$2.00 per copy

CANADIAN LITERATURE No. 51

Winter, 1972

ANNA, SUSANNA, AND CATHARINE

Articles

BY CLARA THOMAS, R. D. MACDONALD, CARL BALLSTADT,
NORMAN NEWTON, MAX DORSINVILLE, J. THIESSEN

Review Articles and Reviews

BY GEORGE WOODCOCK, ALEXANDER HUTCHINSON, ANDREAS SCHROEDER,
AUDREY THOMAS, ROY DANIELLS, JOAN COLDWELL, MARY JANE EDWARDS,
AL PURDY, PHYLLIS GROSSKURTH, JOHN REID, GILBERT TARRAB,
W. H. NEW, ANTHONY APPENZELL, FRASER SUTHERLAND

A QUARTERLY OF
CRITICISM AND REVIEW

editorial

THE CRAFT OF HISTORY

WHETHER HISTORICAL WRITING should be subject to the stimulus of chronological festivities is a point one must leave to the philosophers of that craft. The fact is that the series of provincial and federal anniversaries which began in 1958 with the first of British Columbia's many centennials, and came to a climax in 1967, has been productive of a great many volumes which have increased notably our available sources of local and national history and biography. For collectors of Canadiana it has been a bonanza decade and more; one doubts if so many books in the field appeared in the 91 years between 1867 and 1958 as have appeared in the 13 years since the latter date, whether as reprints or as original volumes.

Once started, the process continues. We are in the predicament of a sorcerer overwhelmed by a tide he has unthinkingly called up, for the spate of Canadiana seems inexhaustible since the fashion for centennials swept from province to province, and the astonishing fact is that — despite the great flotsam of rubbish that inevitably floats on the surface of such tides — the number of creditable new books in the field continues year by year to be high.

Let me begin, however, by isolating among recent publications some of the types of volume (one hesitates to use the word *book*, and *non-book* has become a dreary cliché) that are inspired by historical fashion but carry scanty profit to anyone but the publisher and author, and doubtless — if the truth be known — little to them. There is the collection of dull photographs of fur-clad men on sleds whose only merit is a slight antiquity, and which are reproduced, often with inept historical comments, to flatter local vanities; typical is *Gold Rush* by James

Blower (Ryerson/McGraw-Hill, $9.95), described as "A pictorial look at the part Edmonton played in the gold era of the 1890's". There is the provocative article puffed into the size of a book, like William T. Little's *The Tom Thomson Mystery* (Ryerson/McGraw-Hill, $6.95), which tells of the discovery of a skeleton that may (or may not) have been that of the famous painter. There is the revival of a book that has lost its context, like *The Scalpel and the Sword* (McClelland & Stewart), an impressionistic biography of Norman Bethune written two decades ago by Ted Allan and Sydney Gordon in a journalistic manner long obsolete; one would have thought the commissioning of a scholarly life of Bethune at this time more in place. There is the dense academic study of a limited area, in a style deadened by years of subjection to the thesis-masters; Richard Allen's title *The Social Passion* (University of Toronto Press, $9.50) might be that of a vitally interesting book, but this treatise on "Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28" in fact leads one into a dead wood of banal writing in which the path of genuine interest is there but hard to follow. And there is the documentary that fails a tantalizing title, like James H. Gray's *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Macmillan, $6.95), a book which one reviewer who had obviously never read it described as "prurient". Alas, no! James H. Gray earned deserved respect for his books which rendered direct experience, like *The Winter Years* and *The Boy from Winnipeg*; they are an authentic part of the social history of the Canadian prairies, and indispensable as such. But his present study of prostitution in the pioneer towns is second-hand stuff, and he lacks the imaginative touch of the true historian who can give life to scenes through which he has not lived. The subject itself is fascinating, but it still awaits its Mayhew.

Yet despite these varying failures, there is enough in the publication record of recent seasons to assure one that Canadian historians are still producing a fair number of works whose utilitarian or imaginative qualities make them welcome. To the first class belongs the series of paperback Canadian Lives initiated by the Oxford University Press at $3.50 each. Six titles have appeared so far, and these establish that the series is intended to have a more popular appeal than the parallel enterprise initiated by the University of Toronto Press in connection with the Dictionary of Canadian Biography. The present selection suggests that the Oxford books are planned to fall into two categories. 1. The brief biographies of major figures which act as introductions to wider reading: e.g. Donald Swainson's study of Sir John A. Macdonald and Barbara Robertson's of Wilfrid Laurier. 2. The adequate and satisfying accounts of lesser but important figures of whom a 35,000 word account is likely to be sufficient for all but the most demanding

scholar: e.g. David Flint's study of John Strachan and Dorothy Blakey Smith's of James Douglas. Prepared evidently with an eye to students, these biographies are simple but unpatronizing, and can be read with pleasure and a modicum of enlightenment by anyone with an amateur interest in history. One hopes that the selection of future titles will be expanded in the direction of including as many as possible of those secondary figures whose lives and achievements contain both an idiosyncratic interest, and an importance in terms of historical background, which biographers have rarely explored.

After so many years of rummaging and research, one is astonishingly reminded every year or so that some important document from the more or less distant Canadian past has been lying undiscovered and unpublished for a century or more. The Champlain Society has a record of enterprise in this direction which it is unnecessary to stress, and now, as its forty-sixth publication, it has issued the *Journal* of Major John Norton, that chief of the Five Nations whose hybrid origin is so obscure and whose activities have been so ignored or doubted by our historians that he does not yet find a place even in existing biographical dictionaries. The narrative, describing his journeys among the Cherokees and telling the history of the Five Nations which adopted him, is hardly likely ever to be regarded as an example of masterly writing, though it comes with a lengthy introduction by so distinguished an authority on literature in Canada as Carl F. Klinck, but as a document to be weighed against other historical material it is undoubtedly of the first importance.

In quite a different category, so far as literary merits are concerned, was one of the predecessors of John Norton's *Journal*, *The Narrative of David Thompson* which appeared as the Champlain Society's twelfth title in 1915, edited by J. R. Tyrrell. But Thompson's accounts of his great travels, which included the exploration and mapping of a vast area of western Canada and the north-western United States, have been unavailable up to the present in an edition which the general public could buy. Now this lack has been met. What Victor G. Hopwood gives us in his new version (David Thompson: *Travels in Western North America 1784-1812*, Macmillan, $10.95) is not merely a condensation of the incomplete manuscript reproduced by Tyrrell, which Hopwood trims to eliminate repetitions and irrelevancies; it also includes hitherto unpublished portions of Thompson's journals which the editor found in manuscript form in various Canadian libraries.

The result is a more complete picture of Thompson's experiences and achievements than we have had before, carpentered together with impeccable scholarship and editorial skill. Some years ago, in the pages of *Canadian Literature*, Dr.

Hopwood put a persuasive plea for Thompson's literary as distinct from his historical importance, and now, reading in full his version of the Thompson narrative, the present writer — an aficionado of travel writings — is glad to agree; this is an unusually pleasing book to read for its perceptive observation of men and animals and for its natural style, as well as being a basic document of Canadian history. Thompson, as Hopwood claims, was a prose writer to be classed with such classic nineteenth century masters of the scientific travel narrative as Charles Darwin and H. W. Bates. Undoubtedly, among recent publications in Canadian history, the *Travels* deserves to be regarded as the best; one looks forward with strengthened interest to Dr. Hopwood's biography of Thompson, which will be published shortly.

Quite different in character, but still admirable in its own terms as an example of the skills of modern reportage turned to historical uses, is Pierre Berton's *The Last Spike*, the second volume of his account of the Canadian Pacific Railway; covering the years from 1881-1885, it takes us out of the doldrums of national life that followed the Pacific Scandal and narrates what is perhaps our only epic story as a nation, the actual building of the line.

Berton is a journalist, and inclined to the high colour and accelerated prose to which his trade has accustomed him; he is also prone to the monumental cliché (but so, the experts tell us, was Homer himself, with all his rosy-fingered dawns). As readers of Berton's *Klondike* may expect, he sometimes gives a hectic feeling to events that must have seemed pretty banal in their day, but his book is informative as well as entertaining, and full of odd facts and eccentric erudition. It is also much concerned with the very profound ways in which the construction of the railway affected the lives of thousands of ordinary people in the 1880's; Berton's account of how the labourers actually lived and worked, and of the methods of construction, is unrivalled in any other book on the period. *The Last Spike* is excellent popular history, and one suspects the professionals will use it as a basic work on the Railway for a long time ahead, whether or not they recognize its merits publicly.

It would be unfortunate, however, if the popular success of *The Last Spike* were to obscure the good qualities of another excellent recent example of popular history written at a high level. This is Joseph Schull's *Rebellion* (Macmillan, $9.95), an account of the French uprising in Lower Canada in 1837. The rebellion of 1837 has assumed a new topicality owing to its acceptance by the FLQ and their supporters as the archetypical separatist movement, and *Rebellion* provides a fluent and perceptive account which explores both the political and social

causes of the incident and the lasting wounds that were left by the methods of repression which reinforced in French Canadian minds the belief that they were regarded as a subordinate people.

Slightly on the other and duller side of the border from Berton and Schull, the journalists writing history, are the historians writing for amateurs who have put together *Colonists and Canadians* (Macmillan, $8.95), an account edited by J. M. S. Careless of the various colonies of British North America between the conquest of New France and Confederation. It is the work of eleven writers, each taking a decade, and, while it brings out some interesting and previously neglected aspects of local history during the colonial period, it suffers from the inevitable disjointedness and — worse — the inevitable variation in quality of writing that results from the now fashionable habit of publishing books written by committees rather than by individuals.

The difference between such a book and a firmly-crafted history written by a single individual becomes evident when one compares *Colonists and Canadians*, with its shifting focus and abrupt transitions, with Barry M. Gough's *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast, 1810-1914* (University of British Columbia Press, $12.50), a well-documented and lucid account of the most effective manifestation of the British presence on the west coast of Canada during the nineteenth century; it presents with much charm of style a subject which — astonishingly — has never been adequately studied before. An interesting aspect of the book is the persuasive argument that the United States would indeed have grabbed what is now British Columbia if the Royal Navy had not appeared off the disputed coast in the right strength and at the appropriate time.

At the opposite end of the scale to Dr. Gough's self-contained study of a single phase of European penetration into North America is another nautical volume, Samuel Eliot Morison's *The European Discovery of North America: The Northern Voyages* (Oxford, $15.00). Admiral Morison, of course, is no Canadian, though he has visited us often and with perceptive eye, but in this volume he deals mainly with the explorers who came to the lands that eventually formed Canada, and, if he brings little new in the way of facts, he does discuss the existing knowledge about the Norsemen, the Cabots, Cartier and the Elizabethan searchers for the Northwest, with a shrewd if erratic judgment; he supports his chapters of narrative with copious and useful notes. As a general introduction and a compendium of sources, *The European Discovery of North America* is a useful and readable book, once one gets accustomed to the Admiral's rather self-consciously

Old Saltish breeziness; nevertheless, it is far too idiosyncratic a book to be taken as more than a partial view of the facts available.

* * *

Finally, there are the picture books, massive and colourful, perhaps more numerous this season than ever before, and perhaps more handsome. The best of them demonstrate the tendency of the historical amateur in the 1970's to demand concrete and visual evidence. No longer is he willing to take the professional's word; he likes to see for himself, to weigh and savour, the material on which history is based, so that he can have the feel and look of the past as a physical reality as well as a written record.

The most magnificent of the current historical picture books, *The Discovery of North America* (McClelland & Stewart, $25.00), covers much the same ground as Admiral Morison's book. It also is written by non-Canadians about an area of history that is largely Canadian; the narrative — best described as workmanlike — has been provided by an American scholar, W. P. Cumming, and two British historians, D. B. Quinn and the late R. A. Skelton. It is by no means as lively as the Morison account, but in its caution is perhaps more reliable. The level tone may even be intentional, for it provided a reliable line of continuity on which to hang the most splendid collection I have yet encountered of reproductions, many of them in colour, of the maps, charts and contemporary drawings and engravings that have preserved the knowledge and view of the world held by men in the expanding dawn of the modern age. The narrative begins with St. Brendan and ends with the Pilgrim Fathers, and all the important extant maps of that age are included, in full and clear colour. Yet the best of all the illustrations are the drawings of John White, who accompanied Martin Frobisher to Baffin Island and later played a crucial part in the settlement of Virginia. White was an artist of stature — barely recognized — and his drawings of Canadian Eskimos (the first ever made) and of fishes and other creatures, bring to one with an extraordinary freshness that sense of a new and pristine world which the Elizabethans took home with them from the Americas. The quality of the colour printing in this book is quite outstanding; every graphic artist as well as every amateur of history should study — should even possess it.

In contrast, the visual dulness of *Canada's Five Centuries*, by W. Kaye Lamb (McGraw Hill, $22.50), produces a rather pedestrianly utilitarian first impression. Here, I suggest, the text is more attractive than the illustrations. Admittedly, Dr. Lamb is not likely to tell the professional historian much that is unfamiliar,

but he does recast the material for the general reader in an interesting mosaic pattern which dodges the monotony of complete chronological continuity and relates the historical facts to appropriate groups of illustrations, many gleaned from the Public Archives of Canada over which the author so long presided. In themselves, these illustrations are instructive and often novel, but they are reproduced either in a greyish black-and-white, or in black on a peculiarly distasteful beige-brown background, with a few in pallid four-colour, and some revoltingly crude colour photographs at the end. A great deal of good material has in fact been spoilt by poor design, poor printing and unwisely selected paper. All the sadder is the fact that this is the only one of the five illustrated books under review to be printed in Canada. *The Discovery of North America* and the three other texts I shall mention were all produced abroad, three in Italy, one in Germany, and all are far better examples of the printing craft than *Canada's Five Centuries*.

The remaining books relate to specialised phases of history. In *The National Gallery of Canada* (Oxford University Press, $27.50), Jean Sutherland Boggs gives a modestly-written, much-needed and well-illustrated account of the Gallery's development which reveals how much richer its collections in fact are than the limitations of the present building allow us to appreciate. Obviously we cannot compete with the great collections of London, New York, Paris and Italy, but we can still thank a line of dedicated directors for a selection of good works from all ages and schools that stands high among national galleries of the second rank. Now, with the copious illustrations in Dr. Boggs's volume, we can gain a far more comprehensive idea of the National Gallery than any single visit to its restricted exhibitions will give.

Would that Scott Symons had been as matter-of-fact in his style as Dr. Boggs! In *Heritage* (McClelland & Stewart, $22.50), he rhapsodizes in a prose of curious whimsicality on the associations aroused by a series of splendid colour photographs by John de Visser of some of the best examples of early Canadian furniture. (Nothing that comes from the sunset side of Sault Ste. Marie is shown, which suggests that both author and photographer regard the west as barbarian darkness.) The illustrations are so magnificently self-sufficient, so completely and poetically evocative in their own visual dimensions, that the voice of the rhapsodist becomes in the end an annoyingly distracting twitter. One would prefer informative labels, set in some grave Georgian type, for with such photographs, and such objects, one can easily do one's own daydreaming.

On the other hand, in *Seasons of the Eskimo* (McClelland & Stewart, $16.95),

the voice and the eye seem in perfect harmony. Fred Bruemmer has spent much time in the Arctic, living among the last of the Eskimos who have so far escaped the welfare prison of the modern North and still contrive to live the old hunting life. That is, as his sub-title declares, "a vanishing way of life", and there is a truly elegiac quality to Bruemmer's account. In fine, sensitive prose, he records the traditional Eskimo life from season to season, and in what are probably the best photographs ever taken of the native life of the North he portrays the remote Eskimos of today, veritable men between two worlds, living out the last years of their traditional culture in all its phases. It is history, since what it records will soon be vanished, but it is also a moving human statement of the greatness of the Eskimos' experiment in living, of the nobility of their primeval anarchism, and, not least, of the extraordinary empathetic understanding with which Bruemmer has lived his way into their collective sensibility. *Seasons of the Eskimo* is a far more subtle and adequate contribution to our understanding of the Inuit than any anthropological record I have yet read. It is likely to be a long-valued document of the traditional North.

G.W.

JOURNEYS TO FREEDOM

Clara Thomas

"ANNA, SUSANNA, AND CATHARINE PARR TRAILL" — their names bounce together with the rhythm of a good musical-comedy title song. Certainly a libretto written out of the variety of their lives and works would not be dull, and might even be a piquant memorial to their adventurings in nineteenth-century Canada.

All three women came to Canada in the 1830's. Anna Murphy Jameson was the wife of Robert Jameson, Attorney-General of Upper Canada and then the province's first Vice-Chancellor. She was a professional "woman of letters"; this phrase suggests more clearly than any other the scope of her ambition, and her success, in writing. She was not a poet or a novelist, and neither journalist nor critic is entirely accurate in her description. When, in 1836, she came to Toronto to visit her husband, she had been writing professionally for about fifteen years. After the publication, in 1832, of *Characteristics of Women*, a study of Shakespeare's heroines, her work was known and respected, not only in England, but also in Germany and America. She was forty-two years old when she arrived in Canada, a practised writer with heavy financial responsibilities towards the support of her mother and sisters; she was by no means committed to being a colonial official's wife, and she was certainly not a prospective settler. She had expected that a book would be one of the results of her trip and had begun to consider its themes before she left England. *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* was published shortly after her return to England in 1838.

The Strickland sisters, Catharine and Susanna, came with their husbands to settle in Upper Canada in 1832. They too had written for publication before emigrating — sentimental, moralizing tales thought suitable for the children's literature and the proliferating ladies' periodicals of the eighteen twenties. In 1836 Catharine's letters home were published in the six-penny "Library of Entertaining Knowledge," the immensely popular enterprise launched in 1829 for the

education and improvement of the masses by the reforming enthusiasts of "The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge." By 1836, Susanna was well into the writing of sketches for John Lovell's *Literary Garland*, just beginning in Montreal, and, in fact, weeping with joy over the first twenty-dollar bill she received from him for her work.

All three ladies encountered and recorded the dragons of a new land — its external elements of fierce climate, raw, hard work and crudity of culture, and the haunting, all-pervasive, internal struggle against loneliness, isolation and longing for the unattainable homes. Each one, however, had and developed her own defenses of temperament and talent, and for each woman the Canadian experience was a liberating one though often unrecognized or unacknowledged as such. Though her letters give other dimensions to her experience here, *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* is Anna Jameson's only published book on Canada. But to begin to assess the intention or appreciate the achievement of Susanna Moodie or Catharine Traill, we can and we need to read further: *Life in the Clearings* as well as *Roughing It in The Bush*, and *The Canadian Settler's Guide* as well as *The Backwoods of Canada*. And for a really just assessment of any of them, of course, we need the complete editions.[1]

These women were not "Victorians" — not in any sense that connotes the great middle-class edifice of custom, appearance and convention or the massive empire-mystique that grew in the minds of men as the century advanced. Anna was born in 1794, Catherine in 1803 and Susanna in 1805. They grew up in a society that was more open and more robustly permissive than it later became and at a time, in the afterglow of Waterloo, when the major chords of national security and confidence had their minor counterpoint in the personal insecurity, penury or desperation that impelled the emigrant ships to Canada. Jane Austen's novels and Muriel Jaeger's *Before Victoria* illuminate the kind of society the Stricklands knew and the hopes and ambitions they had, as Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Great Hunger* and John Prebble's *The Highland Clearances* show the stark necessities behind the emigration of the Scots and the Irish whom they met in Canada.

