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# CANADIAN LITERATURE No. 45

*Summer, 1970*

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# CANADIAN LITERATURE

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editorial

# PERMUTATIONS OF POLITICS

THERE ARE TIDES in the social consciousness of artists, and of writers especially. Often the rising and falling of the waters of interest can be traced in the works of a single writer: Auden, for example, or perhaps even better Spender, returning, after two decades of imperfect aestheticism, to relive vicariously in the youth rebellions of the Sixties his own original revolt of thirty years before.

In the marginal area where literature merges into journalism such shifts of fashion, sensitive to the feeling of the time, are especially perceptible. Orwell was the classic example of a writer standing on that volatile frontier. Never sure that he was a good novelist, or a novelist at all in any strict sense, he combined a a passion for the exact and appropriate word with a knowledge of his own timeliness as a journalist. In the twenty years of his writing life, Orwell remained acutely conscious of the social and political issues of his age, yet in his last days it seemed possible — given his growing interest in exploring a Conradian type of fiction — that if he had lived into the Fifties he would have followed most of the men of the Thirties into a detachment from current issues, out of which he would probably have emerged, as so many others have done, into the commitments of the Sixties.

Inevitably, with that change in climate, our age has become, like the decade of the Left Book Club and *The Road to Wigan Pier*, a time when journalists and even writers with more portentous ambitions turn back towards the disinherited, and immerse themselves again in that world of *les bas fonds* which fascinated the French quasi-anarchist writers of the 1890's, the Russian writers who appeared between the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, and the English writers in the age of the Spanish Civil War.

The best of all these works of documentary reportage to appear in Canada has been one that did not look directly at the distress of the present, but reminded us of it by holding up the misery of the Depression, admirably evoked, as a mirror for today or perhaps tomorrow. It was James H. Gray's *The Winter Years*, which appeared in 1966.

Neither of the two recently published Canadian books that strike me as symptomatic of the climate at the beginning of the 1970's is as well-crafted or as memorable a book as Gray's little masterpiece. And, even if craftsmanship or memorability are not merits at which their authors aspire, these books are not even so effective in the art of communicating experience. Both — *The Poverty Wall* by Ian Adams (McClelland & Stewart, $2.95) and *The Underside of Toronto* edited by W. E. Mann (McClelland & Stewart, $8.95) — reveal in varying degrees the limitations of perception which the development of the social sciences has imposed on the natural history of poverty in the later twentieth century.

*The Underside of Toronto* is far the more disappointing of the two books; its title is probably the most exciting thing about it. Anyone remembering Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*, or even Thomas Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor*, will recognize by comparison the general poverty of insight in this uneven collection of pieces which Professor Mann has scrambled together, the prevailing lack of the ability to evoke sympathy or involvement, above all the widespread — but fortunately not quite universal — replacement of interest in the actual human being by an immersion in the generalities and abstractions of pseudo-science. It is clear that Professor Mann and the sociologists on whom he mainly relies have little sense of the uses of literature to further their desire to communicate knowledge, and one can only regard it as fortunate that not every aspect of the underbelly of Toronto has yet been explored by researchers with their notebooks and hidden tape recorders. On some subjects the editor has been forced to rely on enterprising journalists who got there before the survey squads. There, indeed, is something uneasy and apologetic in the way he introduces essays by professional writers who do not use the quasi-hermetic cant of the social sciences. Yet these essays — by Robert Fulford, Elizabeth Kilbourn, Jack Batten — are the best pieces in the book because they are concerned with making people directly aware of what it is like to live in the underworld or to go there as an observer with his senses unblinkered by theoretical preconceptions, and because — avoiding tribal lingoes — they make the attempt to tell their stories in clear and attractive English.

Since, as Orwell argued, the clarity and precision of our language both reflects

and conditions our patterns of thought, it is not surprising that one finishes *The Underside of Toronto* with a feeling that the men and women whose profession it is to communicate their observations have produced accounts of the life of the poor and the neglected that are not merely more evocative and revealing but also — in the last analysis — more honest than the dense and arid writings of those who habitually subdue life as they meet it to the imprisoning network of research methods and classificatory conventions.

Rather firmly in the Orwellian manner is *The Poverty Wall* (Ian Adams), but it is the manner of Orwell at his least successful (*The Road to Wigan Pier*) rather than that of his best works of social reportage, *Down and Out in Paris and London* and *Homage to Catalonia*. The most telling criticism of *Wigan Pier* was that it was really two books; a direct report on the conditions of the English unemployed in the Depression, and a polemical discussion of the plight of British socialism. A similar criticism might be levelled at *The Poverty Wall*. Ian Adams has had a vast direct experience — both as an underdog and as a journalist — of the various faces of Canadian poverty, and there are many passages in which he describes his experiences with a starkness that is completely convincing and needs no polemic to support it. This is the personal and original content of *The Poverty Wall*. The rest of it — the statement of the hypocrisies that underlie current talk about the Just Society and the factual and statistical analysis of the true condition of the Canadian poor — needs to be presented, but not in this book. Indeed, its very presence induces a curiously schizoid tone, and in effect de-emphasizes the passages of personal experience and direct observation, in the same way as the opinionizing in the latter part of *The Road to Wigan Pier* defused the bombshell revelation of slum existence in the opening chapters of Orwell's book. Today one looks for new classics of the literature of social and political revolt, but in Canada they have not yet been forthcoming, and one is hardly aware of them elsewhere.

A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT INTRUSION of politics into our literature during recent months has only confirmed the editors of *Canadian Literature* in their long-sustained view, that petty localism has no place in our assessment of literature or any other art. We refer to the recent agitation by a group of extreme Canadian nationalists against the inclusion of Warren Tallman among the jury that recommended the recipients of the Governor-General's awards for literature in 1969.

The objection to Warren Tallman, whose perceptive essays and reviews on Canadian writers and books are familiar to readers of this journal, is apparently that he is still an American citizen. Let us look at the facts more closely. Warren Tallman came to teach at the University of British Columbia in 1956. For the past fourteen years he has lived in Vancouver, and has shown every sign that this is his chosen home. If he has not decided to become a Canadian citizen, it may be that he is not impressed by the formal implications of a man's domicile, but that, in our view, is a matter of his personal choice. The important fact is that he has been fully involved for many years in the Canadian academic community and has applied himself sensitively over this period to the study of Canadian writers whom he understands more profoundly than many scholars who are birthright Canadians.

But, really, we do not have to prove even that Warren Tallman is a long-term resident with an acute perception of Canadian values to justify his inclusion on the committee selecting books for the Governor-General's awards. The criterion by which such books are chosen is not the extent or nature of their *Canadianness*, if such a quality can be assessed. It is their *literary value*, and that should be manifest to any good judge of books provided his language is the same as that of the writers he is considering. In the visual arts it has long been accepted practice in the case of important exhibitions to include on the jury at least one expert from another country, and the procedure has its value since it assures that there is always an eye whose vision is not coloured by the local influences to which we are all unconsciously subject. We believe that Warren Tallman combines with a peculiar felicity the understanding of one who has lived long among us with the objectivity of one who has not yet made a final gesture of commitment.

The editors of *Canadian Literature* are as aware as the most ardent nationalists of the dangers of American economic and political domination. They are equally aware of the dangers of a Canadian nationalism that narrowly denounces the participation of individual non-Canadians in our literary and artistic life. Our culture, like our society, is a river composed of streams that have flowed in across the frontiers; cut off the streams, and the river will die in the desert of isolation.

# THE FOURTH SEPARATISM

*Ronald Sutherland*

THERE ARE FOUR KINDS of Separatism in the Province of Quebec. The first kind, manifested in mailbox bombings and other acts of noisy desperation, forms the subject matter of Hubert Aquin's *Prochain épisode,* Claude Jasmin's *Ethel et le terroriste,* Ellis Portal's *Killing Ground,* and to some extent of Jacques Godbout's *Le Couteau sur la table* and Hugh MacLennan's *Return of the Sphinx.* Based upon the fairly reliable premise that an established power structure will never voluntarily relinquish power, it is an attitude which is hardly new to the world or to Quebec. It is, for instance, the theme of a minor French-Canadian novel published nearly thirty years ago — Rex Desmarchais' *La Chesnaie.* But with a hero modeled after the Portuguese dictator Antonio Salazar and a revolution somehow intended to take up where Papineau left off in 1841, Desmarchais' novel did not create much of a stir. Recently, however, there have been a number of stirs, and a great deal of writing in addition to the novels listed above. The first kind of Separatism, then, whatever menace it represents for the Canadian nation, has certainly been a shot in the arm for Canadian literature.

The second kind of Separatism in Quebec is illustrated by René Lévesque and his Parti Québecois; although there is some doubt as to how wholeheartedly all the members of the party share Lévesque's articulate moderation. He is, of course, just as dedicated to the goal of an autonomous State of Quebec as are the adherents of the first brand of Separatism. The distinguishing feature of his attitude is that he has repeatedly rejected violence and force. Like the Scottish nationalists, he feels that independence must be achieved by means of the electoral system. As soon as the Parti Québecois elects a majority of representatives to the Provincial Government, there will no longer be a provincial government.

Another distinguishing feature of Lévesque's philosophy is that a future separate Quebec would maintain economic union with the rest of Canada, thus possibly avoiding the often-suggested danger of becoming a hockey-stick and maple-sugar

republic. René Lévesque justifies his position by the argument that only national independence can cure the frustrations and inferiority complex which have long haunted French Canada. Only independence can restore group pride and self-confidence. A benevolent federalism, like a loving mother who will not or cannot untie the apron strings, can never fulfil the psychological needs of a people who have come of age. And just as a grown girl does not want her mother to choose her boy friends, Quebec wishes to conduct her own external affairs.

The other two kinds of Separatism have not been so widely publicized as the first two. There is the Separatism of those who do not really want a politically independent Quebec, but who have learned that the Separatist Movement can be a useful lever to obtain concessions from English Canada, and even from the United States and France. Whereas the other brands of Separatism are nourished by the fears in the hearts of French Canadians, this kind reverses the situation and exploits the fears and aspirations of those who are not French Canadians. Once again, the principle is time-honoured and productive — it has long been used by politicians in the American South and more recently by the "block-busters" in the American North.

The fourth variety of Separatism is the opposite of the third, and it is undoubtedly the most significant of all four. It is the genuine desire for group self-determination which is shared by thousands, perhaps millions of French Canadians who nevertheless refuse to declare themselves Separatists. These people are the confused masses. They know there is something wrong. They feel frustrated and dehumanized, manipulated by a system which they vaguely identify with English Canada and the United States. But because the identification is vague, and because the positive stance of the terrorist groups seems an over-simplification; because the terrorism itself is alien to their thinking and apparently futile; because these people have been conditioned over the centuries to accept the imperfections of life on earth, they have not as yet openly committed themselves. Many are afraid to do so; others do not know how. At the moment they are Separatists in as much as they wish to protect themselves, build a wall around themselves, escape from something, escape from the boiling ocean of North American society and gain the reassuring warmth of the family circle. As I have said, these people vaguely identify the oppression they feel with English Canada and the United States, often grouping the two together under the term *mentalité anglo-saxonne*. If ever Quebec actually does secede from the Canadian Union, it will be because this vague identification has been changed to something positive and specific. And not necessarily with benefit of logic.

The four kinds of Quebec Separatism, then — terrorist, political, opportunist and psychological — are quite distinct from one another, and it seems to me that a knowledge of these distinguishing characteristics is a necessary prelude to examination of the literature of Separatism. Hubert Aquin's *Prochain épisode*, for example, was written by a man who at one time openly embraced the attitudes of our first category; in fact, the book was composed while Aquin was being detained in a Montreal jail after his arrest for alleged terrorist activities. It is an unusual, highly original novel, interweaving an *apologia pro vita sua* with a spy story and using both threads to present symbolic or direct commentaries on the malaise of Quebec.

This malaise is eloquently sung from the beginning to the end of the book. It is tied up with the narrator's personal frustration. "Le salaire du guerrier défait," says Aquin, "c'est la dépression. Le salaire de la dépression nationale, c'est mon échec." A little later he comments: "C'est vrai que nous n'avons pas d'histoire. Nous n'aurons d'histoire qu'à partir du moment incertain où commencera la guerre révolutionnaire. Notre histoire s'inaugurera dans le sang d'une révolution qui me brise et que j'ai mal servie; ce pour-là, veines ouvertes, nous ferons nos débuts dans le monde." Here as in Negro America, violence is regarded as a necessary ritual — the new identity must be baptized in blood and in fire: "Un sacrement apocryphe nous lie indissolublement à la révolution. Ce que nous avons commencé, nous le finirons."

But the novel has another aspect. Interwoven with the narrator's agonized protestations is a description of the events which make up the first episode, or at least the episode which precedes what is to be *le prochain épisode*. This story is an intriguing allegory. H. de Heutz in his several guises of historian, financier and government agent is a symbol of English Canada and the Canadian power structure, or the Establishment if you will. K., the girl with the long blond hair whom the narrator loves passionately and who is presumably his inspiration and accomplice in the attempt to eliminate H. de Heutz, is symbolic of *Québec* and the *Québecois*. In the usual spy-thriller way, the narrator follows the trail left by H. de Heutz, becoming more and more fascinated as he picks up additional bits of information about his many-sided quarry. The true identity of H. de Heutz becomes increasingly cloudy. He has other names and personalities. And he is cunningly dangerous. When the narrator eventually finds him in Geneva, he is himself overpowered and becomes a prisoner. Taken to H. de Heutz's chateau for questioning, the narrator invents a classic sob-story about abandoning his wife and two children because of debts and then lacking the courage to rob a bank or

kill himself with the gun found on his person. H. de Heutz, of course, dismisses the story, but the narrator manages to catch him off-guard, grabs the revolver, and the tables are turned.

Then the plot takes a curious twist. When the narrator has transported H. de Heutz to a forest and is about to shoot him, the latter begins to weep pitifully and plead for his life. Then to the narrator's mystification, he repeats exactly the same sob-story that the narrator had used shortly before. This incredible development has a hypnotic effect on the narrator. He hesitates. And before he can condition himself to perform the execution, a friend of H. de Heutz has crept up behind him and the intended victim escapes. The friend, incidentally, is a girl with long blond hair.

The narrator has one more unsuccessful encounter with H. de Heutz; then he is instructed to return to Montreal, where plainclothes policemen, one of whom is hidden in a confessional booth, capture him in the Notre Dame Church.

What does all this mean? For one thing, Aquin appears to be saying that the narrator, the would-be terrorist executioner, fails because H. de Heutz, despite his chateau with a reproduction of Benjamin West's "The Death of General Wolfe" hanging on the wall, does not correspond to the narrator's idea of what his antagonist ought to be. And the correspondence becomes less and less satisfactory the more the narrator finds out about H. de Heutz. Towards the end of the novel he says: "H. de Heutz ne m'a jamais paru aussi mystérieux qu'en ce moment même, dans ce château qu'il hante élégamment. Mais l'homme que j'attends est-il bien l'agent ennemi que je dois faire disparaître froidement? Cela me paraît incroyable, car l'homme qui demeure ici transcende avec éclat l'image que je me suis faite de ma victime."

Moreover, the narrator and H. de Heutz are strangely alike in many respects. They share a taste for history and historical objects. Their identical sob-stories indicate emotional interinvolvement and similar patterns of thought. At one point, the narrator even mentions that he feels he is almost a spiritual medium for H. de Heutz. In short, the narrator fails because he cannot really identify his intended victim with an enemy who must be destroyed. He has developed a Hamlet complex. He is like a boxer who, confronted with a certain opponent, is unable to muster enough killer instinct.

There is also the suggestion — more than a suggestion really, for why else would Aquin repeatedly include the detail? — that H. de Heutz's blond girl friend is actually the narrator's beloved K., who has been up to a little double-dealing. Aquin's terrorist group, as we know, was not supported by the populace

of Quebec. In fact, the ring was broken by Quebec police. And the capture of the novel's protagonist in a church is probably Aquin's way of saying that *la résignation chrétienne* which has long been preached in Quebec, is not the stuff to light the fires of revolution.

Some critics, understandably enough, have regarded *Prochain épisode* as a sort of manifesto for the first of the four brands of Separatism defined at the beginning of this analysis. Certainly it deals with terrorist ideas, and as we have seen, in certain moods the narrator calls for blood and revolution. On close examination, however, the novel is unmistakably a negation of terrorism, a striking dramatization of the futility of violent intervention. "Je suis devenu ce révolutionnaire voué à la tristesse et à l'inutile éclatement de sa rage d'enfant," says the narrator towards the end of the book. What *Prochain épisode* does provide is an expression, and a convincing expression indeed, of the desperate frustrations which have resulted in our fourth kind of Separatism, the Separatism of the confused masses. "C'est terrible et je ne peux plus me le cacher: je suis désespéré," writes Aquin. "On ne m'avait pas dit qu'en devenant patriote, je serais jeté ainsi dans la détresse et qu'à force de vouloir la liberté, je me retrouverais enfermé." The idea that to struggle for something better might well lead to something worse is undoubtedly one of the reasons why neither the terrorist front nor René Lévesque has yet been able to conscript the masses of French Canadians. Nevertheless, the malaise — the fear of being swallowed up and having all identity destroyed by the amorphous monster of North American society — remains undiminished: "J'ai peur de me réveiller dégénéré, complètement désidentifié, anéanti. Un autre que moi, les yeux hagards et le cerveau purgé de toute antériorité, franchira la grille le jour de ma libération." The narrator goes on to say that he does not know what the *prochain épisode* will be. But he does know that something has got to give, and I have no doubt that he speaks for millions more than himself when he says, "je porte en moi le germe de la révolution."

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PARALLELS between Aquin's book and Claude Jasmin's *Ethel et le terroriste*. Both novels derive from the F.L.Q. activities which led to the death of an elderly watchman in a bomb blast behind an Army recruiting centre on Montreal's Sherbrooke Street. Jasmin, however, takes an objective approach, analyzing the psychology of a young man who plants such a bomb, then goes to New York in an attempt to escape. Paul, the

young man, becomes a terrorist partly because of the same sense of personal and group frustration which haunts the narrator of *Prochain épisode*. His reminiscence of Quebec vividly reveals this feeling:

> My country served up like rotten meat more than a hundred years ago to a band of long-toothed loyalists. My country stuffed with multicoloured cassocks, small-time grocers, skinny woodcutters, a few isolated giants, exceptions providing the material for our legends, which a great joker with a beaver face sings at the top of his voice to our pimply college boys, to our decrepit functionaries, to our street-corner clerks — in parliament we have nothing but a bunch of fat-arsed whore-mongers with their noses buried in huge cheeses made of taxes, taxes collected from the two-bit grocers and functionaries, nothing but an army of gnawing rodents who have themselves blessed every Sunday, who parade about spouting stupidities which are taken for promises. They get themselves elected with no bother at all by fooling the people, by muddling the wits of our grocer-functionaries. And in the wings of this theatre of vermin, the cassocks and the loyalists clap their hands.[1]

Quebec, curiously like Nova Scotia with its exiled Highlanders and dark clouds of religion, has nurtured its legends of giants to offset the nothingness in the lives of ordinary men. Paul, in Jasmin's *Ethel et le terroriste*, must have more than legends for sustenance. The author shows how the terrorist organization provides for him, as it does for other members, a chance to do something significant for the first time, a chance to fill a void which the conditions of life in Quebec and in Canada have not been able to fill. Speaking of his reception in the organization, Paul says, "Et on m'a serré les mains. On m'a dit que j'étais indispensable! Tu entends. On ne m'a jamais dit ça, sais-tu." On another occasion he says, "Je ne suis plus un simple 'canoque' de quartier du parc Lafontaine. Des héros." And when the time comes for Paul to do his part, he acts blindly, unthinkingly: "J'en ai des tics pour un long moment, et puis après? J'avais des ordres. Oui. C'est ce que je voulais. A un moment, j'ai fait ni un ni deux, j'ai dit aux gars: 'donnez-moi le paquet, l'heure, l'endroit.' C'est tout. Je ne voulais rien savoir. J'avais besoin d'un travail aveugle." And like many of the desperate men who jump from bridges or hijack airliners, Paul has his brief moment in the sun.

Jasmin's story, however, goes beyond the simple delineation of a character unbalanced by a need for recognition. The book suggests that many of the other members of the terrorist organization fit into that category, with various added personal neuroses to spur their hate; and so far as the typical terrorist is concerned, Jasmin is probably not far from the truth. But Paul, like the narrator of *Prochain épisode*, has enemy-identification problems. He finds it easier to love

than to hate. In particular, he passionately loves Ethel, who is Jewish. Ethel shares his feelings of frustration. She shares his moments of childlike joy, his essential innocence. She can even share his aspirations and understand his need for release through violence. But she cannot endorse group hatred and murder, and naturally the terrorist group is dependent on group hatred. Paul is told that he must abandon Ethel, something which he cannot and will not do. Thus he ends up in an impossible situation, alienated from his former gang members and being propositioned by the police to save himself by turning stool pigeon. His only sympathizer besides Ethel is an American Negro professor called Slide, who had been collaborating with the terrorist group, but who has become disillusioned by the group's drift from "Third-World" idealism to gutter xenophobia. Paul, then, like the protagonist of *Prochain épisode*, is a failure as a terrorist.

But while both Claude Jasmin and Hubert Aquin dramatize the futility of terrorism, they nevertheless confirm the existence of an explosive malaise in Quebec. Jasmin does not see it as something limited to Quebec. He sees Quebec's problem as part of a fairly universal unrest, which of course it is. Towards the end of the novel, Paul tells Ethel:

> The campaign that must be fought. You know, the war, the true war. The struggle to throw off this great fat cow, this diseased and lazy animal that is lying on top of us all. On your country and on mine. On the black people, on the people of Greece, on those of Turkey and on those of China and Scotland. An enormous beast. The evil, Ethel, the true evil, the only one — it's ignorance. That is what should be fought. That is the true enemy. Our only enemy. Ignorance. Nothing, Ethel, is more serious or worse than ignorance. That is what seeds confusion, what fosters mediocrity, taboos and prejudices.[1]

Jasmin thus identifies the desperation currently manifest in Quebec as essentially part of a worldwide phenomenon. He is, of course, not alone in making such an observation. Other Quebec writers, including Aquin, have said much the same thing. The term *nègre blanc* has come into use, and its legitimacy with respect to French Canadians was recently the subject of a lengthy analysis by Max Dorsinville.[2] Such books as Jacques Renaud's *Le Cassé* or Roch Carrier's *La Guerre, yes sir* convey a sense of depression and hopelessness subject to momentary eruption in violence, as a condition of life hardly peculiar to the Province of Quebec. Jacques Godbout's *Le Couteau sur la table* is even more explicit.

It is a cunning book, packed with subtle undertones and connotations. As in the novels of Aquin and Jasmin, the deep involvement of the protagonist with a

girl has particular symbolic meaning. Godbout's Patricia — rich, blond, beautiful, the ultimate in female comfort and accommodation — represents the affluent North American society, the land of the Lotus Eaters from which the protagonist cannot easily withdraw. She is the jet set, gourmet food, flashy motels and Florida vacations. When he speaks to her of the struggles of oppressed peoples, of the threat of nuclear bombs, or of his own bitter existential vacuum, she responds by offering him her splendid body, showered and perfumed. Then being half Jewish and half Irish in origin, Patricia combines two ethnic traditions which have long had special significance in French Canada. Each of the two groups has had a love-hate relationship with *les Québecois*. It has been possible to identify with the Jews as a cultural-religious entity surviving against great odds, and with the Irish as Roman Catholic Celts victimized by English oppression. On the other side of the coin, French Canadians have thought themselves exploited by Jewish businessmen and endangered by the assimilation potential of their English-speaking, *vendus*, Irish co-religionists. It is, therefore, understandable that Godbout's protagonist should have a love-hate relationship with Patricia.

At the end of the book he acquires another girl friend, Madeleine, who symbolizes French Canada, the quiet, obedient French Canada of days gone by. But he does not give up Patricia. Indeed, the three of them live together in an apartment on Mountain Street in Montreal, with Madeleine temporarily occupying the hero's emotional energy and Patricia his prime-time Sunday afternoons. Shortly, however, Madeleine is killed in an accident — decapitated by a truck while riding the narrator's motorcycle. A funeral parlour scene symbolizes the death of Quebec's old order, which the protagonist can witness with interest but without particular regret. Then he proceeds to seduce Madeleine's little sister Monique.

Throughout *Le Couteau sur la table* Godbout makes recurrent reference to nursery rhymes. Such rhymes, of course, are the most basic and simple indicators of cultural differences. Moreover, the rhyme "I, ni, mi, ni, maï, ni mo," which turns up most often, signifies the state of indecision in the narrator's mind. As the story ends, despite the stirrings aroused by Madeleine, her sister and the Separatist Movement, the protagonist remains in a state of indecision. Patricia is still there, but his attitude toward her has changed. "Je ne te ferai aucun mal, si tu ne dis mot, Patricia," he says. "D'ailleurs il ne te servirait à rien de te débattre ou de crier ou même de parler de nos amours anciennes. Le couteau restera sur la table de la cuisine." The knife is on the table.

In essence, therefore, all of these French-Canadian novels dramatize our fourth

kind of Separatism. All of them emphasize the pressing desire for action and the potential for violence. As the announcement on the back cover of Jasmin's *Ethel et le terroriste* puts it: "Tout jeune Québecois de vingt ans porte théoriquement une bombe sous le bras." The factor which prevents the theory from becoming practice and wholesale support of Separatism is the difficulty of isolating and identifying the enemy. English Canada and federalism have been readily pinpointed by some, but have not as yet been accepted as the malignant tumour by the many.

OF THE TWO ENGLISH-CANADIAN NOVELS dealing with Separatism, Hugh MacLennan's *Return of the Sphinx* and Ellis Portal's *Killing Ground*, the second need not occupy much of our time. Portal's novel is not an attempt to analyse motivations or to offer insight into sociological and psychological realities. Rather it is a projection of what would happen to Canada if ever civil war were to become a fact. As such, it makes a point. Canadians are just as capable of bestiality and cold-blooded slaughter as any other civilized Christian nation. Naturally there would be a mess. Portal's novel, however, is marred by overabundance of sensational detail, which reinforces rather than suspends the reader's disbelief. Raping the enemy's beautiful women is a common human response hallowed by tradition; chopping off their breasts with Bren gun blasts is a little too bizarre. The book eventually deteriorates into a comic-opera sequence of events including wife-stealing and interchange of roles. The more I think about it, the more I seriously doubt if *Killing Ground* has any value at all.

Hugh MacLennan's *Return of the Sphinx* on the other hand, contains a great many insights which are pertinent and valuable. Toronto book reviewers and the Governor General's Award committee notwithstanding, it is probably the most important Canadian novel to appear for many years. I emphasize the word Canadian, and I am going to make a general observation about the works of Hugh MacLennan which may disturb some critics in this country. As I have become more and more deeply involved and conversant with Canadian literature in both languages, it has become increasingly evident to me that Hugh MacLennan is one of the few writers in the emerging mainstream. By mainstream I mean that sphere of experience, consciousness and identification which is essentially and peculiarly Canadian. Every writer must perforce operate within a particular emotional and intellectual sphere of consciousness, and among Cana-

dian writers several such spheres can be discerned. With few exceptions, these spheres of consciousness are defined and restricted by geographical area — Ontario, the small town, the prairies, the Atlantic seaboard, rural, Quebec, Quebec City, English Montreal, French Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Winnipeg. Furthermore, for English-Canadian writers the broader spheres of consciousness are ones which have been defined by American writers, or at least are shared with them. The small town of Sherwood Anderson, for instance, is much the same as the small town of Sinclair Ross or W. O. Mitchell. The border does not really exist for the prairie sphere of consciousness. Stephen Leacock made a point of leaving his readers free to imagine that his settings could be almost anywhere in North America.

