has provided as fresh and sound an evaluation of World War I fiction as we can have at the present; and it will, I believe, remain the standard work for some time.

JAMES A. HART

ON THE VERGE

***** *This Rock Within the Sea: A Heritage Lost* by Farley Mowat and John de Visser, McClelland & Stewart, $10.00. John de Visser has made a remarkable photographic record of the Newfoundland outports. It is by far the best visual account of their way of life yet assembled, and it is likely to remain so, since, as Farley Mowat points out in his brief text, the outports are being killed off by a governmental policy of concentrating the population in larger centres. From now on any celebration of Newfoundland's traditional existence is bound to become an elegy. A more splendid elegy than these sombre, humane and moving photographs of sea and land and men one cannot imagine.

***** *Birds of the Eastern Forest: I*, paintings by J. F. Lansdowne, text by John A. Livingston, McClelland & Stewart, $20.00. Like its predecessor, *Birds of the Northern Forest*, this is easily the most handsome book of the season. Lansdowne's impeccable draughtsmanship is not only immensely pleasing, but also more evocative and informative than most ornithological photographs, and Livingston's commentary is economical, packed with information and conservationist polemics, and always interesting. A book for a triple public: bird lovers, connoisseurs of good figurative painting and drawing, and bibliophiles, for it is magnificently produced.

**** *Guns in Paradise* by Fred McClement. McClelland & Stewart, $6.95. The first full account in English of the exploits of the German cruiser *Emden* as a raiding warship during the First World War. It gives the bittersweet flavour of a world where chivalry in war was still possible, and still appreciated. Good research, good popular writing.

**** *Journey to Power* by Donald Peacock. Ryerson, $6.50. The best book so far on the New Canadian Politics. Mr. Peacock traces with great clarity the leadership crises in the Conservative and Liberal parties, and the ways in which Stanfield fell from a peak of seeming success to overwhelming defeat by Trudeau. Peacock is a Trudeau man, but he does not let it colour his writing, which is fluent without declining into the more annoying kinds of journalese. A sound guide for the times.

**** *The Stratford Scene, 1958-1968*, with an introduction by Michael Langham, Clarke Irwin, $15.00. An elaborate souvenir of the activities of Canada's ranking festival over the past ten years. Lavishly produced, with excellent photographs, recollections by participants, and appreciations by admirers. Some of the content, when it discusses the works per-

formed or the problems of performance, is excellent. But one misses the voice of the real critic. It is too cosy and contained, a family party, like so much in the Canadian arts. But, as family parties go, a good one.

*** *Politics in Saskatchewan*, edited by Norman Ward and Duff Spafford, Longmans, $7.50. As do all books by many hands, *Politics in Saskatchewan* suffers from extreme variation in interest and quality — clear-sighted intelligence to academic fatuousness. Still, prairie politics — particularly minority politics — are a fascinating subject, and there is enough information here on their growth and variations to make it, on the whole, an enlightening book to read and a good one to keep for reference.

*** *Ghosts Have Warm Hands* by Will R. Bird. Clark Irwin, $5.50. Will R. Bird was never impressive as a novelist, but here he has written a good narrative, moving, horrifying, of experiences in World War I. Fifty years afterwards, such first-hand accounts are becoming rare, and *Ghosts Have Warm Hands*, written from a vivid memory, reminds one that Viet Nam has been no worse than Passchendaele in its revelations of what man can do to man. Whether the author intended it or not, this book should shake militarists and strengthen pacifists into certainty.

*** *New France: The Last Phase, 1744-1760* by George F. G. Stanley, $10.00. Volume 5 in the admirable Centenary History of Canada. Very competently done, with a wealth of relevant fact, but Dr. Stanley is no Parkman, and the prose, heavily armoured with detail, rarely lifts from the ground. Except for the chronological line, there is no compelling form to the narrative. A book one will constantly refer to, but never read a second time with the expectation of pleasure.

** *Ensign Prentiss's Narrative: A Castaway on Cape Breton*, edited by G. Campbell. Ryerson, $4.95. A reprint, with reasonably elaborate notes, of the diary of a British officer cast away on Cape Breton Island during the American War of Independence. A minor piece of Canadiana: Prentiss was more concerned to present a slightly falsified picture of his own gallantry and enterprise than to describe the country or its people.

** *Alberta* by Robert Kroetsch. Macmillan, $6.95. The second in Macmillan's series, "The Traveller's Canada", markedly inferior to its predecessor, Edward McCourt's *Saskatchewan*. The manner is sheer journalese, cosy and breathless by turn, and most irritating to read, particularly as much time is wasted with completely uninteresting personal experiences. The book's one redeeming feature is a wealth of out-of-the-way facts.

** *Minutes of the Sixties* by James Eayrs. Macmillan, $6.95. A good author's comments on events in the world around him are interesting at the time, and may be interesting in fifty years, when they take on historical patina. But there is a dead time for such journalism, which begins a few months after it was written, and lasts usually for at least two decades. James Eayrs has collected his commentaries at just the time when they are least interesting. Appearing as little as two years after the events they describe, they seem immeasurably dated.

** *The Smug Minority* by Pierre Berton. McCelland & Stewart, $5.95. A little of the Vancouver Town Fool goes a long way, and the same might be said of Pierre Berton in his muckraking manner. He spoils many a good case by cutting a caper at the wrong time. Eliminate the fooling, and this might make a moving long essay on stagnation in Canadian society — Porter popularized as he needs to be. A good chance lost!