ANNA MURPHY had grown up in circumstances radically different from the Stricklands. She was the eldest of five daughters of Denis Murphy, an Irish miniature painter who had been embroiled a little on the periphery of the disastrous revolution of 1798 and who then found it prudent to

leave Ireland. Mr. Murphy was both talented and charming and for a time he had a heady success in England. He was appointed a Court Miniaturist and he lived in the midst of a lively company of people with intellectual and cultural awareness and interests. His success did not prevail for a long time, nor did it serve to provide for his family's future; but during its time Anna was growing up, both clever and ambitious, eager and willing to make the most of any opportunities her father could arrange for her. She became a governess at the age of sixteen and, far from being broken by the gloomy tyranny that was very often the fate of the governess, she found in nine years of intermittent service plenty of opportunity in the two areas that intrigued her most — travelling and writing. In fact she made full use of a degree of freedom that was forbidden to the young women she was engaged to instruct. Furthermore she continued what she had long since begun — a self-education in European languages, literatures and social customs that was to make her a "new woman" in her time. She moved towards the literary circles, the life and the reputation which suited her best with a determination and a constant, dogged industry that makes "choice" too superficial a word and "temperamental necessity" a far juster assessment of her motivation. By the time she and Robert Jameson married in 1825, she was on her way to becoming a popular author and by the time he came to Canada in 1833 she was a famous one.

The Jamesons' marriage had not been successful from its first days and it certainly had small chance of surviving against the separation of colonial postings for Robert, and growing literary success and increasing family responsibilities for Anna. Her decision to come to Canada in 1836 was partially motivated by a sense of marital obligation, but even more by the need to come to some firm agreement with Robert Jameson about separation. There was also that secondary but always present factor, the knowledge that out of such an experience she would certainly write a book. Long before she left England she was tantalized by the notions of making a "wild expedition" to the west and of investigating the situations and prospects of women in Canada, both among settlers and among the Indian tribes.

She spent about eight months in Canada, from December of 1836 to August of 1837. She got her work ready for the publisher in the months she spent in America waiting for her legal separation papers from Robert Jameson; *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* was published in three volumes by John Murray, shortly after her return to England in the spring of 1838.

From it, and from letters to family and friends, her methods are clear — and by the standards of her day they were notably scholarly. She read widely before travelling, she kept careful and copious notes, and then she did more reading to support and extend her own observations. For instance, she inserted and worked carefully into her text a good deal of material on the history of Pontiac from Alexander Henry, incidents from George Loskiel's *History of the Mission of the United Brethren among the Indians of North America*, and Indian legends which she had heard directly from Henry Schoolcraft and his wife and which, incidentally, were printed for the first time in her book.

She also knew, by this time, a good deal about the techniques of successful writing. She had superficially fictionalized the narrator of her first book, *The Diary of an Ennuyee* (1826), making her into a romantic young lady who, when the tour was all over, Europe seen and commented upon, died of a mysteriously broken heart. This dramatization had given Mrs. Jameson a certain notoriety and her book a special success among the spate of travel diaries produced in the decade of Europe's re-opening to the touring British after Waterloo. Some dozen years later in a Toronto January, "imprisoned in this relentless climate" in "a fourth or fifth rate provincial town with the pretensions of a capital city," Anna did not have to imagine a romantic *persona* to give her journal an ironic tension — she herself, *was* incongruous to her situation. She had only to characterize herself as she had become, a cosmopolitan, urban intellectual, to give a double edge to her work.

> I wished to throw open my house in the evening, and break or thaw the social frost around me; but such a novel and unheard of idea would startle all the inhabitants from their propriety.... I must look around for some thing to try my strength — and force and fix my attention.
>
> I must get "a file for the serpent." (*Winter Studies*).

And so Anna set about translating Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe* and commenting on German art and literature in her journal — thus vanquishing her dragons and, simultaneously, heightening the effective incongruity of her own self-portrait.

As reporter and critic, Anna was free, frank and sharply intelligent — far too much so to please the Toronto society she could neither tolerate nor penetrate.

> I did not expect to find here in this new capital of a new country, with the boundless forest within half a mile of us on almost every side — concentrated as it were the worst evils of our old and most artificial social system at home, with none of its

> *agremens,* and none of its advantages.... We have here a petty colonial oligarchy, a self-constituted aristocracy, based upon nothing real, nor even upon anything imaginary; and we have all the mutual jealousy and fear, and petty gossip, and mutual meddling and mean rivalship, which are common in a small society of which the members are well known to each other. (*Winter Studies*).

Her acid observations are witty and convincing in a timeless way, because to look at any small, closed society from her literary-sophisticated point of view is always to see cultural desolation. And over all the years since 1837 a swelling chorus of voices of gloom has continued to belabour our provincialism — though not often with the wit and perception of Anna Jameson or with her genuine integration into European cosmopolitanism.

Her *Winter Studies* end and *Summer Rambles* begin with her departure from Toronto to the west of the province in May of 1837. She did truly make the "wild expedition" that her family letters show she was planning before she came to Canada. She travelled alone overland through the province to Detroit, then up the lakes by steamer to Michilimackinac and on, by *bateau,* to the Sault. She declared with great satisfaction that she was the first white woman to shoot the rapids at Sault Ste. Marie — and it is unlikely that anyone would care to dispute her claim.

Anna was a particularly astute observer of customs and politics in Toronto, but there were others who left their records: here on tour however, her work becomes unique and uniquely interesting. She enjoyed touring, even under travel conditions that were often primitive and her tone loses both its acid and an intermittent note of sentimental self-pity. She was protected by her genuine enthusiasm and carelessness of physical hardship — and she also took care to be known as "the Chancellor's Lady" whenever such a connection might pay dividends in comfort or courtesy. Above all, she made easy and genuinely friendly connections with people on her way: Henry Schoolcraft left an admiring memoir of Anna's "hearty and warm affections... notwithstanding her strong author-like traits and peculiarities." He also recorded her and, in general, all Europeans' focus on the American wilderness with particular insight.

> It seems to me that Englishmen and Englishwomen, for I have had a good many of both sexes to visit me recently, look on America very much as one does when he peeps through a magnifying glass at pictures of foreign scenes, and the picturesque ruins of old cities and the like. They are really very fine, but it is difficult to realise that such things are. It is all an optical illusion.[2]

"You must be content to be immortalized in my fashion," Anna wrote to Mr. McMurray, Anglican missionary to the Sault, as she was making the final revisions in her manuscript before *Winter Studies'* publication. She meant just that; she was an author, confident and, at times, ruthless in her processes. Most important of all, an essential detachment underlies her work, giving it great possibilities in range, but just as surely limiting its depth. She had, in Henry Schoolcraft's opinion, "the most accurate and artistic eye" of any of his visitors, but she was, for all that, a tourist. Her talents, her perceptions and her interests went far beyond the ordinary, but her springboard had the timeless security of all tourists' poise — she did not have to stay.

SUSANNA AND HER HUSBAND, William Dunbar Moodie, had both aspired in England to the kind of literary life and society that Anna Jameson had achieved, and on one of its many levels, *Roughing It In the Bush* is a dismal elegy to those ambitions and to the Moodies' practical expectations of emigration as well. Their friend, Tom Wilson, warned them justly, as Susanna admits.

> I don't want you to weep, said Tom, but as to our qualifications, Moodie, I think them pretty equal.... You go with the intention of clearing land, and working for yourself, and doing a great deal.... You expect, by going to Canada, to make your fortune, or at least secure a comfortable independence. I anticipate no such results. ... I mean to purchase a farm with the three hundred pounds I received last week from the sale of my father's property; and if the Canadian soil yields only half what Mr. C — says it does, I need not starve. But the refined habits in which you have been brought up, and your unfortunate literary propensities — (I say unfortunate, because you will seldom meet people in a colony who can or will sympathize with you in these pursuits) — they will make you an object of mistrust and envy to those who cannot appreciate them, and will be a source of constant mortification and disappointment to yourself.... There was more truth in poor Tom's words than at that moment we were willing to allow; for youth and hope were on our side in those days.... (*Roughing It*).

Temperamentally, Susanna Moodie had much in common with Anna Jameson, but Anna's radical choices towards personal freedom had begun very early and Susanna never at any time contemplated such choices or their price. Instead, like most of us, she accepted both social conventions and economic pressures and then fought the battles within herself towards some balance. Unlike most of us, however, Susanna had the means to free herself through her writing; in the very

process of recording her conflicts she transcended them. She beat her dragons by fighting them living on the page, and the energy of her struggle suffuses *Roughing It in the Bush*, giving it an enduring, undeniable, though maddeningly fragmented, power.

Susanna's interests, like Anna Jameson's, were centred in people — more specifically in her own encounters with and reactions to people. There is really no more depth of response to the Canadian wilderness in Susanna than Schoolcraft records in Anna. Such lines as these voice a conventional response already trite when she wrote them:

> And silence — awful silence broods
> Profoundly o'er these solitudes . . .
> A sense of desolation reigns
> O'er these unpeopled forest plains. (*Roughing It*).

There are discomfort, economic disaster and inconvenience in Canadian nature for Susanna: but there is no terror. In fact she and Anna, and Catharine Traill, were extraordinarily rugged women and physically very brave ones. But Susanna could not go home again and she *was* afraid of the strange people she met in Canada, who seemed so unruly to her, so appallingly likely to upset her only real security, her confidence in the order of society as she knew it. She suffered real "culture shock" from the moment of landing at Grosse Isle where several hundred Irish immigrants, "each shouting or yelling in his or her uncouth dialect, and all accompanying their vociferations with violent and extraordinary gestures, [were] quite incomprehensible to the uninitiated." What was more frightening still was to find that their fellow passengers, "honest Scotch labourers and mechanics from the vicinity of Edinburgh," who had behaved with orderly propriety on board ship, "no sooner set foot upon the island than they became infected by the same spirit of insubordination and misrule, and were just as noisy and insolent as the rest."

Susanna survived the initial shock of "detribalization" and many others. She recorded her adventures with the people she met, playing them against her own dramatized *persona*, a version of the workaday Susanna who did, in spite of her storms within, bear seven children, learn to bake and work in the fields, and with her husband, gradually secure the family establishment they had come for.

When she arrived in Canada she was a writer of sentimental tales in which virtue always, finally, triumphed and the sun shone again. But her perceptions deepened as her notions of life and order were shattered and in the wondering

pity of her treatment of Brian, the lonely hunter, in *Roughing It*, or the stark realism of her treatment of Grace Marks, the murderess, in *Life in the Clearings*, she moved from sentimental innocence to the recognition, with both acceptance and sympathy, of the irreconcilable presence of the tragic.

Susanna never achieved a consistency of tragic vision in her writing — and in her life she was not seriously undermined by bitterness or despair. Instead, conflict was very often deflected into comedy as her vision of herself, and others, was tempered by humour which she found socially unacceptable, but which in fact kept her going.

> I wish nature had not given me such a quick perception of the ridiculous — such a perverse inclination to laugh in the wrong place: for though one cannot help deriving from it a wicked enjoyment, it is a very troublesome gift, and very difficult to conceal (*Life in the Clearings*).

It is a fascinating exercise to look at *Roughing It* and see Susanna's pen — and her personality — at work. The book is a bewildering, contradictory amalgam of personal moods and literary modes — sentimental, comic, tragic, didactic. It is also, unmistakeably, the work of a gifted, but embryonic, novelist who, in a dozen or so characters and as many scattered scenes, moved from the raw world she lived in towards the timeless reality of a contained world of the imagination.

Anna Jameson had reported Canadian settlers' wives as being "repining and discontented," almost without exception. "I never met with *one* woman recently settled here who considered herself happy in her new home and country: I *heard* of one, and doubtless there are others, but they are exceptions to the general rule." (*Winter Studies*)

CATHARINE TRAILL was certainly the one contented woman. With her, it was simply a matter of being perfectly fitted by both nature and training to adapt to and find fulfillment and freedom in the new land. She liked to think of her experience as a "Crusoe adventure"; she called one of her books for children *Canadian Crusoes*. In it, remarkably for her time, she advocated intermarriage among the Indian and Scottish, French and English children who were her protagonists. And like a Crusoe herself, she wrote of emigration as an eminently rational, confident and purposeful movement towards the founding of a property, "that their children may be placed in a situation in which, by industry and activity, the substantial comforts of life may be permanently obtained,

and a landed property handed down to them and their children after them." (*The Backwoods*).

She did not relate to people less easily than Anna and Susanna — on the contrary, people almost certainly found her easier to love. She did, however, react to others less emotionally and far less egocentrically. She did not have their kind of creative imagination which made adventure of every movement and themselves the heroines. She was creative, nonetheless, inspired with a scientist's endless curiosity about things and with a scientist's patience for collecting, tabulating, describing and classifying. She simply walked past — or through — the dragons which beset the others to look at, then to study, then to describe and classify, the life, especially the plant-life, of the world around her.

The Backwoods of Canada was certainly edited in a way thought best for its didactic purpose, and it suffers accordingly from a monotone blandness: there is no struggle recorded and therefore no present energy on the page. But Catharine's other books, particularly *The Canadian Settler's Guide* and *Studies of Plant Life in Canada* have edge and point because, by the time she wrote them, she knew so much, and she told it all with beautiful precision — and sometimes wit. To look back at her life and her works is to see one indivisible structure, equally remarkable for its practical solidity and for the beauty of its poise. Catharine Traill came the closest of all our writers to finding benign perfection in this land — not Eden, however, but Canaan, a new freedom for herself and her family, and freedom for all the lost and wandering in the land's own promise of fruitfulness.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The *New Canadian Library* editions of *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles* and *The Backwoods of Canada* were massively cut to the requirements of that series. Carl Klinck explains his editorial decisions about *Roughing it in the Bush* in his introduction to the NCL edition. *Life in the Clearings*, edited by Robert MacDougall, is complete in the Carleton Library series, but is not available in paperback at all. Only *The Canadian Emigrant's Guide* (NCL) carries the complete text of the author. It has been edited of certain parts of its appendices.

[2] Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Personal Memoirs of a Residence of Thirty Years with the Indian Tribes on the American Frontier* (Philadelphia, 1851), 567.

DESIGN AND PURPOSE

R. D. MacDonald

SINCE FEW READERS have seriously considered Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* as a work of art, I have had misgivings about my own exploration of the design underlying this work. Moreover, I have had to admit that Mrs. Moodie herself seems oblivious of her own purpose or of the pattern developing within her work. Says she: "It is not my intention to give a regular history of our residence in the bush, but merely to present to my readers such events as may serve to illustrate a life in the woods."[1] A modest intention indeed! All that she seemingly requires of herself is to make her experience real. Notice that she has freed herself from the requirements of a single thesis and from the demands of a single chronology.

As Mrs. Moodie recounts the years of 1836 and 37, her purpose shifts to "illustrate the necessity of a perfect and childlike reliance upon the mercies of God . . . " But after she has descended from her experience of the sublime and from theological speculation, she becomes wholly absorbed in the particulars of pioneer life; her book begins to read more and more like a handyman's guide, a how-to-make-do book. Her purpose now seems that of the seasoned guide who would show potential emigrants how to adapt to the bush. Thus dandelion roots substitute for coffee, and afford this advice to the potential emigrant: "To persons residing in the bush, and to whom tea and coffee are very expensive articles of luxury, the knowledge of this valuable property in a plant scattered so abundantly through the fields, would prove highly beneficial." Again, as the book approaches its close, in "The Walk to Dummer", the author seems to offer practical advice to the would-be colonist. As she describes the qualities required by the successful pioneer, she implies that even a gentleman can be a successful frontiersman:

> . . . if this book is regarded not as a work of amusement but one of practical experience, written for the benefit of others, it will not fail to convey some useful hints to those who have contemplated emigration to Canada, the best country in the world for the industrious and well-principled man who really comes out to work, and to better his condition by the labour of his hands; but a gulf of ruin to the vain and idle, who only set foot upon these shores to accelerate their ruin.

In the last chapter, however, after having asserted her own contentment in the bush ("I was contented to live and die in obscurity"), after having nostalgically described the pleasantness of their leavetaking, the cordial hospitality afforded them while on the road, the beauty and good humour of their ride itself — after all this, Mrs. Moodie suddenly ends the story and then reverts to the purpose expressed in her preface:

> To the poor, industrious working man it presents many advantages; to the poor gentleman, *none!* The former works hard, puts up with coarse, scanty fare, and submits, with good grace, to hardships that would kill a domesticated animal at home. . . .

In her last words the bush is named a "prison-house" and the life there simply one of "toil"and "suffering".

How is one to read such a contradictory work? Is it best simply to use *Roughing it in the Bush* as a historian might, i.e. by looking through Susanna Moodie's book on to the 1830's of Upper Canada or of the British empire? Is it best, if one is to look at the work itself, simply to touch and go, to point out Mrs. Moodie's ironic narrative voice and then slide away from the book by comparing this voice to Jane Austen's? Or is it best finally, simply to accept *Roughing it in the Bush* as a work roughly hewn, an anecdotal travelogue, a work in which experience is half digested, a work digressive and discontinuous, a work filled with vigorous, humorous but rather pointless character sketches?

To answer these questions, I will argue first that Mrs. Moodie's representation of nature does unify *Roughing it in the Bush*, and secondly that the design of the chapters emphasizes this representation of nature. Even here the book may appear confused: it is easy to construe Susanna Moodie carrying across the Atlantic romantic notions of nature which are inappropriate to her new setting. It becomes clear quickly, however, that her romantic ecstasies are not single-minded, or naive, at least in so far as Moodie-the-writer re-creates her earlier experience. In her first description of the serene and silent beauty of the shores of the St. Lawrence, it is obvious that the writer in retrospect has so framed the

scene that the reader must suspect ironic implication: picturesque beauty, one is led to believe, is not reality. Even before she describes the scene, her dour Scot sees the picturesque white houses in the distance as follows: "Weel, it beats a'! Can thae white clouts be a' houses? They look like claes hung out to drie!" And Mrs. Moodie herself wonders whether "familiarity with the scene has rendered the habitants indifferent to its astonishing beauty." Once the picture itself and her day dreams have been broken by the return of the ship's boat, the skeptical frame again is made apparent: the Captain warns that "many things look well at a distance which are bad enough when near." As the ship's party approaches Grosse Isle, the pastoral view of nature begins to dissipate: "It was four o'clock when we landed on the rocks, which the rays of an intensely scorching sun had rendered so hot that I could scarcely place my foot upon them." Moreover the unpleasant effect of the place upon emigrants is suddenly made clear:

> The people who covered the island appeared perfectly destitute of shame, or even a sense of common decency. Many were almost naked, still more but partially clothed. We turned in disgust from the revolting scene, but were unable to leave the spot until the captain had satisfied a noisy group of his people, who were demanding a supply of stores.

The spirit of the place becomes a disease: even Scots "who while on board ship had conducted themselves with the greatest propriety, and appeared the most quiet, orderly set of people in the world, no sooner set foot upon the island than they became infected by the same spirit of insubordination and misrule, and were just as insolent and noisy as the rest."

Again, as Mrs. Moodie describes Quebec, the same bursting of the romantic dream occurs. The "grandeur" and the "picture perfect" quality of the landscape, and the sense that this landscape is the work of a "Divine Originator" so affects her that she reports:

> my spirit fell prostrate before it, and I melted involuntarily into tears. Yes, regardless of the eager crowds around me, I leant upon the side of the vessel and cried like a child — not tears of sorrow, but a gush from the heart of pure and unalloyed delight. I heard not the many voices murmuring in my ears — I saw not the anxious beings that thronged our narrow deck — my soul at the moment was alone with God.

If this passage is not bathetic, the one following closely upon it is, as Mrs. Moodie chauvinistically prophesies that only a great nation could rise from such a great landscape. Then to make matters worse, after apparently coming back to herself,

she abruptly states: "But I have wandered away from my subject into the regions of thought and must again descend to common workaday realities." On this lower level, what follows is a satirical account of the vainglorious expectations of the working class immigrants. Moreover from the first hand accounts of those who have visited Quebec, Moodie suggests that man destroys the perfection of nature — a view not entirely contrary to the Wordsworthian or romantic notions which she has carried across the Atlantic.