What, then, is a sphere of consciousness essentially and peculiarly Canadian? I should think that the main distinguishing feature would have to be dependent upon the main distinguishing feature of the Canadian Nation — the co-existence of two major ethnic groups. To be in the emerging mainstream of Canadian literature, therefore, a writer must have some awareness of fundamental aspects and attitudes of both language groups in Canada. It is just such awareness on the part of a few which is slowly moulding a single, common Canadian mystique out of the previous parallel threads of evolution.[3] The parallel threads, of course, are still there, and the majority of Canadian writers seem content, in some cases consciously determined to continue the process. But Hugh MacLennan is one exception. And not only is MacLennan one of the few in the mainstream; his body of works is the current which has given that mainstream definition and momentum. It is not surprising that the perceptive American critic Edmund Wilson, in describing his reaction to Hugh MacLennan, should say, "I came to recognize that there did now exist a Canadian way of looking at things." Nor is it without significance that George Woodcock should entitle his classic essay on MacLennan "A Nation's Odyssey." So many other Canadian writers — good writers such as Sinclair Ross, Morley Callaghan, Margaret Laurence, Sheila Watson, Stephen Leacock — are in the tributaries rather than the mainstream. And what is more, they are in the tributaries of American literature, not Canadian. Which does not mean, of course, that the work of these authors has any less literary merit. Indeed, in terms of universality of theme and appeal it could mean, and in some cases has meant, the very opposite. The mainstream is a matter of sphere of consciousness, not artistic skill; although sometimes the latter can be conditioned by the former.

So far as French-Canadian writers are concerned, until recently the great majority have been caught up in the various Quebec tributaries of Canadian literature. In other words, they have been regional in spirit as well as setting. Lately, however, a number of authors — Jacques Renaud, André Major, Roch Carrier for example — have embraced spheres of consciousness which, like those of many of their anglophone colleagues, are more or less extensions of spheres already defined in the United States. But these writers, and other such as Gérard Bessette, Réjean Ducharme, Aquin, Jasmin and Godbout, by virtue of a broadening awareness which includes English Canada to varying degrees, are moving definitely toward the Canadian mainstream. As their awareness shifts from the general implications of English-speaking America to the particular implications of English-speaking Canada, they will enter the mainstream more and more.

Hugh MacLennan, on the other hand, is already there. Provided that Canada continues to exist as a single nation, he may well be creating for himself a special status. I suspect that the day will come when Hugh MacLennan is considered to occupy a position much like that of Mark Twain in the United States, as the prime mover in the emergence of a distinctive Canadian literature.

*Return of the Sphinx* provides a panoramic view of the different kinds of Separatism. Daniel Ainslie, son of the protagonist, becomes a would-be terrorist. Like the heroes of Aquin and Jasmin, he is a failure, and for the same reasons. He cannot make a positive identification of the enemy, his problem being especially complex in view of mixed ancestry and a father who is Minister of Cultural Affairs in the Federal Government. A weakness in *Return of the Sphinx* is that MacLennan's characterization of Daniel is incomplete. The young man is believable enough, particularly after one has examined the supporting evidence in *Prochain épisode* and *Ethel et le terroriste*. But the characterization of Daniel lacks the psychological penetration and necessary intricacy of the portraits of terrorists by Aquin and Jasmin. Comparatively speaking, Daniel is a skeleton. The trouble, it would appear, is that Hugh MacLennan, despite considerable power of empathy, cannot sufficiently withdraw from the regions of sweetness and light. With regard to Daniel, the author is at his most effective in the scene where Marielle, a mature, passionate and attractive emigrée from Algeria, introduces the young man to the delights of physical love, while at the same time from her own experiences making him painfully aware of the bitter harvests of hatred.

Aimé Latendresse in *Return of the Sphinx* is an example of the second variety of Separatism, and he is presented quite sympathetically and convincingly. Like René Lévesque, he makes a lot of sense when he speaks of the disadvantages and

humiliations long endured by French Canadians and the absolute need for new confidence and self-respect, for simple dignity. But in all fairness it must be said that MacLennan gives Latendresse an attitude much more sinister than any ever indicated by René Lévesque himself, although it is identical to that of certain other independentists. Latendresse, as might be expected, is a *prêtre manqué*. At another time, in another age, his energies and intellect would have been quietly expended within the greystone walls of a *collège classique* nestled at the outskirts of a small town. But now, like many of his counterparts in real life, he is at large, a man with an undeniable sense of mission coupled to a knowledge of history and great cunning. Here is no mongoloid misfit about to place a bomb in a mailbox. Yet because of the sincerity and determination arising from his sense of mission, Latendresse is not above manipulating others to do what he might not do himself. If the means serves the end, he will not question it too deeply. "I sincerely hope so," he replies, when asked if independence can be achieved without bloodshed. But then he adds, "In the entire history of the human race, has that ever happened?" Marielle tells Daniel that Latendresse is an evil man. But that is because she — and one suspects that Hugh MacLennan feels the same way — is convinced that anyone who would endorse a cause which is likely to lead to hatred, bloodshed and misery has got to be evil. Latendresse, however, is only evil inasmuch as the great majority of the world's leaders, revered and unrevered, have been evil; that is to say, having dedicated himself to an end, he is willing to grant that a certain number of individuals must be sacrificed to achieve that end.

Daniel's Uncle Ephrem provides an example of our third kind of Separatism. Chantal tells Gabriel of his views: " 'This is a good thing, this movement. It's the first thing that's ever made les Anglais squirm.' But I tell you, Gabriel, that if the Queen visited Quebec tomorrow, Uncle Ephrem would probably be in command of the guard of honor, and if he wasn't he'd be furiously angry."

It is Joe Lacombe, however, the R.C.M.P. officer and former Air Force buddy of Alan Ainslie, who expresses the fourth brand of Separatism, and he does so in a way quite similar to that of the heroes in the French-Canadian novels we have discussed. Contradicting the ancient Quebec dictum dramatized in *Maria Chapdelaine* — "Rien ne changera" — Lacombe says:

> Ca change! Ca change! And the feeling's wonderful. Tabernacle, haven't we suffered enough? Supported enough for more than two hundred years? Prayed enough? Gone to mass often enough? Given the Church enough? Taken the lousiest jobs and eaten pea soup long enough because there were too many mouths

> to feed on much else except once a week and sometimes not even that often? Why should it always be us to carry the load for everyone? Be tired all the time like *sa mère*, smile like *sa mère* because there wasn't anything else she could afford to do? Work for the English boss all the time like P'pa speaking English always to him in our own home? Or suppose we want to work in our own *milieu* — what then? In some dirty way with our own dirtiest politicians because they were the ones the English always liked because if they took money they knew they had them, took money under the counter and then did the opposite to what they promised the people who voted for them? Why can't we be free and clean and proud of ourselves? *Why can't we succeed as French Canadians* and not as imitations of the English and Americans? Why should they be the ones to judge whether we're any good or not? Why can't we judge that ourselves?

*Return of the Sphinx* thus echoes the message of *Prochain épisode* and *Ethel et le terroriste*. What is more important, however, is the novel's additional dimension, the observations MacLennan makes on English-Canadian attitudes. At the beginning of *Return of the Sphinx*, we are introduced to Herbert Tarnley, the prototype of the Anglo-Canadian businessman. Tarnley, of course, is concerned about only one thing — the security of his investments. MacLennan endows him with a curious, yet typical duality: through various informants he has a good idea of what is happening in French Canada and he is obviously worried; at the same time he can state categorically that if an independent Quebec were to try to nationalize industry, she "would find herself an appendage on the Latin American desk of the State Department [in Washington]." Tarnley, like so many of his counterparts in real life, is clearly a dynamic, capable man, the sort of person one would want to organize a blood drive or charity campaign. He believes in solutions, and his solution for the unrest in Quebec is that the authorities should be firm and show no weakness. Clearly everyone benefits from a stable society; therefore Quebec should be maintained as such. Tarnley's great deficiency is that he cannot understand spiritual and psychological aspirations. He is incapable of communicating with his son, but he does him the precious service of having his paintings evaluated by experts to establish that the boy has no artistic talent. When Ainslie is more or less kicked out of the government, Tarnley offers to endow a college and make him president. In other words, he knows what is good for everyone; and when Herbert Tarnley has control, everyone is going to get what is good for him whether he likes it or not. Tarnley and Latendresse are thus brothers under the skin; and if Latendresse is an evil man, then in the end Tarnley is equally evil. Neither of these men will solve the problems of Quebec or Canada.

Nor will the mighty politician, Moses Bulstrode. Fearless, absolutely honest, competent, built like a bear and Bible-bred, Bulstrode is the epitome of all the old warrior values. He takes no nonsense from anyone — members of the opposition, shrewd businessmen like Tarnley, editors or college professors. His attitude to Quebec is neatly summed up in a remark he makes to Ainslie: "What gives the French Canadians this idea they've had it so tough? . . . It was twenty times tougher in the Yukon than it ever was in Quebec." And looking at the situation in Bulstrode's terms, undoubtedly it was.

MacLennan makes clear that Bulstrode is far from being anti-French Canadian. Indeed, Moses Bulstrode sympathizes with the people of Quebec who have suffered from the exploitation of Westmount financiers, whom he regards as ruthless and corrupt. But as a strict matter of principle Bulstrode refuses to believe that French Canada should be accorded any special consideration. And it is here that Hugh MacLennan puts his finger on the crux of the Canadian riddle. If Bulstrode were a political operator or opportunist, if he were pro-English or anti-French, if he were simply ignorant, then he would not constitute much of a threat. But he is none of these things, and I believe that he represents a dominant body of opinion in English Canada today. Sincere and dedicated to the admirable principle of equal treatment for all, Bulstrode will never accept or comprehend the subtle distinctions which put French Canadians in a special category. To his mind, the poor in Toronto slums or Newfoundland fishing villages are just as deserving of attention as the residents of St. Henri, and who can argue the point?

*Return of the Sphinx*, as the title intimates, does not solve the Canadian riddle. Ainslie, who has struggled to create an entente between the English and French of Canada, ends up effectively excommunicated by both groups. In this novel MacLennan reverses the Odyssey pattern of his previous books — the hero returns to a house in disorder, but his wise Penelope, in this case Constance, dies when he needs her most, and his son is bent upon stirring up more disorder. Still, as MacLennan states at the end of the novel, Ainslie continues to believe that Canada will endure.

And we, gentle readers, are left with the question — will it really endure? Or from another viewpoint — should it endure? Or to become completely involved in the puzzle — how will Canada endure?

I am not a prophet, but I remain convinced that one can learn more about people and society from creative literature than from scientific reports. In MacLennan's story, Herbert Tarnley and Moses Bulstrode are obviously of the type

of person who would never waste time reading fiction. Consequently, they get to know the facts, but they are unlikely to be attuned to the underlying fears, hopes and frustrations. And the one point which surfaces from the troubled waters of the novels of Aquin, Godbout, Jasmin and MacLennan is that the significant brand of Quebec Separatism is precisely a matter of fears, hopes and frustrations. All four writers advance the thesis that Quebec is psychologically sick. Bilingual civil servants and bilingual districts may salve a few of the superficial irritations, the skin diseases, but they will not cure the disturbed psyche.

Is there anything which can effect such a cure? Is there any way to instil self-confidence, a sense of cultural security and a feeling of dignity in the masses of French Canadians who have not actually committed themselves to the Separatist Movement? I think that there are certain moves which would have a definite remedial effect. For one thing, the egalitarian attitude represented by Bulstrode in *Return of the Sphinx* and apparently an entrenched principle of English-Canadian thinking, must be modified. French Canadians, as the novels we have examined clearly illustrate, think of themselves first as a group or nation rather than as individuals. Thus the idea of equality does not have the same bearing in French Canada as in English Canada. In Quebec, it signifies equal treatment for the French-Canadian nation — on a group basis rather than on an individual basis. What matters is how the French-Canadian collectivity is treated. In other words, French Canada as a whole must have a special status. And in the light of the psychological problems discussed in all the novels, such a special status, including the greatest degree of autonomy possible within a confederate system, makes sense.

But if a genuine feeling of cultural security is to be created once and for all in Quebec, a cultural security which will make the novels we have examined historical documents instead of reflections of actuality, there is one vital step which must be taken — Quebec must become an officially unilingual, French-language province. I can see no other way to create a sense of cultural security and to make French Canadians as a group equal to English Canadians. After all, the other nine provinces are essentially unilingual. Whatever the glories of bilingualism, so long as it smacks of necessary accommodation it will be regarded in Quebec as a threat to the French language and to French-Canadian culture, as a step away from cultural security. To the average English Canadian, bilingualism means acquiring a second language; at the moment, to many French Canadians it means the likelihood of losing a first one. Yet, if through official unilingualism a sense of cultural security were to develop in French Canada,

then the current linguistic tensions would undoubtedly diminish, and the result would be more genuine bilingualism than ever before. Right now, to French-speaking Quebeckers cultural security means more than even the tourist dollar. Settle the problem of security, and the tourist dollar will take care of the rest. In short, ironic as it may seem, an officially unilingual Quebec would be the greatest possible boost for Canadian bilingualism.

I might add that a unilingual Quebec, legally instituted rather than forcefully imposed, need not present any danger or special inconvenience to English-speaking Quebeckers. According to the 1961 Census, nearly 30 per cent of them already speak French, compared with less than 25 per cent of French Canadians who speak English. Where English Canadians are in sufficient numbers they should be permitted to maintain schools and other institutions, but with adequate and efficient teaching of French as a condition. And with more than half of the television channels seen in Quebec already coming from over the American border, English-speaking Quebeckers are not going to develop a complex about the imminent disappearance of their mother tongue.

Now if Quebec is to have special status amounting to virtual autonomy and if she is to become officially unilingual, why not go all the way and declare an independent nation? Do not these concessions amount to independence? In effect, they do. But as agreed-upon concessions, they could be a means to avoid the hatred, violence and bloodshed which are described or suggested in each of the novels we have considered. They could be a means to avoid outright separation and the dangers of economic chaos, political anarchy and possible American intervention, against which even René Lévesque can offer no guarantee. In a conversation with his son, MacLennan's protagonist Alan Ainslie says: "Well, perhaps Quebec *will* separate. But if she does, let it be done decently. Let it be done without hatred and murder and all this paranoia of you and your friends." Special status and official unilingualism do not mean separation, but they are important steps Canada can take to relieve the malaise so vividly portrayed in the novels of Aquin, Jasmin, MacLennan and Godbout. They are a means to foster the cultural and spiritual independence Quebec clearly must have, an independence which French Canadians would thus be able to achieve decently.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Claude Jasmin, *Ethel et le terroriste*. All translations are my own:

> Mon pays livré comme charogne, il y a plus de cent ans, à une bande de loyalistes à grandes dents. Mon pays bourré de soutanes multicolores, de petits épiciers, de maigres scieurs de bois, quelques géants isolés, exceptions qui entretiennent

nos légendes, qu'un grand gaillard à l'air d'un castor chante à tue-tête à la face de nos collégiens boutonneux, de nos fonctionnaires cacochymes, de nos commis des coins de rue — il y a, au parlement, une bande de grosses morues, tous le nez au fond de gros fromages à taxes, taxes des "p'tits culs" épiciers et fonctionnaires, une armée de rongeurs, qui se font bénir tous les dimanches, qui paradent en déclamant des âneries qui font des promesses. Ils se font élire sans peine en trompant le peuple, en débauchant les cervelles de nos épiciers-fonctionnaires. En coulisses de ce théâtre de vermine, les soutanes et les loyalistes applaudissent. (pp. 67-68)

La campagne qu'il faut mener. Tu sais, cette guerre, la vraie. Cette bataille pour terrasser cette grande vache grasse, ce veau malade et paresseux qui est couché sur nous. Sur not pays et sur le mien. Sur le peuple noir, sur le peuple de la Grèce, sur celui de la Turquie et sur celui de la Chine et de l'Écosse. Une grosse bête. Le mal, Ethel, le vrai mal, le seul, c'est l'ignorance. Voilà une bonne raison de se battre. C'est là le vrai ennemi. Notre seul ennemi. L'ignorance. Ethel, l'ignorance, rien n'est plus grave, ni plus mauvais. C'est elle qui sème les confusions, qui entretient la médiocrité, les tabous et les préjugés. (pp. 113-114)

[2] Max Dorsinville, *A Comparative Analysis of the American Negro and French-Canadian Protest Novel* (Thesis presented for Master of Arts Degree in Comparative Canadian Literature, Université de Sherbrooke, 1968).

[3] For discussion of this common mystique and the parallels in French-Canadian and English-Canadian Literature see my essay "Twin Solitudes," *Canadian Literature*, No. 31 (Winter, 1967).

# MACEWEN'S MUSE

*Margaret Atwood*

*Now you comprehend your first and final lover in the dark receding planets of his eyes, and this is the hour when you know moreover that the god you have loved always will descend and lie with you in paradise.*

— *MacEwen, "The Hour of the Singer"* (unpublished, 1969).

IN READING Gwendolyn MacEwen's poetry it is a temptation to become preoccupied with the original and brilliant verbal surfaces she creates, at the expense of the depths beneath them. But it is occasionally instructive to give at least passing attention to what poets themselves say about their work, and MacEwen has been insisting for some time that it is "the thing beyond the poem",[1] the "raw material"[2] of literature, that above all concerns her. There is, of course, more than one thing beyond the poems, but there is one figure whose existence is hinted at throughout her work and who acts as a key to much of it. This is the Muse, often invoked and described but never named; and in MacEwen's poetry the Muse, the inspirer of language and the formative power in Nature, is male. Ignore him or misintepret him and her "muse" poems may be mistaken for "religious"[3] ones or reduced to veiled sexuality. Acknowledge him, and he will perform one of the functions MacEwen ascribes to him: the creation of order out of chaos.

The twentieth-century authority on the poetic Muse is, of course, Robert Graves. In his *White Goddess*,[4] he asserts that the Muse is always female, and if it isn't it should be. Poets who have the bad luck to be women should write either as priestesses of the Goddess, singing her praises or uttering her oracles, or as the Goddess herself. That some female poets have recalcitrantly invoked a Muse of the opposite sex would be viewed by Graves as new-woman perversity; but then, he labours under the same difficulty as does Freud when he tries to discuss female psychology and Jung when he deals with the *animus* archetype: he's a man. There are several male Muses about, even in Canadian poetry;[5]

often when the reader comes across an unnamed "you," he would be better employed searching for the Muse than for someone with a birth certificate and a known address. But no-one has invoked the male Muse with such frequency and devotion as has Gwendolyn MacEwen.

MacEwen is a poet whose interests and central images have been present from the time of her early publications, though her ability to elaborate them, clarify them, transform them and approach them from different angles has developed over the years. Thus her first small pamphlet, *Selah* (1961), contains two images which are later viewed more specifically as incarnations of the Muse: the God-figure and the winged man. The God of the first poem is spoken of as having "fathered" the hills and as being "the guardian/ of the substance of light,"[6] but he is remote; he encloses the individual human life but remains unknown by it ("we . . . do not even . . . hint You"). This distant God reappears in MacEwen's later work as the "almost anonymous" God of "The Two Themes of the Dance"[7] and the electrical First Cause of "Tesla".[8] Although he is the ultimate source of all power, including the power of language (as early as "Selah" he is spoken of as one who "writes," and "sound and light" flow from his "tongue" in "Tesla"), he cannot be conversed with. This may explain the rareness of his appearances: MacEwen much prefers a Muse who may be addressed or who may provide the other voice in a dialogue.

The image of the winged man does not begin as an incarnation of the Muse. In "Icarus" (*Selah*), the parallel developed is that between Daedalus and Icarus, and the Muse, addressed as "you," and the poet, with the wings — instruments of flight — being quite explicitly the poet's pen, and the flight of Icarus, ending in destruction, being the writing of a poem which is later burnt. Here the Muse stands in the relation of quasi-father to the poet,[9] as is usually the case when MacEwen employs the words "legacy," "heritage," and "inherit."[10] But having once used the Icarus image, MacEwen takes it through a whole series of transformations. Always the man-bird is a creature halfway between human being and supernatural power. When he is ascending, he is a human being aspiring towards godhead;[11] when he is descending, he is the divine Muse in the act of becoming incarnate.

In the first "Icarus" poem, in which Icarus becomes a "combustion of brief feathers," the idea of burning is connected with the winged man, and it reappears almost every time the figure itself does. For the god-man the first is divine; for the man-god it is either destructive or regenerative, the fire that precedes a phoenix-like rebirth. The man who flies but dies is readily available

for sexual metaphor, as witness "Black and White" and "The Phoenix."[12] In the first poem the Muse is descending, becoming incarnate; in the second he is an individual man becoming Muse ("beyond you, the image rising from the shoulders / is greater than you . . ."). In *A Breakfast For Barbarians* the flaming birdman makes an ironic appearance as a "motorcycle Icarus," "without wings, but burning anyway," a profane version of the divine Muse who "cannot distinguish between sex and nicotine."[13] Instead of the Muse's descent into the flesh or even Icarus' descent into the sea, the poet imagines a splashdown into Niagara Falls. But the flying Muse is back again full-fledged in *The Shadow Maker*. In the book's first poem, "The Red Bird You Wait For,"[14] he appears, now more bird than man, as poetic inspiration itself, the Muse in its Holy Ghost form which rises phoenix-like from its own ashes only to descend once more "uninvited:"

> Its shape is a cast-off velvet cape,
> Its eyes are the eyes of your most forbidden lover
> And its claws, I tell you its claws are gloved in fire.

That the image of the descending Muse caught in mid-flight is far from exhausted for MacEwen is made evident in the recent unpublished poem, "The Hour of the Singer."

HAVING BECOME INCARNATE, the Muse may both disguise and reveal himself in many forms. There are a number of poems in *The Rising Fire* and *A Breakfast For Barbarians* which praise men in action: the athletes, the escape artist, the surgeon who is "an Indian, and beautiful, and holy,"[15] the several magicians, are all men but more than men, possessed at the sacramental instant by a power greater than their own, the power of their craft, skill or performance.[16] In these poems the poet places herself at a distance; she watches the act but does not participate directly. Instead she transforms the act into a metaphor for the poetic process; in "The Magician," for instance, the magician's "fingers' genius / wave out what my poems have said."[17] This kind of male figure is thus both Muse or inspirer and one who is himself inspired. Though these figures are partial masks assumed temporarily by the Muse, they are never total revelations.[18]

All of the above figures are taken from "real" life: some of the poems in which they appear are dedicated to actual people, others (such as "The Ath-

letes," set in an explicitly Canadian park) are located in a world which may be identified, more or less, with the objective external one. But there are two other forms of the Muse which belong to his own proper realm, that of the imagination. These are the king and the singer-dancer, the Muse at his most static as sacramental object and at his most dynamic as sacramental creator-actor. Song and dance, princes and kings are used as images in the early pamphlets, and "The Two Themes of the Dance" and "The Absolute Dance"[19] are tentative explorations of the relationships among dance, poetry and the divinity of the Muse; but not until *A Breakfast For Barbarians* are Muse, dance and kingship synthesized.

The poems most important in this respect[20] are "Black Alchemy," "Finally Left in the Landscape," "Subliminal," and "The Aristocracies." "Black Alchemy" and "Finally Left in the Landscape" complement each other. In the first, the emergence of the elemental Muse from formless water and his taking shape as "the prince of laughter" "cancels the cosmos:" the world disintegrates, turns fluid, to be recreated by his word which is a dance:

> . . . in his dance
> worlds expire like tides, in his flaming
> dance the nameless cosmos
> must await its naming.[21]

But in "Finally Left in the Landscape," it is the Muse, not the world, which has disappeared. Here the poet invokes the "dancer" who is also a "deity." He is both present and absent: the poet seeks him, but finds only possible fragments of him. Her task is to gather him together (*vide* Isis and Osiris), to seek him as a whole, and her poetry is part of the attempt to recreate him; though her "lines can only / plagiarize his dance,"[22] since, though absent, he remains the originator of both language and world.

"Subliminal" and "The Aristocracies" deal with the relationship between Muse and poet, and with their mutual involvement in time. In "Subliminal," the poet, having achieved a state of mind in which "there is no time . . . but co-presents, a static recurrence,"[23] is able to hold the Muse still for an instant in order to contemplate him: ". . . in that substratum I hold, / unfold you at random." He is seen as both dynamic and static: ". . . you do not move / but are always moving." But such a state cannot persist: both must re-enter the world of time, in which movement forward is the only possibility:

> I rise to see you planted
> in an earth outside me,
> moving through time
> through the terms of it,
> moving through time again
> along its shattered latitudes.

"The Aristocracies" is placed at the end of *A Breakfast For Barbarians*, and pulls together a number of its motifs. The figure addressed is the Muse, incarnate as lover but also as a "natural" king; the tension in the poem is created as the poet's vision moves from the Muse as man to the Muse as a supernatural power ("The body of God and the body of you / dance through the same diagonal instant / of my vision . . ."[24]), a movement which both traps the human element in the man, turning him into a "crowned and captive dancer," and makes him eternal:

> You must dance forever beneath this heavy crown
> in an aristocratic landscape, a bas-relief of living bone.
> And I will altogether cease to speak
> as you do a brilliant arabesque within the bas-relief,
> your body bent like the first letter
> of an unknown, flawless alphabet.

The Muse exists both inside and outside time, and like the letters on a page he is static yet in movement. Bodies as alphabets occur earlier in *A Breakfast For Barbarians*, and, again, word-thing metaphors date back to *Selah*; the importance of this body-letter lies in the fact that it is the first letter and the alphabet to which it belongs is unknown. The Muse is always *about* to be interpreted: he can never be completely deciphered.

Two attributes of MacEwen's Muse worth noting are his preference for a certain sort of landscape and the cyclical nature of his appearances. Before *The Shadow Maker*, the Muse's landscape tends to be identified with actual, reachable landscapes: those of the south and east rather than those of the north and west, exotic Palestinian, Arabian or Greek locales as opposed to bleak Canadian ones. The landscape of the Muse is also the landscape of the imagination, and there is often a sense of the grim "altogether Kanadian" reality of metal cities, snow, breakfasts of "unsacred bacon"[25] and the mechanical clock-time present pulling against a different kind of reality, that of the ornate, hierarchical landscapes and the ancient stone city-scapes of the Middle East, or of the bell-time or blood-time[26] of a more organic past. In *The Shadow Maker*, the poet is

clearer about the relationship between self and Muse. Here she takes "the roads that lead inward . . . the roads that lead downward,"[27] and although the south-eastern landscapes are still present,[28] the Muse's most authentic landscape is identified more positively with the inner landscape of dream and fantasy. "Song for a Stranger" has Muse and poet meeting in a mutual dream to "plot / the birth of a more accurate world" in a setting of "pavilions" and "pools."[29] In the two songs from the "Fifth Earth," the meeting takes place in a kind of science-fiction otherworld. Towards the end of *The Shadow Maker*, the Muse is seen more as a potential force than as an actual or incarnate being: the "chosen abyss" of the title poem[30] has replaced the "chosen landscape"[31] of *A Breakfast for Barbarians.*

THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN MUSE AND POET is an increasingly dominant theme in MacEwen's poetry. Through their meeting each actualizes the other, and together they are able to enter the Muse's landscape, he as a returning exile, she more often as an alien discoverer or explorer rather than a native. Together, also, they form the divine or cosmic couple which is a recurring image in the poetry. This couple may be either the original (and rather vegetable) Adam-Eve, the "man and woman naked and green with rain"[32] of "Eden, Eden" (who reappear, for instance, in the pastoral, innocent, season-linked couple of "We Are Sitting on a High Green Hill"[33]); or it may be an earth-sky couple like that in "Seeds and Stars."[34] It is interesting to juxtapose the early "couple" poem, "Tiamut,"[35] in which the female figure is "Chaos," "the earth . . . sans form"[36] and the male figure is the shaper, the divider, the former of Cosmos, with the later poem "The Name of the Place," in a sense its other half. In the later poem, the god and goddess responsible for the divided world momentarily glimpse a regained unity: "All things are plotting to make us whole / All things conspire to make us one."[37] There is a strong pull in MacEwen's poetry towards completion, synthesis: if the divine couple could ever permanently join, the universe which has emanated from their division would be drawn back into them and all things would indeed be truly one, a sky-earth, flesh-spirit, spirit-flesh landscape which would also be the homeless "adam"[38] returned from exile[39] and a dance containing its own "extremity."[40] Time and space would be abolished.