G. W.

A NOTE ON MAJOR JOHN RICHARDSON

IN THE BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION which A. C. Casselman contributed to his edition of Major John Richardson's *War of 1812* (Historical Publishing Co., Toronto, 1902) there occur the following paragraphs:

> After the publication of *The Canadian Brothers*, Richardson made preparations to start for his home in Sandwich. He decided to travel by means of his own equipage, a method affording greater freedom and more ease and convenience. He therefore purchased a sleigh, a team of spirited French Canadian ponies, and suitable harness and robes, and engaged a servant to care for the ponies at all stopping places. He set out from Montreal during the last

> days of February. In Cornwall he stayed some days, rehearsing old times with Judge G. S. Jarvis, an old fellow-officer of 8th (Kings). His fondness for being entertained by his old friends on the way, and an accident in the early part of the journey, delayed him, and by the time Brockville was reached it was impossible to go farther by sleigh.
>
> While waiting here some days to make the necessary changes to travel by waggon, he was advised to purchase a piece of land, beautifully situated on the high banks of the St. Lawrence, on which were a good house and barn and other out buildings. The journey, which occupied about two months, the greater part of which time was spent in visiting at Kingston, Toronto and London, ended about the last of April.[1]

Since *The Canadian Brothers* was written in 1839 and registered in Montreal on January 2, 1840, this would suggest that it was in the late winter or early spring of 1840 that Richardson purchased the Brockville property which was to be his home for the next few years, and from which he issued his newspaper, *The New Era*. Confirmation of this date has lately been provided by the discovery of the "Indenture of Bargain and Sale" between William Hayes and John Richardson, dated March 7, 1840 — the discovery having been made in the Brockville Register office by Miss Effie Cowan of Brockville, with whom I had been corresponding about Richardson's Brockville sojourn.

As this agreement will form an essential document for anyone who undertakes to write the first full scale biography of Richardson, I think it is worth reproducing in full. As the ink is badly faded, some of the readings below are subject to error:

Liber 2
No. 268
Indenture of
Bargain & Sale
from
William Hayes
to
John Richardson
I hereby certify that the
within named Richard
Duncan Fraser upon his
oath before me proved the
signing and sealing of the
within memorial and the
execution of the deed to
which it relates
Oliver Jones (?)
Register
The within named Richard Duncan Fraser
maketh oath and saith that he was personally
present and saw the within memorial signed
and sealed and the deed to which it relates duly
executed.
R. D. Fraser
Sworn before me at Brockville
This 17th day of March 1840
Oliver Jones
Register
And this memorial thereof is hereby required (?)
to be registered by me the said John
Richardson the grantee herein named.
As witness my hand and seal this
seventh day of March in the year of
our Lord one thousand eight hundred
and forty.
Signed and Sealed
In presence of J. Richardson
R. D. Fraser
D. M. Quinn (?)

According to Miss Cowan, the property was a large one, including house, land and outbuildings, and the price paid — a very high one for those times — was £500. It was situated at the corner of Ann and King Streets in Brockville, and ran from the highway (King Street) to the St. Lawrence River. The impulsive buying of such an expensive property, probably at a price far beyond its actual value, is quite in keeping with what we know of Richardson's imperious, romantic and extravagant personality.

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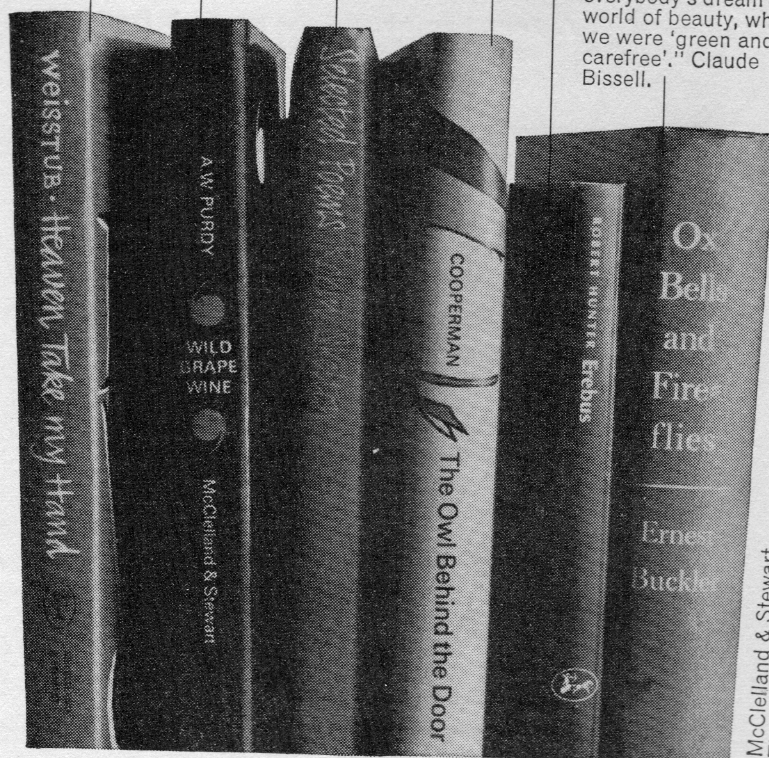

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