> Towards night, most of the steerage passengers returned, greatly dissatisfied with their first visit to the city, which they declared to be a filthy hole, that looked a great deal better from the ship's side than it did from the shore. This I have often been told, is literally the case. Here, as elsewhere, man has marred the magnificent creation of his Maker.

In this passage and in her description of the cholera raging in Quebec, the cynical empiricism of the captain is confirmed: don't trust first appearances.

Romantic anticipation and disenchantment, high style and low, continue to alternate. But this anticipation and high style become a smaller and smaller part of the book. In part, anticipation is replaced by nostalgia for the idyllic British countryside: " . . . I had discoursed sweet words to the tinkling brook, and learned from the melody of the waters and music of natural sounds. In these beloved solitudes all the holy emotions which stir the human heart in its depths had been freely poured forth, and found a response in the harmonious voice of Nature, bearing aloft the choral song of earth to the throne of the Creator." Nature is remembered as the "indulgent mother, holding out her living arms to enfold to her bosom her erring but devoted child." By what seems a sheer effort of will, however, Mrs. Moodie turns from her lament for things past. Still avoiding the present, she prophesies a glorious future for Canada, the land now of her future, her children's future and the land of her children's graves. Typically, however, this chapter falls away from this "high style" to the ludicrous incongruities of Tom Wilson remembered, to the low reality of the crowded immigrant boat, and finally to the droll but foreboding grumbling of Tom Wilson, who has preceded the Moodies to the New World. Says Tom:

> I was tired and hungry, my face disfigured and blistered by the unremitting attentions of the black flies that rose in swarms from the river. I thought to get a private room to wash and dress in, but there is no such thing as privacy in this country. In the bush, all things are in common; you cannot even get a bed without having to share it with a companion. A bed on the floor in a public sleeping room! Think of that, a public sleeping room — men, women and children, only divided by a paltry

> curtain. Oh ye gods! think of the snoring, squalling, grumbling, puffing; think of the kicking, elbowing and crowding; the suffocating heat, the mosquitoes with their infernal buzzing — and you will form some idea of the misery I endured the first night of my arrival in the bush.

This alternation of the high and low may lead the reader to assert that Susanna Moodie's vision was contradictory, her style uneven. But as I have said, the low is usually implied in the high or else the low frames the high. Moreover, the high mimetic mode becomes a smaller and smaller part of the book as the story becomes more and more a catalogue of narrowly averted disasters and as the story implies that in Canada, at least, nature is a heartless tyrant who grinds down the fine edges of the British gentleman. The plot itself, (as it moves in circular fashion from British village, to the Lower St. Lawrence, to Lake Ontario, to the deep bush, and finally back to the Canadian counterpart of British civilization, the village) implies surely that the Canadian bush or Canadian nature is not suitable to the Moodie family.

On a smaller scale, the arrangement of chapters, especially the alternation of espisodic chapters and chapters of character sketch, again suggest a single significant pattern within *Roughing it in the Bush*: the character sketches may seem at first to have no function, beyond merely presenting interesting personalities, but these chapters act as watersheds between the flows of action, and more importantly they imply failure, if the Moodies stay in the bush. If one sees the book in this way, he finds five sections:

1. *Chapters I and II.* The Moodies travel up-river from Grosse Isle, to Quebec, to Montreal and to Upper Canada. The third chapter, "Tom Wilson", a character sketch, explains the causes for the Moodies' emigrating and foreshadows ominously the events to come.

2. *Chapters IV to X.* Mrs. Moodie describes their first settlement, the low life of the frontier American, and the evils of borrowing. Chapter X, "Brian the Still Hunter", is again a character sketch, a watershed chapter and a warning against the perils of the British gentleman's emigrating to Canada. Chapter XI, "The Charivari", does not fit neatly into my scheme because this section of the book does occasionally seem strictly anecdotal, especially where Mrs. Moodie angrily describes the charivari, a custom whereby newlyweds, ill-matched in age or race, are tormented by the young bucks of the neighbourhood. But the chapter does draw many loose ends together as she begins to generalize about the differences between British customs and Canadian customs. And as in the watershed chapter, "Tom Wilson", Mrs. Moodie fills in the background of the story: why they

emigrated, why she pined away in the new world, why servants brought to the new world became unruly, and why masters and servants must eat at separate tables.[2]

3. *Chapters XII to XVI.* The Moodies are now farming in the bush proper — clearing the trees and building their own log cabin. Mrs. Moodie's stance seems that of a wide-eyed Gulliver reporting upon an entirely new world; every particular seems a novelty and seems to demand a new digressive anecdote. Like later generations of Canadian school children, she writes what has become the cliché forest fire, a violent story in which the hero or heroine escapes certain death by sheer luck, the deus ex machina being a thunderstorm. Her account of the logging bee is boisterous and comical, especially her story of the capering Malichi Chroak, but her viewpoint remains consistently ladylike: she disapproves of drunken abandon and careless accident in the bees.

The series of loosely connected anecdotes is brought to an end by not one chapter but three. J. W. D. Moodie's sketch of Simpson in "The Ould Draghoon" fits into the overall pattern of the book as the "Ould Draghoon's" Crusoe-like isolation and ingenuity bode ill for the Moodies who are slowly approaching Simpson's primitive level of subsistence. The next chapter, XVIII, "Disappointed Hopes", is the watershed chapter of the whole book: the reader finds himself with one foot in the preceding flow of bush anecdotes and with the other foot in a muskeg of complaints. The damp summer's ruining their crops, Moodie's declining steam boat stock, the necessity of Susanna working at last in the fields — these sad events begin the chapter. Admittedly Mrs. Moodie shows herself as having grown as a result of these disappointments, especially as now she can sympathize genuinely with the lower class and she has acquired the lore of making-do — e.g., dandelion roots as coffee substitutes. But the catalogue of affliction continues: their bull is stolen; their hogs are vindictively driven by neighbours into the lake and drowned. But this affliction is surmounted apparently, as Mrs. Moodie's comic voice returns: she describes their more-than-Christian dog, Spot, who won't, even though necessity requires it, eat the flesh of his dead friend, Hector the hog. The chapter ends satirically as she describes the shy courtship of her two young servants.

Chapter XVX, "The Little Stumpy Man" is still part of the watershed and again an ominous character study. Malcolm, the little stumpy man, is a direct threat to Mrs. Moodie. He is depicted as surly, sly, selfish and unprincipled. With his smouldering anger he becomes virtually satanic. Her description of Malcolm, I, at least, find extremely sexual:

> He was a strange-looking creature; his features were tolerably regular; his complexion dark, with a good colour; his very broad and round head was covered with a perfect mass of close, black, curling hair, which, in growth, and texture, and hue, resembled the wiry, curly hide of a waterdog. His eyes and mouth were both well shaped, but gave, by their sinister expression, an odious and doubtful meaning to the whole of his physiognomy. The eyes were cold, insolent and cruel, and as green as the eyes of a cat. The mouth bespoke a sullen, determined and sneering disposition, as if it belonged to one brutally obstinate, one who could not by any gentle means be persuaded from his purpose.

Malcolm challenges Mrs. Moodie's rigid sense of propriety by suggesting that it is a hypocrisy that can be dispensed with. The issue of propriety or hypocrisy is raised here as a consequence of her objection to Malcolm's ungentlemanly behaviour toward the family maid. Replies Malcolm:

> Ah you are such a prude — so methodistical — you make no allowance for circumstances! Surely, in the woods we may dispense with the hypocritical, conventional forms of society, and speak and act as we please.

Certainly Malcolm is a threat to the Moodies as he attempts to foster discord between man and wife; and as he becomes a burden by refusing to leave or to share the work, he is also a threat to the family economy. This chapter then is an ominous prelude to the final movement of *Roughing it in the Bush.*

4. *Chapters XX to XXIII.* A series of narrowly averted catastrophes increasingly implies failure. The burning of their cabin roof, which could easily have caused the loss of all their possessions; the Rebellion of 1837, which could have meant death for J. W. D. Moodie but which brought unexpected money to the family; the hurricane which narrowly missed the cabin; the ten weeks of sickness and the loss of friends who move away — all these misfortunes imply near failure. Chapter XXIII, "The Walk to Dummer", does not really belong to this catalogue of narrowly averted disasters; nor is the chapter really a character sketch. But this short anecdote, in which Susanna Moodie embarks on a mission of mercy, and the short sketch of the destitute family which she is saving, imply surely that the Moodies themselves may soon come to the same dire straits. Though Moodie, unlike the absent head of this destitute family, is not a drunkard, he is a British gentleman living in the bush and therefore within the terms of this book, a potential failure.

5. *Chapters XXIV to XXV.* One might argue that *Roughing it in the Bush* is nicely rounded off, as in the last two chapters the circle of events is completed: the Moodies have left civilization, settled in the bush and now return to civiliza-

tion; through Mrs. Moodie's plea to the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir George Arthur, on behalf of her husband, he is offered the position of sheriff of District V — near Belleville. But the last two chapters move in an uneven fashion, beginning with elevated speculations about intuition and then shifting abruptly to the raw chunks of Mrs. Moodie's undigested experience of the bush. This first paragraph is in her high speculative style:

> The holy and mysterious nature of man is yet hidden from himself; he is still a stranger to the movements of that inner life, and knows little of its capabilities and powers. A purer religion, a higher standard of moral and intellectual training, may in time reveal all this. Man still remains a half-reclaimed savage; the leaven of Christianity is slowly and surely working its way, but it has not yet changed the whole lump, or transformed the deformed into the beauteous child of God. Oh, for that glorious day! It is coming. The dark clouds of humanity are already tinged with the golden radiance of the dawn, but the sun of righteousness has not yet arisen upon the world with healing on his wings: the light of truth still struggles in the womb of darkness, and man stumbles on to the fulfilment of his sublime and mysterious destiny.

The very next paragraph reads like the diary of an Ontario farmer totally absorbed in the particulars of his life:

> This spring I was not a little puzzled how to get in the crops. I still continued so weak that I was quite unable to assist in the field, and my good old Jenny was sorely troubled with inflamed feet, which required constant care. At this juncture, a neighbouring settler, who had recently come among us, offered to put in my small crop of peas, potatoes, and oats, in all not comprising more than eight acres, if I would lend him my oxen to log-up a large fallow of ten acres and put in his own crops. Trusting to his fair dealing, I consented to this arrangement; but he took advantage of my isolated position, and not only logged-up his fallow, but put in all his spring crops before he sowed an acre of mine. The oxen were worked down so low that they were almost unfit for use, and my crops were put in so late, and with such little care, that they all proved a failure. I should have felt this loss more severely had it happened in any previous year; but I had ceased to feel that deep interest in the affairs of the farm from a sort of conviction in my own mind that it would not long remain my home.

Perhaps this kind of unevenness is to be excused in travel or frontier literature, but as I have already suggested, the very last paragraph of the book follows illogically from the previous paragraphs. Mrs. Moodie warns the emigrant gentleman to avoid settling in the bush, yet just before this, she has been describing the beauty of the winter sleigh ride, the pleasant leavetaking from their neighbours,

and the warm hospitality of the innkeepers who shelter the Moodies on their trip to Belleville. Thus though the reader is perhaps prepared for the closing of a circular plot, he is startled at the sudden and contradictory warning which ends the book.

Recognizing the discontinuity within these last paragraphs, one should not forget the pattern that does integrate the book — the catalogue of narrowly averted disasters which increasingly imply failure for the Moodies if they do not leave the bush, and the cyclical plot (village, bush, village) which suggests that they cannot continue living in the bush. The book is also significantly tied together by those transitional chapters, those watershed chapters, which are comprised of character sketches. Each sketch is an ominous picture of the British gentleman who fails in the bush.

Tom Wilson may be seen merely as a humorous eccentric, but he really serves a larger purpose, for the impractical, absent-minded Tom, a caricature of the British gentleman, is totally incapable of coping with the bush. He fails, and his failure foreshadows Moodie's failure. This is obvious in Chapter II as Tom warns Moodie that he is even more liable to failure than Tom himself:

> As to our qualifications, Moodie, I think them pretty equal. I know you think otherwise, but I will explain. Let me see; what was I going to say? — ah, I have it! You go with the intention of clearing land, and working for yourself, and doing a great deal. I have tried that before in New South Wales, and I know that it won't answer. Gentlemen can't work like labourers, and if they could they won't — it is not in them, and that you will find out. You expect, by going to Canada, to make your fortune, or at least to secure a comfortable independence. I anticipate no such results; yet I mean to go partly out of a whim, partly to satisfy my curiosity whether it is a better country than South Wales; and lastly, in the hope of bettering my condition in a small way, which is at present so bad that it can scarcely be worse.

Even the Moodies' literary talents will make them "an object of mistrust and envy to those who cannot appreciate them, and will be a source of constant mortification and disappointment. . . ." Certainly the story bears out Tom Wilson's warning as the Moodies decline to failure and as their neighbours consider Mrs. Moodie a freak. In *Life in The Clearings*, she becomes "the one that writes."

At first reading, Brian the Still Hunter, may appear as no more than an interesting character, a Canadian counterpart of the American Natty Bumpo, the isolated gentleman of the woods who sees the woods as God's temple and who in his theological musings seems as much mystic as woodsman. But Mrs. Moodie's sketch of Brian is not a comforting one. How can one man be so violent and so

gentle? This seems to be the question she is asking. Moreover, in Ned's account of Brian's attempt at suicide, she makes the violence extremely gross:

> If I did not find him, upon my landing on the opposite shore, lying wallowing in his blood with his throat cut. 'Is that you, Brian?' says I, giving him a kick with my foot, to see if he was alive or dead. 'What upon earth tempted you to play me and F..... such a dirty, mean trick, as to go and stick yourself like a pig, bringing such a discredit upon the house? — and you so far from home and those who should nurse you!'
>
> I was so mad with him that (saving your presence, ma'am) I swore awfully, and called him names that would be ondacent to repeat here; but he only answered with groans and a horrid gurgling in his throat. 'It's a choking you are,' said I; 'but you shan't have your own way and die so easily either, if I can punish you by keeping you alive.' So I just turned him upon his stomach, with his head down the steep bank; but he still kept choking and growing black in the face.

The indignation exhibited in this grotesque account has its counterpart in the shame exhibited by Brian himself as he explains to Mrs. Moodie that his hunting is both madness itself and a compulsive attempt to purge himself of madness.

> 'Tis the excitement . . . it drowns thought, and I love to be alone. I am sorry for the creatures, too, for they are free and happy; yet I am led by an instinct I cannot restrain to kill them. Sometimes the sight of their dying agonies recalls painful feelings, and then I lay aside the gun, and do not hunt for days. But 'tis fine to be alone with God in the great woods — to watch the sunbeams stealing through the thick branches, the blue sky breaking in upon you in patches, and to know that all is bright and shiny above you, in spite of the gloom that surrounds you.

In this paragraph it is evident that Brian's hunting and his individualistic nature worship serve the same root purpose, i.e. to purge him of intolerable gloom. On the same page, hunting also becomes a way of purging his sense of degradation, because he has sunk so low in the bush and because of his earlier attempt at suicide. Thus hunting becomes "the stimulant which he lost when he renounced the cursed whiskey bottle." In his eccentricity, Brian is a mad version of the British gentleman who has gone native, who has been swallowed up by the bush, while somehow retaining the courtesy of a gentleman. His madness surely is an extension of Tom Wilson's eccentricity, and his failure a foreshadowing of the Moodies' possible end.

Simpson, the Ould Draghoon, can hardly be called the British gentleman, but he is the British soldier "Crusoefied" by the bush. As Simpson ingeniously "makes do", as he ingeniously employs wood and leather for all his domestic and farm-

ing purposes, as he ingeniously employs one shoe, alternating it from foot to foot to save wear and tear, Mr. Moodie is obviously presenting a humorous caricature, one which seems based upon the isolated, afflicted and ingenious Robinson Crusoe. But there is more than humour here, for as J. W. D. Moodie muses upon the wisdom of Simpson's resigning himself to fate, his thoughts imply surely the possibility of himself and his family being reduced to Simpson's marginal subsistence:

> A certain degree of dissatisfaction with our present circumstances is necessary to stimulate us to exertion, and thus to enable us to secure future comfort; but where the delusive prospect of future happiness is too remote for any reasonable hope of ultimate attainment, then, surely it is true wisdom to make the most of the present and to cultivate a spirit of happy contentment with the lot assigned to us by providence.

Thus, despite the unevenness of Susanna Moodie's style, her contradictory set of purposes, and the anecdotal fragmentation of her story, a basic pattern unfolds in *Roughing it in the Bush*. The movement is from romantic anticipation to disillusionment, from nature as beautiful and benevolent to nature as a dangerous taskmaster. The story moves from her experience of the sublime to her catalogue of near disasters. What remains constant is Mrs. Moodie's viewpoint, an ironic and skeptical retrospection, which from the first pages brings into question the heady optimism of the emigrant. The character sketches are constant too as they imply that the British gentleman must fail in the bush. Susanna Moodie's basic fable warns "Beware!"

FOOTNOTES

[1] Susanna Moodie, *Roughing it in the Bush* or *Forest Life in Canada* (Toronto, 1923), p. 295. This edition is more accessible than the original London edition of 1852 and more complete than the New York edition of 1852 or the Toronto edition of 1966. Minor variations in spelling will be found. The chapter entitled "The Magic Spell" in the original edition becomes "Adieu to the Woods". Two chapters are dropped. See below.

[2] In the original edition, "The Charivari" is followed by "The Village Hotel" and "The Land Jobber", both chapters written by Mr. Moodie. Here he continues his wife's drawing of loose ends together and continues explaining the basic difference between life in the Old Country and the New. He explains more fully than his forbearing wife why he made such poor investments in land and in steam boat stock. More importantly, he generalizes further than she and explains why the colonist possesses more energy and will than the European:

> The knowledge of the causes which promote the rapid settlement of a new country, and of those in general which lead to the improvement of the physical condition of mankind, may be compared to the knowledge of a language. The inhabitant of a civilized and long-settled country may speak and write his own language with the greatest purity; but very few ever reflect on the amount of thought, metaphor, and ingenuity which has been expended by their less civilized ancestors in bringing that language to perfection. The bar-

barian first feels the disadvantage of a limited means of communicating his ideas, and with great labour and ingenuity devises the means, from time to time, to remedy the imperfections of his language. He is compelled to analyse and study it in its first elements, and to augment the modes of expression in order to keep pace with the increasing number of his wants and ideas.

A colony bears the same relation to an old-settled country that a grammar does to a language. In a colony, society is seen in its first elements, the country itself is in its rudest and simplest form. The colonist knows them in this primitive state, and watches their progress step by step. In this manner he acquires an intimate knowledge of the philosophy of improvement, which is almost unattainable by an individual who has lived from his childhood in a highly-complex and artificial state of society, where everything around him was formed and arranged long before he came into the world; he sees the *effects*, the *causes* existed long before his time. His place in society — his portion of the wealth of the country — his prejudices — his religion itself, if he has any, are all more or less hereditary. He is in some measure a mere machine, or rather a part of one. He is a creature of education, rather than of original thought.

The colonist has to create — he has to draw on his own stock of ideas, and to rouse up all his latent energies to meet all his wants in his new position. Thus his thinking principle is strengthened, and he is more energetic.

For a similar discussion of the colonist's energy and ambition, see George Grant's "In Defense of North America", *Technology and Empire*, Toronto, 1969.

SUSANNA MOODIE AND THE ENGLISH SKETCH

Carl Ballstadt

SUSANNA MOODIE'S *Roughing It in the Bush* has long been recognized as a significant and valuable account of pioneer life in Upper Canada in the mid-nineteenth century. From among a host of journals, diaries, and travelogues, it is surely safe to say, her book is the one most often quoted when the historian, literary or social, needs commentary on backwoods people, frontier living conditions, or the difficulty of adjustment experienced by such upper middle-class immigrants as Mrs. Moodie and her husband.