But the union of Muse and poet is limited by the flesh, and even when it takes place in dream or fantasy it is bound by the strictures of time and, in poetry,

by the length of the poem. Hence the emphasis on the cyclical nature of the Muse's appearances. Again, the wheel or cycle is an image used frequently by MacEwen. The revolving wheel is an organizing symbol in *Julian the Magician*, and in "The Ferris Wheel"[41] it is made a "wheel of lyric" connected with the writing of poetry as well as with the movement of life around the "still middle, the / point of absolute inquiry." Wheel, circle and still centre occur as images again in "The Cyclist in Aphelion."[42] But the moving wheel becomes the shape of time itself in three poet-Muse poems in *A Breakfast For Barbarians*: "She,"[43] which draws on Rider Haggard's tale of the reincarnations of a pair of lovers; "Green with Sleep,"[44] in which the "great unspeakable wheel," which is both diurnal time and the mythical time of recurrences, renews the lovers; and "Cartaphilus,"[45] in which the two lovers encounter each other repeatedly: "Whoever you love it is me beneath you / over and over. . . ." In *The Shadow Maker* the wheel image is connected not only with the poet's own circular movement,[46] but also with the circularity of time and the recurrences of the Muse. "First Song from the Fifth Earth" is even more positive than is "Cartaphilus" about the underlying identity of all the incarnations of the Muse: "I say all worlds, all times, all loves are one. . . ."[47] "The Return," in addition to illustrating the theme of recurrence, is one of the clearest "Muse" poems MacEwen has written, and is worth quoting in its entirety:

> I gave you many names and masks
> And longed for you in a hundred forms
> And I was warned the masks would fall
> And the forms would lose their fame
> And I would be left with an empty name
>
> (For that was the way the world went,
> For that was the way it had to be,
> To grow, and in growing lose you utterly)
>
> But grown, I inherit you, and you
> Renew your first and final form in me,
> And though some masks have fallen
> And many names have vanished back into my pen
> Your face bears the birth-marks I recognize in time,
> You stand before me now, unchanged
>
> (For this is the way it has to be;
> To perceive you is an act of faith
> Though it is you who have inherited me)[48]

Who has created whom? Is the male Muse as Marduk shaping the female chaos of the poet into an order or defining her by contrast (as in "The Shadow Maker"), or is the poet putting the Muse together out of words, as she sometimes suspects?[49] Is the Muse outside the poet, or is he inside, a fragment of the self? Does he exist outside time, or can he be apprehended only through time and through the senses? These are questions the poems ask; the answers to them are never final, since another turn of the wheel may invalidate all answers. The poet wrestles with the angel, but to win finally, to learn the true name of the angel, would be to stop the wheel, an event which she fears.[50] The last poem in *The Shadow Maker*, "The Wings," is a series of questions; in it the Muse, despite his many names, languages and landscapes, is again nameless. He has created, destroyed and restored innumerable worlds and several phases of the poet herself, and through the poet's invocation is about to begin the process again.

"I want to construct a myth," Gwendolyn MacEwen has written, and she has indeed constructed one. MacEwen is not a poet interested in turning her life into myth; rather, she is concerned with translating her myth into life, and into the poetry which is a part of it. The informing myth, developed gradually but with increasing clarity in her poetry, is that of the Muse, author and inspirer of language and therefore of the ordered verbal cosmos, the poet's universe. In MacEwen's myth the Muse exists eternally beyond sense, but descends periodically as winged man, becomes incarnate for a time as magician, priest-king, lover or all of these, then dies or disappears, only to be replaced by another version of himself. Though the process is cyclical, he never reappears in exactly the same form. Each time he brings with him a different landscape and language, and consequently a different set of inspirations, though beneath these guises he keeps the same attributes. He is a dancer and a singer; his dance and his song are the Word made flesh, and both contain and create order and reality. The poet's function is to dedicate her life to the search for the Muse,[52] and the poetry itself is both a record of the search and an attempt to reproduce or describe those portions of the song-dance which she has been able to witness. The Muse is both "good" and "evil," both gentle and violent, both creative and destructive; like language itself, he subsumes all opposites. Since he is infinite, the number of his incarnations is potentially infinite also. Though the final poem in *The Shadow Maker* may look like a last word, each of MacEwen's previous collections has an ending which is really a beginning: the "growing" of *The Rising Fire*, the "unknown" alphabet of *A Breakfast For Barbarians*. Here the final

word is "floods," chaos comes anew, a chaos which invites the creation of a fresh cosmos. There is little doubt that the Muse will rise again from his ashes in yet another form.[53]

FOOTNOTES

1 "The Double Horse," TRF, 18.

2 Introduction, BB.

3 A. Schroeder in *The Vancouver Province*, July 25, 1969.

4 With which MacEwen is familiar: see "Thou Jacob," BB, 27.

5 Where however the Muse, male or female, is more typically a place rather than a person. But see e.g. Jay Macpherson's Angel and some of the male figures in Dorothy Livesay's *Plainsongs*.

6 "Selah," *Selah*.

7 TRF, 41.

8 BB, 19.

9 cf. Graves, for whom the Muse is, among other things, a Mother.

10 cf. e.g. "The Return," SM, 81. Nor is it strange to find the "boy" as parallel for the poet:: this is elsewhere the case in MacEwen's poetry; see e.g. "Dream Three: The Child," SM, 56.

11 cf. the astronauts of "The Cosmic Brothers" (TRF) and "The Astronauts" (BB); cf. also the poet as a child, attempting to fly with the help of the magic word SHAZAM, as humorously recounted in "Fragments of a Childhood" (*Alphabet*, No. 15, December 1968, 10).

12 TRF, 19, 57.

13 "Poem Improvised Around a First Line," BB, 16.

14 SM, 2.

15 "Appendectomy," BB, 42.

16 cf. also Julian in *Julian the Magician*.

17 BB, 36.

18 MacEwen's interest in Christ is connected with his role as divine priest-king-physician incarnate; he is not the original or archetypal Muse, but another of the Muse's earthly incarnations.

19 TRF, 41, 43.

20 Though see also "Thou Jacob," the "Arcanum" series, and the cosmic dance at the electron level in "Tesla."

21 BB, 40.

22 BB, 52.

23 BB, 31.

24 BB, 53.

25 "The Last Breakfast," BB, 35.

26 See for instance "The Drunken Clock," the last poem in the pamphlet of that name.

27 "The Wings," SM, 82.

28 As in, for instance, such poems as "One Arab Flute" and "the Fortress of Saladin."

29 SM, 53.

30 "The Shadow Maker," SM, 80.

31 "Finally Left in the Landscape," BB, 52.

32 *The Drunken Clock*.

33 SM, 58.

34 SM, 71.

35 TRF, 5.

36 cf. other woman-as-earth images: e.g. in the verse play *Terror and Erebus*, in "Poet vs. The Land" (*Selah*), and in "The Discovery" (SM, 31).

37 SM, 16.

38 "The Catalogues of Memory," TRF, 66.

39 cf. also "The Caravan," BB, 51.

40 "The Absolute Dance," TRF, 43.

41 TRF, 49.

42 BB, 7.

43 BB, 9.

44 BB, 28.

45 BB, 46.

46 See "Dream Three: The Child," SM, 56.

47 SM, 68.

48 SM, 81.

49 See e.g. "The Face," BB, 9.

50 See e.g. "Fragments of a Childhood," in which the pronouncing of the "Final Formula" would stop everything.

51 BB, Introduction.

52 cf. again Graves; though for MacEwen the Muse is less Nature than creating Word or Logos.

53 See, for instance, the recent poem "Credo" (*Quarry*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Fall 1969, 5), in which the poet says, "no one can tell me that / the Dancer in my blood is / dead. . . ."

# GEORGE RYGA AND THE LOST COUNTRY

*Neil Carson*

GEORGE RYGA first attracted my attention as the author of "Indian", a half-hour television drama produced on the CBC-TV series "Quest" in 1962. This powerful short play about an encounter between a transient Indian labourer and an official of the Department of Indian Affairs seemed to me at the time one of the finest one-act dramas on a Canadian theme that I had seen. If it was perhaps a little too reminiscent of Edward Albee's *Zoo Story*, it nevertheless revealed a dramatic talent of great promise. Now after two novels and numerous television and film scripts, Ryga has written a major play for the stage. "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe" was commissioned by the Playhouse Theatre in Vancouver, where it was first performed in 1967. More recently audiences in the East had an opportunity to see it at the Opening Festival of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa in June. It was broadcast on CBC radio in August and plans call for a television version to be shown sometime in 1970. In my opinion, "Rita Joe" establishes Ryga as the most exciting talent writing for the stage in Canada today.

This is not, it must be admitted, an extravagant claim since the competition is not keen. Of all the fields on the Canadian Literature farm, drama is surely the most barren, the most uncultivated. This is partly because the extravagance of the drama has never seemed congenial to Canadians. Until recently the theatre has played a very minor role in our national life and few writers have been attracted to it as a medium. This does not, however, justify the continuing indifference of many literary critics and historians who still tend to concentrate their attention almost exclusively on the printed word. Since very few of those original Canadian plays which have been produced in the last few years have been published, there is a growing body of vigorous writing which remains largely unknown. Ryga seems particularly worth discussing in this context because "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe" has been more widely seen and heard than

many new Canadian plays and because it is closely related to his published work, especially his novels *Hungry Hills* (1963) and *Ballad of a Stonepicker* (1966).

The play is about two representative Indians, Rita Joe, an accused prostitute and Jamie Paul, an advocate of Red Power, who are destroyed in a hostile white environment, in this case Vancouver. Opposed to them on the one hand are the rather papier mâché figures of white authority, the magistrate, the police, the priest, the social worker etc. On the other stands the patriarch Indian Chief, David Joe, a symbol of the old way of life which, however heroic and dignified in the past, is no longer viable. Although much of the time Ryga seems too emotionally involved in his subject to raise it above the level of a propaganda piece, there are many moments of fine dramatic writing. These reveal Ryga's extraordinary talent for creating an approximation of Indian dialect which is capable of immense poetic effect. Like Synge, he has formed out of the speech of a remote group a dramatic medium of far greater range than either simple realism or the "poetic" dialogue which is usually thought of as the only alternative. Two examples will illustrate the sort of thing I mean. The first is spoken by Chief David Joe directly to the audience:

> But when I was fifteen years old, I leave the reserve to work on a threshing crew. They are paying a dollar a day for a good man . . . an' I was a good strong man. The first time I got work there was a girl about as old as I . . . She'd come out in the yard an' watch the men working at the threshing machine. She had eyes that were the biggest I ever seen . . . like fifty-cent pieces . . . an' there was always a flock of geese around her. Whenever I see her I feel good. She used to stand an' watch me, an' the geese made a helluva noise. One time I got off my rick an' went to get a drink of water . . . but I walked close to where she was, watching me. She backed away, and then ran from me with the geese chasin' after her, their wings out an' their feet no longer touching the ground . . . They were white geese . . . The last time Rita Joe comes home to see us . . . the last time she ever come home . . . I watched her leave . . . and I seen geese running after Rita Joe the same way . . . white geese . . . with their wings out an' their feet no longer touching the ground. And I remembered it all, an' my heart got so heavy I wanted to cry . . .[1]

The second is also spoken by the chief to Jamie Paul and to his silent daughter, Rita Joe.

> FATHER: You're a good boy, Jamie Paul . . . a good boy . . . (*To Rita, talking slowly, painfully*) I once seen a dragonfly breakin' its shell to get its wings . . . It floated on water an' crawled up on a log where I was sitting . . . It dug its

feet into the log an' then it pulled until the shell bust over its neck. Then it pulled some more . . . an' slowly its wings slipped out of the shell . . . like that! *Shows with his hands how the dragonfly got freedom.*

JAMIE: (*Angered and deeply moved by the father*) Where you gonna be when they start bustin' our heads open an' throwing us into jails right across the goddamned country?

FATHER: . . . Such wings I never seen before . . . folded like an accordion . . . so fine, like thin glass an' white in the morning sun . . .

JAMIE: We're gonna have to fight to win . . . there's no other way! They're not listenin' to you, old man! Or to me.

FATHER: . . . It spread its wings . . . so slowly . . . an' then the wings opened an' began to flutter . . . Just like that — see! Hesitant at first . . . then stronger . . . an' then the wings beatin' like that made the dragonfly's body quiver until the shell on its back falls off . . .

JAMIE: Stop kiddin' yourself! We're gonna say "no" pretty soon to all the crap that makes us soft an' easy to push this way . . . that way.

*Rita Joe is now reduced to a child before her father.*

FATHER: . . . An' the dragonfly . . . flew up . . . up . . . up . . . into the white sun . . . to the green sky . . . to the sun . . . faster an' faster . . . Higher . . . HIGHER![2]

(The second passage also illustrates fairly well the social protest sloganeering which is one of the unfortunate features of this play.) Together they show Ryga's continuing concern with themes that are far deeper and ultimately more troubling than the hiring policies of B.C. industry or the alleged dishonesty of the Vancouver police. In the evocative description of the geese — symbols of doom or possibly sexual passion — as well as in the aspiration implicit in the symbol of the dragonfly, Ryga returns to two ideas that are central to much of his published work — the elusive nature of love and the search for meaning or for what in *Ballad of a Stonepicker* he calls "the country".

Love as it is usually understood by the readers of women's magazines or the more lurid modern novels is rarely fulfilling in Ryga's works. Although it calls forth some of his most sentimental writing —

> I pulled her to me and kissed her on the mouth, and her friends looking on. Then I turned away and went home, blind, because my eyes were full of tears and I couldn't stop them coming . . .[3]

more often his tone is bitterly ironic. At the end of *Ballad of a Stonepicker* a girl who has been made pregnant by a man who has deserted her murmurs over the grave of the narrator's father, "It's love that'll make it all wonderful. Find love quickly — today." Far from being a fulfilling experience, love (and especially

sexual love) is shown more frequently as a destructive, almost perverting force. In *Hungry Hills* it is embodied in the incest of the Mandolins, *In Ballad of a Stonepicker* it is represented by the pathetic infatuation of Clem the blacksmith and Freddy the idiot, by the disappointment of Helen Bayrack and, perhaps most vividly, by the coupling of Marta Walker and Hector in her father's tool shed made safe by the killing of the watch dog. Physical love indeed seems to be presented as a weakness into which the disappointed or the fearful escape. The narrator of *Ballad of a Stonepicker* feels that it is only after he has "killed the animal in himself" that he can bury his father without shame.

IF RYGA REJECTS romantic and physical love, he does not conclude that meaningful human relationships are impossible. On the contrary he frequently shows a bond between individuals which he clearly believes to be more exalted than love in the usual sense. Ordinarily this is a relationship in a family (between brother and brother in "Indian", father and daughter in "Rita Joe", boy and aunt in *Hungry Hills*). Occasionally, as in the father's grief over the loss of his horse in *Hungry Hills* and in the comic episode of Timothy and his ox in *Ballad of a Stonepicker*, the relationship may be between man and animal. Indeed it is the potential strength of this latter bond that makes the slaying of the dog by the sexually aroused Marta and Hector so chilling, and Minerva Malan's coolly efficient slaughter of the rooster in *Ballad of a Stonepicker* so symbolically right. But in the world Ryga writes about there is little enough even of this second kind of love. It comes fleetingly, in moments of crisis, or in flashes of understanding, but is never indulged and often not even acknowledged. Ryga's vision of the fragility of love is perhaps most poignantly conveyed in his description of Mary and Peter Ruptash in *Ballad of a Stonepicker*:

> They'd been married fifteen years before they had a kid — a girl with one missing arm. Pete had built a playroom ten years earlier for her coming. The playroom had wallpaper with rabbits on it, a small crib, rocking toys and a little desk with a chair. And then this baby came.
>
> It had learned to walk and was able to say 'mama, I busy' and 'da-da' when it caught diphtheria and died. Pete had to beat his wife with his fists to take the kid away so he could bury it.[4]

If Ryga's characters are partly tormented by their need for love in a world that denies it or corrupts its expression, many of them are even more profoundly

troubled by existential longings. In *Ballad of a Stonepicker* the narrator attempts to describe his feelings at hearing of the death of his father. "I felt I was in a strange town," he says, "... trying to find the gates of the country."[5] This is an echo of an earlier passage in the novel describing the feelings of the scholar son, Jim, just before his suicide in England. In his last letter home he speaks of himself as "a young man who lost one world and never felt at home in another." The sense of spiritual homelessness is common in Ryga's work and many of his characters define themselves by their relationship to a country they have lost or one they never find.

In his early work, this country seems to represent the lost time of youth, innocence, and happiness that is replaced by the cares of maturity and responsibility. The crisis is often a moment of choice which is precipitated by outside factors but which is faced by the protagonist with full awareness. In "Indian" the transient labourer speaks of such a moment.

> I ... kill ... my ... brother. In my arms I hold him. He was so light — like a small boy. I hold him ...rock 'im back and forward like this — like mother rock us when we tiny kids. I rock 'im an' I cry ... I get my hands tight on his neck, an' I squeeze an' I squeeze. I know he dead, and I still squeeze an' cry, for everything is gone, and I am old man now only hunger an' hurt left now ...[6]

Here, although the situation is symptomatic of social injustice, Ryga is more concerned with understanding the existential consequences than with attacking the evil itself. To a large extent, the Indian's identity is a product of this action and his compulsion to recount the murder is intimately bound up with his own sense of who he is.

A similar concern with identity and with growing up is evident in *Hungry Hills*. Snit Mandolin, after spending some time in a Welfare Home and later as a mechanic in a garage in Edmonton, decides to return to his home in the Alberta foothills. He cannot articulate his reasons for going home, but the rest of the story concerns his search for his origins and his final attempt to create a life of dignity for himself. One thing he learns is that the misfortunes of his family are not only the result of the hostility of outsiders but also of deliberate choice.

> "We done it ourselves, Snit — don't you see?" There were tears in Aunt Matilda's eyes now. "We done it long ago, and other folks had no part of it — it started long ago, when two sisters and a brother came on this farm. There was no proper life for anyone when the work was done. But instead of going out and doing what we shoulda done, saving ourselves for a good life, we turned ourselves inside

> out, killing everything we touched until we didn't know what was right or wrong any more. Your pa and ma paired off, and you were born. I was one of the outside folks then, and I hada start taking care of things. I could been like your ma — could've come and gone in the same way — just like your pa did. I was saved for a taste of life — but it came too late, Snit!"[7]

Although here too Ryga shows the conflict between man and his neighbours, he is more fundamentally concerned with man's struggle with himself. The "heroine" of the story is Aunt Matilda who has learned to endure the consequences of her choices.

> . . . she stood erect and proud, like nothing would knock her down — nothing she saw or lived through.
>
> "I gotta die, Snit — same as anybody else. But I ain't gonna die easy. My conscience won't let me!"
>
> "Ya' ain't alone — I'm with ya. I don't want to hear anymore!"
>
> "But you've got to listen, Snit — you've got to understand. Once you've made up your mind, there's no turning back."[8]

In *Ballad of a Stonepicker*, there seems to be far less emphasis on conscious choice. Although the father is destroyed by his decision to give excessive financial support to one son, most of the characters are shaped by forces over which they have no control. The stonepicker asks, "when had the boyhood gone, and when did the man take over in me?" Here the protagonist no longer recognizes the crucial moment of decision and is caught instead in a process which he does not understand. The impression of passive suffering rather than deliberate action is conveyed further by the structure of the novel itself. Reminiscent of the ballad form, it consists of a number of apparently random memories told by an anonymous narrator. The central character is essentially faceless, a symbol of the inarticulate victim. "I've stood for hours out there in the field," he says at one point, "the wind blowing all around me, drying the soil and sapping the water out of my flesh. I've felt it all, but could never tell others how it felt."[9]

But if Ryga is suggesting that suffering is only partially explicable in terms of our own choices, and that many men are victims of a Fate they cannot control or comprehend, he does not seem to deny the possibility of meaning altogether. For the narrator's attempts to find relevance in his seemingly unrelated memories are not entirely unsuccessful.

> Then it came to me — the truth I had never realized before — the truth Nancy Burla saw when she married the doctor. These arms were all I had and all that anybody had ever wanted. . . . they were the reason for my life. Here was my

> strength and my food and my bed. There was no other part of me worth anything — never had been. In so short a time they raised their Jims, their babies, their invalid mothers and fathers — and then they shrivelled and brought unhappiness to the man willing to work but not able because his visions twisted downwards into a patch of earth no larger than a grave.[10]

Whether or not these twisted visions are the only visions possible is not made clear in the novel. Ryga himself seems temperamentally caught between the romanticism of hope and the romanticism of despair. But the intensity of his writing (in this novel at least) suggests that, although the stonepicker has lost his way, a way does nevertheless exist.

"The Ecstasy of Rita Joe" seems at first to be far less complex than the novels which precede it. In outline its conflicts are simple, the alternatives apparently black and white (or perhaps red and white), the target for outrage clearly designated. In this play (unlike in "Indian") a great amount of time is spent in describing the injustices of white society and proportionately little on the deeper, more perplexing issues. But it would be a mistake to see the play as nothing more than a social protest melodrama.

In structure, it closely resembles *Ballad of a Stonepicker* or Arthur Miller's *After the Fall*, being a dramatization of memories and a search for identity. On one level Rita Joe makes a sharp distinction between the remembered happiness of childhood in the country and the harsh realities of adult life in the city. The reservation where love cannot be bought for a thousand dollars is contrasted to the city where love seems to be purely commercial. Rita Joe's fate in her own memory has been caused by white prejudice and bureaucratic inefficiency. But Ryga shows that Rita Joe's memories often deceive her and that she sees in them only what she wants to see. As the Magistrate points out, "The obstacles to your life are here, in your thoughts . . . possibly even in your culture."[11] Although Rita Joe does not articulate the idea, both Jamie Paul and David Joe know that Indian culture cannot survive unchanged. They know that "If we only fish an' hunt an' cut pulpwood . . . pick strawberries in the bush . . . for a hundred years more, we are dead."[12] David Joe puts his faith in education. Jamie Paul in Red Power. But it is not clear that Ryga shares either view. In the end it is uncertain what new country the dragonfly will find or if indeed his escape from the shell is anything but momentary. Perhaps the only certainty in the play is the inexorability of time. As Rita Joe says, "I wish we could go back again then an' start livin' from that day on, Jamie."[13] Or in the words of the song that closes the play,

The blue evening
Of the first warm day —
Is the last evening.

"The Ecstasy of Rita Joe" is one of the products of a new working relationship between the professional theatre and creative writers in this country. An increasing number of regional theatres are looking for original Canadian plays and some of them are working closely with local authors to get them. A grant from the Centennial Commission made it possible for Ryga to be associated with the Playhouse Theatre during the production of "Rita Joe". It is to be hoped that some such relationship can be continued. For Ryga has that very rare gift for writing dialogue that has the sound of ordinary speech but the resonance of poetry. If he can master the technical and structural demands of the stage, we may yet have a Canadian play worthy to be mentioned in discussions of contemporary drama.

FOOTNOTES

[1] "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe" (Unpublished playscript, May 1969), p. 41.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.
[3] *Ballad of a Stonepicker* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966), p. 123.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 153.
[6] "Indian", *The Tamarack Review* (Summer, 1965), p. 17.
[7] *Hungry Hills* (Toronto: Longmans, 1963), pp. 98-99.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 164.
[9] *Ballad of a Stonepicker*, p. 124.
[10] *Ibid.*, p. 156.
[11] "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe", p. 23.
[12] Ibid., p. 55.
[13] Ibid., p. 20.

# NOTES ON ALDEN NOWLAN

*Keath Fraser*

READING THE BODY of Alden Nowlan's work one begins to share his acute feeling for place. The ideal landscapes of Roberts and Carman, his literary ancestors, are the ones he avoids and de-mythologizes:

> . . . here persistent misery endures;
> growing thick-headed like a cow, it chews
> thistles in mute protest against the rain
> of innocence it cannot lose or use.

To get beneath a Maritime cliché the poet here brandishes a prudery he recognizes and undercuts a countryside he does not. Elsewhere he writes that water "the colour of a bayonet. . . / glitters blue and solid on the page/ in tourist folders, yet some thirty towns/ use it as a latrine"; and while acid from "heaps of decomposing bark torn loose/ from pulpwood driven south" kills the salmon — in the summer "the stink/ of the corrupted water" fills the air. Yet the tourist pictures have not lied, says Nowlan: "the real/ river is beautiful, as blue as steel." As he views it, the Real McCoy resides not in any Platonic folder, the *idea* of landscape, but in the stab of the river above and below the ice, in winter and in summer. If Beauty exists it arises from a comprehension ubiquitous and therefore poetic, not a romanticized abstraction which excludes pain and coldness:

> Ours was a windy country and its crops
> were never frivolous, malicious rocks
> kicked at the plough and skinny cattle broke
> ditch ice for mud to drink and pigs were axed.

Individual poems hint that in this world where "Spring is distrusted", "Summer is not a season", and "December is thirteen months long", there can be no harking back to Tantramar for lost experience: any loss boils down simply to the absence of harshness, not to something that creates combustion in the mind.

While Roberts would rather remember his environment, the New Brunswick writer sees it for what it is:

> Only the leaves of the thistle have retained their greenness
> even in the grave: they remind me of men,
> poor, ignorant, wise, who only shrug
> at each new effacement of history . . .

To my mind this consequence of calcified regionalism clutches Nowlan most noticeably. Because he prides himself on writing of what he knows the threat of piecemeal living seems never distant from his regional world. "I went to work when I was 15 years old, peeling pulpwood 12 hours a day" (he wrote in *The Canadian Forum*, January 1969). "Until I received my first pay cheque — two weeks after starting work — I lived on boiled potatoes flavored with vinegar." Thus in his short story, "A Call in December", where the narrator and an old man bring a Christmas hamper to a starving mother and baby, the hunger evident in "two empty sardine cans, their tops drawn back like the open mouths of crocodiles", appears stark and unpretentious. Nowlan chronicles himself and others via a milieu where the pain of his own experience contributes to much of his work, such as this widely published poem which takes its title from the first line.

> When like the tears of clowns the rain intrudes
> Upon our ordered days and children chant,
> Like repetitious birds, their sexless shrill:
>
> My heart crawls lean and lewd, a shrinking thing,
> To haylofts where, when I was ten and whipt,
> Tall horses swore fidelity and drummed
> As wolf-thoughts howled within my punished wrists.
>
> There in the seasoned hay's unsubtle tang
> The lash of fleshly pride unleashed my lips
>
> And in a dream I saw the meek bequeathed
> Their deep and narrow heritage of earth.

This poem counterpoints the tragi-comic, and juxtaposes pain caused by coming of age with a symmetry of images that is informed by the boy's rural, puritanical heritage; rather than a shaking-off of legacy, there seems a masochistic attempt to comprehend its influence. Certainly the poet's roots are painful to relate, for his parents are victims of a calcified conscience. In "Beginning" he writes,

From that they found most lovely, most abhorred,
my parents made me: I was born like sound
stroked from the fiddle to become the ward
of tunes played on the bear-trap and the hound.

Not one, but seven entrances they gave
each to the other, and he laid her down
the way the sun comes out. Oh, they were brave,
and then like looters in a burning town.

Their mouths left bruises, starting with the kiss
and ending with the proverb, where they stayed;
never in making was there brighter bliss,
followed by darker shame. Thus I was made.

The outcome of parental degradation shambles through "Child of Tabu", too, where children taunt one of their playmates "who was conceived so casually by strangers/ in the soft hay and the high noon":

Begotten furtively in the marital night,
beneath the crush of blankets
and the long shame,

we avowed our ancestry
with the ruthless simplicity of children
offering our gods
a dripping handful of his heart.

The blissful love of the tabu parents contrasts vividly with an ascetic condition that comes "bordered" (in another poem) "by the rumpled quilts/ And children bred from duty as the soil/ Was ploughed to hide the seed and not for joy."

A short story, "The Glass Roses", demonstrates that regional parents will never tolerate imaginative encounter. Stephen's father tells him that if he is to learn the ropes of pulp-cutting and manhood he must disown the Polack and his alien sensibilities; for lumberjacks, as Nowlan the poet acquaints us elsewhere,

are the men who live by killing trees —
their bones are ironwood, their muscles steel,
their faces whetstones and their hands conceal
claws hard as peavy hooks: anatomies
sectioned like the men in the Zodiac.