The reasons for the pre-eminence of *Roughing It in the Bush* have also long been recognized. Mrs. Moodie's lively and humorous style, the vividness and dramatic quality of her characterization, the strength and good humour of her own personality as she encountered people and events have contributed to make her book a very readable one. For these reasons it enjoys a prominent position in any survey of our literary history, and, indeed, it has become a "touchstone" of our literary development. W. H. Magee, for example, uses *Roughing It in the Bush* as the prototype of local colour fiction against which to measure the degree of success of later Canadian local colourists.[1] More recently, Carl F. Klinck observes that Mrs. Moodie's book represents a significant advance in the development of our literature from "statistical accounts and running narratives" toward novels and romances of pioneer experience.[2] Professor Klinck, in noting the fictive aspects of Mrs. Moodie's writing, sees it as part of an inevitable, indigenous development of Canadian writing, even though, in Mrs. Moodie's case, that development was strongly conditioned by her practice as a writer of children's stories before she came to Canada, and as the author of serialized fiction with English settings for the *Literary Garland* of Montreal.

Except for passing reference, Susanna Moodie's literary practice and acquaintanceships in England have not been considered in relationship to the form and techniques of her most successful book. As a member of a literary family which drew some attention to itself amongst minor English literary circles, Susanna Strickland sought and established literary friendships, and as a writer she followed an established pattern which, even had she remained in England, would very probably have led her to produce a book similar in many respects to *Roughing It in the Bush*. At the very least, however, when Susanna emigrated to Canada, she brought with her an awareness of models for a book of sketches about a region and its people.

Susanna's early career involved three kinds of writing, the first of which was literature for children. The writing of children's books certainly gave her practice in the description of characters, in the writing of dialogue, and in the use of the rhetoric proper to religious, moral, and didactic tales, a rhetoric which she was never willing to abandon. But the children's stories were simply the first stage in a pattern followed by many young women of the early nineteeth century who tried to forge literary careers for themselves. They progressed to poems and stories for the elegant annuals and gift books, and then, perhaps, to longer forms such as romances or biographies. Such was the pattern of the careers of Mrs. S. C. Hall, or Mary Howitt,[3] or Susanna's own sisters, Eliza and Agnes, who distinguished themselves in the 1840's as the biographers of the Queens of England. It was virtually inevitable, therefore, that Susanna should proceed to contribute sentimental and religious poems to the annuals and gift books, and that these poems should be collected and brought out by subscription as *Enthusiasm and Other Poems* (1831). Her sister Agnes had done much the same before her.[4]

It is, however, another phase of Susanna Strickland's career which is most pertinent to *Roughing It in the Bush*. During the years 1827-1829, Susanna Strickland contributed a series of prose sketches to a London periodical for ladies entitled *La Belle Assemblée* which was edited by a Suffolk native and friend of the Strickland family, Thomas Harral. The series, "Sketches from the Country", consists of five pieces: "The Witch of East Cliff", "The Two Fishermen", "Naomi", "The Dead Man's Grave", and "Old Hannah, or, the Charm".[5] The first four involve Suffolk legends told to the author by elderly natives of the region. Unfortunately, they are marred by an excessively metaphorical style and are without restraint on sentiment. Only in the introduction does the author exercise economy and limit her pen to what she really knows. The fifth sketch is Susanna's personal recollection of a maid-servant at Reydon Hall, the Strickland

home in Suffolk, near Southwold. It reflects warmth and good humour, and, perhaps because it is personal, is characterized by a greater directness and simplicity of style than the preceding sketches.

THE IMPORTANCE of this series of sketches is that it represents Susanna's early attempt to emulate the writing of Mary Russell Mitford and to do for Suffolk what Miss Mitford did so prolifically and so well for Berkshire. Miss Mitford in turn was an admirer of Washington Irving's *Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1818), and, although she was also inspired by her own "hearty love of her subject",[6] shortly after the publication of Irving's book she began contributing country sketches to the *New Monthly Magazine* and to annuals and gift books. In 1824 the first volume of a five volume series, *Our Village; Sketches of Rural Character and Scenery* (1824-1837), was published in London. Her first series was followed by *Belford Regis; or Sketches of a Country Town* (3 vols., 1835).

Susanna Strickland was a reader of the annuals and of the *New Monthly Magazine*, a journal to which her sister Agnes also contributed in 1824 and 1825. Having read and admired Mitford's sketches in these sources, she began to correspond with her in 1829, first addressing a poetic tribute to the celebrated Mitford in June of that year. Miss Mitford responded with a letter in July, 1829, and there followed an exchange of letters over the course of a year.

The published letters of Susanna to Miss Mitford clearly establish her admiration of Mitford's work:

> I had always ranked Miss Mitford as one of the first of our female writers, and though my knowledge of your writings was entirely confined to the sketches in the annuals, and to some extracts from the 'Foscari', these were sufficient to make me feel the deepest interest in your name, and even to rejoice in the success that ever attended the publication of your works.[7]

The letter in which this statement of admiration appears also contains Susanna's wish that she could visit Miss Mitford in London, as well as an invitation for the latter to visit the Strickland home in Suffolk where she would find "such sweet woodland lanes as you so inimitably describe."

Succeeding letters from Susanna to Miss Mitford include comments on her family and their literary pursuits; Susanna's own temptation to emigrate to Canada because of the attractive accounts which her brother, Samuel, had sent home; a visit to London during which she resided with her "dear adopted father",

Thomas Pringle;[8] and characters and customs described in Mitford's sketches. The recurring references to these sketches and the occasional tributes to Miss Mitford's skills make it very clear, I think, that Susanna's admiration was sufficient to lead her to emulate Mitford's subjects and techniques.

Such emulation is indicated in the titles and contents of Susanna's country sketches. In the *Our Village* sketches, Miss Mitford was wont to include portraits of rural characters, accounts of country walks, and tributes to rural institutions. A few titles from her first volume give a reasonable indication of the kind of contents: "Walks in the Country: the First Primrose", "Tom Cordery", "A Village Beau", "A Great Farm House". They usually begin with a general passage of reflection or description which eases the reader into a particular topic or event, or some portion of an individual's history, including his eccentricities, dress, occupation, and perhaps some crisis in which he has been involved. The style is familiar and direct, exhibiting a fine attention to detail; the tone is delicate and quiet. They are sketches of ordinary life and the emphasis is upon the colour and charm of rural living. The introduction to "Hannah Bint" is a good example of her loving attention to nature, as a prelude to the character and situation of a country friend:

> The Shaw, leading to Hannah Bint's habitation, is, as I perhaps have said before, a very pretty mixture of wood and coppice; that is to say, a track of thirty or forty acres covered with fine growing timber — ash, and oak, and elm — very regularly planted; and interspersed here and there with large patches of underwood, hazel, maple, birch, holly, and hawthorn, woven into almost impenetrable thickets by long wreaths of the bramble, the briony, and the briar-rose, or by the pliant and twisting garlands of the wild honey-suckle. In other parts, the Shaw is quite clear of its bosky undergrowth, and clothed only with large beds of feathery fern, or carpets of flowers, primroses, orchises, cowslips, ground-ivy, crane's-bill, cotton-grass, Solomon's seal, and forget-me-not, crowded together with a profusion and brilliancy of colour such as I have rarely seen equalled even in a garden. Here the wild hyacinth really enamels the ground with its fresh and lovely purple.... The variety is much greater than I have enumerated; for the ground is so unequal, now swelling in gentle ascents, now dimpling into dells and hollows, and the soil so different in different parts, that the sylvan flora is unusually extensive and complete.

The same kind of introduction is employed by Susanna in her country scenes, particularly in "Old Hannah" and "The Dead Man's Grave." The latter is characterized by the similar attention to the particulars of a locale related to a specific history or event:

> Should any of the readers of La Belle Assemblée wish to become better acquainted with the spot known by the designation of The Dead Man's Grave, they may find it at the end of a long narrow lane, in the well-known village of Reydon, where four cross country roads terminate, in the entrance to Goose Green, a piece of common so called from the number of geese which are bred upon it. Each of these roads forms a pleasant summer's walk, shaded from the heat of the sun by tall hawthorn hedges full of fine old trees. The grave rises to a considerable height in the centre of a pretty waste, of a triangular form, which attracts the notice of the traveller from each of its approaches. Generally, it is covered with a soft mantle of verdure, rivaling the emerald in brightness. The ground about it is thickly studded with broom and stunted blackthorn bushes, seldom rising to the height of four feet above the turf, and affording, with their low branches, a shelter for the violets that open their deep blue eyes beneath, and grows in profusion around the grave, while the more aspiring primrose rears her pale star-like crest above the mossy mound, and encircles it with a diadem of living gems.[10]

In the introductions to four of her sketches and throughout her reminiscence of Old Hannah, Susanna Strickland's series reminds one of Mitford's attention to a region and its people; it is local colour fiction.

It seems very likely, then, that when Susanna Moodie decided to write of her Canadian experiences near Cobourg and Peterborough, she would have thought of Miss Mitford's books on rural life and scenery. A connection seems indicated not only by her early interest in *Our Village*, but by the fact that parts of *Roughing It in the Bush* were first published as a series of "Canadian Sketches" in the *Literary Garland*.[11] That series of six sketches includes a country walk, a backwoods custom, and portraits of eccentric or peculiar characters, all categories used by Mary Mitford, and all assuming an important place in *Roughing It in the Bush* when it was published in 1852. For the British reader of the mid-nineteenth century, large sections of "Uncle Joe and his Family", "Brian the Still Hunter", "The Charivari", "The Wilderness and Our Indian Friends", and "The Walk to Dummer" would satisfy an appetite for impressions of the peculiarities of custom and character in British North America.

Of course, *Roughing It* was conditioned by other important factors and, therefore, has different components and tones than *Our Village*. Mrs. Moodie had more functions than one to fulfil in writing her book. She wished to convey information to prospective immigrants, to tell her personal story of fortunes and misfortunes, and to create impressions and descriptions. She is, therefore, the essayist as well as the story-teller, and *Roughing It* is both a didactic book, an autobiography, and a sketch-book of pioneer life.

In *Our Village* the author's personality as a unifying factor is much less important. Although the sketches which are entirely devoted to seasonal country walks express Mitford's personal delight in nature, she is generally objective and does not obtrude with her personal fortunes.

Differences in the tone and flavour of the two books are largely due to the landscape which each writer focuses on. While Miss Mitford's sketches take on the gentle and fertile character of the Berkshire countryside, Mrs. Moodie's reflect the larger dimensions of the Canadian scene and the sense of challenge which the bold extremes of Canadian climate and landscape demanded.

An interesting coincidence may serve to conclude and to support the suggestion that *Roughing It in the Bush* has connections with *Our Village*. In 1840, a book very similar to Mrs. Moodie's, *A New Home — Who'll Follow?*, was published in Boston. Its author, Caroline Kirkland, was a refined New England lady who settled with her husband in Michigan in the 1830's. Many of her attitudes and responses to the wilderness and its inhabitants are similar to Mrs. Moodie's, as are many of her disappointments. Although her prose is more pretentious and sentimental than Susanna's, her book progresses by sketches of custom, character, and anecdote, and many of her topics are inevitably the same as those of *Roughing It*. But Mrs. Kirkland also serves to indicate the extent of Miss Mitford's influence:

> If Miss Mitford, who has given us such charming glimpses of Aberleigh . . . had by some happy chance been translated to Michigan, what would she not have made of such materials as Tinkerville, Montacute, and Turnip?[12]

Very probably Miss Mitford would have made much the same of Caroline Kirkland's backwoods towns as she herself did, or as Mrs. Moodie did of her Cobourg and Peterborough environs.

FOOTNOTES

[1] "Local Colour in Canadian Fiction". *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 28 (Jan. 1959), 176-189.

[2] Introduction, *Roughing It in the Bush*, New Canadian Library edition, 1962.

[3] Mary Howitt was the author of *Sketches of Natural History*, for children, and she later produced *Biographical Sketches of the Queens of Great Britain* (1851) in the wake of the success of the Strickland sisters, Agnes and Eliza. Mrs. Samuel Hall, having begun as an author of children's stories followed Mitford's successes with *Sketches of Irish Character* (1829) and *Lights and Shadows of Irish Life* (1838).

[4] Agnes Strickland was the author of several volumes of verse, including *Worcester Field; or, The Cavalier* (1826) in the manner of Sir Walter Scott. She also pro-

duced *Old Friends and New Acquaintances* (1860 and 1861), two series of Suffolk sketches which it might have been Susanna's lot to write had she remained in England.

[5] *La Belle Assemblée*, n.s. VI (1827) 15-19, 109-114, 247-251; n.s. VII (1828), 51-55; n.s. IX (1829), 21-24.

[6] Preface to *Our Village*, vol. I (London, 1824).

[7] The poetic tribute and the letters of Susanna Strickland to Mary Russell Mitford are in *The Friendships of Mary Russell Mitford as Recorded in Letters from Her Literary Correspondents*, edited by The Reverend A. G. L'Estrange, 2 vols. (London, 1882), vol. I, pp. 196-198, 204-208, 212-213, 222-223. The tribute is dated June 2, 1829 and the last letter August 12, 1830. The quotation is from the first letter, July 31, 1829.

[8] Thomas Pringle was another friend of the Strickland family, in fact, the person who carried the correspondence from Susanna to Mitford. Pringle was probably the man who introduced Susanna to John Dunbar Moodie. Both men had been in South Africa. At the time of Susanna's visit to London, Pringle was secretary to the Anti-Slavery Society. He was the author of *African Sketches* (1834) and *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* (1835).

[9] *Sketches of English life and Character* (London, The Weekend Library, 1928), pp. 152-3.

[10] *La Belle Assemblée*, n.s. VII (1828), 51-55.

[11] The sketches, "Old Woodruff and his Three Wives", "The Walk to Dummer", "Our Borrowing", "Tom Wilson's Emigration", "Uncle Joe and his Family", and "Brian, the Still Hunter", appeared in the *Literary Garland*, n.s. V (1847).

[12] *A New Home*, p. 11.

CLASSICAL CANADIAN POETRY AND THE PUBLIC MUSE

Norman Newton

EVERYBODY SEEMS TO BELIEVE that classical Canadian poetry is mediocre; the question is not whether, but why. Various explanations have been advanced. At times this mediocrity has even been treated as its chief quality, an expression of the national virtues of sobriety and reasonableness. In this article, I propose to look into one aspect of the mediocrity of classical Canadian poetry, and to offer some explanations of my own, in the hope of stimulating discussion.

"Mediocre" means "of middling quality", not "bad". There is no doubt that some classical Canadian poetry is quite bad. But what we have, it seems, is a poetic landscape mediocre in the best sense, possessing few outstanding features, but rich in pleasant fields and wooded hills. Indeed, when one considers English and French poetry together, one discovers a body of work which is surprisingly solid for a country with so short a literary history and, until recently, so small a population. It compares very favourably with that produced over the same period of time by countries with much older literary traditions — nineteenth-century Spain, for example. Nevertheless, it is, even if in the best sense of the word, mediocre. One may apply to the Canadian poetic tradition the judgment Lampman applied, with great good sense, to himself: "There never was any great poet, but simply a rather superior minor one who sometimes hit upon a thing which comes uncommonly near to being very excellent."

Canadian poetry is also distinctive. Nothing better indicates a national identity than the fact that our traditional French and English poets, in spite of mutual ignorance, had a great deal in common. In this, they no doubt reflected a certain similarity between the two cultures. As John Porter recently pointed out in an

article in *Cultural Affairs*, "English and French Canadians are more alike in their conservatism, traditionalism, religiosity, authoritarianism, and elitist values than the spokesmen of either group are prepared to admit." The poetry, for its part, reflects a conservatism closer to that of pre-industrial society than to the capitalist conservatism of the United States: a very strong sense of the ties of orthodox Christianity even when these ties were rebelled against, a sense of the heroic, a strong attachment to place (usually expressing itself as an idealisation of the village and rural life of the poet's boyhood), a fondness for ornate and colourful language, a tendency to personify nature which went beyond the poetic conventions of the age and approached mythogenesis — and, on the negative side, a lack of wit (Canadian wit tended, and tends, to be annoyingly simple-minded), an inability to sustain intellectual argument on a high level of subtlety, and a lack of that daring which makes the poet an inventor as well as a singer and craftsman. Clearly these positive and negative elements were related to each other.

Simple definitions are often false ones, and I am not oblivious of nuance when I say that traditional Canadian poetry in both English and French seems to me very conservative even in the political sense, and that this quality is closely bound up with the Canadian character as it expressed itself in our formative years. The two most important factors in the history of this country have been the English-Canadian rejection of the American Revolution and the French-Canadian rejection of the French Revolution, rejections which were related even as these two revolutions were. Conservatism as such does not make for mediocrity; but a particular kind of conservatism does, and this particular kind of conservatism was strong in nineteenth-century Canada. It was most evident in what one might call "public poetry" — hence my title. It is in public poetry that the poet most clearly expresses what he conceives to be his role in society. My contention is that the peculiar qualities of nineteenth-century Canadian poetry, both the good and the bad ones, arose out of the poetic community's conception of its own role. This in fact was a misconception, but one which developed very naturally out of the confusions of the age itself, in which the aristocratic idea of art was dying.

I first became fully aware of this when I was working on a radio production of Heavysege's *Count Filippo*. There has always been a clash of opinions about the value of Heavysege's work. Smith has compared his Malzah to Ariel or Caliban, and has referred to *Count Filippo* as "brilliantly written and well-constructed . . . in the manner of Beaumont and Fletcher". Others have come to the conclusion that he is very nearly the worst poet who has ever lived.

I have, at times, almost inclined to the latter opinion. There is no doubt that Heavysege could write lines of incomparable grotesqueness. But his sonnets are good; and when, many years ago, I came across a copy of *Count Filippo* in the Toronto Public Library, my first impression was that it is a curious mixture of utter banality and originality, with some moments of great power and others of unexpected subtlety. Certainly, it seemed no mere "closet drama", but a truly imaginative if ludicrously uneven poetic drama, which I felt then would probably work in performance.

Some two years ago I had a chance to look at it again. Since I was producing radio drama for the C.B.C., I decided to commission a radio version from Peter Haworth. Mr. Haworth prepared a sensitive and intelligent adaptation, and the play was presented on a programme called *Midweek Theatre*. As it turned out, the play did indeed "work", in spite of great flaws which no editing could eliminate.

This makes *Count Filippo* something of a rarity. As everybody knows, Victorian dramatic literature is a kind of elephants' graveyard, into which hundreds of gigantic verse dramas have stumbled to die. Perhaps a better analogy would be one of those Siberian pits filled with the frozen corpses of mammoths, since we are dealing with extinct species. But here was a live mammoth. How could Heavysege, writing a pseudo-Jacobean drama as so many of his contemporaries had done, have produced one which worked?

The answer, I concluded, was to be found in the archaic nature of Heavysege's mind. He *was*, in a sense, a Jacobean, and his archaism of language was not merely a literary device, but an expression of his inner nature. Patmore, another archaic mind whose language surfaces are also sometimes abortive, was aware of this, as his often quoted review of *Saul* clearly shows.

> Shakespeare he also knows far better than most men know him; for he has discerned and adopted his method as no other dramatist has done. He takes not virtue and morality, and their opposites *generally*, as other dramatists do, but these under the single aspect of their dependence upon *spiritual influences*, of whatever kind: the direct influence of the Divine Spirit; and the influence of good spirits; and of the principalities and powers of darkness; and even the mysterious influences of music, the weather, etc., upon the moral state of the soul. Like most of Shakespeare's plays, this drama has the appearance of being strangely chaotic. There are hundreds of passages for the existence of which we cannot account until the moral clew is found, and it would never be found by a careless and unreflecting reader; yet the work is exceedingly artistic.

If one does not take "exceedingly artistic" to mean that *Saul* is constructed with sophistication and finesse, the above is certainly true. Heavysege was an emotional contemporary of Shakespeare. Canada has been a refuge for folk and archaic elements which have died in Europe. Folklorists have discovered medieval ballads and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century court songs magically preserved, though in an altered and countrified form, in the folk-music of Quebec; they have discovered Elizabethan slang in the dialect of Newfoundland; the tradition of classical bagpipe playing, "pibroch", survived in the Maritimes long after the Scots themselves had lost interest in it. In Heavysege we have something more remarkable: a Jacobean sensibility transplanted whole, though with some damage in transit, into the nineteenth century.

Perhaps the circumstances of his life help to explain the anomaly. He was a Yorkshireman, and a member of the artisan class, a cabinet-maker and carpenter. His parents were strict in their religious views, and rigidly moralistic. He was largely self-educated, and his reading was deep but very narrow; he seems to have found pleasure mainly in the Bible and Shakespeare. He met few writers of even moderate distinction, and his intellectual and artistic life was largely a solitary one.

In other words, Heavysege was born into a provincial and hence archaic sector of English society. When he was a child, his parents determinedly kept him "unspotted from the world". He escaped the conformity-inducing influences of formal education, and entered young into a trade which had maintained longer than many others the old handicraft traditions. True, he did leave provincial Huddersfield, but he did so only to go to even more provincial Montreal, ruled by an elite consisting of merchants, true-blue English Tories, descendants of French seigneurs, and a few annexationists.

Saul, which really should be reprinted, is indeed an astonishing work, a work that seems, when one enters into it without reservation, to display something like genius. Nevertheless, there is still a sense in which *Saul* is a failure. Why should this be, when there is so much talent apparent in it? I believe the reason is that Heavysege did not realize how deeply inimical his society was to the poetic spirit. His gigantic chronicle play was completely irrelevant, so far as the life of his time was concerned. We know that he was saddened by lack of recognition; we also know that he bore the uncertainty and drudgery of his daily life with Christian patience, but not without the very natural hope that he would be "discovered". Most of the criticism he received from Canadians — whether it was intended well or ill — did him more harm than good. *Jephtha's Daughter*,

which, unlike his other works, he carefully revised along lines suggested by well-meaning friends whose taste represented the norm of his time and place, is dull and conventional; and here we find another anomaly, since it is the most polished and self-consistent of his productions. Apparently Heavysege's genius and his lack of taste were inseparably related; he could write "correctly", but only by writing dully.

LET US REVERT, after what must seem a long digression, to our main theme. Do we not find, in many classical Canadian poets, the same combination of talent and miscalculation? Is not this unfortunate combination most apparent in their public poems? This phenomenon is precisely due, I believe, to the fact that their poetic talents could only operate when they wrote in a state of illusion — an illusion, I have suggested, as to their social role. They could still deceive themselves, though not consistently, into the belief that their society valued their contribution to the spiritual life of the age, that they were as poets a functional part of the social body. Society was willing to aid them, though half-contemptuously, in this self-deception, and politely applauded the odes, political sonnets, and lyrics in which they expounded what they conceived to be the national ethos. From time to time the poets became aware of their true position, that of outsiders who were tolerated rather than loved or respected, and their tendency was then to retreat into a defensive subjectivity. Even in their most confident moments, however, the doubt as to their role was present, though hidden. The result was an uncertainty of intonation in the poetic voice, which might manifest itself as bluster, over-insistence on the obvious, vulgar and fumbling attempts to capture the sentimental popular imagination, and other features of bad style.

Thus a kind of universal schizophrenia is apparent. There is the real Charles Sangster, a playful, minor poet of springtime, with a pleasant taste for country girls. Then there is the Sangster who wrote *Brock*, with its marvellously comic closing lines —

> Briareus-limbed, they sweep along,
> The Typhons of the time.

The thought of Brock as Typhon is an image of horror worthy of Blake; but Sangster did not mean it that way.

There is Isabella Crawford, who could have written fine personal lyrics with a

gnomic force, but chose to waste her talents writing about men with axes, whom she did not understand. There is Charles Mair, an autumnal sensibility, a quiet lazy dreamer after the manner of James Thomson, who trickled his gentle talent away into the vast dusty mould of a chronicle drama about Tecumseh. There is Sir Charles G. D. Roberts, who should have written nothing but regional pastorals, but tried to write hymns of empire. Bliss Carman ruined his talent, as Desmond Pacey has pointed out, trying to be the spokesman of a crudely vigorous optimism which was alien to his sensuous, feminine and melancholy temperament. In Archibald Lampman and D. C. Scott, who came nearest to realizing themselves in their work, there is often an annoying split between impulse and diction.

Here we come a bit closer to our quarry, which is an elusive one, and must be surrounded: it cannot be dispatched cleanly and at first sight. As has been implied, every time our classical poets tried to fulfil a social function, to perform their public "use" as poets, which is to say, every time they tried to write a patriotic poem, a historical epic, or a serious theatrical work, the result was in some way embarrassing. On the other hand, when they described a personal experience, or responded to a landscape they loved, the result was often beautiful. Clearly, unlike the contemporary poet, they did feel they had a use, and so did their society. Poets were still expected to write ceremonial odes for the visits or noble or royal persons, for example, and were expected to give utterance to the great religious and political truths. Society did indeed demand poetry, and it demanded poetry on the same themes that poets of earlier ages had treated. For some reason, though, it seemed to demand bad poetry.

It is a curious fact that in nineteenth-century Canada literature became connected with the civil service in a way it has never been, one is inclined to think, in any other country outside Tsarist Russia. Sangster, Mair, Lampman, W. W. Campbell, D. C. Scott and Tom MacInnes were all civil servants, and Sir Charles G. D. Roberts was one of the official historians of the First World War. There was also a strong connection with the clergy: Campbell was a clergyman before he entered the Civil Service, F. G. Scott was an Anglican priest, and Roberts, D. C. Scott and Lampman were the sons of clergymen. Most of the other poets in the "canon" seem to have been involved in, or related to people involved in, high-level journalism, medicine or the law. They were an elite group, obviously: they were to a very large extent dependent upon public institutions for their living, and most of them came from "good families" of the old-fashioned kind. There was little connection with the world of business.

A similar though not identical pattern may be discerned in the Quebec of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Pamphile Le May, Louis-Honoré Frechette, Gonsalve Desaulniers, Jean Charbonneau, Lionel Leveille and Paul Morin were lawyers, judges, or combined law with public service; William Chapman, Albert Ferland and Edouard Chauvin were civil servants with the federal or provincial governments; Nereé Beauchemin and Guy Delabaye were doctors; René Chopin was a notary. Most of the other poets of the period were journalists; some were priests or abbés.

Compare this situation with that in the United States, where, at least between the Civil War and the New Deal era, national and state governments ignored the arts on the whole. A few United States poets were civil servants; but most were employed by universities, or worked as journalists. On the other hand, there has been, in the United States, enlightened private patronage of a type very rare in Canada. Usually this patronage was offered, in the days before the great tax-exempt foundations, by members of an immigrant financial or capitalist elite, who patronised the arts in the manner of the European haute bourgeoisie. But they were much more interested in painting and music than in poetry. It is not surprising that nineteenth-century United States writers tended to be more "individualist" than their Canadian counterparts, and that they felt less identity with the aims of their governments. The great classics of United States literature are all seditious, as has been pointed out more than once, and United States poets who have consciously identified themselves with the political establishment, such as Archibald MacLeish, have found their poetic stock plummeting as a result. In Canada, one suspects, a MacLeish would have been "Dean of Canadian Poetry" several times over.

From the days of de Tocqueville on, visitors to or natives of the United States have been pointing out that it is a profoundly anti-poetic society. However, de Tocqueville, in his inspired and penetrating simplicity, appears to have come closest to the truth, namely, that United States society is anti-poetic because it is an anti-aristocratic and anti-monarchical, as such an archetypically capitalist society must inevitably be. The intellectual life of the United States after the Revolution and before the Civil War had, on its upper levels, elements of a refinement — though a thin, attenuated and provincial refinement — of essentially European and aristocratic or pseudo-aristocratic type, and the farmers and frontiersmen were producing a folk culture of real vigour. It is from such societies, when they mature, that poetry springs. But this society was not allowed to develop; it was cut down in the Civil War, and was finally obliterated by the rise of

industrial big business in the latter half of the nineteenth century. One of the profound and tragic beauties of Whitman's work is that he was glorifying a world which was disappearing, though he thought it the world of the future — the world of the farmer, the pioneer, the sailor, and the free, independent artisan. The America he heard singing was dying as it sang, and this gives his poems the heroic beauty of a great elegy, a beauty he could sense in the already half-mythical and archaic figure of Abraham Lincoln.

IN CANADA, THOUGH, the social effect of the Age of Business was delayed. Right through the Second World War we were still presenting an image of ourselves in our propaganda films as a nation of wheat-farmers, fishermen, sailors, trappers and dwellers in small country towns. French Canada, producing spokesmen like the Abbé Groulx, a clerical pamphleteer and historian who could have fitted very comfortably into the France of Charles X (I do not intend this to be taken as condemnatory of the Abbé) was even more archaic. Indeed, in the seigneurs, Canada had had a land-owning hereditary aristocracy up to 1854, and the habitants were not fully relieved of their "feudal" obligations until 1940. Our Governors-General, right up to the end of the Second World War, were English noblemen. Even our political radicalism — the agrarian socialism of the C.C.F. and the petty-bourgeois anti-capitalism of early Social Credit — had a piquantly old-fashioned quality.

Furthermore, many of the social ideals upheld by the "Establishment" up to the end of the Second World War were aristocratic ones. We were loyal to the monarch and to the land: Americans fought for Mom's apple pie, that symbol of happy consumption, but we fought for those waving fields of wheat. We considered ourselves (though mistakenly) a specifically Christian country, and thought it more important to be law-abiding than to be clever. Our propaganda media extolled the dignity of agricultural labour and idealised the simple homely virtues. Our official symbols, and the persons who embodied the ceremonial life of the state, were aristocratic in tone. Of all American states, only Canada could have produced such a figure as our late Governor-General, General Georges Vanier. In his nobility and his extraordinary public presence, he represented a type — and I mean this as a tribute to his memory — not found elsewhere outside historical films. He was a poetic figure. Our Houses of Parliament have on them carvings of all the animals and birds to be found in Canada. What could be more poetically archaic than that? One is reminded of the garden outside the

Temple of the Sun in Incaic Cuzco, which contained gold and silver images of all the birds and animals of the empire.

The following passage, from a sermon preached in Upper Canada in 1824, must be one of the last statements, from an "Establishment" source at any rate, of the doctrine of degree.

> One is formed to rule and another to obey. Subordination in the Moral World is manifest . . . The beauty and advantages of this arrangement are obvious and universally acknowledged . . . The various relations of individuals and societies require a mutual exchange of good offices . . . The Magistrate requires the aid of his people, the Master of his servant. They are all dependent upon one another . . . The lowest order enjoys its peculiar comforts and privileges, and contributes equally with the highest to the support and dignity of Society . . . All discontent and murmuring at the inferiority of our Station is [therefore] most unreasonable.

Such ideas were echoed again and again by the spokesmen of what has been called "The Family Compact", in their disputes with radicals and liberals.

In times long past, attitudes and ideas such as this gave birth to great buildings of state, cathedrals, epic poems and verse dramas. They did not in Canada, because the tradition was dying, almost dead. But if one can personify a tradition, it kept trying, even in its dying hours, to do what it had done all its life. It was this tradition which continued, with the automatism of the moribund, to produce cathedrals and buildings of state in the Gothic style, epic poems in the Roman style, and verse dramas in the Jacobean style. No poet of the United States could address his country as "O Child of Nations, giant-limbed", or refer to one of his national heroes as Sangster referred to Brock, as one who "in his lofty sphere sublime / Sits crowned above the common throng." The nearest they came to such classical personification and apotheosis was in the Revolutionary period, when some popular broadsheets and ballads spoke of Washington in terms suitable to the eighteenth-century military aristocrat, with his code of honour —

> Great Washington he led us on,
> Whose streaming flag, in storm or sun,
> Had never known disgrace.

We have now to examine why a tradition which was certainly a noble one, and which, since it answers certain needs that seem to be part of the intrinsic nature of man, is an inherently vital one, did not produce work of more value. The answer seems to be that we are dealing here with an official "Establishment" ideology which, while it was largely respected by the people of the country, did

not rise from their common life, and did not rest upon an economic and political base consistent with its aims.

Official Canada, aristocratic Canada, was by no means alien or exotic: it was as native as the world of the logger and the wheat-farmer. But the concessions made after the MacKenzie and Papineau rebellions, which stifled what was a developing indigenous French and English aristocracy and nipped Church Establishment in the bud, prevented it from establishing roots in the economic, political and social soil of the country. Had we been at that time an independent country, this quiet liberal-capitalist revolution would probably have produced a society similar to that of the United States, which we would then have joined. (Indeed, as is well known, the Rebellion Losses Bill of 1849 strengthened the annexationists' cause immensely.) Fortunately we were not independent at the time: the United States dared not intervene, for fear of war with Britain. What happened instead was that the aristocratic idea, deprived of its local roots, became more firmly attached to the metropolitan centre. Those who belonged to the elite, or aspired to enter it, cultivated modified English accents and entered their children in schools modelled after the English type. Sometimes, as is usually the case with those who pursue refinement and taste as canonical virtues rather than graces of everyday life, the result was somewhat artificial. Brian Moore, in the book he wrote on Canada for Time Inc., tells of a remark made by an English lord about Vincent Massey. "Fine chap, Vincent," he said, "but he does make one feel a bit of a savage."

Beneath the level of the official elite, there was developing an economic life very similar to that of the United States, though less sophisticated and less cruel. Effective power was in the hands of businessmen, and what is virtue to the aristocratic mind is to the business mind either folly or obscurantism. Because the United States was above all the Land of Business, Canadian businessmen tended to become "Americanised". Indeed, in our conflicts with the United States in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, many members of the mercantile community played a treasonable or near-treasonable role, though there is no doubt that they would have been fiercely and violently nationalistic if that had been the profitable stance.

Nevertheless, to them, the virtues inculcated by the official elite were matters of convenience only. The monarch was a kind of hereditary president or a means of preserving social stability, thus a mere convenience. Love of the land made sense only if agriculture were more profitable than other forms of economic activity; thus, those waving fields of wheat were merely sources of income, and

had no mystical beauty. Labour had no dignity, only a price. The law was to be respected only if it encouraged business growth; if it hampered the expansion of business, it was to be changed. Christianity, to steal a phrase from a man who understood capitalism well, was the opium of the people, and thus of value, but only if one did not insist on a Christian business ethic. As to art, it was a diversion or an intellectual consumer product. Thus the businessmen, who were and are the effective rulers of the country, had no use for odes, epics or verse dramas. The poets were serving an idea which was, in terms of the everyday life of the country, completely hollow.

From time to time this struck home. In his sonnet, *The Modern Politician*, Archibald Lampman indicates how close he came to understanding the situation.

> What manner of soul is his to whom high truth
> Is but the plaything of a feverish hour,
> A dangling ladder to the ghost of power?
> Gone are the grandeurs of the world's iron youth,
> When kings were mighty, being made with swords.
> Now comes the transit age, the age of brass,
> When clowns into the vacant empires pass,
> Blinding the multitude with specious words.
> To them faith, kinship, truth and verity,
> Man's sacred rights and very holiest thing,
> Are but the counters at a desperate play,
> Flippant and reckless what the end may be,
> So that they glitter, each his little day,
> The little mimic of a vanished king.

The thought in this sonnet is at once deeply traditional and savagely acute. But the diction is Victorian Synthetic, that grandiose and magniloquent substitute for true grandeur and magnificence which was as much a product of the "age of brass" as Lampman's politician himself. Lampman has adopted an aristocratic voice to express an aristocratic sentiment, but the voice of the Victorian aristocrat was that of a dog who is all bark and no bite, and is only waiting for the burglar to toss him a bone. I do not want to be misunderstood; Lampman is no hypocrite; he feels all he is saying; but his muddled idea both of his role and of his relationship to aristocratic ideals has led him into writing his poem in such a manner that it is almost rendered ineffectual.

Had the poets realized what was going on, they might have produced work of great value. One of the advantages possessed by French writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, was the fact that aristocratic and

capitalist-democratic ideas had been fighting openly, and on a high intellectual level, ever since the Revolution. Later socialism, the child of capitalism, had entered the battle. Thus, Claudel, Péguy and Bernanos knew they were being "reactionary". Writers in the United States, too, acquired a social consciousness; and it is interesting that this consciousness showed itself in its most refined form in New England and the Southern States, where the traditions of eighteenth-century British America had retained a vestigial life. James, Eliot and many Southern writers also knew they were being "reactionary", though in many cases they had to visit Europe to acquire an understanding of their role. Some French-Canadian writers also achieved this awareness.

In English Canada this did not happen, and the reason it did not happen, it seems to me, is that here the aristocratic tradition kept an appearance of vitality well into this century, just as it did in Britain. By a series of most astute compromises, British aristocracy and the monarchy had lasted through the revolutionary violence of the late eighteenth century, and the more subtle pressures of the nineteenth. But there is no doubt that one of these compromises was accommodation to the business ethic. It was the sort of thing that was never talked about when one was wearing one's ermine; but in the process man discovered a new kind of hypocrisy, a new combination of mean calculation with high and pompous speech. The aristocratic ideal of the Victorian elite was largely a matter of "keeping up appearances".

Now the essence of keeping up appearances is that the appearances must be entered into with just the right degree of irony and inner detachment. If one allows the pretended motives to become real ones, then one becomes an anomaly. An aristocrat may keep up the old house, and perform all his ceremonial functions. But if he begins to think like an aristocrat, he will begin to scorn the capitalist ethic. Thus, since the world is dominated by capitalism, he will cease to be effective. He will fail. If he has enough power or money to avoid failure, he will probably be attacked in the press as a spokesman for obscurantism, or an enemy of the people. Nor can he afford a spokesman (poets have usually been, in their public character, spokesmen for aristocratic ideals if not aristocratic practice) who gives his game away by setting up standards he cannot meet. Therefore he favours in literature a certain hollowness, pomposity and lack of reality which will correspond to his own nature. An aristocratic elite which has made this fatal compromise will tend to support an official idea of culture and morality which is at once empty, affected and pretentious. This was the character of Victorian art at its worst. In Britain, it was carried into our own century by the old *Times*, the

B.B.C. at its stuffiest, and certain aspects of the Anglican church. It is in this manner that avant truths become clichés.

THE HEROIC, EPIC, ARISTOCRATIC VIEW of Canada was just such a "truth", and it was made into a cliché in just the same way. For Canadian history *is* epic and heroic. Something of it comes through, for me, in Fréchette's *La Decouverte du Mississippi.* I am naive enough to be thrilled by the confidence of a stanza like:

> Jolliet! Jolliet! deux siècles de conquêtes,
> Deux siècles sans rivaux ont passé sur nos têtes,
> Depuis l'heure sublime où, de ta propre main,
> Tu jetas, d'un seul trait, sur la carte du monde
> Ces vastes régions, zone immense et féconde,
> Futur grenier du genre humain!

The same heroic quality is to be found in Cremazie's *Le Drapeau de Carillon*, D. C. Scott's Indian poems, and parts of Pratt's *Brébeuf and His Brethren*, which has moments of real nobility. I do not claim that any of these are "great poems". The heroic quality I speak of is a matter of temperament, not talent; it is flawed by obvious stupidities; and I put it down to a certain archaism in the Canadian temperament. There is nothing similar in the poetry of the United States. There is a hidden sadness and disillusion even in Whitman. Indeed, there is nothing quite the same in any poetry I have read, except perhaps in André Chènier's sketch for *Le Chant d'Alonzo*, which was to have been part of a projected epic, *L'Amérique*, and begins, "Salut, o belle nuit, étincelante et sombre . . . " Perhaps it is significant that Chènier never wrote the epic; perhaps it is also significant that this great poet, who had once thought himself a liberal revolutionary, discovered, at the very foot of the guillotine, that his sympathies were aristocratic.