In "The Migrant Hand" the calcified working man arrives shut inside "the last ten hours of blackflies and heat,/ the last two hundred barrels of potatoes." Yet

the regionalist at his best canalizes attention toward the aggregate experience of this individual, the Everyjoe who has served all masters in a *universal regionalism*:

> For how many thousands of years, for how many millions
> of baskets and waggonloads and truckloads of onions,
> or cotton, or turnips has this old man knelt
> in the dirt of sun-crazy fields? If you ask him,
> he'll put you off: he's suspicious of questions.
> The truth is that Adam, a day out of Eden,
> started him gathering grapes: old Pharoah
> sold him to Greece; he picked leeks for the Seljuks,
> garlic for Tuscans, Goths and Normans,
> pumpkins and maize for the Pilgrim Fathers . . .

By and large, then, Nowlan, like the preacher in "The Young Rector" — fascinated with indigenous spirituality — cannot help but witness that the abject people he intuitively loves "are dead/ all they need is someone/ to throw dirt over them./ Passionless, stinking, dead." For this writer (fortunately, his admirers might add) both Eden and Tantramar are gone; only his struggle against asceticism and the nitty-gritty remains where "farmers maddened/ by debt or queer religions winter down/ under the ice".

WHILE REVIEWS of his early work praised Nowlan for the accuracy of his images, they also admonished him for flatness and failure to experiment much with form. A tendency not to whack home more forcefully a poem's potential also came under fire; what his poems of the early sixties needed more of was the expansive yet integral conclusions of his later ones, which exhibit an adroit control. In *Under the Ice* (1961), his fourth and final chapbook, one discovers him finding his range, adjusting his sights, but shooting erratically nonetheless; even some previous poems are decidedly better than the ones which now describe his middle period. "The Egotist" from *The Rose and the Puritan* (1958), for example, explores a favourite theme of violence with more sophistication than the later "Bear". The earlier poem clinches its simple but electric statement superbly.

> A gushing carrousel, the cock
> Revolved around the axeman's block.

Sweet Christ, he kicked his severed head
And drenched the summer where he bled.

And terrible with pain, the scream
Of blood engulfed his desperate dream —

He knew (and knowing could not die)
That dawn depended on his cry.

"Bear", on the other hand, lacks as much voltage because its conclusion is bathetic. In the first stanza a she-bear comes crashing down with rifle-fire; the second stanza pictures a bear cub chained beside a highway restaurant in order to attract tourists. While the bloody death of the mother appears a high point climactically, it does not imagistically; the second verse requires at least a sustaining image, or as in "The Egotist", one of an ascending kind that survives as part of the resolution.

Concerning his poetic endeavours at this time Nowlan could rationalize all he wished: "If all life is to be the stuff of poetry, and it should be, poetry will be banal occasionally", he wrote in review of Irving Layton (*Fiddlehead*, Spring 1960). Banality, of course, merely concocts an excuse for stuff that would be better left alone or written up in prose. Ironically enough, he was criticized for this identical weakness in a review of his *A Darkness in the Earth* (1959) in the very issue of *Fiddlehead* his own review appeared: "When he fails", commented the reviewer, "the failure is usually in the subject matter itself which is badly chosen, partially perhaps because of a desire to explore through poetry almost anything which he feels or with which he comes in contact." In *Under the Ice* Nowlan reveals limitations, not because a number of titles read like a rural *Who's Who* ("Jack Stringer", "Charlie", "Georgie and Fenwick", or "The Flynch Cows"), but because the poems themselves often forfeit neat contours of structure and perception (a notable exception is "Warren Pryor"). Verse like "Georgie and Fenwick", for instance, assembles tattle that makes better fiction. Nowlan realizes his use of local folk in the short story "The Execution of Clemmie Lake" much more effectively; the gossipy nature of the inhabitants of Larchmont, New Brunswick, who watch Clemmie hang twice because the rope breaks once, and who whisper "Clemmie messed in his pants when his neck broke" — the writer cauterizes in authoritative fashion that gains perspective when he retraces the story of the unfortunate victim through eye-witness accounts of his hanging on October 18, 1923. Not that Nowlan's fascination with the insecurity which gives rise to this need for gossip really diminishes in

his later work, but the treatment of it in *Bread, Wine and Salt* (1967) proves more consequential. "Small Town Small Talk", by its title, foreshadows a measure of irony that articulates in a few lines the isolation of two people, so the dreary procession of busybody verse as in *Under the Ice* vanishes; or from the same volume, "Every Man Owes God a Death", the irony expressed by the crafty narrator-cum-gossip again provides a double edge when the attempt to construe his landlady's niche in capitalism makes universal the shame peculiar to them both as Calvinists. With *Bread, Wine and Salt* Nowlan commands a hearing with such poems as "Sailors", "O", "Footsteps in the Dark", and "The Fresh-Ploughed Hill" where, instead of petering out, his images accelerate sufficiently to spurt past the banal and overtake the significant.

> The fresh-ploughed hill slopes down to the sky.
> Therefore, the sower,
> broadcasting his seed, runs
> faster and faster.
>
> Bounding like a stone
> the skirts of his coat
> straight out behind him.
>
> See how he falls, clawing
> at the earth —
> nor will let go
> but still clutches
> dirt in his fists, rolling
> into the bright depths of the sun.

IN THE PREFACE to *The Things Which Are* (1962) Nowlan reminds himself to "Write the things which thou hast seen and the things which are" (The Revelation of St. John the Divine). Consequently one perceives in a good deal of his writing the importance he attaches to a theme like coming of age. As observed in "When Like the Tears of Clowns", a fearful encounter is responsible for the transition toward some measure of maturity and the presence of "A Night Hawk Fell With a Sound Like a Shudder" in the same volume, his first, leads one to suspect that it too traces unexpected growth. Here the poet feels suddenly "lonely and cold", foreseeing his own death perhaps, when the winged predator descends upon some field rodent. In Nowlan's third chapbook, *Wind in a Rocky Country* (1960), the poem "Partner-

ship" again picks up this image of the hawk and uses it to describe a boy who, taught by an old man "about mermaids", "filches/ bay rum and tonic" for his teacher. The boy's attainment of any maturity hovers ambiguously, however, because — only "half-certain he's seen a star/ fall like a hawk and roll in the dooryard" — he senses no apprehension as does the figure in the previous poem, nothing to jar him from an adolescent and debilitating naïveté. Coming of age crops up in short stories like "Hurt", "A Sick Call", "In the Finland Woods" (all from *Miracle at Indian River*, 1968), and reappears trenchantly in the later poem, "The Wickedness of Peter Shannon", where fourteen-year-old Peter suffers humiliating guilt for his masturbation. Here shame and inferences of an austere heritage obstruct the course of maturity by creating tension which adumbrates epiphany; but while the analogous poem "When Like the Tears of Clowns" emits a Calvinist flavour, this one echoes an Irish religious orthodoxy. With such exclamations by the boy as "Oh, God, God, God," "ohhhhhh,/ Jesussss", and "my cheeks/ burning as though Christ slapped them!" the poem establishes a cyclical guilt that nestles as deeply within Peter Shannon as within Stephen Dedalus. And the myth of Daedalus is not remote from at least one recent and personal poem by Nowlan.

"I, Icarus" recounts "a time when (he) could fly", navigating himself through his bedroom window "above the pasture fence,/ above the clothesline, above the dark, haunted trees/ beyond the pasture." Nevertheless the poet's transcendence, an imaginative release accompanied by "music of flutes", requires considerable effort for his flight outside. As a result the artist implies a falling-back at dawn into what he cannot overcome — as Icarus fell into the ocean when he flew too near the sun that melted his wings. The inside-outside motif, suggested here, carries through Nowlan's poetry of the past decade, and receives an obvious statement in his first volume (as Milton Wilson noted, *The Canadian Forum*, June 1959) with such poems as "Sparrow Come in My Window", where the outside which invites escape remains cut off by a window that isolates the narrator and the bird he wishes to share his loneliness within. This confining window image continues clear in later poems like "Warren Pryor", "Party at Bannon Brook", "Jane at Two", and in "Wasp" where the poet discovers "a thorned phallus" inside his car windshield and — experiencing a "sudden pity/ for him, myself and every other being/ beating at unseen walls" — he rescues himself by grabbing the insect with his fingers and flinging it outside,

> Like a hot coal
> grasped in the naked hand!

Foolishly happy,
exhausted, licking my sore paw like a dog,
I sit here, thinking of glass
and the jokes it plays in the world.

The nature of glass makes it difficult to distinguish what is real, a difficulty observable in the second paragraph of "The Foreigner", a short story set in an asylum and indicating Nowlan's interest in the insane:

> Every day we spend an hour in the exercise yard. The yard is bordered on three sides by a high board fence and on the fourth side by the red brick wall of the hospital. Things that will grow anywhere, grow here: daisies, dandelions, thistles. There is even a tree, a maple about twice as tall as a man. And we smell the earth instead of iodoform and lysol. But it does not seem that we are outdoors. It seems that we are in a huge room with a dirt floor and a window opening on the sky, such a room as one might find in a dream. And perhaps what we see is not the sky but a plate of tinted glass. How can we be sure, since we cannot reach it?

What escapes the entrapped patients here — what eludes the boy narrator in another story, "At the Edge of the Woods" — is a foothold in either the real world or the unreal. "To be a stranger is enough, to be a stranger/ in two worlds: that is the ultimate loneliness." Nowlan himself seeks familiarity with both worlds to understand better the real one, but its price exacts the shut-in seclusion required to create art.

While the confined sparrow of an earlier poem returns briefly in "Homecoming" ("a wild bird/ flying from room to room" in a deserted house with "the windows blind"), so all the birds vanish — together with the artistic inspiration they represent — from inside another house in "Poem".

A silence like a lizard on the tongue,
    quiet that is not peace stalks through the mind,
searching for words in all the empty rooms,
    birds that no wicker cages have confined.

Grim is the shadow of wanton despair,
    icy the rooms where not a bird is crying.
Stop at the window, motionless as mute,
    even the hawk may come, when you've ceased trying.

Here the repetitive hawk again suggests itself antithetical to life (this time imaginative life), while the possibility occurs of artistic fulfilment deliberately pur-

sued in an inside world. But for the artist this world must balance ideally with its counterpart (the outside): or else asceticism, a condition of calcified regionalism, will grip the poet — seen as Time Traveller in "The Eloi and The Morlocks" — as it has the squatters observed as Morlocks who "venture no farther/ than their murky doorways", "shielding white faces" from the light. The hawk as one creature of prey bears close watching, but it is the Morlocks and their peculiar human severity that seem more to resemble those regional woodsmen who aim to chop down Stephen's imagination, stomp all over his glass roses.

The inside may afford temporary relief, but inevitably this solace confirms loneliness: as it does for the Puritan whose abstemious condition within his "cubicle" contrasts keenly (if unsuccessfully) with the predatory beasts that roam beyond its walls ("The Rose and the Puritan"); for the poet who occasionally desires "a world no bigger than the coupling bodies/ of two clockless strangers" ("Sometimes"), but experiences "beginning pain" when passion subsides and his lover crowds him "toward the wall" ("Porch"); also for the woman who every morning salvages twigs from the night wind in order to warm her windy shack ("The Gift"); and even for the cat that instinctively enjoys "the crackling stove" then shortly "stiffens/ and shies away" from the outside winter — one of its eyes "a hideous crust of blood and pus" ("The Cat"). Nowlan's regional sphere squats as an inherently unbalanced one where winter "that we share,/ shut out and young or shut away and old" ("New Brunswick") bespeaks an existence not only lonely but precarious. His artistic appeal for harmony attempts to re-unite God and devil ("The Drunken Poet"); it proposes an inexorable search for the real world where security is not cramped but universal. Meanwhile this search, in the context of isolation, death, and redemption — the fundamental upshots of down-to-earth living — presupposes certain ironies.

Viewing a world close to the earth, as "Comparison" does, exposes its grotesqueness and judges its humanism with images that are violent.

> Comparing pigs with cattle, Jack the butcher
> says he likes cows and understands them. They
> go where they're sent and stand until they're struck
> by his great hammer, then bleed drowsily.
>
> Pigs, on the other hand, disgust him; running,
> darting and leaping and befouling him
> with blood that spurts out of their backs because
> they won't accept the axe like gentlemen.

For Nowlan there are two ironies: (1) an ironic violence as displayed in this poem and another like "In Our Time", where a newspaper captions the kicking to death of a Congolese rebel, "*the shoe is on the other foot*"; as well as (2) an ironic humour which undercuts situations not violent themselves but still hostile to our credibility. In the short story "Miracle at Indian River", for instance, the author weaves a hilarious tale of how a puritanical pastor of the Fire-Baptized Tabernacle of the Living God takes it upon himself to allot marriage partners to those who refuse to acquiesce to more gentle persuasion. Or another story, "The Innermost One", hitting squarely at the recent penchant in North America for seeking out meditating monks of the Far East for spiritual inspiration: where we see Martin Rosenberg, the American poet who receives an audience with The Innermost One, "roughing out in his mind" the poem he will write of his encounter — until His Holiness asks Martin, since he is from California, whether he knows Larry, Moe, and Curly-Joe.

> "Larry, Moe and Curly-Joe," echoed Martin, in bewilderment.
> "They call themselves The Three Stooges," The Innermost One explained.

Obviously an extension of regional boundaries creates a sort of pop mythology that still permits humour the irony of local colour. "The Anatomy of Angels", for example, maintains that while angels of love songs are mere sprites, the seraphim "that up-ended/ Jacob had sturdy calves, moist hairy armpits,/ stout loins to serve the god whom she befriended". And who would suppose that an unattractive woman who avoids the indecent sun like the Morlocks, had the night before danced in a tent with "God Himself, the Old One," kissed the sweaty Christ — "the smell of wine and garlic on his breath" — and spoken "the language they speak in heaven!" as result of possession by the Holy Ghost ("Daughter of Zion")? Saving grace for his characters, apparently, leads often to the author's tongue-in-pen engagement with their eccentricities. Ironic overtones thus provide an individual like Francis who laughs insanely and wears winter clothes in the hot July sun ("Francis"), with a simple logic — "what keeps out the cold, she'll keep out the heat" — evidently required of those who would redeem sanity and reality from climatic extremes of their local microcosm.

Dedicated honestly and humbly to his art, equally at home in more than one *genre,* Alden Nowlan furnishes an unhip, thoroughly non-academic world with splashes of exquisite insight. A Grade 5 dropout, he has taught himself that the archetypal image ("oh, admit this, man, there's no point in poetry/ if you withhold the truth once you've come by it") is not necessarily a sacred

cow, but a local breed that he might wryly milk in order to construct a more truthful image of a rural

> silence broken only
> by the almost inaudible humming
> of the flies rebuilding their world.

If I have emphasized his poetry at the expense of his short stories it is because themes attendant to both are illustrated more felicitously by the poems. Yet as a fiction stylist he discloses an equivalent delicacy and intuition, apparent upon a reading, say, of "Annointed with Oils" or "The Girl Who Went to Mexico". Of course his unashamed simplicity in everything he writes best accounts for the scale of his experience: a tide of magazine publications, seven books (three more in various stages), an already wide anthologizing — his work reveals relentless growth, while his regional qualities continue to endure. And these last do serve to remind a country often reluctant to acknowledge them, of the perspective of its heritage and the roots of its contemporaneity.

# LE MONDE CLOS

## *Dubé et Anouilh*

*Edwin Hamblet*

LA CRITIQUE CANADIENNE parle souvent du rapprochement du dramaturge Marcel Dubé avec Arthur Miller, William Inge, et Tennessee Williams. Elle a raison d'ailleurs puisque les personnages et les thèmes de ces écrivains reflètent fidèlement la vie tragique de l'homme moyen en Amérique du Nord. Pourtant, Dubé manifeste aussi dans son oeuvre l'influence de Jean Anouilh. Une analyse plus profonde du théâtre dubéen révèle la situation particulière et le désarroi du Canadien-français dans sa difficulté à s'identifier avec les éléments discordants de son contexte nord-américain. Il découvre soudain que paradoxalement il n'est ni Européen ni Américain de mentalité, mais plutôt un mélange curieux des deux. Car Marcel Dubé, lui aussi, rappelle fortement Jean Anouilh. C'est précisément cette qualité qui rend Dubé intéressant dans le cadre des études des littératures européennes et nord-américaines.

Dubé se passionna pour le drame d'Anouilh après avoir vu une mise en scène d'*Antigone* en 1949. Ce premier contact avec le théâtre l'encouragea à lire l'*Antigone* de Sophocle et l'oeuvre complète d'Anouilh. Il convient alors de noter les parallèles frappants qui existent entre Dubé et le célèbre dramaturge français.

*Florence* de Dubé, par exemple, ressemble étroitement aux personnages et à l'atmosphère qui règne dans *La Sauvage* d'Anouilh. Thérèse, héroine de cette dernière pièce, est issue d'une famille ouvrière composée de musiciens médiocres qui ne s'aiment guère. Elle tombe amoureuse de Florent, riche pianiste réputé. Celui-ci veut épouser Thérèse en lui offrant l'occasion d'échapper au milieu sordide de son enfance et de trouver l'amour, la sécurité, et le bonheur qu'il lui paraissait inaccessibles. Il ne semble pas avoir d'abord d'obstacles à son amour jusqu'au moment où elle commence à sentir une barrière psychologique entre Florent et elle-même ce qui écarte la question de mariage. Florent est riche, couronné de succès, indépendant, et Thérèse elle, souffre du fait qu'elle ne peut rien apporter à cette existence si parfaite apparemment. Les énormes différences

sociales qui les séparent sont à l'origine de la frustration et de la faiblessse qui enfin obligent la jeune femme à s'enfuir. La situation est encore aggravée par les deux familles respectives. Florent ne peut comprendre le raisonnement de Thérèse, et par conséquent, il ne réussit pas à voir en elle un individu tragique et prédestiné incapable d'oublier son passé dans sa quête du bonheur.

Florence, premier personnage dans la pièce de Dubé, naquit dans une famille ouvrière comme Thérèse. Florence, d'ailleurs, est un personnage typique de Dubé car elle s'efforce d'échapper à son mode d'existence. Cependant, elle se trouve gênée par ses parents qui lui rappellent constamment le fait que sa personalité est solidement accrochée à son passé. Elle est déchirée entre des intérêts et des normes sociales contradictoires: son foyer étouffant où prédomine une atmosphère janséniste s'oppose à la promesse du bonheur que son poste de secrétaire et les nouveaux contacts à l'extérieur lui offrent.

Florence, comme Thérèse, ne diffère de la plupart des femmes de son milieu que par le fait d'être consciente de la paralysie qui menace son existence. Elle désire ardemment vivre à l'écart de ce milieu opprimant et elle s'isole de plus en plus de sa famille à cause du nouveau code de moralité qu'elle trouve dans le monde extérieur. La tension s'accroît en elle jusqu'au moment où elle n'est plus capable de contrôler ses émotions et doit exprimer ouvertement sa répugnance devant l'inertie de ses parents. Elle les juge impartialement, quoi qu'elle ait peur de paraître ridicule lorsque la compréhension et la sympathie inattendues de son père la désarme complètement. Florence avait pensé auparavant pouvoir se séparer de son passé en quittant sa famille et en rompant ses fiançailles avec Maurice, son ami ennuyeux. Mais son passé et ses traditions familiales sont enracinés dans son caractère psychologique.

La nouvelle liberté que lui offrent son emploi et son patron Mathieu n'est pas satisfaisante. Florence apprend rapidement que son prix est l'isolement et la solitude. Elle considère la possibilité d'abandonner le code moral de sa famille en devenant la maîtresse de Mathieu parce qu'elle pense que ce code perpétue l'état de torpeur et de satisfaction d'elle-même qu'elle déplore tant. Mathieu lui propose un moyen d'évasion. Mais cette échappatoire ne mène qu'à la porte d'une chambre à coucher ce qui n'équivaut qu'à une fuite temporaire. Elle ne peut s'évader indemne; sa conscience la rend pleine de remords et craintive des conséquences de son aventure décevante avec Mathieu. L'indépendance effraie la jeune secrétaire et lorsqu'elle trouve la force de se révolter, elle n'a ni le courage ni l'amoralité pour réaliser son but. Incapable de composer avec sa conscience, elle tranche le dilemme en s'enfuyant à New-York.

Une fatalité tragique toute puissante pèse sur Florence comme sur Thérèse dans *La Sauvage* car ces deux personnages habitent un monde clos sans issue. La situation économique des deux femmes est un remplacement moderne de l'idée classique du destin: le pouvoir écrasant d'une société impersonnelle de bureaucrates, au lieu d'un façonnement cosmique prédestiné, étrangle l'individu. Dans la vision du monde de Dubé et d'Anouilh, l'individu est aux prises avec ce désarroi et n'y peut rien. Dans l'univers que Dubé a créé pour Florence, le libre arbitre et la liberté n'existent point. Le suffocant milieu canadien-français et la fatalité opprimante créent la sombre atmosphère pessimiste qui domine toute la pièce, représentant une vision de la vie quasiment janséniste. Comme les habitants d'un monde janséniste, Florence est marquée d'une souillure reçue dans le passé. Bien qu'elle lutte avec acharnement pour s'en libérer, ses efforts sont vains. Thérèse ressemble à Florence sous cet aspect car elle tente aussi sans succès de se transformer afin d'atteindre un état de pureté dont elle conçoit finalement l'impossibilité.

Les personnages d'Anouilh font typiquement un effort pour se nettoyer de la flétrissure reçue dans le passé. Cette obsession de la souillure ressemblant au péché originel est un des thèmes dominants dans l'oeuvre d'Anouilh. La critique traditionnelle y voit un jansénisme sans le Christ. L'individu impliqué ne peut se laver de cette souillure car il est un esclave contaminé qui a été marqué par chaque mot et par chaque geste et doit lutter avec futilité pour se libérer de cette emprise. La philosophie janséniste prédominante dans l'enfance de Marcel Dubé au Canada français explique probablement sa perspective mélancolique de la vie. Le jansénisme présente une vision pessimiste et fataliste semblable à celle manifestée dans le théâtre de Dubé et d'Anouilh. Ennuyés et dégoûtés de leur milieu, leurs personnages cherchent un bonheur inaccessible. Ils essaient de s'inventer de nouvelles identités. Dans leur quête de purification, l'évasion offre un moyen d'effacer cette souillure et pendant quelque temps, ils se permettent l'illusion d'avoir atteint un état de félicité qui est réellement hors de leur portée. Au début, Florence et Thérèse se laissent entraîner; elles apprennent par la suite que leur passé les a marquées; de façon indélébile. Il n'existe pas de baptême non plus pour enlever cette tâche.

Les thèmes de Dubé et d'Anouilh se recoupent, en particulier le conflit psychologique qui se produit dans la société capitaliste occidentale. Un prolétariat

misérable enlisé dans sa crasse physique n'arrive pas à communiquer avec la haute bourgeoisie enlisée dans sa crasse morale. L'amour, dans ce sens, est ou impossible ou coupable parce que la société et l'éducation représentent des barrières insurmontables entre Thérèse et Florent, et Florence et Mathieu, par exemple. Thérèse et Florence finissent toutes deux par refuser la vie telle qu'elle est. Dans la rigidité de leurs convictions, elles manifestent l'impossibilité à s'adapter aux normes du monde réel; elles refusent le compromis de l'acceptation des règles établies comme une voie satisfaisante. Thérèse est engloutie dans sa pauvreté tandis que Florence est prisonnière de sa conscience. Ainsi, l'évasion reste la seule solution viable à leurs problèmes profonds.

Depuis Tarzan, jeune héros de *Zone* (1953) jusqu'à Geneviève, héroine d'*Au retour des oies blanches* (1966), les personnages de Dubé, tout comme Becket et Jeanne d'Arc dans l'oeuvre d'Anouilh, restent intransigeants. Il s'agit d'une question d'honneur personnel qui les empêche de se conformer à la volonté d'une personne ou d'une société qui leur est odieuse. La tare innée de chacun de ces héros est de nature psychologique ou sociale et mènera par la suite à leur ruine. Les héros de Dubé et d'Anouilh sont appelés à l'action ce qui est admirable. Mais ils échouent inévitablement dans leur lutte acharnée contre le destin car ils sont emmurés dans un monde clos.

# MAGIC, NOT MAGICIANS

## *"Beautiful Losers" and "Story of O"*

*Stephen Scobie*

OUR CULTURE is one which sets a great value on individuality, the preservation of the unique personality. This idea is one of the bases of democracy, of capitalism, and of the Protestant religious ethic, all of which systems are of course inter-related. The precepts of the "new morality" proceed from the assumption that no general, inflexible rules can be laid down which cover all possible situations; instead, each case has to be evaluated on its individual merits. Not only morality, but our whole romantic conception of love and sex, derived from sources as diverse as Provençal poetry and lipstick advertising, is centred on the sanctity of the individual personality and its uniqueness. This value finds its fullest expression in literature, which we look to for the artist's personal vision of the world. At least since the Romantics, we have valued not only the writer's own "originality" (a process aided by copyright laws), but also the differentiating individuality of fictional heroes and anti-heroes.

It is against the background of these generalizations that I wish to make a few remarks about two novels, which have at least this in common: that both describe, and perhaps endorse, a principle directly counter to those outlined above, namely, the deliberate attempt to destroy one's own individuality. Part of the profoundly disturbing impact of both books is due to the fact that they do strike at such basic preconceptions of our cultural orientation; and the books are even more disturbing in that they treat the theme directly in connection with what is still the uneasiest of our social taboos, sex.

The two books are Leonard Cohen's *Beautiful Losers*, and *Story of O*, published (Paris, 1954) by an unknown author, whose pseudonym "Pauline Réage" has never been penetrated. Both novels (but especially Cohen's) are rich and complex works, and this article does in one sense distort them by isolating one thread from their varied tapestries: that of the central figure's steady progression

towards loss of self, an apocalypse of utter impersonality, and of the function of the secondary characters in teaching and preparing the way for them.

A brief summary of the action of *Story of O* may be necessary at this point. The novel tells of a young woman, O, who voluntarily becomes the sexual slave of her lover, René, and of the man, Sir Stephen, to whom he gives her. The form is that of a pornographic novel, complete with isolated chateaus, dissolute aristocrats, and a large variety of whips, riding-crops, branding-irons, etc. O progressively loses all trace of any identity save that of a sexual object; she is grotesquely marked with the insignia of Sir Stephen's ownership, and in the climactic scene she is publicly displayed wearing an owl mask, so little recognizable as a human being "that no-one thought of questioning her, which would have been the most natural thing to do, as though she were a real owl, deaf to human language, and dumb." In a suppressed final chapter, she requests her own death.

It is not the purpose of this article to suggest that *Story of O* exerted a discernible influence on Cohen (though it would not be surprising if he had read it), but rather to point out certain thematic patterns which the two books have in common. In *Canadian Literature* 34, Desmond Pacey writes of *Beautiful Losers* that its main theme is "voluntary loss of self for some higher cause", while Sandra Djwa comments (somewhat disparagingly) that "I", in his final metamorphosis, "escapes from . . . the human predicament." Both of these comments seem slightly to miss the point. Pacey's is true of the secondary characters, but for "I" himself there is no "higher" cause for which the self is lost: the cause *is* the loss of self, which may be viewed as an answer to, rather than an escape from, the human predicament.

The inversion of values is apparent in the titles of both books: Cohen's heroes, however beautiful, are still losers, and O stands for negation, the denial of personality, the unimpeded movement towards death. This involves the characters in a degree of genuine misery. O, for instance, is not a physical masochist: she enjoys the *idea* of submitting herself to the men and becoming nothing more than their object, but she never enjoys the actual whippings and other physical tortures which she undergoes. One of the characteristics of the individual in any situation, sexual or otherwise, is the retention of power, power over the disposition of one's own body, power over other people's feelings, etc. O's major technique in what Susan Sontag calls her "project for completely transcending personality"[1] is to surrender completely all vestiges of this power.

Power is also one of the major themes of *Beautiful Losers*. As Cohen writes

in the commentary on Gavin Gate and the Goddesses, "Oh God! All states of love give power!" F. wields not only personal power over "I" and Edith, but also economic and political power; conversely, the history of Edith's tribe, the A---s, "is characterized by incessant defeat." Catherine Tekakwitha has the power of a saint, through her intercession with God, through the miracles performed in her name, and through the influence her example exerts over the faithful (including "I".) The greatest power of all is Magic, celebrated in the famous "God is alive. Magic is afoot" section. It is towards this power that "I" is being led; F. writes to him, "Here is a plea based on my whole experience: do not be a magician, be magic."

The equivalent force in *Story of O* is sex, and O "progresses simultaneously toward her own extinction as a human being and her fulfilment as a sexual being." Sex is impersonal; O rejoices that Sir Stephen's satisfaction of his desires bears no relation whatever to her as a person, and F. talks of the "nourishing anonymity of the climax." The image of O's dehumanization in the owl mask has, as its rough equivalent in Cohen's novel, the image, simultaneously comic and sublime, of the Danish Vibrator.

The initials D.V. (*deo volente*) point up, as Pacey notes, the fusion of religion and sexuality which is another theme of *Beautiful Losers*. F. and Edith indeed suffer at the will of God, not at their own will, but this God is "ordinary eternal machinery", made in Denmark. To its will, their wills become utterly transparent, as the saint's is to God's, or O's to Sir Stephen's. All distinctions of personality are lost: Catherine, Edith, Mary, Isis, all become one; and the protagonist of the significantly third-person Epilogue is an indistinguishable amalgam of "I" and F. (IF, "a remote human possibility.")

The idea of pain and physical torture is an integral part of this complex: F. and Edith excite themselves by reading of the martyrdom of Brébeuf and Lalemant before submitting to the whip of a seedy, popular-mythology Hitler; Catherine tortures herself with whips and thorns to approach closer to God, and her programme of self-extinction is echoed by "I". O's very similar programme also centres upon pain; pain is, after all, one of the most apparent signs of power, and the whippings which O undergoes are evidence of mental dominance rather than physical pleasure. O, as has been said, takes no masochistic pleasure in her pain; and the book, which is told completely from her point of view, lays no stress at all upon the men's sadistic pleasure. Indeed, as *Story of O* progresses, the male figures come to seem important only as instruments for O's destruction of herself.

It would perhaps be too fanciful to suggest that Sir Stephen comes to envy O the fulfilment she is able to achieve through his agency; but this feeling is definitely present in the case of Edith and F., and is most strongly marked in their dialogue before the Argentinian orgy. It is here that F. says, in bitterness and resignation, "I was the Moses of our little exodus. I would never cross. My mountain might be very high but it rises from the desert." F. and Edith are religious acolytes, preparing elaborate rituals and initiations for another's fulfilment, sacrificing themselves to "I" as Catherine Tekakwitha sacrifices herself to her God.

Again we have arrived back at the religious metaphor. It is inescapable in *Beautiful Losers*, and it is also implicit in much of the language of *Story of O*. In a preface to "Pauline Réage's" book, the novelist André Pieyre de Mandiargues (whose *Girl Beneath The Lion* is a beautiful and lyrical treatment of a very similar theme) describes it as a mystic book rather than an erotic one. Susan Sontag, in her excellent essay "The Pornographic Imagination", comments that "Despite the virtual incomprehensibility to most educated people today of the substantive experience behind religious vocabulary, there is a continuing piety toward the grandeur of emotions that went into that vocabulary. The religious imagination survives for most people today as not just the primary but virtually the only credible instance of an imagination working in a total way."[2] This kind of "total" experience is analogous to what Cohen means when he defines a saint as "someone who has achieved a remote human possibility", and both religion and sexuality may be viewed in these books as metaphoric modes of achieving such a possibility.

What then is the total experience with which these novels deal? For *Story of O*, the answer is simply Death. Death is the goal towards which O inexorably advances. It is an obsessive book, in such details as its continued concentration on O's clothing, and in its unity of theme and directness of movement (though this has been overemphasized by the omission from consideration of the secondary theme of Jacqueline.) The goal is summed up in O's name: negation, eternity, or a bodily orifice. The novel is a dark realization of the Jacobean pun on "death". O denies all the values of personality which our society holds to be fundamental, and she finds her fulfilment in that denial. The ultimate value is not the self, but the willed loss of the self.

In *Beautiful Losers*, the issue is not quite so clearcut. Loss of self is again the main process, but the secondary characters (F., Edith, Catherine Tekakwitha) clearly do so for a definite further purpose. In Catherine's case, this further pur-

pose is union with God; there are also suggestions in the final paragraph of a Christlike compassion being extended to "you, darling and friend, who miss me forever in your trip to the end" (though who speaks this final paragraph — the Jesuits, Catherine, "I" metamorphosed, or Cohen himself — is very far from clear.) But for F. and Edith, the further purpose is the fulfilment of "I", and that fulfilment can only be described as the dispersal of self, as the old man loses all human identity and merges with the magical form of reality, cinema. His eyes are blinking in synchronization with the "ordinary eternal machinery" of the movie projector, and what he sees is the blackness between the frames, nothing. He has indeed become what F. never was: not a magician, but magic itself.

Our society has assumed that any answer to "the human predicament" must start with the individual's acceptance of the responsibility of his own individuality. The protagonists of these two novels respond by annihilating that responsibility. The artist's response is to present these "remote human possibilities", and to invite the reader to re-examine some of his basic presuppositions, to question the unquestionable. The reader's response is, as always, his own affair.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Susan Sontag, "The Pornographic Imagination," in *Styles of Radical Will* (New York, 1969), p. 58.

[2] Sontag, p. 69.

*chronicle*

# NORMAN LEVINE

*An Interview*
*by John D. Cox*

NORMAN LEVINE lives with his wife and three teen-aged daughters in a comfortable house on a quiet residential street in St. Ives, Cornwall, where he leads, like many writers, a rather sedentary life. He is seldom seen on the narrow cobbled streets he wrote about in "A Sabbath Walk" or in the pubs he frequented as an optimistic young expatriate writer fresh from McGill University in 1949. Long ago he withdrew from the frenetic social life he wrote about in "The Playground," which flourished among young artists and writers in St. Ives in the idealistic post-war years. He has lived in St. Ives for most of twenty years, yet what attachment he has for the place seems largely a metaphysical one. Before the interview, he sat near the fire in the parlour and talked about the presence of the sea, the waves, which have been lapping against the sand long before one was here, and will continue long afterward. The theme plays a role in his new novel.

The interview took place in the room in which he writes, the large garret of the house whose window-paned gables offer a low-level view of the village and St. Ives Bay. The white-walled room is so sparsely furnished that it gives an austere appearance, an impression only slightly diminished by the presence of organized clutter. The room contains one straight-backed chair, a large wooden table on which he writes, and two wooden cabinets. Across the top of one cabinet is a row of books. The surface of the other is covered with high, neat stacks of periodicals containing his short stories, articles and reviews, an impressive record of his work which he no longer tries to keep up. On the light brown linoleum floor across the end of the room near his table are three rows of neatly stacked manuscripts — short stories and early drafts of his new novel, *From A Seaside Town*. On the wall above the table are stuck picture postcards, mostly of Cornwall, but one of flowers, "Gentians — I like the blue." A small name-plate

reads: "Norman Levine, Resident Writer". It is a memento of his year at University of New Brunswick. A match stick holds up a copy of a poem. There are two small Soutine prints and a large drawing by the late Peter Lanyon of a girl undressing — "his last birthday present to me." It is a room which to a visitor seems neither warm or "homey", but it is a clean, well-lighted workroom of a man who allows himself few distractions. "I don't do anything here but write."

* * *

*In* Canada Made Me *you write: "I like the lower towns, the place across the tracks, the poorer streets not far from the river. They represent failure, and for me failure here has a strong appeal." Why are you so interested in failure?*

I don't think I am interested in failure in the way you mean. But in that part about Lower Town Ottawa, I was thinking of my father's generation. People who came over from Europe to Canada before or after the first world war and just couldn't make much contact with Canadian society. They were sacrificed — a kind of stepping-stone for the next generation, my generation. But they had a lot of qualities I admired.

*Why do you think so many post-war Canadian writers happen to be Jewish? And come from this generation you've mentioned?*

It's hard to generalize. There are a lot of possible reasons. I think, with me, it was seeing the change from my parents to myself. Usually this sort of change takes several generations to happen. But this was happening as part of my growing up. Then there was the business of coming from — well, a tradition, having an identity — and being forced to come to terms with a society that was still looking for some identity. I should think there were enough tensions and stresses there to start anyone off . . .

*Was your childhood an unhappy one?*

I don't think so. I don't remember it as an unhappy one. There were times when it was a bit boring.

*At 18 you joined the RCAF and eventually ended up on a Canadian Squadron in England on Lancasters. What effect did the war have on your writing?*

I did use some of it in the very early things. But I wasn't equipped then, as a writer, to handle it. Or perhaps, more accurately, my experience of the war itself was superficial. Apart from the flying. I was much more affected by the life I found in England away from the air force stations. The way people lived their lives during the war. I'm sure this was one of the reasons for my wanting to go back.

*But before you went back to England in 1949, you went to McGill. Apparently you did very well: your BA with first class honours in English, your MA in one year, several prizes, a fellowship for postgraduate work. There is no evidence from your work then of the kind of writer you have become. Did something traumatic happen at university?*

No, not at university. In fact, once I decided to do English, I found university much too easy for my own good. And then the literary standard for undergraduate writing was not very high. Of course I didn't know it at the time. I was much over-praised for some youthful romantic writing I did in verse and prose. This helped to give confidence. But when I came to England in 1949, I was riding this crest. I had some poems published, I had finished a novel and won a prize with it at McGill, I had a fellowship. And coming to England, to the tail-end of that post-war romantic-idealistic time, standards weren't very high either. Enthusiasm was. *The Angled Road* received some very good reviews in England. And when it came out in Canada the Canadian reviewers, for the most part, followed the English reviewers. But by then I already knew the book wasn't any good. And here I was a writer. Writing things that weren't anywhere as good as I wanted them to be.

*What did you do?*

I didn't have another book out for six years. And during that time I did a lot of reading and writing — and discarding what I had written. Some writers, you know, come fully equipped with their first book. And often, with them, their first book remains the best. But there are others who take several books just to get on the rails. And that happened to me.

*Where were you when* The Angled Road *was published?*

We were living in Mousehole. In a nice house on the side of a hill, with a stone-walled garden, and copper beech, palms, and bamboos in the garden. The house had been, at one time, a school. And I was trying to write in a large room

built on to the house — I think it was where they used to put on plays — there was a raised platform at one end.

*What did you write then?*

Short stories.

*Who published them?*

*Northern Review* published one, and some English literary magazines, and a Norwegian one published in English from London called *The Norseman.* They published four or five of my stories. But there was hardly any money in it. The best payer was *The Norseman.* I used to get five or six pounds for a story. I think they went as high as seven pounds for a long one. Things were getting difficult. I remember going to Penzance library and looking at the glossy magazines — seeing which one carried stories by good writers. I found *Harpers Bazaar* did. And I remember thinking if they paid 25 guineas, what we would do with it? And at that time just being in *Harper's Bazaar* would have been a great encouragement. So I sent them a story. And of course it came back. Some seven or eight years later when I had a couple more books out and *Harpers Bazaar* had published three or four stories of mine — I sent them this early story again. Back came an acceptance and they said they were paying me their highest rate for it.

*Did you tell them?*

Of course.

*One of your stories in* One Way Ticket *is set in a mine in Northern Ontario. The place must have made quite an impression on you. It is also in* The Angled Road *and in* Canada Made Me. *When did you go to work in the mine, and why?*

It was during the summer holidays — the summer of 1947 — while I was going to McGill. I went to work at Helen Mine, Wawa. It was part of Algoma Ore. The place was called Jamestown. I was shown Sir James Dunn's bungalow about 50 yards from where we ate. He was said to come and live there from time to time. I went to the mine quite deliberately. My parents expected that I would take some office job in Ottawa with some government department for the summer. And I didn't want that. I had been doing just that before I joined the air force. I felt a war had been fought and that was behind me. Also going

to the mine, at the time, was a bit of bravado. A new experience. And I was hungry for experience.

*Another place that seems to have left its mark is the French Canadian village of Ile Aux Noix, by the Richelieu River. It is the setting for your story,* The Cocks Are Crowing, *and appears in* The Angled Road *and* Canada Made Me.

It was also responsible for several early poems and other stories. I went there in the summer of 1948 to tutor a French Canadian and three of his school friends — Guatemalans — in English. They were hoping to enter Loyola in the Fall. The woman who owned the house and where we all stayed was a widow, a Huguenot. She was quite a lady. She taught the late Tyrone Power how to drive a car. And as a Huguenot she didn't go along with the sort of village life that was around her. I was brought up in a French Canadian section of Ottawa — but this was the first time I lived in an entirely French Canadian community — mostly farming. It was also the first time I lived by a river. I spent a lot of the time outside: sailing, fishing, canoeing. It was a very nice time. And I'm still drawing on it.

*Several reviewers of your stories have pointed out that though some are set in England and some in Canada — wherever you go you seem to find the same sort of thing. Is this true?*

Perhaps it is. I don't do it consciously.

*Has this so-called permissive society of the last few years had any effect on your writing?*

Yes, I think it has. I know I felt much freer writing the new novel — dealing with marriage — than I would have done earlier.

*Is it correct to assume from the title of your new novel,* From A Seaside Town, *that it is not set in Canada?*

Like most of my books half of it is set in Canada and half in England. The parts in Canada are Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec City. But it's connected with Canada in other ways than the setting.

*You mentioned earlier that your books have their largest sale in Germany. Why do you think this is?*

I don't really know. Perhaps more people in Germany buy books. But my new

translator there is Heinrich Böll. And as you probably know he is one of Germany's leading writers.

*One question about your method. How important is rewriting to your work? Has its function, and extent, changed over the years?*

It's very important. A first draft for me is just what it is, a first draft. I write very quickly. Then I go back and revise, and revise and revise. In the early work revision usually meant cutting things out. Now, I find it means adding things in.

*What changes can you see from your earlier work?*

There's more humour, I think. More fun in my recent things.

*Have you published everything you have written? Or do you have stories or novels in manuscript form?*

I have published everything I've thought finished. Except for one story. Eleven years ago — it was a nice night in summer — I had half a bottle of brandy and went upstairs to see what I could write on that. I had never done this before, nor have I since. By morning the bottle was empty and I had written a short story of some 3,000 words. I went to bed thinking it was pretty good. But sometime next day I read it again . . . I have never tried to publish it. It's a children's kind of story.

*Could you say which writers have influenced your work, and whom you enjoy reading today?*

Well, early on — an awful lot of writers influenced me. I can't pick out anyone in particular. But if you look around this room you can see on the desk a book by Orwell, another by Hemingway, Babel, but mostly Chekhov and Graham Greene. And Joyce — I like the Joyce of *The Dead*, not *Ulysses*. On the wall I've got a poem by Charles Causley, a friend of mine, that I like very much. It's called "Walking." And it has this marvellous last line: *Birds, big as history, lumber by*. I have my favourite poems, stories, a few novels. And I keep rereading these. I like Chekhov and Graham Greene because reading them I am reminded of things in my own life. With Greene there's something else. The vitality of his prose. I find that stimulating.

*You've been in England now for 20 years. Are you still a Canadian citizen?*

Yes, and I don't see myself changing. A person I know, a Canadian from

Montreal, over here for as long as I have been and married, like myself, to an English girl, has decided to take British citizenship. He's a businessman. And I can understand how he feels. But it's not the way I feel. And I think part of the reason why I feel the way I do is because of being a writer. The Canadian upbringing is important to me. Just as being a Canadian living in England gives life a certain tension.

*review articles*

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*D. G. Jones*

PHYLLIS GOTTLIEB, *Ordinary, Moving.* Oxford. $4.00. MIRIAM WADDINGTON, *Say Yes.* Oxford. $4.00. CLIFTON WHITEN, *Putting the Birthdate into Perspective.* Clarke, Irwin, $3.95. FRANCIS SPARSHOTT, *A Cardboard Garage.* Clarke, Irwin, $3.95. R. G. EVERSON, *The Dark Is Not So Dark.* Delta. $2.00 paper, $5.00 cloth. RALPH GUSTAFSON, *Ixion's Wheel.* McClelland & Stewart, $4.95.

NEVER BEFORE HAS language been strained through so many media, at such volumes, in the service of so many and such insistent demands. At the same time, the radical changes in our human world appear to have outpaced our capacity to make them articulate — as if some fantastic cultural mutation had left the old linguistic exoskeleton in fragments. For the modern writer, the price of relevance has often been distortion and fragmentation, language fused in apocalyptic vision or dispersed in encyclopaedic perceptions. From Rimbaud to Sylvia Plath, Pound to the Black Mountain poets, poetry has run the risk of impenetrable delirium or pedestrian dullness. Particularly for poets on the lower slopes of Olympus, the problem of how to make it new without loss of control has become acute. No sure convention remains. And they may well ask with John Newlove whether it is fit to whisper or to shout.

This problem of language is clearly raised by the six new books of verse to be reviewed here. No two are alike and, for good or ill, none reflects any dominant or sure convention. If there is something they share, implicitly at least, it is a sense of loss: a loss of language and through that of a world. It is the explicit concern of at least three of the poets. As Miriam Waddington says in "Looking for Strawberries in June":

> I have to tell you
> about the words I
> used to know such
> words so sheer thin
> transparent so light
> and quick I had such
> words for wind for
> whatever grew
> I knew a certain leaf-language from
> somewhere but now
>
> it is all used up
> I have come to the
> end of some line or
> other like walking
> on railroad ties in
> the country looking
> for strawberries in
> June and suddenly
> the ties end in the
> middle of no-place

Francis Sparshott begins on the same note. In his hot teens, he tells us, he found a wealth of phrases he could turn with ease. But now, like the old papermaker whose ability to mat the fibres of the pulp in a few sure twists of a

screened frame has deserted him, the poet too has lost his knack.

> What locks the fabric in a turn of phrase
> I never knew the numbers used to come
> thrown like medusae on a public beach.
> One day the clichéd oracles went dumb.

And he "mourns rhetoric and her wrung neck."

*A Cardboard Garage* is an exercise in rhetoric, ironic, sometimes academic, bleakly amusing or plainly savage. An autobiographical "summing-up," with references to Harley-Davidsons, hunting in the North woods, driving through Illinois, is prefaced with the title of a poem in Arabic: "The Ma' Allaqua of Imr Al-Quais." Such a juxtaposition might please a man like Borges. It indicates, I gather, that the most diverse worlds reveal the same basic human experience. The basic experience of most of these poems, however, is of desolation, the loss of meaning. Things are what they are and they do not add up to anything. Rising from memory there is a sparse landscape eroding in the wind, of which the speaker says:

> Now let me see if I can remember my
> lessons
> Reading from left to right gate horses
> field fences
> here is a blown grey lake and here is a
> scorched drumlin
> — all better seen than said
> Ask me which way
> and I won't know Living from hour to day

Sparshott's garage is in the middle of no-place. And it houses some equally paradoxical vehicles. Traditionally patterned poems are parked in a section labelled "Brittle Bodies." More open and contemporary-looking poems are in a section labelled "Soft Engines." As a brittle body, "Oarsmen" is rhymed, mixes the colloquial "out of gas" with the archaic or poetic "alas," and demonstrates with stoic assurance that all we know and steer by is the past. It is a good old-fashioned ride, but a "ride" nonetheless; it can hardly take us anywhere that we haven't been already. "Argument with Dr. Williams" is a soft engine, which in part suggests that the modern may be just one more variety of rhetoric. It is as tightly controlled and more coldly sardonic than the so-called brittle bodies.

> But nothing depends
> on your old wheel
> barrow.

> In the last fire storm
> of Hamburg not
> one man

> there was not one killed
> but would have died
> at last

Life pushes up blindly, oblivious to the creation of art or the destruction of cities or the fact that love:

> has never learned to
> give up its hold
> on rain

> drops on wheel barrows
> and burned children
> screaming

> for mothers whose milk
> is boiled out of
> their breasts.

A little histrionic? Perhaps the most terrible lines are to be found in the seemingly jaunty couplet which concludes "Deep Freeze", one of the brittle bodies. We read:

> Here's the whole matter in a little space
> I love you to your hurt and my
> disgrace.

Sparshott ends by resigning his role as puppet master. He will hang his crea-

tions in the trees where, he says, "they dance better at the wind's bidding/ than they ever did at mine."

There is no use calling on Dr. Williams or on anyone else. The tricks of rhetoric, old or new, cannot help. Miss Waddington arrived at the same conclusion in the poem cited already:

> I mutter *Lenin*
> *Karl Marx Walt Whitman*
> *Chaucer Hopkins* even
> *Archibald Lampman* but
> nobody comes I don't
>
> know the password
> I only know it has
> nothing to do with
> being good or true
> nothing to do with
> being beautiful.

R. G. Everson in *The Dark Is not So Dark* calls on everybody, Goethe and Raymond Souster, Roethke and Baudelaire, Valéry and Robinson Jeffers, but nobody comes. Everson has given us some good poems (e.g. one in Oxford's *The Wind Has Wings*), but not in this collection. The language is out of control. The poems vary from doggerel to epigram, popular ballad to free verse. The trouble is, the tone may vary just as widely within a single poem. One of the most colourful is the ballad-style recollection from childhood, "The Night We Lost With Sir Wilfrid Laurier," when "Grits lay down and died/ under Tory pride," and the speaker crawled away to the barn to hide his shame. But look what happens to the form in two verses from a ballad on John Bunyan.

> Johnny Bunyan
> fought sin
> so hard that Bedford dungeon
> locked him in
>
> for twelve years
> while he tried to look after his family
> at first by mending kettles
> and then by making thousands of long-tagged thread-laces.

It is sadly ironic that the title should be taken from Valéry, an intricate and painstaking craftsman. A certain irony and fantasy in the poems themselves appears to sustain the conviction that the dark is not so dark. But without the necessary control these qualities become levity rather than irony, fancy rather than imagination, and we end with a parody of that tough gaiety the title intends. The result is grotesque, with precisely the grotesqueness of "Waking in Moonlight," where a bat blunders into the speaker's room and we read:

> Not a snake though he hisses
> Not a bird though he flies
> and unable to walk on paralyzed legs
> the bat now hangs upside down on the drape
> He's worse off than Baudelaire's albatross
>
> Between my birth and my death
> I who cannot comprehend what I am
> (museum of leftover bones from Early Man
> museum of leftover religions)
> stare at this ignorant creature
>
> He is flying again
> flying in grotesque hope

Perhaps the book is more eloquent in failure than it might have been in success, for its reveals clearly that neither the language nor the imagination are equal to the situation, and the situation is terrible: loneliness, frustration, alienation, madness, on the highways, in suburban homes, in the hospitals and asylums. One sonnet (?) consists of fourteen repetitions of "nameless dread." It will take more than the spark from the local incinerator to light up this dark.

> When the Syrian onyx is broken
> Out of the dark, thou, Father Helios, leadest,
> but the mind as Ixion, unstill, even turning.

These lines by Pound serve as the epigraph to Ralph Gustafson's *Ixion's Wheel*. Despite the obscure allusion, they speak with luminous clarity and precision in this particular context. Gustafson is no Pound. He never attains the sweep of these lines. Yet the epigraph is appropriate. He does catch something of their elliptical swiftness and knotty intensity. He knows what can be achieved from knowledge, craft, a steady awareness and persistence of mind. He may call upon Pound, upon Hopkins or Shakespeare, but he also knows that he must labour himself if they are to be of any help at all.

*Ixion's Wheel* covers a decade of work. The first of four "years of voyages" reprints *Rocky Mountain Poems*, first published by Klanak Press. The second reprints selections from *Sift in an Hourglass*. The third and fourth are made up of new poems sprung from travels to Europe, Scandinavia and the eastern Mediterranean. Of these, the *Rocky Mountain Poems* are his outstanding achievement and surely one of the lasting contributions to be made to Canadian poetry in these six volumes.

Unexpectedly, perhaps, Gustafson is one of very few poets equal to the Rockies. He is equal to them because he approaches them slowly, almost doggedly, with the careful precision and indirectness of the man who climbs them. As he says, "There was a care needed; stones/ On the path could break the ankle." He builds up his mountains stone by stone, step by step. "On mountains," he writes, "One does not try out metaphors." He keeps his eye on the ground: "My mind was on boots." And on the small. Running into a patch of wild strawberries, he remarks, "All that day the sweet berries/ Kept our heads to the ground." Yet the peaks are there, implied, towering above their bent heads. Later Gustafson will say à propos of the Parthenon, "Proportion is all things of beauty." It is the tension, the imagination balancing the opposites, the large and the small. As a man climbs a chimney, matching his weight against mountains and gravity, so from details of rock, moss, branches, flowers streaming with pollen, thirst, scratches, more rocks, underground streams, waterfalls and glacial vistas there finally emerges that sense of "greatness cragged/And broken, lying on the mind/Until the mind gave in." That immensity has been made articulate.

Similarly in the second year of voyages a model of the Matterhorn and the twisted shoe of a dead man, "grazed by that grandeur," serve to evoke the ambiguous face of the mountain. What is contained in the little museum evokes the uncontainable reality without.

Yet the whole world of the later voyages tends to become a museum whose relics provoke in the turning mind reflections on passion and death. So in "Sunday Queue: Tower of London," we are told that "Descended stones/are knowledge" and "Grief is monuments." What the tourist sees are the magnificent reflections of human desire in revolt against banality and death, reflections left in the stone by design or by accident. "Jane's hair/tangles with the axe. Dying/ is coronation, the bloody tower/is of royal blood." The ironic eye tempers any rhetorical extravagance, insisting on the banal and the mortal: Liszt in carpet slippers, Pasiphae with her eye on an ant, the coke machine on the top of Milan cathedral, the skulls and turnips

that circumscribe every life, Agamemnon's, the Pharaohs', Galla Placidia's, that of a Princess of the Nile and of the author himself. But we weary of reflections, of the continual return to Shakespeare's grave, Hamlet's soliloquy over the bones. It is true, the stones themselves may come alive, as in "The Horses of Saint Mark":

> Had virgin
> Such beautiful feet?
> Ha! hoofs!
> Placed on their pedestals,
> One forefoot up,
> Nostrils snared in the Venetian wind.

Yet even here, in that "Ha! hoofs!", for example, we catch the echo of the past, of earlier resolutions of certain tensions which have since been spent. One wants the naked body in a nameless wind, making it new.

Phyllis Gotlieb begins at home, in the streets, "every carstop a cram course." Eye and ear attentive to the recurring elements of speech, she ends up with some of the most basic, perennial forms of human expression: nursery rhymes, game songs, ballads and proverbs, "a brainful of rain and A WALL OF GRAFFITI." "Ordinary Moving," she says in the title poem, "is the name of the game."

> *laughing, talking* where the ball bounces
> in the forgotten schoolyard
> *one hand, the other hand; one foot, the other foot*
> you know the one
> (Saturday Afternoon Kid
> blackball-muncher, scotchmint-muncher
> handkerchief-chewer extraordinary)
> *clap front, clap back*
> ball thwack on the boardfence

and so on "roundabout/until you're out."

"Ordinary Moving" is something of a *tour de force* in which a host of children's songs and folk-rhymes serve to sketch the whole course of life. With blunt humour and verbal highjinks they acknowledge the terrors of sex, birth and death, the struggle to digest individual and class differences, the conflicts of languages, race and religion. They can hardly refine our insight, nor are they really new. But they renew our awareness of the variety and tough vitality of both language and people, which is precisely the point on which "Ordinary Moving" concludes:

> we turn the world away from night
> we raise the sun, we bring the light
>
> if we don't act the way we should
> too bad for you. We're here for good.

In keeping with this logic we find a Petrarchan sonnet invaded by the Saint Louis Blues, a ballade in which a Jewish Villon laments the world's cruelty and indifference. All is not variation or ventriloquism, however. There are several delightful and vigorous poems one wants to remember that are more nearly in Mrs. Gotlieb's own words, for example "First Person Demonstrative," with its characteristic opening, "I'd rather/heave half a brick than say/I love you, though I do," or the fantastic versification of the human skeleton in "A Discourse," or the classical sonnet "I Ask You," with its jazzed-up language and conventional cynical wisdom. Throughout we are reminded of poetry's roots in the play of language. And Mrs. Gotlieb does catch something of the "heyrube and racket of carnivals." Still, we are reminded that this perennial speech is also a kind of rhetoric and that it may become, as I fear it does in "Nothing," a sort of "busted slapstick." The heyrube of carnivals and even the songs of children

seem somehow to belong to an earlier and more innocent world of discourse. One doubts whether they can in fact raise the sun, bring the light — whether we are "here for good." The most convincing note may be that of the witty, ironic, yet finally puzzled "Death's Head." Lying awake, the speaker (between breaths) contemplates her own mortality sustained by nothing but her continued breathing and the realization: "and yet I seem to get to sleep."