Curiously enough, we have never understood the ideological basis of this heroic quality — a quality which, though I do not profess to be very sensitive to painting, I seem to find also in the paintings of the Group of Seven and Emily Carr. We have always thought of it as a response to the Canadian landscape, which is certainly very large. But this is almost to take a naive environmentalist view, and in any case, if the size of the landscape explained it, we would expect to find the same quality in the poetry of the United States.

I would say that the mediocrity of our classical public verse, at its dull average, is very closely linked to the virtues it has at its best, and that both its mediocrity and distinction are closely related to the archaic and anomalous quality of nine-

teenth and early twentieth century Canadian society, which was in many respects as "backward" a society as Ireland and Spain are today. To illustrate more clearly what I mean, I will quote some lines which indicate these two qualities, so closely related.

Sangster's *The Soldier of the Plough* begins thus:

> No maiden dream, nor fancy theme,
> Brown Labour's muse would sing;
> Her stately mien and russet sheen
> Demand a stronger wing.
> Long ages since, the sage, the prince,
> The man of lordly brow,
> All honour gave that army brave,
> The Soldiers of the Plough.
> Kind heaven speed the Plough!
> And bless the hands that guide it;
> God gives the seed —
> The bread we need,
> Man's labour must provide it.

This stanza is a real museum of anomalies. The first quatrain is a model of Victorian ineptitude, a crown of coal in which the phrase "fancy theme" is perhaps the sootiest gem. The line, "Long ages since, the sage, the prince," has, in its balancing of images of traditional wisdom and inherited power, a truly archaic ring, almost a folkish dignity; but it is followed immediately by "the man of lordly brow", which is a line suited to a poet of the Romantic Revival, such as Sir Walter Scott, looking back at the Middle Ages. "The Soldiers of the Plough" is the kind of image Victorian journalists loved to use when they were feeling sentimental about farmers. "Kind heaven speed the Plough; / And bless the hands that guide it" reminds one of *Hymns Ancient and Modern.* Yet the stanza ends with three lines ("God gives the seed . . . " etc.) which are absolutely mediaeval in feeling.

In other words, we have in this one stanza a poet whose mind is moving from a truly mediaeval, rather peasanty sensibility to a Victorian counterfeit of that sensibility. Obviously he does not know the difference; there is no irony or deliberate contrast here.

Or let us consider Frederick George Scott's *The Wayside Cross.*

> A wayside cross at set of day
> Unto my spirit thus did say —
>
> "O soul, my branching arms you see

Point four ways to infinity.

One points to infinite above,
To show the height of heavenly love.

Two point to infinite width, which shows
That heavenly love no limit knows.

One points to infinite beneath,
To show God's love is under death.

The four arms join, an emblem sweet
That in God's heart all loves will meet."

I thanked the cross as I turned away
For such sweet thoughts in the twilight grey.

The first couplet is a conventional little prelude in the Victorian manner, a couplet which Archdeacon Scott might well have used to help him get into the poem, but which he should then have thrown away or rewritten. Well satisfied with it, he went on. And went on to what? Four couplets which might have been written by a contemporary — a minor contemporary, certainly — of George Herbert. These images have an emblematic sharpness and intellectual clarity, showing great things imaged in familiar and homely things, which is metaphysical, not simply influenced by metaphysical verse, as are so many other early twentieth-century poems. (Archdeacon Scott died in 1944.)

But then the poet, as if somehow embarrassed by the reality of the poetic experience, begins to drift back into a Victorian facsimile of piety. In intellectual content, the next couplet is still metaphysical, but in style it is sweet and sickly. The concluding couplet is utterly banal, and the last line, which ought to climax the poem, is the weakest of all. Once again, we find the genuinely poetic and the falsely poetic side by side, and it appears the poet does not know the difference.

In the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott we find a dark, fierce and direct poet living in the same body with a gentle and dreamy "sweet singer" of rather feminine temperament. In this case the personality is not divided between true poet and false poet, but between major poet and minor poet. Yet here again Scott is not aware of his two-sided personality. In fact, each poet keeps intruding into the other's verses. Both are at their best in such poems as *Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon*, but their mutual presence is just what keeps this poem, which has extraordinary moments, from being the great poem it almost is.

It is my contention that we are dealing here, not with a form of mental illness, but with a cultural phenomenon —a phenomenon which is certainly present in much nineteenth-century verse, but is apparent with particular obviousness in English-Canadian nineteenth century verse, for reasons which I have tried, in a necessarily circuitous manner, to examine. Many of the classical Canadian poets thought of poetry as a public as well as a private art, and they shared this view with their readers and the elite which sponsored them, or into which they had been born. The social ideas they sought to embody in their poems were, to a large extent, conservative ones — more conservative, perhaps, than many of them realised. But they did not understand, at least they did not understand clearly, the real ambiguity of their position in relation to society, a society which demanded that it be reflected and expressed in poetry because this was still, to those who spoke English, the noblest of the arts. However, this society had in reality a deep-seated contempt for poetry. Thus the relationship between the Canadian poet and society was a false and even a poisonous one, which vitiated the poetic impulse at its source, and resulted in a body of poetry notable for its vacillation between the truly poetic and the pseudo-poetic.

For the reason indicated at the beginning of this article, I have confined myself largely to a consideration of this situation as it affected English-language poets in this country. That French-Canadian poets found themselves in a similar position is indicated by the following lines from *La Patrie au Poète*, by Albert Ferland, whose dates are 1872-1943.

> Rêveur, pourquoi m'aimer comme on aime une femme?
> Tes yeux se sont mouillés d'avoir vu ma beauté;
> Pour comprendre ton coeur et vivre ta fierte,
> Poète, mon enfant, il me faudrait une âme!
>
> Les noms des fiers Aïeux dont l'honneur et la foi
> Font pensif l'étranger qui traverse mes plaines,
> Chante-les, plein d'orgueil, dans tes strophes hautaines;
> Poète, ces grands Morts ne revivent qu'en toi.
>
> Va, Barde, primitif des vierges Laurentides,
> Va t'en pleurer ton coeur comme un fou dans les bois,
> Fidèle au souvenir des héros d'autrefois,
> Tandis que l'or vainqueur fait les hommes avides!
>
> Poète, mon enfant, tu me chantes en vain,
> Je suis la Terre ingrate où rêva Crémazie;
> Célèbre si tu veux ma grave poésie,
> Mais pour toi, mon enfant, je n'aura pas de pain!

PAYS, PAROLE ET NEGRITUDE

Max Dorsinville

UN JEUNE POÈTE s'exclamait tout dernièrement: "Finie, la vieille thématique. Ecrire quelque chose sur le pays, ça ne donne plus rien. (...) Le pays, je m'en chrisse."[1] Cela laisse songeur quand on sait que le plus important mouvement littéraire à naître au Québec, depuis la génération de *La Relève*, revendiqua le pays à découvrir, la puissance de la parole et l'engagement du poète comme présages de la fin d'un mal collectif. L'attitude de Desroches paraît symptomatique d'un désenchantement assez général à l'égard de ce mouvement qui, logiquement, ne pouvait déboucher que sur l'alternative suivante: le combat purement politique ou le refuge dans l'hermétisme.

Pendant que nous attendons l'issue de la gestation d'un nouvel élan poétique, il importe, à mon avis, de dégager les racines profondes de cette poésie, dite du Pays, des années 1958-1967. Car, tout en étant l'aboutissement d'une thématique authentiquement québecoise, elle démontrait parallèlement, au triple niveau du ton, des images et des symboles, de frappantes ressemblances avec la poésie du mouvement de la Négritude. Tel est le double propos de cette analyse.

Le premier grand thème de la poésie québecoise, comme l'a si justement souligné Gilles Marcotte (ici même, dans les pages de cette revue), est celui du sentiment d'exil.[2] Celui d'un Octave Crémazie d'abord, exprimé dans des poèmes tels que "Les Morts", "Le Drapeau de Carillon", "Le Vieux Soldat Canadien", et autres, où l'esseulement en terre d'Amérique ne cède qu'à la hantise de la mort, véritable obsession salvatrice que partageront de nombreux poètes. Ainsi:

> Priez pour l'exilé qui, loin de sa patrie,
> Expira sans entendre une parole amie;
> Isolé dans sa vie, isolé dans sa mort,[3]

Exil douloureusement exprimé parce que vécu par le poète lui-même. Crémazie, dans une de ses lettres, lamentera son sort: "A ce que nous n'avons malheureusement qu'une société *d'épiciers*. . . . Dans ces natures pétrifiées par la routine, la pensée n'a pas d'horizon".[4]

Un même mal d'être tourmente Louis Fréchette, bien que ce sentiment soit infléchi dans "La Découverte du Mississippi", "La Légende d'un Peuple" et autres poèmes, par l'exploration de la nature sauvage environnante. Pour échapper à l'indifférence de ce Nouveau Monde, Fréchette tente d'embrasser les grands espaces, poussé par le désir effréne de s'engloutir dans un nouveau sein maternel. Mais l'angoisse contenue ailleurs dans *La Voix d'un Exilé* sous-tend pareil désir. Chez les Paul Morin, René Chopin, et jusqu'à Alain Grandbois, une semblable recherche d'évasion mène aux exercices du Parnasse, ou aux pérégrinations ulyssiennes. Compensation cependant n'est pas satisfaction. Grandbois avoue dans *Les Rivages de l'Homme*:

> Je n'ai rien vu
> Je n'ai rien goûté
> Je n'ai rien souffert . . .

La poésie du terroir des Pamphile Le May, Nérée Beauchemin, Gonzague Désaulniers, et même Alfred Desrochers, colporte également son bagage d'inquiétude. La célébration du quotidien sans fard, le recours à la simplicité, exprimés dans un lyrisme plein de pudeur, semblent taire les tourments de l'exil: ". . . l'espoir en mon âme repose,/ Car je sais les bontés du Dieu que j'ai servi". Une note insolite se fait entendre néanmoins dans ces vers. Pourquoi Beauchemin s'exclame-t-il: "Debout, peuple, debout! Dieu parle"? Et pourquoi Desrochers affirme-t-il: "Je suis un fils déchu de race surhumaine"? Ici nous touchons à la mystique messianique, aux mythes compensateurs au sujet desquels Jean Le Moyne en dit long.[5] Mais que l'on accepte ou non l'image bucolique tracée par ces poètes, celle-ci ne peut être que marginale, alors que l'usine remplace la ferme, la ville dépeuple la campagne, que le mythe rural se désintègre devant la conscience urbaine.

Avec Nelligan, Lozeau, Saint-Denys Garneau et Anne Hébert, cependant, résonne à nouveau un accent proche de celui des origines. A la grandiloquence et au pathétisme des débuts succèdent le sens de la mesure verbale et, surtout, la conscience d'un mal relevant doublement du lieu géo-

graphique et des tréfonds de l'être. D'où le mystérieux "Vaisseau d'Or", la "Romance du Vin" de Nelligan qui en forçant l'interrogation — pourquoi ce vaisseau a-t-il sombré? Pourquoi cette incantation désespérée de la gaieté? — posent la nouvelle équation, dont la réponse semble être que "Dégoût, Haine et Névrose, entre eux ont disputé" (images d'extrême violence faisant contraste avec le vaisseau du rêve "aux flancs diaphanes") pour amener l'effondrement dans l'abîme. Il y a loin de la gaieté, mais tout de l'aggravation de l'esseulement crémazien, dans des vers tels que:

> C'est le règne du rire amer et de la rage
> De se savoir poète et l'objet du mépris...

Si le mal sous-tend le vouloir de gaieté de Nelligan, sous des dehors de sons, couleurs et parfums, Lozeau utilisera l'infirmité physique pour fonder son angoisse ("Quand on gémit captif de la réalité"). La poésie se retire derrière les volets et se repaît de douloureuses ruminations. Ou bien elle se complaît dans ce que Northrop Frye a appelé la "garrison mentality", ou la vie de château. S'isolant au manoir seigneurial près de Ste-Eustache, Saint-Denys Garneau cultive la hantise de l'enfance innocente ("Le Jeu") et, surtout, la conscience presque morbide de son déchirement. Mais, par-delà l'idiosyncrasie, le poète ressasse le malaise de toute une culture (celle de l'élite, du moins), tant il est bouleversé par l'absence de lien entre son moi et la vie qui bat hors du manoir:

> Je marche à côté d'une joie,
> D'une joie qui n'est pas à moi...

Le repliement sur soi accompagne (ou précède?) ce sentiment d'aliénation, et l'obsession crémazienne de la mort ne peut que sourdre:

> Un mort demande à boire
> Le puits n'a plus tant d'eau qu'on le croirait
> Qui portera réponse au mort...

La cousine de Garneau, Anne Hébert, portera réponse, semble-t-il. Du sentiment de l'exil poussé à son extrême, la poétesse, tel le Phénix, fera renaître la vie des cendres. Cet itinéraire est tracé ayant comme point de départ la nostalgie du monde de l'enfance perdue (*Les Songes en Equilibre*, premier recueil qui fait écho aux *Jeux et Regards dans l'Espace*) et comme lieu d'arrivée le *Tombeau des Rois*, véritable "saison en enfer", s'il en fut. La progression du poème-titre de ce dernier recueil résume, pour ainsi dire, l'historique de la thématique de l'exil

et de la constance de la mort. Le premier mouvement indique ceci clairement: "Je descends/ Vers les tombeaux des rois/ Etonnée/ A peine née". De cet affrontement avec les voix ancestrales — qui n'est pas sans rappeler la démarche d'une Maria Chapdelaine ou d'un Menaud, quoique l'issue ne soit pas la même — dépend l'ablation du mal: "Avides de la source fraternelle du mal en moi/ Ils me couchent et me boivent..." On a beaucoup parle de l'ambiguité de la strophe finale, s'interrogeant sur le sens à accorder à l'image de l'oiseau se tournant vers l'aube "ses prunelles crevées". A mon avis l'aube saluant la remontée représente bien une note d'espoir puisque elle suit l'exorcisme souhaité, l'acte cathartique indiqué dans le vers: "Et les morts hors de moi, assassinés". Le "Mystère de la Parole", tiré du dernier recueil d'Anne Hébert, *Poèmes*, démontre tant au niveau des images que des symboles cette nouvelle volonté d'espoir. Par le recours à la parole ("en plein centre du verbe, nous/ avançons à la pointe du monde"), l'harnachement de la symbolique du feu et du sang ("nous reçumes mission du feu"), la portée des images, "Mystère" affirme que la guérison du mal ancestral réside dans la destruction de la vie de château et l'ouverture sur le pays:

> Que celui qui a reçu fonction de la parole vous prenne en charge comme un coeur ténébreux de surcroît, et n'ait de cesse que soient justifiés les vivants et les morts en un seul chant parmi l'aube et les herbes.

La mission de la poésie et du poète désormais sera celle de l'engagement, le mariage de la parole au pays. La parole s'affirmant rituel d'exorcisme, et le pays son canon, la poésie se fait révolutionnaire, dans le sens qu'entendait André Breton. De dire Chamberland, point de salut hors de l'engagement:

> Je l'ai appris de Miron: il n'existe pas de *salut individuel*.... La croyance au salut individuel ne conduit qu'au redoublement halluciné, d'autant plus lancinant qu'il est solitaire, de l'échec collectif; on sombre dans la putréfaction du marais intérieur: Saint Denys Garneau.[6]

Parallèlement à l'évolution d'Anne Hébert germent les poèmes de Gaston Miron. De 1954 à 1960, nous dit Miron, il eut une prise de conscience à travers "toutes sortes de lectures", et au sortir d'un séjour européen, de ce que Miron appelle "sa condition de colonisé".[7] Un ton poétique neuf (celui du colonisé), un inventaire du pays dans des images telluriques et existentielles précises, l'acharnement du feu et du sang couvant sous le froid, fondent la poétique de Miron et de ses camarades à l'Hexagone, *Liberté* et *Parti Pris*. Sans vouloir diminuer

l'importance de l'évolution retracée plus haut, il y a lieu de croire que le courant poétique des années soixante se nourrît, en sus, au confluent du Tiers-monde. Si on peut supposer que parmi les lectures de Miron figurèrent l'*Anthologie* de Senghor et le *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal* de Césaire (témoignage que nous tenons de Vallières: "Je dois à Miron d'avoir appris à connaître et à aimer la poésie contemporaine, ainsi que la littérature des colonisés [Aimé Césaire, . . .],)[8] nous savons par contre l'admiration que voua Chamberland à ce dernier: "Je peux bien dire mes préférences: *une saison en enfer, le cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, . . ."[9] C'est à se demander même si Chamberland, comme sans doute de nombreux jeunes écrivains de l'époque, ne connût Césaire par l'entremise de Miron.

Je voudrais démontrer dans ce qui suit comment le recours à la parole, au triple niveau du ton, des images et des symboles, correspond à cette autre poésie engagée, celle de la Négritude.

Sartre, dans sa préface à l'*Anthologie* de Senghor, l'"Orphée Noir", signale le ton commun de la poésie nègre antillaise et africaine par cette interrogation-choc: "Qu'est-ce donc que vous espériez, quand vous ôtiez le bâillon qui fermait ces bouches noires? Qu'elles allaient entonner vos louanges? Ces têtes . . . , pensiez-vous, quand elles se relèveraient, lire l'adoration dans leurs yeux?" C'est plutôt le vrombissement de la revendication, de la colère, qui se fait entendre. "Accomodez-vous de moi, moi je ne m'accomode pas de vous," dit Césaire.[10] "J'ai l'impression d'être ridicule/ dans leurs salons dans leurs manières," avoue Léon Damas. Et Jacques Roumain de proclamer "la flétrissure amère de la seule égalité du désespoir":

> Nous ne chanterons plus les tristes spirituals désespérés. . . .
> Debout les damnés de la terre
> Debout les forçats de la faim.

David Diop de renchérir: "Toi mon frère au visage de peur et d'angoisse/ Relève-toi et crie: NON!"

Gaston Miron inaugure l'écho de cette révolte dans les lettres québecoises lorsqu'il annonce: "Je suis malheureux plein ma carrure, je saccage/ la rage que je suis." S'il est malheureux c'est qu'"il est ce pays seul avec lui-même . . . / *un pays que jamais ne rejoint le soleil natal*" (c'est nous qui soulignons). Paul-Marie Lapointe fait de la métaphore de la prison le lieu de la revendication: "Ce continent me trahissait/ j'étais prisonnier de ses pores." Mais c'est surtout Jacques Brault qui fait sentir la colère fondée dans l'état de mal être des siens. A la

manière de Césaire dont la première partie du *Cahier* est un tableau impitoyable des "Antilles qui ont faim", de "cette foule criarde si étonnamment passée à côté de son cri", Brault s'exclame:

> Nous
> les bâtards sans nom
> les déracinés d'aucune terre
> les boutonneux sans âge
> les demi-révoltés confortables

Paul Chamberland, constatant également que "ce peuple dort aux caveaux de la honte", fera hurler l'afficheur:

> J'habite en une terre de crachats de matins hâves et
> de rousseurs malsaines les poètes s'y suicident et
> . . .
> la rancoeur purulle aux lèvres de ses habitants

Cette révolte est donc précédée par la pénible conscience d'une situation de fait, mais elle est toujours suivie par la redécouverte du pays. Tandis que, dans un premier temps, la prise de conscience du malaise mène à la revendication, dans un deuxième, elle anime la tentative de repossession des siens, du pays. La mission du poète s'accouple à celle du mage ou du prophète; la force de la parole doit "sommer libre (. . .) la succulence des fruits." Eclosent les images et que naisse le pays souhaité: "Je dirais orage. Je dirais fleuve. Je dirais tornade. Je dirais feuille. Je dirais arbre. Je serais mouillé de toutes les pluies, humecté de toutes les rosées."[11] Pour Senghor, comme pour Chamberland, le pays est l'image de la femme aimée:

> Femme nue, femme obscure!
> Fruit mûr à la chair ferme, sombres extases du vin noir, bouche qui fait lyrique ma bouche
> Savane aux horizons purs,

Alors que Pilon annonce que "Nous sommes à la naissance d'un pays à reconnaître", Paul-Marie Lapointe le célèbre dans une luxuriance toute césairienne:

> j'écris arbre
> arbre d'orbe en cône et de sève en lumière
> . . . . .
> pins blancs pins argentés pins rouges et gris
> pins durs à bois lourd pins à feuilles tordues
> . . . . .

cèdres de l'est thuyas et balais cèdres blancs
bras polis cyprès jaunes aiguilles couturières

Paul Chamberland offre également son kaléidoscope d'images:

notre patrimoine sous les quatre épées du vent
et les forêts les banquises les gulf-stream
cinglant l'horizon de nos semailles
.....
NOUS rançonnerons aux cents nuits
la TERRE QUEBEC

Mais le pays est surtout, pour Chamberland, Brault, Miron, Préfontaine, l'image de la femme à posséder; la possession de la femme convie à la possession du pays, et le contraire est aussi vrai: "termine ô femme ma déroute qu'en toi j'élève ce/ pays au jour claquant du nom."