One wonders if Clifton Whiten ever gets to sleep, he is so busy, as the blurb-writer says, keeping his eye on the clock and the calendar. *Putting the Birthdate into Perspective* is a first book, on which no final judgement of Mr. Whiten's work can be made. The poems vary from personal reminiscence to impersonal comments on the news. The language wobbles between parody and plain speech. The insights range from the profound to the callow. Perhaps the best thing in the book is "Of Ourselves," with its fairly straightforward and firm opening:

> This is no easy task, this, filling the shoes
> of a dead man, but be done it must
> I tell myself — and doing it, admit
> I overdo it.

Yet it becomes a little embarrassing when he steps into Eliot's shoes ("noble Eliot and I") or Will's (Shakespeare's, that is). It is equally embarrassing to hear the latter called "William S. the word boy." The constant comparison with childhood friends and historical figures, the "old roomie" and the famous dead, betrays a painful self-consciousness and lack of proportion. The indiscriminate intimacy with first names becomes merely flippant. The author was born in 1939, under the sign of the familiar "V" for victory. On the shoulder-blades of a childhood friend, this sign was the envy of all. But later the speaker in the title poem discovers the same sign transformed: it stares from the photograph of a faceless man, a survivor of World War I. There is something very black indeed to be put in perspective. But it will never be managed with puns on "busts" and the grotesque undergraduate mixture of language we find, for example, in the lines:

> But do come
> to see me my lovely. I'll have been some
> good time awaiting you — old high-school
> chum.
>
> Bawd, bawd, bawd demon! Aroint
> (avaunt?) thee devil!
> You'll bring Toronto about my ears.
> *So evil.*

Strangely, it is Miriam Waddington's *Say Yes*, whose language is closest to the conventional lyric, that of all these books appears freshest, surprises with sudden illumination, touches us with her gaiety and convinces us of her gravity. Her language enlivens the dark. Acutely aware of the loss of love, of language, of a familiar world, she confronts it directly and articulates it honestly. With a possible hint from Dr. Williams she has devised a rather baroque, run-on form made up of lines of two to four feet into which the most prosaic sentences may be fitted, in a potentially endless series. But the variations are far from prosaic, as in this sure, delicate and haunting passage:

> I see
> empty nests falling
> in the cold air
> forced out of the trees
> by a stiff wind
> I am afraid
> of this bird-emptiness
> and the ratgrey dark
> that comes
> to nuzzle my loneliness

I am afraid
of the cries
of little animals
I don't know that language
I wonder
if I can still sing

Looking at an intricate network of lines in a drawing by Ronald Bloore she asks, why should it, then, "remind me of the world/broken and burned by/lightning the world of/dead roads I thought I/ had left behind me/forever?" In the country, in the city, in art or in nature, everywhere the dark appears. In "Shakedown" we read:

Time like a raftered roof has
shaken us down like grain or
brickdust into the lowest bin
of the dark world.

One poem is entitled "Swallowing darkness is swallowing dead elm trees." And swallow it Mrs. Waddington does. The dark is not simply an alien dark; it is our own. Running "like a homeless dog through/the muddy fields," where the children fly kites in the lonely spring and the speaker is troubled by death and the song of the dark polluted river, she concludes that the "song heard/by all those who run in fields/is nothing but the sound/of our dark crying." The dark is the home of the inarticulate "other." Moving into the dark with affection, she retains her language and enlarges it, rediscovering her world in the bleakest times and the most unpromising places. Iron bridges fold their wings like swans; construction cranes like colourful amphibious animals bring her a breakfast basket of helmeted workers and bricks by the ton. And in "Time" the most ancient love lyric is easily and surely renewed:

When I run to meet my love
I am large-eyed and swift
as spring on the outskirts
of Jaffa.

Despite the strangeness of cities, the "black leather police," empty libraries, empty rooms, Eros survives. It survives to inform the imagination and the control of the language, and with it survives the capacity for song.

the world is getting
dark but I carry
icons I remember
the summer
I will never forget
the light.

# WHERE TO GO?

*D. O. Spettigue*

JAMES BACQUE, *The Lonely Ones*. McClelland & Stewart. $6.95.
LAWRENCE GARBER, *Garber's Tales from the Quarter*. Peter Martin Associates. $4.95.
STEPHEN VIZINCZEY, *The Rules of Chaos*. Macmillan. $5.95.

START WITH *The Lonely Ones* because it's easy. It calls itself "a novel of contemporary Quebec", and it is, with Separatists and Artists and Sex, just as you'd expect, and a made-to-order plot that creaks a little. "My life is Chaos", it begins but the novel does not live up to this promise. Harry Summers is a

man of impulse, not of chaos. About to marry a nothing-girl, Shirley (well-to-do English — that is English-English — and very sweet, the girl Everyman wants to carry off to his cabin in the woods), Harry sees her suddenly as a trap, a threat to his Art, and runs out on her. Back in Canada a day later he runs the rapids in a canoe to reach the safety of his cabin in the woods only to find himself threatened by an armed Separatist. Harry is half French-Canadian; his French bosom-pal and artistic mentor has gone political and Harry is drawn indifferently into a plot to seize a radio station. Co-habiting with his friend's wife, and trying to paint again, he manages at least to send for Shirley who arrives the day of the plot. Fleeing the results of the prime minister's assassination the four (English, English-French, French-English and French) sort out their confusions and end on a note of what is meant to be perennial optimism in the face of unlikelihood:

> Down the stairs and out both mad from trying to stay sane in this country, but we'll make it. We made it this far and this isn't the end, oh no, you haven't won with the cops politics bombs ancestors hate, no, you lose you've been losing all the time and that's why we aren't bitter, go, go.
>
> ... Running. The car.
> "OK. I'll make it."
> "Yeah, come on, we'll make it."

What comes through is the irrationality of choice, Harry's confused good intentions. But not chaos, because the neat plot and mathematically polarized characters and settings (England-Canada, bush-city, Montreal-Toronto) suggest just the opposite. We may not know where we're going but we're fully in control of the representations of our confusion.

The breakdown of order under the pressure of irrational rebellion may be inevitable, but Stephen Vizinczey would create a rationale for revolt by freeing it from its origins in fear and undefined anger. Rid yourself, he suggests, of the illusion of the omnipotent system and your gesture of freedom can become a happy self-expression instead of a nervous twitch. *The Rules of Chaos* is a liberating book, and a little frustrating too. You nod vigorously all the way through it; you mutter "quite right" at intervals. Here is an author who thinks what you oft have thought and, damn him, expresses it better than you ever could. All those letters you were going to write to the Editor can now be burned — this says them all.

It says that cause-and-effect are illusions, that only in retrospect do events seem orderly. "Events do not develop, they are born out of chaos." Furthermore, the trend of our time is to chaos because the illusion of control can not be sustained much longer.

It's always a little startling to realize how young modern science is. This book must be one of thousands reflecting the difficult transition from the certainties of a Newtonian law-governed universe to the post-Darwinian one which includes our relativist-existentialist present. The decentralizing process, accelerated since mid-century, reflects the increasing acceptance of the lack of a cosmic centre. Without such a metaphor all applied notions of centrality — central government, authority of state, law, church — are seen to be baseless.

How Mr. Vizinczey releases the theoretician in us! Power, he says, is an illusion. A Johnson, a Nixon, cannot promise peace in Vietnam because he has no

power to effect one. Conversely, North American nightmares of creeping conspiracy are generated by the mistaken assumption that other nations and their leaders, or groups within a nation, have the power to direct events against us. But power — the foreseeing, planning and direction of history — is an illusion both because human actions are irrational and uncontrolled and because the permutations of circumstance are beyond calculation.

How, then, make "Rules"? Mr. Vizinczey invites us to free ourselves from fear by accepting the reality of the present. The historical past is an illusion of order, the future a projection of the illusion, and "delusions breed cowardice". What he leads us to is the paradox that once we can accept that we have no control — and no one else has either — then we can control our lives, make choices, by taking no thought for the morrow and living fully in relation to others and ourselves in the present. (Rule no. 2)

Hardly a new concept, but one Mr. Vizinczey recognizes particularly needs emphasizing when the myth of state-control and computerized societies seems to threaten everyone's freedom. At the core of his book are essays on Eugene McCarthy and on Stendhal, individuals who were bigger than their times in proportion to their power to see through illusion to the reality of the moment. "If Nothing is Certain, Nothing is Impossible."

In his didactic role Mr. Vizinczey inevitably overstates his case in order to tempt us to his essentially anarchic position. Perhaps he knows the cautious reader will provide the qualification. Thus, when he says "pure chance" governs, the reader will object that innumerable limitations reduce the odds of "pure chance" to those of an uncertain probability. And this granted, the reader's final position is likely to be a wistful regret that he cannot follow the author all the way.

Much of the book is intended to provide a context for the two enthusiastic portraits, and at the same time to give a slight fictional colouring to the whole. Vizinczey uses wife and daughter in the roles of straight-men and pleasant sceptics to lighten the didactic burden and to establish that some parts of his book are of the fictional form known as colloquy, as others are of the familiar essay. The effect of the whole is to add personality to theory and so to make both pleasant and persuasive what must be, finally, a futile process — the reasoning toward, and establishing rules for, spontaneous behaviour. The fictional element only heightens the paradox because it is so marginal as to acknowledge the inadequacy of fiction to say boldly what needs to be said. And thus the paradox that without the fictional vehicle the message is finally unconvincing because it is said rather than lived — true, no doubt, but merely true.

Unlike the other two, Garber's book is big and spready and might be called chaotic but for a unity of subject. The subject is sex, but that word is not brutal enough for this book. It is not often one reads fiction that is physically nauseating and the question therefore, arises, Why read it? Why publish it? (The legal wrangles over mildnesses like *Lady Chatterly's Lover* and *Ulysses* become pointless now; if you don't ban this you don't ban anything.) From the opening copulation to the last public-lice hunt the book oozes its 400-odd pages of obsceni-

ties. For what? Nobody's pleasure, surely, since the effect is certainly not titillation.

And that is probably the point. In literary terms this book is a confession and an anatomy; confession because it is a first-person account of the observer-protagonist's descent into the life of the Quarter in Paris in ever-descending circles of dead-pan debauchery to end in satiety and disease; anatomy, because it is an exploration of the nature and practice of sex where there is no other interest. It is an Anatomy of Love. At one point it becomes a richly ironic colloquy on love, the narrator taking an idealized as well as clinical view, the antagonist (Rose, yet) pragmatic:

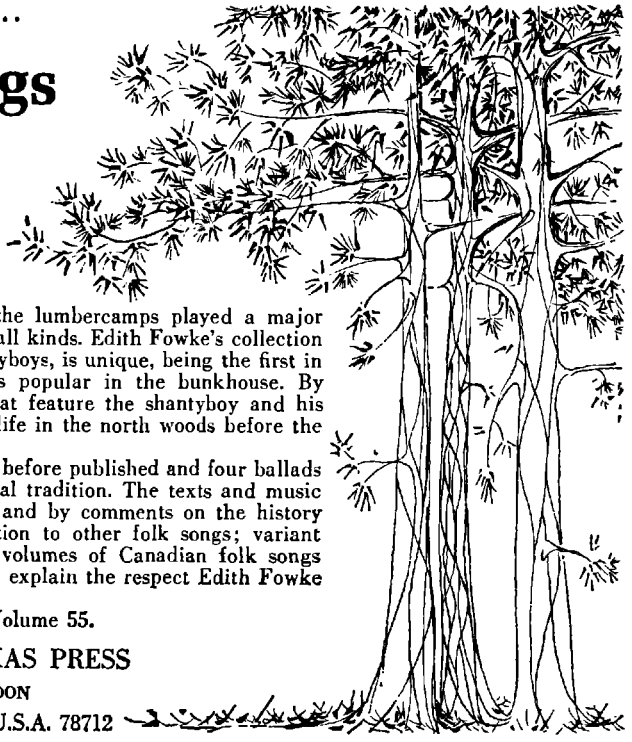
> Garber: Sometimes love is a vicious testing ground. As if there were some deep interior goblin that is not satisfied with the more forward urges, but must continually renew itself in acts of outrage and contumely. Love often drains off its own existence by driving toward some extreme and unhallowed proportion that overreached its very meaning.
> Rose: Oh fuck off, Grubs.
> Garber: ... The imp is a two-headed goblin; its janus face is deceptive and betrayed you into the impossible equation that to render was to withhold.
> Rose: Yes well I'm not finished with that ass-bleeder yet. I'm going to show that fart a windstorm; he'll know what fancken love is, I'll find him and shove love right up his queer.
> Garber: At least you still care. That's something I wouldn't have suspected. "Forked man has yet his charm," I see.

None of the charm of unaccommodated man remains from this book. The ironic narrator carefully betrays himself in describing in abundantly lyrical terms a week's excursion with friends into the

*a vivid picture of life in the north woods ...*

# Lumbering Songs from the Northern Woods

**by Edith Fowke**



In Ontario and adjoining areas of Quebec, the lumbercamps played a major role in preserving and spreading folk songs of all kinds. Edith Fowke's collection of sixty-five songs, recorded from former shantyboys, is unique, being the first in this field to exclude the more general songs popular in the bunkhouse. By limiting her collection to only those songs that feature the shantyboy and his work, Mrs. Fowke presents a vivid picture of life in the north woods before the days of mechanization.

*Lumbering Songs* includes many songs never before published and four ballads previously listed as of doubtful currency in oral tradition. The texts and music are complemented by detailed documentation and by comments on the history and currency of the songs and on their relation to other folk songs; variant texts and tunes are also given. Six previous volumes of Canadian folk songs and the numerous recordings she has produced explain the respect Edith Fowke is accorded as a collector of her country's lore.

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chateaux-country where they rouse themselves from the miseries of cold and pot-hunger and boredom only once to enjoy their wilful corruption of a boyscout troop.

Irrational, almost automatic behavior, a determined amorality. Questions of ought and must do not enter this upside-down world. It is the ultimately permissive society, if a series of portraits of the lost whose separate interests are only their particular hang-ups, can be called a society. They come together in groups only when one personality, like Vangrin's, forms a centre for daily meetings of the bored.

The comic element is present in the book, more than one realizes at first, but it is difficult to savour among the stronger odours. (Constance: What's the difference between *decadent* and *debauched*? Bunny: *Debauched* is when you do it in the rain). What dominates is not a Rabelaisian gusto but a Swiftian disgust at the flesh. The truth this book offers is that down is merely down. There is no revelation awaiting us, as the "Black Romantics" would have it, at the bottom of the abyss. The limitations of mind and body — satiety, apathy, disease — circumscribe experience. The protagonist withdraws at the end through a hollow English limbo toward Canada where the "truth" of the Quarter can never be believed, does not in fact exist. ("Canadian? What does that precisely mean?" "It is the northern extremity of an attitude prevalent in New York.") We are out of it, here in Canada, we know nothing of the gay life; ours is a different kind of Limbo. For us, distance, convention and deception may still romanticize love, but under the microscope of this book the thing lies bared as a horror.

A highly sophisticated work, *Tales from the Quarter* approaches one of those limits of literature beyond which there is no place to go. So, in another way, does the marginal *Rules of Chaos*. Which is very interesting, because where to go is the contemporary question for each of these three authors.

# THE MYTHICAL MONSTER

*F. M. Frazer*

SHEILA EGOFF, G. T. STUBBS, and L. F. ASHLEY (eds.), *Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature*, Toronto and New York, Oxford University Press, 1969, $7.50.

CHILDREN ARE SIMPLY IMMATURE people (J. R. R. Tolkien) — except that they are, at least potentially, so much better than their elders that the adult world may not be fit for them to grow up in (Jason Epstein). They are innocent and love justice (Chesterton, quoted by Tolkien) — but theirs is a savage innocence, and their sense of justice is confined to the treatment they themselves receive; they have "none whatever in regard to anyone else"

(Penelope Mortimer). They aren't concerned with whether or not a story is true or false, 'real' or 'unreal' (Edmund Leach) — perhaps because they immediately translate every classic fairytale into a euphemistic symbolization of an often-steamy home truth (Michael Hornyansky).

In fact, if one could only connect all the psychological and moral definitions of children explicit and implicit in the forty essays that constitute *Only Connect*, one would have the outline of the mythical monster to end them all.

The reader attempting an uninterrupted passage through the book, and rendered slightly seasick by the variety of child-concepts, tends to recall the old recipes for girls and boys, "sugar and spice and all things nice" — "scissors and snails and puppydogs' tails", with new appreciation. But although the heterogeneous definitions are commonly invoked to back opinions about what a child's book should be, it becomes evident that literary judgment and taste are the primary determiners of the essayists' likes and dislikes, promotions and condemnations. The psychologizing and the psychology (two contributors are psychiatrists) are largely supportive in thirty-eight of the articles.

The two exceptions are Jason Epstein's " 'Good Bunnies Always Obey': Books for American Children" and Nat Hentoff's "Fiction for Teenagers". For Epstein, the mortal sin of a writer for the young is apparent advocacy of submission to circumstances or authority. In his view, the theme that "organized society is hostile to growth and freedom and defeats the individual as, in the literature of an earlier epoch, nature used to do. . ." is the supremely attractive and healthy one for children. Yet, he says, children are beset by 'experts' who would impose upon them fictional glorifications of acquiescence and who only occasionally let a book like Edwin Tunis's *Frontier Living* through their bureaucratic ranks.

> Unlike most books in its category, it neither patronizes nor sentimentalizes the Indians, whose side it takes against the whites where it is necessary to do so. The Kentucky settlers are described as drunken and brutal, while it is revealed that the towns farther west were often bothered by gamblers and prostitutes. The directors of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific are described as thieves and exploiters who co-operated with the California legislature to rob the public, while the United States senate is shown to have been frequently faithless in its treaties with the Indians. In its attention to detail and the cleanliness of its style, *Frontier Living* is a considerable achievement — one of those books that is [*sic*] likely to inspire strong feelings of social justice and patriotism in certain young readers by providing them not only with a sense of their uniqueness but with a link to the common welfare.

Nat Hentoff is troubled by teenagers' complaints that "there are many more hang-ups in being young than are even intimated in most of the books they've seen." He feels obligated to meet "the challenge. . . to make contact with the sizeable number of the young who seldom read anything for pleasure because they are not in it". And mindful of this challenge, he is impressed by seventeen-year-old Susan Hinton's *The Outsiders*, which, despite a plot that is "factitious at times", "has been widely read among heterogeneous sections of the young because it stimulates their own feelings and questionings about class and differing life-styles".

Even if idealization of rebellion *per se* and the exaltation of ignorance and inexperience into trailing clouds of glory

were not the new conformity, Epstein's demonstration of "doctrinal adhesion" would be alarming from a man of letters — especially from a vice-president of Random House. And although Hentoff's bent is clearly practical as well as humane, since the solipsistic teenagers who worry him are apt to be with us for some time, he is surely inviting proselytism and the reduction of literature to an instrument of social therapy. Moreover, Robert Rosenheim's program, sketched in "Children's Reading and Adults' Values", seems more likely to develop people worth contacting. He says:

> ...I would suggest that...we do not bother inordinately with questions such as 'Is this a great book?' Or a wholesome one. Or an up-to-date one. Or an informative one. Or even a 'broadening' one. The questions I would ask would tend to be: Will this book call into play my child's imagination? Will it invite the exercise of genuine compassion or humour or even irony? Will it exploit his capacity for being curious? Will its language challenge his awareness of rhythms and structures? Will its characters and events call for — and even strengthen — his understanding of human motives and circumstances, of causes and effects? And will it provide him with a joy that is in some part the joy of achievement, of understanding, of triumphant encounter with the new?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Effective imaginative literature is an amalgam of the new and strange — whatever taxes credulity and complacency — with what is somehow believable, authentic, and immediate. And I should argue that if the balance is to be tipped it must be tipped in the direction of novelty, of the alien and challenging. For all genuinely memorable literary experience is, in some measure, an initiation into the previously unknown....

These essays apart, with the varying theories of the other contributors about what constitutes a child, there is a large amount of agreement in *Only Connect*. Writer after writer rises to the defense of fantasy against charges that it is escapist or frightening or diabolically inspiring. C. S. Lewis and Donnarae MacCann make the point that wish-fulfilling "realism" about triumphant children feeds the gluttonous ego and engenders "undivine discontent", whereas fantasy can stir and trouble its reader "(to his lifelong enrichment) with the dim sense of something beyond his reach and, far from dulling or emptying the actual world... [give] it a new dimension of depth" (Lewis). And several essayists assert that children enjoy a little horror (like being vicariously frightened), cannot be terrified by literature unless the penchant for terror is present in them any way, and are themselves pretty frightening in their unconscious and hence unrestrained sexuality and their aggressive hunger for power. Anthony Storr gives some of this theory its most violent expression:

> ...it is only the child who is already emotionally disturbed who will act out his fantasies. If this were not so we should all have strangled our brothers and sisters, slept with our mothers, castrated our fathers, and reduced to pulp all those who in any way opposed us.

Michael Hornyansky says much the same thing with mixed ruefulness, tenderness, and hilarity. And Penelope Mortimer and Diana Goldsborough declare the hardiness of the average child's psyche with the cool candour and wit that seem to characterize literate Englishwomen.

There is also considerable harmony concerning specific books and authors. Predictably, Lewis Carroll, Kenneth Grahame, E. E. Nesbit, C. S. Lewis, Rosemary Sutcliff, and Mary Norton receive accolades. Less predictably, Frances

Hodgson Burnett, once severely censured for the sentimental prettiness of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, is given respectful attention for her addictive *The Secret Garden*. A surprising revival may be in store for the Oz books. Martin Gardner, the annotator of *Alice*, recommends that *The Wizard* be restored to children to fill in the bookshelf gap left by *Alice*, which has, he claims, been an adults-only book for several decades. Jordan Brotman's "A Late Wanderer in Oz" is a detailed, joyous appreciation of Frank L. Baum's Oz series. (I am unconverted, but cannot find a single copy of that shelved lot in which to check my faint memory of rather flat, thin writing and relentless contrivance.) Three other slight shocks are the bundle of qualifications in which Elizabeth Janeway wraps her commendation of *Little Women*, the fact that T. H. White receives only one, fleeting reference, and the absence from this Canadian book of any reference to L. M. Montegomery in general or *Anne of Green Gables* in particular.

Some of the best writing in *Only Connect* is, of course, in the articles by major authors. Tolkien's justly celebrated "Children and Fairy Stories" is represented by a long extract. The book also contains C. S. Lewis's persuasive "On Three Ways of Writing for Children", T. S. Eliot's warm and winning appraisal of *Huckleberry Finn*, and Graham Greene's finely serious treatment of the art of Beatrix Potter. Rosemary Sutcliff contributes "Combined Ops", an exciting, involving evocation of the genesis of *The Lantern Bearers*. Less successful are Rumer Godden's "An Imaginary Correspondence" and P. L. Travers' "Only Connect". Rumer Godden's fictional exchange between Beatrix Potter and a soulless, virtually mindless publisher is apparently a necessary and necessarily broad corrective in some quarters, but in the company it keeps in *Only Connect* it appears to comprise forty whacks to a very dead horse. P. L. Travers' contribution is full of taking anecdotes and fascinating bits of information and quasi-information, but her style verges on and sometimes slips over the border of coyness, which the editors avowedly avoided. (The book abounds in typographical errors, but contexts affirm that she really meant "lordily" and "folkly".)

On the whole, appreciations of particular authors and works are the most satisfying contributions. Furthermore, the mingling of authors' actual voices with the voices of their critics gives an impression of interplay that modifies the sensation imparted by the isolated "a child is" pronouncements that potential discussions are for ever frozen in potentiality.

Of the articles by sub-creators — essayists who are principally critics — several are distinguished by prepossessing styles or provocative ideas or both. Alison White's piece on the life and works of Edward Lear is a sparkling little study of the victim of "almost everything that the pre-aspirin age could inflict" and his defiant, delirious, inspired gaiety. Michael Hornyansky gives an irresistible impression of mirthful fright as he suggests a new look at the "tiny downtrodden egoist" in the nursery. Edmund Leach uses Babar as an illustrative case for his thesis that adults are the fragile, apprehensive creatures whose fears and taboos impose limitations upon fantasies ostensibly written for children. (If he is right, perhaps 'What is an adult?' is a

more pertinent question than the one that peripherally or centrally obsesses the writers of *Only Connect.*) Sheila Egoff posits the possibility that young readers have a natural affinity for science fiction because they want instant solutions and are, in Leslie Fiedler's terms, "new mutants" to whom machines are extensions of themselves. Roger Duvoisin provides useful information and interesting opinion on the intrinsic and historical differences between painting and illustrating.

All in all, *Only Connect* is a book well worth the making. But the wise reader will take it bit by bit, or else start at the end with Sheila Egoff's sane, sensitive, enormously knowledgeable essay on the past and present of children's literature and adults' beliefs about it, an essay that can prepare him for much of the book's multitudinousness. He who attempts it head-to-tail and whole will find himself giddy from shifts of style and approach, bemused by treatments of a single problem in variant terms and different problems in similar terms, and beguiled by some actual correspondences and sympathies into distrusting his own bemusement. He may well be left clinging to the surety of a single sharp assertion, perhaps worthwhile in itself but a fragment nonetheless. I emerged from my rash first reading holding hard to Frederick Laws' comfortingly certain certainty that "An insufficiency of pigs is one of the great faults of modern children's books".

# JUNGLE AND PRAIRIE

*George Woodcock*

MARGARET LAURENCE, *The Tomorrow-tamer and other Stories.* New Canadian Library, McClelland & Stewart, $1.95. *A Bird in the House.* McClelland & Stewart, $5.95.

AS A SHORT STORY WRITER, attracting attention in little magazines like *Prism* and university journals like *Queen's Quarterly,* Margaret Laurence first made Canadian readers aware that a new voice of major importance had emerged among them.

Those early stories were exotic in the most literal sense; they emerged from the experiences of years the author spent as an engineer's wife in an Africa growing towards independence. The West African stories — which complement Margaret Laurence's descriptive books on life in Somaliland — were collected in 1964 into a volume entitled *The Tomorrow-tamer* (title of one of the individual stories), and this has now been republished in the New Canadian paperback series at the same time as Mrs. Laurence's new book of stories, *A Bird in the House,* makes its appearance.

Whether this simultaneous presentation of the two collections was merely coincidental, or a result of the publisher's planning, it reminds one forcibly of the

multiple claims Margaret Laurence has established to being accepted as one of our finest prose writers. For she is much more than an excellent novelist. *The Prophet's Camel Bell,* a narrative of her life in Somaliland, is a combination of autobiography and travel writing of a quality neither genre often attains in Canada. Her *Long Drums and Cannons* is a workmanlike presentation of a vital phase in African literary history. And the volumes under review, taken together, clearly establish her as one of the three best short story writers at work in Canada today.

There are similarities between the two books, but there is also a remarkable progression. Each, of course, has its own kind of unity, its own special mark. In *The Tomorrow Tamer* the physical look and feel of Africa are recorded with a precise and brilliant brushwork; perhaps the impasto is at times rather heavily applied, but the impressions of a tropical environment press so weightily on the stranger who enters it that they often do appear exaggerated to those who have not experienced them. Temporally the stories are united by the fact that all are devoted to the period of Margaret Laurence's own life in Africa, and in theme they are united because each in its way records a displacement; all the characters and their predicaments are involved in a larger and essentially political pattern — the complex of changes that affects individual lives and fates when a country gains its own identity through independence.

The main flaw in *The Tomorrow-tamer* is the obviously didactic intent, for in almost every story there is a moral which the author has not sufficiently absorbed into the fabric of the action. For example, "A Gourdful of Glory", the tale of an African market woman's triumph on the day when freedom comes to her country, has much of the blunt point-making that has marred officially approved Russian fiction over the past two decades. Yet the awkwardness with which the theme is handled in that particular instance is exceptional. The best stories follow the pattern of alienation implied in "The Drummer of All the World", which concerns a missionary's son, brought up among Africans and accustomed to think Africa his home, to whom independence and the hostilities it unleashes even among children who shared the same nurse's breast bring a disillusioning realization. "The old Africa was dying," he muses, "and I felt suddenly rootless, a stranger in the only land I could call home."

Here is a truer ring than in "The Perfume Sea", where two European hairdressers who have deliberately cut their roots with the past find a comfortable place in the new Africa. "The Perfume Sea" is so evocatively written that the surface charm of the story at first woos one into accepting its pleasing fantasy, but one is unconvinced by the denouement, which projects a dream brilliantly but hollowly fulfilled. It is the stories which accept that for strangers African dreams will go unfulfilled, which apply this knowledge even — in the case of "The Rain Child" — to Africans returning from Europe, that are the most urgently felt pieces in *The Tomorrow-tamer.* In comparison, the stories about Africans struggling with the changing world that engulfs them have a remoteness of feeling, almost as if one were reading a translation, and, indeed, in a way they are translations, for, however

sensitively Margaret Laurence may have absorbed and understood the traditions of Ghanaian peoples, we are always aware that she is expressing them in an alien idiom.

Thus, though I regard a third of the stories in *The Tomorrow-tamer* as remarkably successful, and admire the atmospheric quality of all of them, I find the book as a whole incompletely satisfying. I would find it hard to justify a similar judgment of *A Bird in the House*. For here one enters a world far tighter, far more self-consistent, far more directly apprehended and expressed than that of *The Tomorrow-tamer*.

*A Bird in the House* is a group of stories about a girl growing from childhood into adolescence in a fictional Manitoba town. The stories are populated for the most part by the same cast of characters: Vanessa MacLeod, her parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, with other small-town characters appearing on the periphery of this tightly-knit world of two connected but rival families, the professional MacLeods and the pioneering Orange-tinged Connors. Story flows into story, to such an extent that when they are collected a perceptible development from one to the other becomes evident, and it is hard to know whether to define *A Bird in the House* as a collection of tales or as a loosely knit and unconventional novel.

The autobiographical content of *A Bird in the House*, the solid basis of personal experience, is even more evident than in *The Tomorrow-tamer*. Much in the earlier book was obviously invented, but, though there are clearly many wholly imaginary incidents in *A Bird in the House*, one feels that as a whole it is an illuminated series of variations on Margaret Laurence's own experience of a depression-age childhood in a Manitoba small town very similar to Manawaka, where the action of *A Bird in the House* is enacted.

By predicament as well as by place the people of *A Bird in the House* are united, and here — as in *The Tomorrow-tamer* — the sense of alienation is crucial, though now it is not the transformation of a society so much as the failure of a society that sets the tone. Society in general having failed, the natural social units become important again, and familie are willy-nilly reunited, Aunt Edna coming home from jobless Winnipeg, Dr. MacLeod moving in with his widowed mother because his patients can no longer pay him in cash; the depression in fact renews the pioneer intensity of relationships within small and threatened groups, and that intensity Margaret Laurence mordantly evokes.

*A Bird in the House* shows the same power of creating a convincing background as *The Tomorrow-tamer*, but here, because it is not an exotic setting that is being portrayed, the brushwork is even more exact, while the colours are modulated in sombre tones rather than in clashing vividnesses. But it is not merely the setting that is so superbly appropriate and sufficient in *A Bird in the House*. Perhaps the most notable achievement is the skill with which Margaret Laurence has shown the lives and emotions of older people through a child's eye, until in the end the child moves into the age when those emotions become identical with hers, and the perceiver becomes the perceived.

*books in review*

# WHERE PRUFROCK WAS

GEORGE JONAS, *The Happy Hungry Man.* House of Anansi. $5.00.

SOME MONTHS AGO, when George Jonas came to read in Victoria, I was asked to introduce him. New in Canada, I had not met him or read his work. That afternoon I read all *The Happy Hungry Man* aloud (twice) and discussed it with my students.

Jonas's talent was obvious at once. His poems are easily available and read aloud well. His range and intelligence are immediately appealing. Several students asked where they could buy the book, and bought it. A few admired the skill, but had misgivings about the pose, the cynicism on show.

At his reading, later, Jonas offered the more "serious" pieces. Having been taken with his book's lighter moments, I got him to add "Wakes up next morning to the strains of O Canada" (a piece which cries out for its proper space in all the anthologies) and the comic odyssey, "He hitches a ride". Nothing further was revealed about him in the brief post-reading discussion, with its generally opaque questions: "What do you think of Leonard Cohen?", etc.

All this by way of first response to a talented, rather engaging poet. Jonas is not the Canadian poet (that much is clear, leaving aside what a "Canadian poet" may be). He isn't even North American, but is an internationalist writing in English. Nationalities, alienation, *angst*, role-playing, bombers, "they", Brecht, a good lay — the book's substance, with the expressed wish to narrow his circle of experience to the last of these. And why not?

Rereading it now, I am less happy with the book. Its *angst* is fashionable rather than deeply felt. Jonas's scheme, making a day's quotidian progress a reference point for all "the happy hungry man's" impingements, is quite imaginative (related to the sense of the commonplace in such poets as Frank O'Hara), but it limits his basic approach, chiefly to the one-page "lyric" which tells a little story — a mode which right now seems old-fashioned and restrictive. The chance events of "the happy hungry man's" progress — picture of Lorca, Radnoti poems, Brecht — seem rather calculated (may not be, need not be — given the type of *persona*, who belies everywhere the photograph of the starving Asian on p. 7, — but they *seem* that way).

The book opens with statements of what "the happy hungry man" believes in (three lines). Line 4 reads: "I wouldn't mind believing in something myself". This should make us uneasy. So, the "happy hungry man" is not a *persona* for the poet? Or is he? *Who* is he? That poem's closing line is a puzzle which also reveals much: "Sometimes one is almost tempted to go on living". Happy? Tempted by what? Does one, then, characteristically, not want to go on living? If "the happy hungry man" is all of us, wouldn't it be truer to point to our continuing *fierce desire* to go on living? "Almost tempted"? We shall reach conclusion before we are through that, who-

ever he may be, "the happy hungry man" has no strong temptation to do himself in.

Much in *The Happy Hungry Man* depends on readers' associations. Nothing new happens with the language (the life of "the poem" itself is therefore not at issue as something to "believe in"). Nothing interesting is going on rhythmically/musically. Much of the work would be more in keeping with "an average river" (photo of junked cars on riverbed, p. 33) if it were in broken form, but Jonas's staples are free verse (dictated by grammatic phrasing) and the kind of "loose iambic" Robert Frost talked about. Slippery stuff, it becomes "memorizable" as poems of ideas (as in the "O Canada" poem mentioned above).

Incidental pleasures are fairly plentiful, such as the portrait of the virgin travelling in the clubcar:

> Soon she will respond to the last call for lunch
> A happy piece of salmon will sit in her plate
> Which she may reward with half a gentle smile,

or "the happy hungry man's" wry confrontation with g-o-d:

> I met God yesterday.
> He sat on a sort of throne
> We were both slightly embarrassed.
> "I have no answers for you," he said finally.
> I was relieved but tried not to show it.
> I had no questions.

These are typical of a quiet, ironic wit which is both a plus and a minus for Jonas — plus because it *is* witty and accomplished, minus because it reveals a whole attitude of urbane non-commitment. Yet this, in turn, may have its bonuses, as in the case of the "marginal affair", now over:

> We nod when we meet in the street, we smile
> And we still share the same cleaning lady.

Everything is relative in "the happy hungry man's" world; he isn't *really* happy, he isn't *really* hungry. Death will ensure that no one's actions, mistakes, commitments, will "make the slightest difference", being a Canadian suits "just fine" since it means having "to remember no one & nothing". It's only "on second thought he screwed her/ On the New York Thruway to Canarsie", this "happy hungry man":

> Passing
> With my lights out
> Unknown
> At any address
> Matching
> No description.

Foolish to quarrel with another man's response to his own experience. One hasn't the right and, here, it's beside the point. Jonas has many good qualities — wit, intelligence, talent, and others which may be good — a sense of irony, detachment, etc.; but his non-commitment, his careful abdication, permeates his book's texture. He entertains, but does not excite. He reminds us of horrors he does not actually make us feel. Centring poems on widely significant experiences of our time, he does not illuminate. We haven't, in this book, moved a step from where Prufrock was over fifty years ago:

> If this is heaven, we'll make the best of it.
> There must be music of a kind, there must be sex,
> And refreshments will be served at ten to six.

MIKE DOYLE

# EXISTENCE AND SONOROUS ART

ALDEN NOWLAN, *The Mysterious Naked Man.* Clarke Irwin, $3.95.

IF ALDEN NOWLAN'S *Bread, Wine and Salt* notched a new stage in his poetic growth, *The Mysterious Naked Man* reveals an even roomier accomplishment in terms of the grace and strength of his colloquial voice.

Poems like "The First Stirring of the Beasts", "The Mosherville Road", and "In Memoriam: Claude Orser (1894-1968)" exude the centring sadness which typifies this collection, a complete indifference to facile epiphany. For the reader, enlightenment arrives from somewhere beyond poetic parts, from a sum impossible to convey without quoting an entire poem that comprehends wonder or fear or love so altogether and without coercion.

Consider "The Persistent Caller". The first twenty-six lines describe a simple situation: the poet refuses to answer the doorbell because he's busy working inside, and likely it's some kid calling on his son who isn't home anyway. But then knocking starts, grows louder, until the man needs to reassure himself that as an adult he has a perfect right to refuse answering a child. "Still", the poem concludes,

> I keep my eye on the door
> in case whoever it is
> making all that noise
> should turn the knob
> and start to push it open.

What one perceives here is an example of the repercussion which amplifies Nowlan's attempts to universalize such low-brow events. In this case the controlling image connotes the sort of dismay that might derive from a grenade going off in slow motion, when words are too late for anything but ineffectual excuse, after one has inexplicably pulled the pin. That's why his insight at its richest contains a swelling, inescapable fascination, and why (as Nowlan says in the final lines of the book) he is

> bursting to tell someone about the great
> sight seen,
> yet not even sure why it should seem so
> important.

Irrationality suggests the recent surrealism that also lends to this new volume its expansive success.

> A thousand nights
> I've flown with Beurling,
> cried out in nightmare
> from the beaches
> of Normandy,
> sweated in engine rooms
> until it seemed
> my skin peeled
> as from sunburn,
> endured winds so cold
> my teeth chattered until,
> one by one,
> they fell out and bounced
> off icy decks
> into the North Atlantic.

Yet although war has begun to interest Nowlan — he can present it surrealistically or naturalistically ("Ypres: 1915") — its characters relate inevitably to a familiar social centrality; even most of the half dozen or so poems set in Ireland and England involve working-class people one remembers from the earlier work. As in the past, too, the fluidity of Nowlan's colloquialism stands out; perfected by delicate qualification it becomes his own metre:

> but
> when I tell you
> she's a woman who can set fires

in a man's body with
those same fingers, well then,
it becomes an act of holiness,
that little gesture.

Certainly Nowlan remains unique for the extensive interest he manifests in his search for awareness through the action of others. And through, of course, those things which are, which are.

Such as grotesque normality. The mysterious naked man of the title poem is not so inscrutable as the witness who cannot describe his appearance to the police because he is naked: a perverted case of not seeing the forest for the trees, the human malaise. And throughout this collection of eighty-five poems the naked fugitive reappears in the guise of a terrified boy or an insane woman or a legendary leper or an ascetic recluse or a poet near death. A Brueghelian world, finally, where

each one of these thousands has created me,
is therefore my god,

or

laughter is the wail
of wind in alder leaves sucked dry and
dying,

or where the gap dissolves between the cacophony or existence when

all that comes out
is the sound of one sick old man
scraping a shaky bow
across an out-of-tune fiddle,

between that, and sonorous art.

KEATH FRASER

# ODYSSEAN JOURNEY

ROBERT KROETSCH, *The Studhorse Man.* Macmillan. $4.50.

ROBERT KROETSCH once described himself as having "lived my life alternating between various parts of the frontier or wilderness and various universities." It is a statement he must be weary of by now, for it has been dutifully recorded on the jacket of each of his three novels as though it somehow contained the secret of the man. But it does, in fact, provide an interesting perspective on his novels. Each of them could be called "regional" in their use of setting (the first takes place on the Mackenzie River, the next two in rural Alberta), but in the hands of the university-trained writer these set-

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tings are transmuted into something which goes far beyond regionalism. For while the journey in *The Studhorse Man* is from Edmonton to a small town called Coulee Hill, the novel's events take place on a mythic, rather than a realistic, plane.

This mythicizing Kroetsch accomplishes particularly through his use of names. Demeter Proudfoot is the book's narrator-author, a name which joins the Greek goddess of marriage to an English equivalent of the name Oedipus, while the hero whose wanderings he chronicles is called Hazard Lepage; as he leads his stallion Poseidon about in search of a perfect mare, Hazard encounters women with such delightful names as P. Cockburn, the widow Lank, and Hole (with her husband Stiff). The effect of this technique is suggested in one of the narrator's reflections:

> I have more than once remembered that the pleasure in listening to a hockey game, as I do each Saturday night during the long winter, resides not only in the air of suppressed and yet impending violence, but also in the rain upon our senses of those sudden and glorious names.

Style reinforces the mythic quality, for the novel utilizes the precise, sparse language of the fable. It eschews the use of descriptive detail for verisimilitude, and the description it does employ is most frequently the symbolic detail of the dream:

> Hazard also implied . . . that the ultimate horror came at having, while standing on the back of the galloping horse, to leap through a ring of fire. The flaming circle blazed before his eyes like a hole in the darkness, waiting to swallow him down. He could neither leap at the bright circle nor jump from the back of the mare. The mice were a shrill hum at Tad's bare feet.

In fact, Kroetsch conceives of his principal role as that of myth-maker (and feels that as such he is working in the tradition of other western Canadian novelists such as F. P. Grove and Margaret Laurence). For example, each of his novels provides the reader with its own reworking of the Oedipus archetype. In *But We Are Exiles*, young Peter Guy must try to reconcile his accidental (but desired) killing of the man who has stolen his girl friend and whose very name, Hornyak, suggests the threatening aspect of male sexuality. In *The Words of My Roaring* the novel's protagonist, John Judas Backstrom, is locked in political struggle with an older man, Doc Murdoch, a man who has been like a father to him. Here too the battle becomes a sexual one, a struggle which revolves around Murdoch's daughter.

In *The Studhorse Man* this archetypal conflict is given new form. It is the novel's fictional author, Demeter, who believes himself to be a rival to the very character whose adventures he is chronicling. Hazard, here, is the powerful male force, leading about the stud Poseidon, a phallic symbol on a leash ("You four-legged cock," he sometimes addresses the animal). The youthful Demeter stays close to home, and to Martha, the woman to whom Hazard will eventually return.

But in this novel even the phallic male has difficulties, for Hazard's quest for a mare to breed, and thus preserve the Lepage line of horses, is unsuccessful. "Whoever thought," muses Hazard at one point, "that screwing would go out of style?" And here, much more than in the other two novels, the two male figures are revealed as the duality which exists *within* man. Hazard and Demeter

merge: Hazard takes the alias "Proudfoot"; upon occasions he assumes poses which are characteristic of Demeter; and he may be—in fact probably is—a creation of the narrator's imagination, a projection of Demeter's divided self.

The Oedipus myth is not the only important archetype working in these novels however—nor is it really the central one. The plot of each takes its particular form from its own controlling myth. As its epigraph suggests, *But We Are Exiles* is shaped by the story of Narcissus. (Seen in these terms, Hornyak becomes, in some sense, a reflection of Guy's own personality.) *The Words of My Roaring* works with the seasonal-rebirth myth of Pluto and Persephone, and its struggle ultimately becomes that of the forces of death against those of life.

In *The Studhorse Man*, Kroetsch has employed an archetype which must surely be difficult for any post-Joycean writer to attempt, that of the journey of Odysseus. But since Kroetsch is a writer of comic vision (the mistake of his first novel, he feels, was its attempt to create a tragic world), he takes his hero on a delightfully insane mock-odyssey which is all this author's own. Demeter becomes a Telemachus who wishes to have Martha, a parodic Penelope who keeps a hotel, for his own. The faithful Euryclea and the patient hound Argus are replaced by the aching and aged housekeeper Mrs. Laporte and her setter—and now, rather than being recognized by a scar, Hazard finds himself seduced by the woman, and scarred as an outcome.

Poseidon, the god that kept Odysseus moving, is here Hazard's horse, hence his own turbulent phallic energy. And in the novel's parody of the Odyssey's reunion scene, Hazard's phallus becomes, for Martha, like Odysseus' bedpost—the centre of the universe and its source of stability:

> There was no tree of knowledge to equal that one in her will to know, no ladder and no hill. *Axis mundi*, the wise men tell us, and on it the world turns.

But it is an Odyssey in which Odysseus dies in the end, and in which Hazard's very striving for fertility becomes inverted by modern civilization into sterility:

> I must intrude here a little scientific jargon . . . [says Demeter to explain the use to which Poseidon was put after Hazard's death]. PMU is an abbreviation that enables one to avoid saying Pregnant Mares' Urine. From the urine of pregnant mares (to be more precise, from urine collected during the fifth to the ninth month of the eleventh-month pregnancy), scientists are able to extract the female hormone known as oestrogen. With oestrogen, in turn, they have learned to prevent the further multiplication of man upon the face of the earth.

With its ingenuity, its skilful manipulation of the twin foci of Hazard and Demeter, and its spirit of comic madness, all handled with great technical ability and careful craftsmanship, *The Studhorse Man* is a significant achievement.

RUSSELL M. BROWN

# NEWSMEN

MURRAY DONNELLY, *Dafoe of the Free Press.* Macmillan.

WILFRED EGGLESTON, *While I Still Remember.* Ryerson.

A BIOGRAPHY is by definition concerned with the whole of the subject's life, but rightly organized, the balance of the

study must fall to the years of greater influence or creativity, and to some degree the reader anticipates the same weighting in an autobiography. Neither Murray Donnelly's biography, *Dafoe of the Free Press*, nor Wilfrid Eggleston's autobiography, *While I Still Remember*, answers this expectation.

Donnelly's failure is one of emphasis. Unfortunately for him, the crucial years of Dafoe's career had already been thoroughly covered in Ramsay Cook's *The Politics of John W. Dafoe and the Free Press* (a book never referred to in the present volume). Donnelly's consequent attempt to find a centre other than politics in tracing the course of Dafoe's development is coupled with his desire to reach the largest possible audience, and by leaning too far towards the popular, he not only provides little for the specialist but also does a disservice both to his subject and to the lay reader.

It may be that a biography written without the panoply of scholarship befits the journalist J. W. Dafoe, who recognized the generalist nature of his trade. Nonetheless, Dafoe, himself formed by the course of events, was for many years a shaper of Canadian opinions, and the evolution of his thought demands a serious treatment. Donnelly does, in fact, perceive the watersheds Dafoe passed on his way to becoming an internationalist, and the key issues which involved him. Yet he buries the essential man under a mountain of bathetic attempts to read Dafoe's attitudes as an expression of his environmental experiences.

Donnelly's primary thesis is apparently that Dafoe is yet another successful Horatio Alger, a backwoods boy made good, even an exponent of survival of the fittest, always distressed by his inability to eradicate the breed of Tory imperialists. Dafoe is characterized as "the rough, red-haired, deep-chested backwoods hick," "the boy from Combermere," "the boy from Winnipeg," "the boy from the backwoods," who "vented his anger as cuttingly through his pencil as he had once wielded an axe"; who "slashed at ideas he did not like as if he were a lumberjack climbing a tree."

Despite the author's claim that his method is original ("This book is not a biography in the traditional sense, but is rather an attempt to describe and delineate the interaction between a man and his environment." — *Preface*) his book belongs to what may be called the "lone pine" school of biography, one of the least attractive Victorian contributions to the genre. Possibly Donnelly took his theme from Dafoe's belief that "surroundings mould habits and form character," but the feeling for their homeland that Dafoe demanded from Canadian writers and his own abiding love for Canada have little to do with the supposed effects of certain trees and of cold winter nights on a young boy.

Countless Canadians developed in communities like Combermere, travelled on wood-burning trains, raced on snowshoes, and were seasick while crossing the Atlantic. Doubtless all these things were stored up in J. W. Dafoe's memory, but the constant iteration of them leaves the reader with the picture of a man still naive and not very well-informed in his fifties, a portrait which manifestly distorts the outspoken and free-thinking Dafoe. Geography and climate were and are essential Canadian facts, and Dafoe knew it. He also knew that the "two solitudes" and the British government had much to do with Canadian history,

and in his continuing concern for national identity, these considerations occupied him much more than the physical conditions. Always emphasizing what he supposes to be the psychological effects of Dafoe's environment, Donnelly buries the references to his changing attitudes in mid-paragraph. As illustrations — the reader is told "he knew now that Canada could never be a melting pot" in a section which begins "He was more than a year older than Canada. . . ." and the description of Dafoe's ultimate advocacy of centralization of government follows "he was old and would soon die while the country was young; and . . . would continue to grow."

It is more difficult to fault an autobiography for misplaced emphasis; the reader can only complain that what he had hoped to find is not there. In Wilfrid Eggleston's case what is missing is an expression of the tenaciousness of spirit which enabled the author to rise from stockboy in Pakowki's general store to Chief Press Censor and finally to the head of the School of Journalism in Ottawa's Carleton College. Whether humility, a general desire not to offend or genuine feeling is the source, the whole of the memoir is coloured by the rosy view of retrospect.

In one way Eggleston's essentially romantic survey of a virtually unmarred past provides a healthy corrective to the study of Dafoe, for their experiences of youthful poverty and hard-gained education are parallel and Eggleston baldly states the general financial situation of rural Canada ("We were poor but so were all our neighbours") without suggesting that it was the prime shaper of his success. On the other hand, by omitting or glossing over events, particularly conflicts of personalities, which determined policies, he deprives his audience of the insight into the newspaper world of the twenties to the forties which he could well have given.

Eggleston's style is in accord with his vision of events. The smooth flow, simple diction, brief paragraphs, and strict adherence to chronological order are the cumulative result of his years on the *Star* and *Star Weekly,* and his many years of free-lancing. What he must have learned of sensationalism and invective on the *Star* itself and in the Ottawa Press Gallery is throughout overshadowed by his temperamental suitability for the journalism of the *Star Weekly* which was designed for "relaxed reading".

If it is unfair to judge Eggleston or his work in this way, it is an impression he clearly leaves by design. While he adds to the fund of anecdotes, his stories, with the possible exception of the J. R. Bone — H. C. Hindmarsh clashes, are related in the kindliest way, with anything reflecting to anyone's discredit visibly softened. A single example will suffice; Mitchell Hepburn's presentation of the Ontario brief to the Rowell-Sirois Commission. What is generally agreed to have been an intended insult to the Federal government is described by Eggleston as "uncomfortable and embarrassing", a report "conceived in the spirit of high jinks."

Were they additions to a well-tilled region, these two books might be evaluated differently, but they exemplify the way in which the study of Canadian journalism has been neglected. While Eggleston is not the first Canadian newspaperman to write his memoirs and Donnelly is not the first to study John W. Dafoe, the time has come when such

works need to be related to the larger field, when journalism must cease to be a peripheral interest.

JANE FREDEMAN

# AMAZONIAN TRAVELS

GEORGE WOODCOCK, *Henry Walter Bates, Naturalist of the Amazons.* Queenswood House, $7.00.

HENRY WALTER BATES was a self-taught English naturalist. He went to Brazil (with Alfred Russell Wallace) in 1848, nearly penniless, stayed eleven years, wandering the Amazon River and environs, collecting "no less than 8,000 hitherto unknown species of insects, birds, mammals and other forms of animal life."

Bates' book, *The Naturalist on the River Amazons*, 1863, forms the principal source of George Woodcock's account of his life. *The Naturalist* was one of the most popular travel books of its time, its merit previously attested by Charles Darwin, D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell, and now by George Woodcock himself. Their quadruple testimony impresses, but does not altogether convince the sceptic in me. For I think much of the merit in the new book is supplied by Woodcock.

However, the idea of a young Englishman living off the proceeds of selling dead insects and animals to museums, wandering among the Indians of then little-known Brazil, is interesting of itself. The sheer bulk of information about mid-nineteenth century life in Brazil is also impressive. But Bates' life, in the quoted excerpts from his book, remains somewhat impersonal, as if he were describing himself outwardly but not internally. And that is perhaps unjust of me, for this is a travel book, not a novel.

Bates and Wallace (the two men separated not long after reaching Brazil) were part of that yeasty boil of British scientific theory that preceded Darwin's *The Origin of Species*; they were the field men who visited the far places others read and theorized about, endured hardships, recording their experiences in books.

But curiously, when Bates returned to England in 1859, he became the prototype of a conventional life, getting married, accepting an appointment with the Royal Geographical Society, and did no more field work. That his health was somewhat impaired by years in Brazil does not explain his life breaking into these two distinct parts, though perhaps lack of money and family responsibilities does.

Bates died in 1892, a minor scientific figure perhaps, but of interest also as a writer and traveller. And I join George Woodcock in speculating that his mind may have wandered back to those early days in Brazil, "as it lapsed toward death in the bedroom of a Victorian suburb."

A. W. PURDY

# BIRD'S EYE VIEW

DESMOND PACEY, *Essays in Canadian Criticism 1938-1968*, Ryerson, $7.00.

*Essays in Canadian Criticism 1938-1968* is a collection of twenty-four articles that Desmond Pacey has published on Canadian literature in English during the past thirty years. These essays display his

thoughts on a wide variety of subjects in many kinds of articles through several types of criticism. He reprints, for example, from *Culture* (1953) a critical analysis of Lampman's "Heat", from the *Queen's Quarterly* (1962) a paper on "The Young Writer in Canada", originally given at a Student Conference on Creative Writing in Canada at the University of Toronto, and from *Canadian Literature* (1967) a study, first delivered as a lecture at Sir George Williams University, of "The Phenomenon of Leonard Cohen" which traces some relationships between Cohen's earlier work and *Beautiful Losers.* This collection, then, provides a bird's eye view of the charactistics of Pacey as critic that he has shown previously in works like *Creative Writing in Canada, Ten Canadian Poets,* and the chapter on "Fiction (1920-1940)" in the *Literary History of Canada.*

Pacey as critic is impressive. For the past three decades he has been one of the few critics in Canada who have consistently and frequently written about Canadian literature in English. He has been industrious, ingenious, and opportunistic in bringing forgotten, neglected, and new authors to the attention of students and readers of this literature. One of the articles in *Essays,* "Frederick Philip Grove" (1943) was a rehearsal for *Frederick Philip Grove* (1945), until very recently the only published, book-length study of this author. All Pacey's qualities as a critic are displayed in *Essays in Canadian Criticism.*

Pacey as critic is also disturbing, however. One gets tired of statements like "Of the best-known writers of this period [1900-1920] — Ralph Connor, L. M. Montgomery and Norman Duncan in prose, W. H. Drummond, Tom MacInnes, Robert Service, and Marjorie Pickthall in verse — only Marjorie Pickthall, and she only in a minor way, was a serious artist." One longs to ask Pacey what he means by "serious artist", and one begins to suspect that he has not read many of these authors' works. Since he categorizes L. M. Montgomery as a writer of "books for juveniles", I certainly wonder if he has read her *Emily* books, which, to the extent that they are autobiographical, suggest that she was a serious, if not totally successful, novelist who did not write particularly for children.

Furthermore, although Pacey warns the reader in the "Foreword" that "some of these essays express attitudes and opinions to which [he] no longer sub-

ALPHABET 18 will centre around the Hieroglyph, features poem drawings by JUDITH COPITHORNE, an original song by Vancouver Island's LYLE CROSBIE. JANE SHEN is assisting with the planning of this issue, one of the most striking and original to come from Alphabet Press. Summer 1970.