Par-delà l'image, la symbolique des forces telluriques, du feu et du sang (forces énergétiques premières, signes de l'authenticité recherchée), alimente la parole libératrice. Pour Senghor et Césaire de *telos* représente les racines, le souffle omniprésent de l'Etre faisant des vivants et des morts le levain de l'âme africaine. Par l'incantation du feu et du sang s'accomplit le rituel du verbe libérateur:

des mots, ah oui, des mots! mais
des mots de sang frais, des mots qui sont
des raz-de-marée et des érésipèles
des paludismes et des laves et des feux
de brousse, et des flambées de chair,
et des flambées de villes...

Dans le troisième mouvement du *Cahier* le poète élève son cri de renaissance à la vie, après la descente aux enfers, et il est d'embrasement cosmique:

> Et voici soudain que force et vie m'assaillent (...), et voilà toutes les veines et veinules qui s'affairent au sang neuf et l'énorme poumon des cyclones qui respire et le feu thésaurisé des volcans et le gigantesque pouls sismique qui bat maintenant la mesure d'un corps vivant en mon ferme embrasement.

Il importe de souligner, par ailleurs, que le poème "Héritage de la Tristesse" de Miron accomplit un itinéraire semblable à celui du *Cahier*. La même constatation initiale d'agonie, d'inertie ambiante, se résorbe à la fin dans un réveil secoué de forces telluriques:

vents telluriques, vents de l'âme, vents universels
vents accouplez-vous, et de vos bras de fleuve

> enserrez son visage de peuple détruit, donnez-lui la chaleur
> et la profuse lumière des sillages d'hirondelles.

Brault, pour sa part, clôt "Suite Fraternelle" par un semblable recours: "Un peuple ivre de vents et de femmes s'essaie à sa nouveauté." Chamberland, remplaçant le "morne oublié" de Césaire par le froid qui glace, les manguiers par les pins, le tropical par le boréal, fera du feu et du sang l'incendie du nord emprisonnant. Puisque "le froid nous a tenus en haute trahison peuple-bedeau (...) je verrai le visage du feu sourdre au terroir de nos jurons." Le grand cri de s'élever:

> ô visage du feu...
> vous aura-t-il fallu flambé de l'Asie à l'Afrique et de
> l'Afrique aux nègreries latines incendier les tropiques d'une
> mer à l'autre
> pour enfin nous tirer des mâchoires du pôle et dresser
> dans nos corps ensommeillés de taupes l'incendie d'être libres
> et d'épouser au long de ses mille blessures notre terre Québec

Ainsi, à la seule sérieuse question philosophique selon Camus, le poète répond avec véhémence: "en notre sang terre assaillie d'aurore/ nous fondrons l'espace au feu d'un pays."

Que les poètes québecois, de Miron à Chamberland, aient été sensibles à la poésie de la Négritude n'a pas de quoi surprendre puisque la révolte et la quête d'authenticité des Césaire, Senghor, Damas et Roumain reposèrent sur une condition d'exil éprouvée lors de séjours d'études en Europe.[12] Dès lors ils écrivirent partant d'une double aliénation: d'abord celle géographique, et surtout celle à l'égard d'eux-mêmes causée par le racisme. Ces poètes durent se révolter contre ceux que Fanon appelle "les imbéciles" (les racistes)[13], et, en refusant le rôle assigné par l'Europe ("celui d'endurance à la chicotte")[14] se reposséder par le retour aux sources ancestrales, au pays natal. Cette démarche dialectique soutient des oeuvres capitales telles que *Pigments* (1937) de Léon Damas; le *Cahier* (1939), bien entendu, de Césaire; *Chants d'Ombre* (1945) de Senghor; *Bois d'Ebène* (1945) de Jacques Roumain, sans compter les poèmes disséminés dans les revues de l'époque (l'*Etudiant Noir*, revue fondée par Césaire, Senghor et autres, en 1934; *Tropiques*, fondée par Césaire à son retour en Martinique en 1941).

Bien qu'il y ait loin du malaise issu du racisme européen à celui enraciné dans certaines conditions historico-religieuses, les poètes de l'Hexagone, de *Liberté*

et de *Parti Pris* se sont pourtant reconnus dans l'aliénation de l'exil Noir. Chamberland, définissant son engagement, dira:

> J'accomplis ce que Césaire appelle un "retour au pays natal". C'est alors que s'inaugure une étrange mais vitale conjugaison: celle qui enferme le *je* et le *nous* en un seul mouvement. Le retour au pays natal, à l'homme réel, au pays réel, impose deux attitudes rigoureusement liées: 1- *je* me reconnais tel que je suis, tel que la *situation* m'a fait, (...). 2- je *nous* reconnais tels que nous sommes, je prends acte de notre vie, de notre misère, de notre malheur. . . .[15]

Il y a bien concordance de deux mouvements poétiques qui remontent aux mêmes sources: la poésie furibonde des "maudits", Rimbaud et Lautréamont, et la conscience moderne existentialiste.[16]

La Négritude, néanmoins, en tant que mouvement littéraire, prend fin avec l'avènement à l'indépendance des pays d'Afrique Noire, ou bien elle prend le chemin des redites et de l'hermétisme (voir pour ce dernier cas *Ferrements* et *Cadastres* de Césaire, titres sombrement évocateurs d'une Martinique laissée pour compte au chapitre de la décolonisation, et qui demeure un département d'outremer de la France). De même le mouvement du Pays au Québec révèle son épuisement avec le départ de Chamberland pour l'Europe (Yves Préfontaine part également). Il en résulte l'*Inavouable* (1967) dont le titre même indique le cloisonnement consécutif à l'échec, le retour aux volets clos: "je sais qu'aujourd'hui ce n'est point la parole qui confère le sens mais l'acte."[17] L'incapacité d'agir constitue justement le constat "inavouable". Le dernier vers de cette étrange confession, non moins étrangement signée "Désiré", annonce le silence du repliement sur soi: "cette voix sourde qui parle en moi, je l'entends."

Point n'est besoin d'insister sur l'évident parallélisme de l'hermétisme, de l'intériorisation finale de l'engagement, chez Césaire et Chamberland. L'échec, reconnu par ce dernier, de la gageure de la libération par la parole fonde l'ampleur du désenchantement du jeune poète cité au début.

NOTES

[1] Roger Desroches, *La Presse*, 3 oct. 1970, C2.

[2] Gilles Marcotte, "Une Poésie d'Exil", *Canadian Literature*, 2 (1959), 32-36.

[3] Afin d'eviter une énumération fastidieuse et encombrante, l'unique référence aux citations, à moins d'avis contraire, est la suivante: Guy Sylvestre, *Anthologie de la Poésie Canadienne Française* (Montréal: Beauchemin, 1963); Alain Bosquet, *La Poésie Canadienne Contemporaine de Langue Française* (Paris: Seghers, 1966); Paul Chamberland, *Terre Québec* (Montréal: Déom, 1964); Paul Chamberland, *L'Afficheur Hurle* (Montréal: Parti Pris, 1964); Léopold Sédar Senghor,

Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Nègre et Malgache de Langue Française (Paris: P.U.F., 1948); Lilyan Kesteloot, *Anthologie Négro-Africaine* (Paris: Marabout-Université, 1967).

[4] Michel Dassonville, *Crémazie* (Montréal: Fides, 1956), pp. 54-55.

[5] Voir *Convergences* (Montréal: HMH, 1961).

[6] Paul Chamberland, "Dire ce que je Suis", *Parti Pris*, 2, No. 5 (1965), 37.

[7] Gaston Miron, "Un Long Chemin", *Parti Pris*, 2, No. 5 (1965), 25-27.

[8] Pierre Vallières, *Nègres Blancs d'Amérique* (Montréal: Parti Pris, 1968), p. 202.

[9] Chamberland, *Ibid.*, 39.

[10] Aimé Césaire, *Cahier d'un Retour au Pays Natal* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1956), p. 55.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 75, p. 40.

[12] Voir Lilyan Kesteloot, *Les Ecrivains Noirs de Langue Française* (Bruxelles: Univ. Libre de Bruxelles, 1965), pp. 110-127.

[13] Frantz Fanon, *Peau Noire Masques Blancs* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952), p. 25.

[14] Césaire, *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[15] Chamberland, *Ibid.*, 38-39.

[16] Tout en n'oubliant pas Breton et le surréalisme. Voir le témoignage de Senghor, "L'Apport de la Poésie Nègre au Demi-Siècle", *Négritude et Humanisme*, Liberté I (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964), pp.. 134-135; celui de Chamberland, dans ces "notes" qui, avec le temps, deviennent un véritable "art poétique" des années soixante, "Dire ce que je Suis", *Ibid.*, 33-42.

[17] Paul Chamberland, *L'Inavouable* (Montréal: Parti Pris, 1967), p. 64.

CANADIAN MENNONITE LITERATURE

J. Thiessen

BEFORE DISCUSSING the literature of the Canadian Mennonites a short historical sketch of Mennonitism is in order. The Mennonites belong to the radical wing of Protestantism who went beyond Luther in stressing their emancipation from Rome, for they emphasized a personal free will and regarded the unadulterated discipleship of Jesus as their overriding concern. Infant baptism, taking of the oath, and the bearing of arms for military service were repudiated firmly from the very beginning. By taking literally Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount, "Swear not at all", they refused to take any oath, even a civil oath. Christ's words: "Love your enemies" and "Resist not evil", and the Fifth Commandment, formed the basis of their principle of nonresistance. For their practice of adult baptism they became known as Anabaptists. The right not to swear an oath or take up arms was granted to the Anabaptists by the governmental leaders of all the countries to which they migrated. But these privileges were subsequently always withdrawn.

One of the outstanding leaders of the Anabaptist movement in the Netherlands was Menno Simons. Born in 1496 in a Frisian village, he became a Roman Catholic priest, but renounced his faith in 1536 to assume leadership of an Anabaptist congregation. He became their first elder. When the Counter-Reformation under the Duke of Alba (1544-1572) forced him and many of his followers to flee the country, they found a haven and new fields for their missionary zeal in the more tolerant principalities of Northeast Germany. From there the movement spread rapidly; the time for religious independence from Rome had come and many sensed and heeded this spirit. Eventually even Anabaptist congregations having no direct connection with Menno's movement became known as

Mennonites, a generic term used today as synonymous with Anabaptists of a pacifist orientation.

It was in the Vistula delta, in the Danzig triangle along the Vistula and Nogat rivers, that the Mennonite movement achieved an ethnic identity, a *Gemeinschaft*. There they consolidated their religious and economic community. Towards the end of the 18th century their prosperity and established way of life was threatened once again; land acquisition was restricted and pressure to do military service was exerted on Mennonite young men.

When Catherine II succeeded to the Russian throne in 1763 she published a manifesto in Western Europe inducing foreign settlers to colonize the unoccupied agricultural lands of her domain. These lands had been bought with a price; she had cleared them of Turkish domination. Agriculture was central to her plan for the stability of this area and for national prosperity, so she sought model farmers who would work the land with perseverance. The offer she extended was generous and attractive — free land, religious toleration, exemption from military duty and taxation and freedom in establishing educational and social institutions. A delegate group of Mennonite explorers set out to appraise the situation and having reached accord they agreed to settle on the Russian steppes. In 1789 the first families arrived in Chortitza on the Dnejpr, which became the initial settlement of the Mennonites in Russia. By 1914 Mennonite villages numbering over 200, with a combined population of approximately 100,000, had spread far into south and east Russia. When the privileges originally granted the Mennonites in Russia were jeopardized, the first migration to Canada was undertaken during the years 1874-78. Subsequent migrations followed in the 1920's after Communism stifled religious freedom and free enterprise in Russia. After the Second World War many other Mennonites, evacuated by the German thrust of 1941-43, gradually found their way to their fellows in the New World. The Mennonite emigration to America is over. There are in the world today some 500,000 Mennonites. In the province of Manitoba, where they have settled most densely, some 55,000 have established new homes. Of these at least 15,000 live in Winnipeg, which is the largest concentration of Mennonitism in existence today.

MENNONITES have from their beginnings, four and a half centuries ago, existed chiefly on a fare of Bible and Bread. They were almost ready, it would seem, to ply the pen after having become a *Gemeinschaft*, a self-conscious community in the Vistula triangle. But then the time came to pull up

and pitch anew in the Russian Steppes. Here the successive *Tod, Not, Brot,* (Death, Distress, Prosperity) generations ran out of time again. There were literary attempts but progress was slight.

The emigration to Canada, the departure from the Ukrainian steppes which were to have been their home "for all time", again threw the reflective mind into much disarray and consternation. True, the Russian Revolution with subsequent famine and privation inspired and even forced many to write about their experiences. But how? The Mennonite artist, expressing himself in a German language which had never received sustenance from the German literary soil proper, encountered the same difficulty as before in Russia: to identify himself with a country not completely native to his formative years. Such identification requires time, more than time: it demands a critical yet compassionate, mature yet flexible and receptive audience. This audience was rarely there, and if it was, it demanded literal and not imagined truths in novels, and like most self-conscious groups whose existence has often been threatened, it was disposed to accept only literature that favourably portrayed the Mennonite world. In short, what Mennonite reading public there was wanted to be treated to *realia*, a reflection no doubt of their modest literalist biblical fare. Their literary fancy is so impoverished that it must be assumed that, unbeknown to them, their biblical fare not only gave sustenance to their faith but also ample nourishment to the demands of imagination and fancy.

This very limited literary background may explain why the world of fantasy, for example, is rare in Mennonite literature. Life was simple and sober; hard work and honest living produced prosperity which in turn was interpreted as a manifestation of God's bountiful blessings. They lived Max Weber's Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, centuries before he so pointedly described it. The great, oftentimes unique, accomplishments of the Mennonites in every country where they settled were limited to success in the agricultural and enterprising area and were never matched by their literary endeavours.

There was one very notable exception to the dearth in Mennonite letters: Hans Harder. He was born in 1903 in the remote Mennonite colony of Samara on the Volga. It was Harder's luck that he wrote his numerous novels in Germany where the intellectual climate was diversified, mature and discerning enough to absorb his powerful artistry. Making his home in West Prussia after World War I he has written *Das Dorf an der Volga, Das Sibirische Tor, Klim, Die Hungerbrueder* and *Die Muschel.* Harder writes about his lost homeland, about death and graveyards. Harder understands what Schiller's *"fernende*

Erinnerung" (receding memory) means and he is warm and autobiographical yet not sentimental, maudlin, or confessional. In Canada, as in the Mennonite settlements of Russia, we venture to say, he would have been isolated or hounded out of the community, sharing the fate of other Mennonite writers of less ability.

It was this suspicion of things imaginary and novel that much occupied J. H. Janzen's mind in his exposition of Mennonite literature in *Mennonite Life*, January 1946.[1] Reflecting on the situation past and present of Russo-Canadian Mennonites, Janzen writes, "Mennonitism was regarded in certain respects as a terra sancta on which the jugglery of belles-lettres dared not appear. That Mennonites would write in this genre was simply sin. After all, one could not treat Mennonitism that way."

It is difficult to imagine the honest lay minister and writer Janzen posing much of a threat to any community of interests, religious or ethnic. And yet the events that caused him pained surprise on publishing his first story shortly after the turn of this century are to this day sadly typical of Mennonite reactions to their writers. Janzen says:

> Before the appearance of my book (1910), I had published a story in Kroeker's Familienkalender in the style of a diary, in which, awkward as I was at the time, I had not sufficiently masked the individuals who served as my characters, and they recognized themselves and became furiously angry at me. I had to ask their pardon, and it was no easy task to receive their forgiveness. I thought I had defended them, but they felt that they had been exposed at the rack, and the injustice which had been done they considered a sin unto death. Later I became more clever, and if occasionally someone felt offended, he would not know where to send me to beg for pardon, so that I was henceforth spared that unpleasant task.

In Canada, Janzen and two fellow "poets", M. Fast and G. Loewen, organized a "Hainbund" (league of young poets) for the purpose of exchanging poetry and criticisms. Loewen's poems were published in a modest volume called *Feldblumen*, and Janzen published his own products of the field and pen by the dozen, mainly in mimeographed form. Later poetry was much along these lines, such as G. A. Peter's *Blumen am Wegrand* (Wayside Flowers). All this led the Germanist Hermann Boeschenstein[2] to observe that Mennonite poetic writing was "blatantly dilettante". It is a sadly true commentary. These poems are Romanticism re-visited, heavily dependent on Goethe and Eichendorff for theme, turns of phrase and style.

Janzen ends his hopeful exposition with a hearty "Vivat! Crescat! Floreat!" to the future belles lettres of "our own", but the echo to the valiant cry failed to

resound. And yet Janzen's first novel *Denn meine Augen haben Deinen Heiland gesehen,* (Halbstadt, Russia: Raduga, 1911) was a breakthrough, not so much for its content but because it was a beginning. It was the first book in which a Mennonite wrote about the common Mennonite life in the form of fiction. In the *Mennonite Life* of July 1951 Arnold Dyck describes just what an overwhelming breakthrough Janzen's effort actually meant. What lasting impression it left on Dyck's mind or to what extent it motivated him to start writing is a matter of speculation. In any event, Dyck in the Thirties suddenly became the only Mennonite writer of note in both the High and Low German languages in Canada. Much of what he has written is *Heimatdichtung* and was treated and read as such.[3]

It remained for "outsiders", — non-Mennonites — to discover a new dimension to Dyck's artistry. In a perceptive and extremely well written article on A. Dyck's *Bildungsroman, Verloren in der Steppe,* Michael Hadley,[4] was quick to realize that *Verloren in der Steppe* was much more than "merely a piece of Mennonite writing". He observes that "it is this type of bland reasoning that has militated against the novel's being recognized as part of the broader German tradition. While the work admittedly has its own distinctive character and 'mystique" it takes its rightful place in a genre peculiar to German literature, namely that of the Bildungsroman." Walter Schmiedehaus, the writer, apothecary and German Consul in Chihuahua, Mexico, stylistically and genetically akin to author Theodor Fontane, was also quick to realize Dyck's art, observing: "Wer auch nur ein einziges Buch von Arnold Dyck gelesen hat, der weiss, dass aus jeder Zeile ein Sänger seines Volkes, ein Heimatdichter spricht". (One need read only a single work of A. Dyck's to know that in his every sentence speaks a poet of his people.)[5]

Dyck edited the *Mennonitische Warte* in the 30's and early 40's, the only respectable Mennonite journal in which budding artistry was given even a fair chance of expression. In the light of what has already been said it will come as no surprise that the *Warte* was soon defunct. Another no less valiant effort was Victor Peters' *Mennonitische Lehrerzeitung* in the late 40's and early 50's. It suffered the same sad fate. The churches, i.e. the Mennonite establishment, felt threatened and granted no support, financial or moral, while other support was insular and fragmentary; another manifestation that the field of Mennonite belles-lettres was still in its infancy.