ALPHABET 19 — Horoscope Astrologica in the painting of Hieronymus Bosch viewed by JETSKE SYBESMA.
"2001: a Space *Commedia*?" by JAMES POLK.
"Solar Flares" a poem by PHYLLIS GOTLIEB.
Various astrologers are at work. Autumn 1970.

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scribes", he neither tells the reader that they contain facts which are incorrect nor does he use footnotes to indicate errors when they occur. One example of inaccuracy is his account of the life of Frederick Phillip Grove. While Douglas Spettigue's *Frederick Philip Grove* was probably published too late to allow Pacey to consider Spettigue's version of Grove's life, suspicion has been cast by critics for many years on the accuracy of Grove's autobiography, *In Search of Myself*, the chief source of Pacey's information for both the article and the book.

Finally, his tone is sometimes annoying. The reason for this is suggested in the last article in *Essays*, "The Outlook for Canadian Literature" (1968). Here Pacey characterizes himself as a "doctor" who has been "for over a quarter of a century . . . taking the pulse of Canadian literature" and says that he has "the satisfaction of knowing that the patient is in rather better health than when [his] diagnosis began". Canadian literature in English may have suffered from minor ailments like laryngitis and frost-bite in the past, but it has never — and certainly not in the past twenty-five years — been sick enough to need a doctor as critic.

Perhaps Pacey provides the fairest assessment of *Essays in Canadian Criticism 1938-1968* and of himself as critic at the end of "Sir Charles G. D. Roberts". I have substituted some words for Pacey's and changed the tenses in the quotation:

> He does have many weaknesses; in particular as if he feels that single-handedly he must [criticize] Canadian literature in all its branches, he has tried to do too much, become a [critical] jack-of-all-trades. But by virtue of his influence on others, and by virtue of the few truly excellent [criticisms] he himself has written, he certainly deserves a place in our living tradition.

*Essays in Canadian Criticism 1938-1968* likewise deserves a place on our bookshelves.

MARY JANE EDWARDS

# NOT WITHOUT RESERVATION

SHEILA BURNFORD, *Without Reserve*. McClelland & Stewart. $6.95.

SHEILA BURNFORD is of course the author of *The Incredible Journey*. Her second book, *Fields of Noon*, a collection of naturalist essays, far surpassed *Journey* in style, wit, and command of material. Because the second book rose above the defects of the first, and because as an essayist Mrs. Burnford revealed herself an intelligent, witty, honest person, the prospect of a third book in which she relates her experiences "among the northern forest Indians" (to quote the dust jacket) was full of promise. And a *human* subject was the logical next step in her development as a writer, was it not?

The logic turns out to be purely accidental, however. *Without Reserve* is little more than a collection of notes spread over some seven years when forays were made into the northern Ontario bush. This time the author's quarry was not mushrooms or wild duck, but the Cree and Ojibwa Indian. At the outset, Mrs. Burnford is careful to make clear her own lack of intent:

> Neither Susan [the artist who accompanied her] nor I, committing sketches or words to paper in those days, did so with any idea of eventual publication, only for our own

> satisfaction and our own records. Much of what follows here has been lifted straight out of journal, notes, or sketchbook; the rest has been edited or enlarged or deliberately written for the sake of continuity. There are no drums beaten throughout the pages, no problems solved. We were, and are, never happier than among the Ojibwa or Cree people on their far northern reserves, and that is all there is to it.

Then, as though conscious this may not be enough, she adds:

> We shall be happier still if our descriptions will do anything towards helping other non-Indians to understand something of the background from which these people are now slowly emerging.

Unfortunately, one cannot help inferring from this that the desire to publish a new book has taken precedence over the hope of fostering understanding.

One misses, too, a sense of dramatic unity. *Without Reserve* is neither a logbook nor a collection of essays; it is evident that a serious attempt at continuity has been made. Yet could not the material have been better arranged, perhaps to illustrate an unfolding theme? This said, it must be emphasized that *Without Reserve* is nevertheless well worth reading. Mrs. Burnford's style is literate and witty, her observations acute. The many drawings by Susan Ross add a further dimension to the descriptions of Indian life and help to unify the book. One finishes it with admiration for the good fortune and enterprise of these two women, "Mizraw and Mizburp" as the Indians would have it, who eventually succeeded in breaking through whatever curtain (Moosehide?) may be said to divide the two races.

Mrs. Burnford devotes the first chapter of her book to explaining why the unhousewifely pastime of Indian-watching attracted her at all. She had, it seems, a vivid childhood experience while visiting her grandparents in Canada (she was born a Scot and is a naturalized Canadian), where the physical dexterity and unsunbonnetted freedom of a briefly-met Indian child filled her with envy and despair:

> I felt most unbearably inadequate and wrong... Effete and somehow repulsive would be the words I would have used to describe myself had I known them then. She was so essentially right....

She also had, she tells us proudly, a distinguished forebear, one "Scotty" Philip, who "had lived among the Cheyenne and the Sioux" and who, moreover, had married a sister-in-law of Chief Crazy Horse. The childhood romantic dreams which she spun from these two threads turned out to be poor preparation for later emigration to this country, where she was confronted with the sad evidences of Indian life to be found in and around what was then Port Arthur, Ontario.

Realism may have succeeded in quenching the romance, but curiosity blazed on. She met Susan Ross, who shared her persistent interest, and at last the first important contacts were made. Over the years as one contacted to another they visited Lake Nipigon, Big Trout Lake, Sandy Lake, Fort Severn, Casabonika and Yelling Falls, staying at nursing stations and schoolhouses, seeking always to assimilate life on the reserves.

For Mrs. Burnford, who suffers from shyness, the process of assimilation was not always easy. What could she find to do with herself on a reserve? Watching their baggage being unloaded at Big Trout Lake, the "most northerly Ojibwa

settlement in northwest Ontario", she comments enviously

> All the world loves a painter . . . I realized that I was going to have to find myself a profession as obvious as Susan's if I wanted to be accepted by, and consequently listen to, these people.

Her solution was ingenious and simple. Remembering that at the last minute she had brought along wool and needles,

> I went forth, thankfully, to meet the populace in my new profession of Knitter (Extraordinary).

What does Mrs. Burnford think of the Indian people now that she has met them on their own ground? It is evident that she is impressed by physical abilities which she has not observed in white men. She admires, for instance, the "aware stillness" of the silent Indian who can wait for hours in a canoe with

> only the movement of eyes to mark something momentous . . . hunter's eyes certainly, but not the sharp predatory eyes of a white hunter — they were truly "seeing" eyes. I used to wish that I could see through them just once, to find out how different the world must look.

She expresses concern over and gives telling examples of the poor quality of education, the poverty and the inhibiting effects of traditional ways on ambition. She is distressed by inadequate communications between Indian spokesmen, the more isolated bands and Ottawa.

And yet there are compensations. In her next-to-last chapter "Ohnemoos: the Indian Dog", we see symbolized ((apparently unconsciously) her underlying attitudes to the Indian way of life and our own. The undernourished, ragged Indian dogs who roam Post Island "had an unquenchable spirit and ebullience . . . I have never encountered so many unforgettable personalities among so many scrawny dogs." Meanwhile, beyond the picket pale of the weather station "sat the only pedigreed dog on the island, a Springer spaniel . . . he was immaculate." He is also "rather stupid" and "effete", and lacks only a sun-bonnet to make the parallel complete.

Which just goes to show, one supposes, that romantic dreams take a long time in dying.

PAT BARCLAY

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# SAMPLING THE HARVEST

JEAN-CHARLES FALARDEAU, *Notre société et son roman*. Editions HMH.

IT IS NOW ABOUT TEN YEARS since the sociologists discovered French-Canadian literature, and Professor Jean-Charles Falardeau, who has laboured in this vineyard since the first hour, here gives us a useful volume containing a sampling of his harvest. He has brought together seven of his articles on the French-Canadian novel, published in various places from 1959 to 1965, and has added to them extended studies of the novelists Robert Charbonneau and Roger Lemelin, both written in 1966.

This is a collection of considerable variety and interest. The first two articles examine certain ideological themes found in *Jean Rivard* (1862-64), *Charles Guérin* (1846-53), and *Robert Lozé* (1903), the latter slightly out of place in a grouping of "romans canadiens du XIXe siècle." The third chapter, "Recherche d'une voix: le Canada français par sa littérature" offers in nine pages an impressive number of penetrating observations on French-Canadian literature: the difficulty of establishing its chronological divisions ("deux genres importants au moins, le roman et la poésie, ont connu des tempts d'évolution fort différents l'un de l'autre"), the rhetorical character of much nineteenth-century French-Canadian writing, the divorce between oral and written literature in the same period, the myth of the "pays d'en haut," the periodic alternation between French influences and native inspiration in the history of the literature, the role of introspective writing in Quebec, and the way French-Canadian authors have frequently "maternalized" their female characters. Many of the suggestions thrown out in this brief chapter could well be expanded into articles or books: Professor Warwick's admirable study, *The Long Journey*, illustrates how fruitful such investigations could be.

The same seminal quality is found in Chapter Four, written in 1959, which is a surprisingly early effort to encourage a comparative study of our two Canadian literatures. In more recent years some Canadian universities have advanced hesitantly into this field, and in 1969 Clément Moisan has taken up the same cause in his book-length essay, *L'Age de la littérature canadienne*. Professor Falardeau's fifth chapter attempts with rather less success to apply Roland Barthes' distinction between "écrivains" and "écrivants" to the Quebec literary scene. Next comes a somewhat old-fashioned sociological analysis of the geoggraphical settings, family relationships, social classes, occupations and institutions depicted in a score or more of post-Second - World - War French - Canadian novels. The final chapter of the first part is an original and suggestive account of the literary movement launched by the "génération de *La Relève*" in 1934; unfortunately, having been composed in 1965, it does not include Robert Charbonneau's thinly-veiled eye-witness account of that phenomenon in his last novel, *Chronique de l'âge amer* (1967).

Turning to the two longer studies of the second part, one is aware of a change of direction. In the older articles, Professor Falardeau's approach had been essentially sociological, concerned with ideological content: "Nous avons surtout

cherché", he had stated, "à dégager l'idéologie propre à l'auteur de chaque œuvre". In the second part, however, sociological considerations are kept in the background and there is much analysis of structures, themes, symbols and myths: "Tout univers romanesque comporte aussi une pluralité de significations globales. Il recèle une multiplicité de structures". It is evident that the critical context has changed. Indeed, with the exception of an excellent introduction describing the social background of the novels of Charbonneau and Lemelin, this part is given over to orderly and thorough-going analyses of the spatial and temporal elements of each novel, of the characters and their relationships, and of the novels' thematic and symbolic aspects. The presentation is perhaps excessively schematic, and there is a visible attempt to bring out the unifying features in the total work of each novelist. Very little attention is given to precisely why neither of these novelists seems destined to have any more than a merely historical place in the evolution of the French-Canadian novel. Charbonneau's reputation has already become fixed: he will be remembered as an essayist and literary theorist, as our most intelligent disciple of Mauriac, and as a necessary link between the "génération de *La Relève*" and the interior novelists of the forties and fifties, Élie, Giroux and Langevin; even university courses, notoriously respectful of independent thinkers, have already dropped his fiction. Lemelin is proving more durable, but his three ill-digested novels are rapidly taking on a quaintly primitive air beside the ingeniously experimental works of the writers of the sixties. The breath-taking rapidity with which literary works become obsolete in modern French Canada is surely a fascinating question for sociological inquiry, yet there is no hint of this in *Notre société et son roman.* Nor is there any study of the younger novelists who during the past decade have had a great deal to say, directly or indirectly about French-Canadian society: Hubert Aquin, Marie-Claire Blais, Jacques Ferron, Jacques Godbout or Claude Jasmin, all of whom had published important books before 1966.

Similarly disconcerting is Professor Falardeau's apparent indifference to the work of his critical predecessors. When he writes of the ideology of *Jean Rivard* there is no mention of Maurice Lemire's Laval thesis on that very subject; when he examines the work of Charbonneau one would think that Miss M. B. Ellis, Romain Legare or Allan McAndrew had written nothing of interest on that author. And one hardly expects to read a volume of sociological criticism published in 1967 which takes no notice of the theories of Lukács and Goldmann.

Despite these omissions, to which might be added the lack of an index, *Notre société et son roman* remains a rewarding volume for the student of the French-Canadian novel, full of acute observations and stimulating suggestions for further investigation. There is little doubt that the major articles of this collection will stand for many years as the best treatments of their subjects we possess.

DAVID M. HAYNE

# JOHN MITCHELL'S ROSES

PATRICK SLATER, *The Yellow Briar*. Macmillan, $7.95.

"PATRICK SLATER'S" *The Yellow Briar*, a novel couched as the idyllic reminiscences of an old Irish Ontario settler, has been reprinted many times since it first appeared in 1933, but never so handsomely as now, with block prints by Alan Daniel decorating each chapter. The illustrations do not change the quality of the book, however, so the new edition will carry much the same appeal to much the same readership as it did before. Every age of modern readers has a book by which it reaches back not simply to its own childhood, but to an age of innocence that it now dreams once existed — *Huckleberry Finn, Penrod and Sam, House of Children*, and so on. In Canada place as well as time affects the issue, and innocence becomes a regional motif and thus a semi-private domain. *Who Has Seen the Wind* (in the West), *The Mountain and the Valley* (in the Maritimes), and *The Yellow Briar* (in Ontario) all have their champions for emotional reasons. As William Arthur Deacon wrote of "Slater's" book in the *Saturday Review of Literature* in 1934:

> [it] reproduces the rural Ontario of an earlier day with such fidelity of atmosphere that we . . . are a bit ashamed of ourselves for having gone soft around the heart over anything so ingenuous. . . . [It is] a book to be loved rather than admired.

Though insisting also that it "is not nearly so guileless as it seems", he never goes on to explore what might make it artistic; it remains "enchanting", "accurate", and "charming" — which are the subjective responses that someone outside the region ought not even to be expected to feel in any but a tolerantly sympathetic way.

For other readers the most valuable section in this new edition will be the 44-page popular biography of its author, by Dorothy Bishop. "Patrick Slater", as remarkably few people in 1934 were aware, was an unsuccessful lawyer and nurseryman manqué named John Mitchell, who erratically preserved his anonymity and enjoyed his measure of fame. Delighting in his ruse of passing Slater off as a real person, he managed to deceive both the Toronto *Star* and the London *Times*, whose picture of a reminiscent old man spilling home truths and genuine religion perhaps reflected more of their own expectations of a rural philosopher than their actual assessment of the work at hand. Slater's garrulous character, however, is convincing, and for all its sentimentality, the characterization is one of the more successful ones in Canadian fiction prior to the 1940's. But Mitchell was never successful in matching this accomplishment, and his later verses and prose, as Dorothy Bishop points out, regrettably demonstrate the author's

> helpless inability to write with the emotional vigour which one feels. It is not the absence of the thought, itself, perhaps . . . It is the inability to transfer such thought in the rainbow garments of pure wonder. . . .

The words, ironically, are Mitchell's own. It is not that Miss Bishop condemns his work — she is much too sympathetic towards him for that — but she tempers her appreciation of his charm with critical objectivity. As a result, her bio-

graphical note is both warm and informative, as it traces Mitchell's career through farming, literature, law, litigation, a jail sentence, and penurious old age. It makes an interesting companion piece to *The Yellow Briar* itself, and will introduce readers admirably to the novel's background.

W. H. NEW

# LA GUERRE, YES, SIR!

ROCH CARRIER's novel, *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* was reviewed in *Canadian Literature* No. 40 by Ronald Sutherland when it first appeared in French. We now welcome its publication in English. It appears, under the same title, in an adequate but not brilliant translation by Sheila Fischman. The publisher is House of Anansi (Cloth $5.00, paper $2.50).

# ON THE VERGE

**** DONALD CREIGHTON. *Canada's First Century*. Macmillan. $9.95. Good, partisan history. Creighton's conservative views are more dominant in this than in any of his earlier books. He presents nothing new in the way of facts, but gives his narrative a controversial vigour by the consistency with which the Liberals appear as villains, while the first century of confederated Canada is shown as the virtual creation of Creighton's great hero, Sir John A. Macdonald. Uncompromisingly anti-American, which is popular in the current climate of Canadian opinion, Creighton is equally opposed to dominant trends of opinion in present-day Quebec, and his reluctance to do justice to the grievances of the French in Canada goes beyond conservatism into reaction. Most unpalatable is his attempt to justify, by denigrating Riel, Macdonald's major political error and crime.

*** JOHN S. MOIR and D. M. L. FARR. *The Canadian Experience*. Ryerson. $10.00. The format of this book suggests that it is intended primarily as a text for educational purposes. If so, it is to be welcomed as an intelligently comprehensive study of the Canadian past and present. Even amateur historians are likely to find few nuggets of unfamiliar knowledge, but the frankness of the approach to Canadian problems and the absence of hero worship or false patriotism make it an admirable book for introducing the young to Canadian history.

*** WALTER D. YOUNG. *Democracy and Discontent*. The Frontenac Library, Ryerson. $2.50. The Frontenac Library is a new series of brief, well-documented studies in Canadian history, arranged thematically rather than chronologically. In the present study Walter Young, author of the recent history of the CCF (*The Anatomy of a Party*) deals with the emergence in Canada during the years after World War I of movements and parties expressing the discontent of Canadians with the existing social order and with the pendulum succession of Conservative and Liberal governments. Professor Young's study is restricted to the west, and he has nothing to say of the movements bred in Quebec of discontent with dominant trends in government.

*** I. K. STEELE. *Guerillas and Grenadiers*. The Frontenac Library, Ryerson. $2.95. In the same library as Young's book, *Guerillas and Grenadiers* is a study in military history dealing with the rivalry during the Franco-British conflict in the New World between the warfare of frontier guerillas and the warfare of regular European-trained troops. Though both ways of warfare have their advantages, and in tactical terms the guerilla can often defeat the regular, Mr. Steele's view seems to be that in the long strategic haul the battalions have the advantage, "... Canada fell to fortune's favourite — the biggest army. Is this not sufficient reason for the fall of Canada?" How can one square such a conclusion with recent events in the Middle East? Or with the situation in Viet Nam? What commentary does it present on the theories of Mao? There is room here for fertile speculation.

*** FRED BRUEMMER. *The Long Hunt*. Ryerson, $12.50. This may well be one of the last eye-witness accounts of a way of life that is now almost extinct — that of the

Eskimo hunter using traditional methods in the high Arctic. Already, along the shores of Hudson's Bay and in the Barren Lands, there are few real hunters left and the dog team is becoming an archaic rarity. But at Grise Fiord, on Ellesmere Island, Fred Bruemmer, a photographer and journalist, found men still following the old life of the hunt, and spent two months with them travelling by dog team and living off the land in this most northerly of Canadian territories. He describes sea hunts and bear hunts, encounters with the musk ox which are slowly re-establishing themselves in the remoter parts of the Arctic, and the day-to-day hazards of travel in "this immense land of black and white, so cold, so rugged and remote, and, apparently, without life." The narrative is workmanlike and adequately descriptive; the photographs are fine and unusual.

*** CLARA THOMAS, *Ryerson of Upper Canada.* Ryerson Press, $5.95. A biography of the distinguished educationalist and the "Pope of Methodism", published appropriately by the press that bears his name. It is a useable introduction to Ryerson's life, but the principles on which it has been composed are not immediately evident. The 136 pages of text obviously do not use more than a fraction of the material available on Ryerson, yet the author has found it necessary to pad heavily — even to the extent of giving a pocket history of Methodism and a brief account of Upper Canadian pioneer society, both of which could be looked up by the reader who needs to be supplied with a background. Ryerson is a great Canadian parent figure; he deserves a grander presentation.

** ROBERT SELLAR, *A Scotsman in Upper Canada: The Narrative of Gordon Sellar.* Clarke Irwin. $2.25. The narratives of the pioneers are being rediscovered and reprinted nowadays at a fine pace, as if publishers were doubtful how long the bull market in Canadiana will continue. This one is pleasing for its spare and lucid style, but its re-appearance (it was first published in 1915) really adds little to the knowledge of pioneer life which the average collector of such items will have acquired during the past decade.

** *The Elizabethan Theatre.* Edited by David Galloway. Macmillan. $5.50. These are the papers given at the International Conference on Elizabethan Theatre which was held at the University of Waterloo in 1968. They bring one up-to-date on the most recent views about the kind of theatre in which the plays of Shakespeare and his fellow Elizabethans were performed. All in their way are informative, but some are prize examples of congested pedantry.

** GEORGES CONCHON. *Canada.* Queenswood House. $12.75. Georges Conchon is a member of the French literary establishment who came to Canada to write a travel book in the Beaux Pays Series published by the English firm of Kaye & Ward. An assignment of this kind is always difficult, and Conchon has dealt with it in the best way, by being wholly idiosyncratic. He obviously knew nothing about Canada when he started, and — at least in the west — he seems to have been told and to have believed some lofty tall stories, for at times his facts waver violently towards fiction. Yet in an impressionistic travel book the accuracy of every detail is not essential; much more important is the intuitive sense of a place's spirit, and this Conchon does possess. He has it particularly for the rural parts of French Canada, and for the older parts of Quebec City and Montreal, all of which he observes as offshoots of an old France dead in Europe; he has little feeling for the new spirit in Quebec. Wisely, he devotes more than half his space to French Canada, and fills in the west and the Maritimes with bold but sensitive strokes. Apart from the inspiration of getting a book on Canada done by a metropolitan Frenchman rather than an Englishman or a Canadian, the publishers should be congratulated on a splendid selection of well reproduced photographs. Visually the book is a triumph.

** HELEN EVANS REID, *All Silent, All Damned: The Search for Isaac Barr.* Ryerson. $6.95. An uninspired but conscientious attempt to reconstruct the history of the ill-fated Barr Colony in Saskatchewan and to do more justice than most writers to its originator, Isaac Barr. Convincing, on the whole, but the facts have to speak strictly for themselves; they are presented without eloquence.

* JOHN SAYWELL. *Canada Past & Present.* Clarke Irwin. $1.95. A brief, bright panning shot over Canadian history. Not the cup-of-tea of anyone who knows much about the subject, but the kind of slim essay to send off to the English aunt on her way to Canada, or to despatch *en masse* to American politicians whose knowledge of our country is usually far inferior to their knowledge of certified banana republics.

G.W.

opinions and notes

# MONTREAL POETS

Sir :

I read Christopher Xerxes Ringrose's article "Patrick Anderson and the Critics" with great interest and pleasure.

There are three minor points however I should like to comment on. Mr. Ringrose refers to the "magazine he [Anderson] ran for three years", implying that he was the editor of *Preview*. *An* editor would be more accurate. *Preview* was edited by an editorial board whose names appeared on the cover of the magazine. (This is not to put Anderson down. Without him there would have been no *Preview* in the first place.)

Ringrose says of me that I was a stenographer. He elevates me unduly. I think no employer in his right mind would have taken me on in that role. I was something much more lowly: a filing clerk.

And finally, he talks of "the English background of P. K. Page, Anderson and James Wreford". In my case this was literally true. My *background* was indeed English but my foreground is Canadian with the exception of a brief period from birth to two years.

P. K. PAGE

Sir:

For a period of ten years I have taught courses in Canadian Literature. If they were asked, some 1200 students could testify that I deliberately brought to their attention the poetry of Patrick Anderson. I discussed his poems with enthusiasm and frequently expatiated on his talents, his background, his role and influence on poetry in Montreal. I usually concluded by remarking that it was necessary to introduce Anderson to them because there would almost seem to be a conspiracy in Canada to ignore, neglect and play down this excellent poet.

I knew Patrick Anderson personally. I admired his work. I, with many others, regretted his leaving Canada. When I wrote the article entitled "Montreal Poets of the Forties" I included a lengthy passage on Anderson, the man and the poet. My manuscript was considered too long and, with considerable reluctance, as Dr. Woodcock can attest, I permitted the editor to excise certain passages, including that on Anderson.

It is ironic, therefore, that Mr. Ringrose should take me to task for "disapproving" of Anderson, or for giving him short shrift. I do not wish to quarrel with Mr. Ringrose's interpretations. I wish merely to assure him that I share his interests in Anderson and to commend him for drawing the attention of your readers to the talent of such a poet. But I must protest Mr. Ringrose's use of the word "jibes", in referring to my article. When I wrote: "Patrick Anderson, proletarian by choice, Canadian by desire, and poet aflame with purpose" I was merely stating well-known facts. Allow me to restate those facts for Mr. Ringrose: "Patrick Anderson deliberately adopted proletarian sympathies; he wanted very much to become a Canadian; he was a dedicated poet." Jibes? Hardly. I am certain that Patrick Anderson himself, as well as others who knew

him, would endorse these observations as being an accurate description of that phase of his career which he spent in this country.

WYNNE FRANCIS

# MONTREAL PRESSES

Sir,

May I just add a correction to Douglas Barbour's review of six Delta Canada books (*Canadian Literature* No. 43) before misconceptions begin to multiply.

Mr. Barbour refers to the Delta Canada press as Dudek's "own publishing house" and seems to attribute to me all editorial decision for the books published, commenting on my "eclectic tastes as an editor". I am grateful, but I would not want to accept praise for something which is not my due.

It is difficult for those outside to know how a particular small press operates — at least until the "papers" are deposited in some library — and so the comment on little magazines and presses is often distorted by giving credit to one figure in a group at the expense of others, who are sometimes far more active and industrious. In the case of Delta Canada there are three editors, M. Gnarowski, Glen Siebrasse, and myself. (At the beginning, R. G. Everson also formed part of the group, but he is now only associated as a friend). Most of the hard work of the press — production, correspondence, business work and distribution — is done by Glen Siebrasse. All editorial decisions to date have been made by the three editors together, with equal votes (although for the first year or so I was granted absolute powers — I did not in fact exercise them); and some manuscripts have been entirely scouted and edited by Gnarowski and Siebrasse, under the joint editorial system. Two recent series of books, the Buckbooks and a series of "Quarterback" chapbooks, are to be edited exclusively by these two editors without my participation, other than in the way of advice. It would therefore be a great exaggeration to say that Delta Canada books are my sole province. I have a strong say, but no greater than that of the others.

For those interested, I may also say that Delta Canada books invariably lose money (only two small books in our list show a positive balance). Our total losses in the past five years equal over $3,300, though this is somewhat set off by Canada Council grants totalling $2,213 for the same period. We have at present nineteen books on our list, and nine others in course of production.

LOUIS DUDEK

Sir,

In the winter issue of *Canadian Literature* I noticed Douglas Barbour saying that "Delta Canada is Montreal's only English language entry in the field [of little presses]", p. 88. For the record I think that Poverty Press and Tundra Books should also be mentioned and perhaps, though they don't specialize in poetry, Harvest House, Palm Publishers and Château Books: all English language presses in Montreal tend to be small, but not negligible.

PHILIP STRATFORD

## HERON ON THE GRAND RIVER

fisher of time,
he draws his long beak
through waters
of my emptiness,
refills

slow eye,
such curve of neck
eases me

blue balm winds
round me,
through me

and heron hiatus
of quiet
reflects the golden trees
of my mind

I am human

I would lie down on leaves
suck the sky into my lungs

roll into your arms
forever

Joan Finnigan

Hudson's Bay Company
INCORPORATED 2ND MAY 1670

Presents this work as one of a series written by
Canadian poets and illustrated by Canadian artists

Head

# CANADIAN LITERATURE

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No. 22 Louis Dudek on **Raymond Souster** and Wynne Francis on **Louis Dudek**, with Ethel Wilson's **Reflections in a Pool** and articles by George Woodcock, Naim Kattan, Frank Davey.

No. 28 George Woodcock on the poetry of **Irving Layton**, Jean le Moyne on **Saint-Denys-Garneau's Testimony**, F. R. Scott's translation of **Marc Lescarbot's Farewell to the Frenchmen**, articles by Peter Stevens, George Jonas, B. Rajan.

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No. 43 Christopher Xerxes Ringrose on **Patrick Anderson**, George Bowering on **A. W. Purdy** and G. K. Fischer on **A. M. Klein**, Frank Davey on **E. J. Pratt** and Frank Birbalsingh on **F. P. Grove**, articles by Antoine Sirois, Naim Kattan, Phyllis Grosskurth.

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