Dyck has written equally successfully in the Low German vernacular and his portrayals of the comic characters Koop and Bua will probably outlive all other

Canadian Mennonite writings in German. In his best short story in the dialect, *Twee Breew* (Two Letters), Dyck has fully utilized Low German as a vehicle of respectable literary art. There is masterful dialogue and description: the physical setting of a blizzard, admirably and powerfully depicted, is set against a lonely woman's inner struggle for hope, formerly in the Steppes in Russia, now in the Canadian Prairie, drawn with sensitivity and sympathy. The two conflicts are developed separately but concomitantly, until they merge with all the pathos and inevitability of great tragedy.

A Mennonite poet who developed into maturity rather late in life is Gerhard Wiens, now residing in Oklahoma but formerly a teacher in Manitoba. When in 1967 the C.B.C. ran a series of broadcasts on ethnic poetry other than English and French, they commissioned me to gather representative Mennonite poetry. Everything else suggested was refused as too "doggerel", but Wiens' poems, "His Willow Tree" and "The Farmer's Son", were immediately regarded even in translation as poetry of note. Of the other Mennonites who have put their pen to the test Gerhard Friesen (pseud Fritz Senn) and Abraham Johann Friesen (pseud Karlo) must be rated as the best. Both wrote in *Die Warte* and in the *Mennonitische Welt*.

An anthology of Low German, English and High German Poetry by J. W. Goerzen[6] was published in 1967 on the occasion of Canada's Centennial. The doggerel quality of Goerzen's poetry is matched only by his genuine sincerity. Goerzen is a romantic rhymer and his innumerable Odes to the Moon are directly, sometimes literally, dependent on Goethe and Eichendorff. This kind of imitation resulted in obvious caricatures.

THE PERIOD OF GERMAN-CANADIAN LITERARY EFFORTS seems to be over. Young Mennonites, studying and dabbling in both High and Low German, think and express themselves, in the main, in English. Some — but they can be quickly counted — realize well that when a system, an institution or a language and the way of life it represents are doomed, then the flame of devotion may flare wider and higher and burn for a moment with exceptional intensity. But man, particularly North American man, lives rarely by nostalgia.

Before mention is made of the flicker of hope in contemporary Mennonite writing, a brief reference must be made to the writing of Mennonites other than the German-Russian-Canadian Mennonites, and to literature that is marginally attributable to the Mennonite people.

The novels by B. Mabel Dunham, of Kitchener, Ont., herself a descendant of Mennonites, are warmly sympathetic treatments of the early Mennonite settlers of that area. *The Trail of the Conestoga* (1924) deals with the immigrants to Waterloo County, Ontario, from Pennsylvania, and their early settlement in Canada. *Toward Sodom* (1927) portrays the religious problems created later in the same settlement by isolation from and nonconformity to the world and the consequent loss of many young people to other creeds and faiths; Miss Dunham's point that the trend towards the city ("Sodom") is fatal to Mennonitism has proved all too true. Her *Kristli's Trees* (1948), also dealing with Mennonites in Ontario, is a charming novel for adolescents. Her last novel *Grand River* (1945) is a more descriptive and historical account of the settlement of this section of Ontario, and refers to the Mennonite contribution to the total development of the province.

Frederick Philip Grove, who taught at Winkler, Manitoba, some 50 years ago and married Katherine Wiens, a Mennonite, touches on Manitoba Mennonite life in his novels *Our Daily Bread* (1929) and *In Search of Myself* (1946), again a form of Bildungsroman. To what extent Paul Hiebert's sketches in *Sarah Binks* (1947) can be called Mennonite literature is debatable, although they amply demonstrate a frustration with the quality of Mennonite High German, while lampooning literary studies and literary societies.

In the 60's the young Mennonite writer, Rudy Wiebe wrote two novels, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and *First and Vital Candle*, and several short stories. When Wiebe's first novel appeared, the Mennonite community sustained a severe and trying shock. His readers were pained, indeed angered, at the thought that the world would see them in a negative light, and Wiebe was soon given a one-way ticket out of Winnipeg, where he was editing a church paper at the time. Wiebe is unquestionably an artist of note and when he sticks to his business of writing he can cause the dormant chords in the discriminating Mennonite reader to vibrate.

His second novel *First and Vital Candle* is removed from the Mennonite plot. It lacks the convincing tone of its predecessor; indeed it is inhibited and stultified. Wiebe's proselytizing theology and his lack of a genuine encounter with life invariably get in his way, and the tense effort to reconcile his ideological baggage with his artistic intentions results in two-fold damage: the theological argument is shoddy and his writing is not convincing. If Wiebe ever resolves the problem of harmonizing Christianity with life and living he may achieve a real literary breakthrough.

It may just be that the long overdue definitive Canadian Mennonite novel will be produced by one of the writers of the present generation. The questions implied in this statement are obvious: what would constitute a definitive Canadian-Mennonite novel, and how could it come about?

It must of necessity be a work by an artist who is engaged without being involved, an artist who is righteously indignant without being blinded; it must be written by an artist who refuses to confuse humility with ignorance, who is unwilling to accept that a Mennonite's material success is necessarily a manifestation of God's bountiful blessings while his opposite's possessions are spoiled fruits from the tree of avarice, who tolerates without being indifferent, and who knows, understands and accepts that some Mennonite ventures have been trips rather than pilgrimages and that there are mysteries in life not necessarily attributable to God's intervention in history. The novel must be a contestation between the individual and his community, an honest and serious acceptance of both self and the world. Only by such a synthesis can the novel we are imagining be written. The young generation of Mennonites is no longer so mortally afraid as its predecessors of being victimized and ostracized. And so there is hope.

FOOTNOTES

[1] J. H. Janzen, "The literature of the Russo-Canadian Mennonites", *Mennonite Life*, North Newton, Kansas, U.S.A., Jan. 1946.

[2] Hermann Boeschenstein: "Canada in German Literature", Seminar. *A Journal of Germanic Studies*, Toronto, Vol. III, No. 1, Spring 1967.

[3] *Mennonite Life* articles in 1959 on the occasion of Dyck's 70th birthday and in April & July 1969 on his 80th birthday. *Also*: Elizabeth Peters: *The Poet Arnold Dyck*, M.A. Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1968.

[4] Michael L. Hadley, "Arnold Dyck: Verloren in der Steppe, A Mennonite Bildungsroman", *Can. Ethnic Studies Journal*, Calgary, 1970.

[5] Walter Schmiedehaus, "Der Schriftsteller Arnold Dyck", *Mennonitische Welt*, Winnipeg, Manitoba, January 1952, p. 8.

[6] J. W. Goerzen, *German Heritage, Canadian Lyrics in Three Languages*. Edmonton, the author 1967.

review articles

CANADA'S OCTOBER DAYS

George Woodcock

RON HAGGART and AUBREY GOLDEN, *Rumours of War.* new press, $6.95.
BRIAN MOORE, *The Revolution Script.* McClelland & Stewart, $6.95.
DENIS SMITH, *Bleeding Hearts . . . Bleeding Country: Canada and the Quebec Crisis.* Hurtig, $2.95.
PIERRE VALLIERES, *White Niggers of America.* Translated by Joan Pinkham. McClelland & Stewart, $7.95.
MARCEL RIOUX, *Quebec in Question.* Lewis & Samuel, $3.50.

IT IS A POINT on which historians will long argue: whether Canada's October was a more traumatic event to French than to English Canadians. At first one was inclined to accept without much criticism the thesis of Peter Desbarats that the grotesque sequence, from the kidnapping of Cross, through the seizure and murder of Laporte, the fabricated government story of a plotted insurrection and the imposition of the War Measures Act, followed by the arrest and detention of hundreds of suspects, was merely the externalization of the chronic state of war that exists in Quebec — and especially in Montreal — between the various elites and would-be elites thrown up by the Quiet Revolution, and that the relationship between French and English Canada — the whole question of quasi-colonial domination — really played a minor role. Objectively Desbarats was doubtless correct, but subjectively the whole incident, and especially the abandonment of libertarian pretences by the Trudeau government, was profoundly disturbing to many English Canadians. It shook, if it did not shatter, our vision of Canada as a gentle land, as a country where the governmental excesses and private violences that have scarred the United States could be avoided. Our armour of moral priggishness suddenly seemed a suit of ragged gossamer, and we realized, perhaps with exaggerated emphasis, that here, as elsewhere, politics could reveal itself as a vicious game.

It is perhaps the sudden intensity of the experience for us, the abruptness with which that moment of truth was precipitated, as compared with the years of growing awareness among French Canadians, that explains why it is books by English Canadian rather than Québecois authors that now attempt most anxiously to analyse and explain the crisis. Of the five books I am reviewing the two by French Canadians have only a peripheral bearing on the crisis. *White Niggers of America* is the translation of a personal and political apology published in French before October; Marcel Rioux's *Quebec*

in Question, a dull, routine statement of the separatist position of which no more need be said, has been brought up to date to discuss the crisis on a very superficial level, but it was in the main conceived and written earlier.

The earliest of the English Canadian books, *Rumours of War*, by Ron Haggart and Aubrey E. Golden, claims to be no more than a journalistic work, written and published in a hurry so as to bring quickly before Canadians the iniquity of their government's precipitate actions in response to the kidnappings. The desire for speed was so great that the authors did not even wait for the cycle of events to reach its conclusion with the arrest and trial of the murderers of Pierre Laporte, on the rival iniquity of whose killing they have certainly not expanded themselves. In other words, it is a frankly polemical work, and the devices of sentimental and sensational journalism have been freely used to serve the accusations — in themselves sound enough — which the authors bring forward. But cold facts and bare arguments would have spoken effectively enough and Haggart and Golden — convinced civil libertarians who examine with a ruthless logic the measures taken by the federal and provincial governments — in fact weaken a strong base by an undue exploitation of "the human element" and by a mannered vehemence which leads the cautious reader to wonder just what they are trying to conceal. What they *are* in fact trying to conceal is the one-sidedness of their history. They know all about the actions of the authorities, which for the most part were conducted in the open, even if the motives were sometimes obscure; they are evidently far more in ignorance about the precise actions of the terrorists, and they have failed to provide what — given the haste in which they wrote — might have been a passable substitute, a sound and full discussion of the history, philosophy and composition of those rival enemies of civil liberty, the FLQ.

Brian Moore, in preparing his impressionist narrative, *The Revolution Script*, and Denis Smith, in writing the first profoundly reflective analysis of the affair and its implications, *Bleeding Hearts . . . Bleeding Country*, have both had the advantage of time, which has deepened perspectives and given deliberation to conclusions.

Moore has attempted one of the most difficult forms of writing, the reportage in which gaps in direct knowledge are filled with invented dialogue and even invented action. He has not been able entirely to avoid the perils of this hybrid genre. When he is describing settings — and especially the seedy areas in Montreal in which so much of the action takes place — he writes vividly and evocatively. When he reconstructs action, he is almost invariably convincing. The coating of verisimilitude, however, begins to wear thin when he tries to create dialogue between the terrorists. *The Revolution Script* reads then as if it were written, not by Brian Moore the novelist, but by some rather clumsy imitator of Roch Carrier, and the terrorists shape themselves in our minds as incredibly ignorant, naïf and pathetic, which I am sure is not Moore's intention.

Perhaps even more disappointing is the fact that the balance of *The Revolution Script* is heavily tipped by Moore's concentration on the captors of Cross. In their case he has indeed shown what may well be a true picture of humanity triumphing over ideology as the terrorists

find themselves unable to turn into the murderers of a man with whom they have lived. Psychologically, the interpretation has the tone of truth, but it fails to give a whole picture because the other group, the Roses and Simard, who *did* kill their captive, appear as little more than shadowy and malevolent presences. If Moore had used in portraying Paul Rose the care he took over his portrait of Marc Charbonneau, we might have had an absorbing study of the two faces of the FLQ, the genuinely human idealism and the fanatical cruelty, features that combine in all terrorist movements.

In fact, Pierre Trudeau, not Paul Rose, is cast as the principal villain of *The Revolution Script*; Moore's representation of him is caricature of a passionate kind, even taking into account the fact that the author is by origin Belfast Catholic and therefore liable to be unsympathetic to heavy-handed governments. I think this savage portrait is perhaps most significant in so far as it conveys the degree of revulsion which intellectuals in Canada or concerned with Canada have developed towards Trudeau in his years of office, a revulsion intensified by the fact that so many of them supported him when he ran as a dark horse for leadership and now feel insulted by his authoritarian style.

There is much less of this distorting passion about *Bleeding Hearts . . . Bleeding Country*. Denis Smith has strong convictions about the nature and needs of democracy, but he has cooled his feelings in reflection, and the result is a remarkably good narrative of the events, which leads up to a many-sided consideration of the new set of possibilities that have faced Canada since October.

I am not always in agreement with

Professor Smith, though I admire the fairness and compassion with which he has tried to weigh every aspect of the October events, allotting responsibilities impartially and not shrinking, as so many critics of the government have done, from an outright condemnation of the terrorists on moral grounds while insisting on their sincerity. Nevertheless, I think he confuses the ideals and the realities of democratic government when he argues that it would have been possible for the Canadian authorities to have met the demands of the kidnappers, have saved the hostages, and have emerged politically strengthened. Personally, I was in favour of any action that would have saved the lives of Cross and Laporte, and I was opposed to the imposition of the War Measures Act, but I was able to take both these positions because I am uninterested in politics in the sense of power structures. But I knew that such a crisis calls in question the whole conception of government based on coercive laws by opposing arbitrary violence to institutionalized violence, and I also knew that no party *in power* (in the full sense of that loaded phrase) could do other than dramatically assert its authority in such a situation. Even a government of Wafflers, faced by acts of right-wing terrorism, would react in a closely similar way to Trudeau faced by acts of left-wing terrorism; it is the fact of administration based on a pyramid of power that has to be changed, not the attitudes of individual governments caught in the plays of force.

Professor Smith has been unable to make this admission, and so he argues — with great skill admittedly — for the kind of realism that would accept the democratic separatism of the Parti Québecois as a means of defusing terrorism and would work out a destiny for Canada on this basis. The virtue of his book is that in the process he reveals the hollowness of federalism as at present envisaged by Canadian federalists, and demonstrates the need for a deep re-examination of our democratic ideas and our less democratic practices.

In the process of his discussion Professor Smith presents an analysis of FLQ attitudes and classifies them as anarchists; with that identification I must also take issue. The evidence to support it is singularly scanty. The FLQ call themselves Marxist, and their spokesman, Pierre Vallières, has specifically denied that they are anarchists. Even Professor Smith unwittingly betrays his own argument when he says that "the October acts were an anarchist preliminary stage or interlude of action in a revolutionary pattern which will not necessarily remain anarchist, but which is intended by the theorists of the movement to develop later into a disciplined mass revolutionary movement." I do not think there is much doubt that the shadowy leaders of the FLQ indeed see themselves as little Lenins and hope eventually to accomplish an October much closer to that of 1917 than to that of 1970, but once one admits this, the argument that the FLQ is *at present* anarchist falls to the ground, since anarchism is not the temporary strategy of convinced authoritarians, but a fundamental and consistent opposition not only to organized government but also to disciplined political parties seeking to overthrow *and replace* governments. There is also a crucial difference in method between the classic anarchist terrorists of the 1890's and the FLQ terrorists. The anarchists would kill opponents in cir-

cumstances which often amounted to self-immolation so far as the assassins were concerned, but they never held men hostage under the threat of death. That was a refinement introduced into left-wing activity by the Bolsheviks. To act as a self-appointed jailer would seem contemptible to any true anarchist. In taking hostages the FLQ are, then, Bolshevik by ancestry; their formation into cells derives ultimately from the tactical doctrines of the French nineteenth century revolutionary, Auguste Blanqui, from whom the Bolsheviks too derived so much; only their rhetoric carries an echo of Bakunin.

Some of that Bakuninist rhetoric, gone very rusty, rattles through *White Niggers of America*, which every Canadian interested in politics should read, not for pleasure, since it is in almost every way a singularly bad book, but because nobody can understand the hallucinatory worlds to which political fanatics strive to give concrete reality unless they read confessions of this kind. It is true that some strange WASPish guilt has led certin English Canadian critics to praise *White Niggers* and seriously to compare Vallières with revolutionary theorists like Guevara and Fanon, whose writing he merely lamely imitates. One can only conclude that they themselves are wholly ignorant of the history and literature of left-wing politics; otherwise they would have recognized that the rhetoric used by Vallières had been worn threadbare by a hundred users before he took it out of the ideological Sally Ann of the New Left, while his so-called political analysis is the naïf kind of radical apocalypticism which Hyde Park orators have been spouting — and spouting more intelligently — for fifty years.

Even as an autobiography, *White Niggers of America* does not have the virtues of fresh perception that might compensate for the massive distortions created by self-pity and delayed adolescent rage. It is the product of a Céline in fustian; long passages read like a burlesque skit on *Death on the Instalment Plan*. Vallières lacks any of Céline's literary power, but he has the same corroding fury, the same paranoia that twists his view of everything he observes.

White Niggers of America is the work of a fanatic, but that — I repeat — is the reason why it should be read, since to understand the causes of political fanaticism (which is always authoritarian, puritanical and thoroughly unpleasant in its results), one has to observe with objectivity that interplay between subjective feelings of intolerable persecution and actual social evils which makes men with a strong sense of inner impotence seek apocalyptic ways of change which history has always shown worsen the evils they aim to eliminate. Perhaps the Vallières are sick, and one is ready to believe a sick society has infected them; societies often produce from their own depths the scourges they deserve. But that is no reason for sane men to accept the lash, or to agree that out of hatred one can build a world of love.

WAYLAYING THE MUSE

Alexander Hutchinson

GEORGES ZUK, *Selected Verse*. "Translated from the French language by Robin Skelton." Kayak Books, $1.50.
ROBIN SKELTON, *Private Speech: Messages 1962-70*. Sono Nis, $2.50.
ROBIN SKELTON, *The Hunting Dark*. McClelland & Stewart, $2.50.

ALL OF ROBIN SKELTON'S books reflect the poet's desire to know and master his craft: his recent publications on Synge clearly demonstrate — as in Berryman's early study of Stephen Crane — how the close knowledge of another writer's life and work need not have an insidious or regressive effect on a poet's own work and can, instead, develop his skill and enrich the vision. Skelton's translations from the Greek anthology are delightful in themselves, and worthwhile for the literary tradition which they re-animate; his Zuk poems are a tribute to a continental alter-ego. *Private Speech* consists of messages from the "lively dead," and has as its central theme the act of creation as a dance of opposites; in *The Hunting Dark*, the *persona* often appears as the public man of letters, walking home from classes, jotting down notes for lectures, lamenting the makers that are gone, praising those alive, and learning that to hold the attention of listening children takes skill to equal *ars poetica*. In addition to these books, he is preparing two others which deal directly with the practice of poetry.

The figure of Georges Zuk is shaped quickly in the introduction to the *Selected Verse* and gradually in the poems and collages — as a mask slips, a raincoat flashes open, or a fly button is nibbled away — he tempts you to throw off the visible, assault the institutional pieties, and be responsible on occasion for a clearly indecent exposure.

> Yesterday I had
> an enormous erection
>
> in one of the smaller rooms
> in the Plais de Justice.
>
> It was an empty room
> perhaps even a vacuum,
>
> and the smell of the dust was exciting
> as young girls hair.

It's often a tight squeeze for Zuk: his head balloons with metaphysics, even as the blood is crowding to other parts of his anatomy. But he persuades; he teaches; he provides the bucket in a well lined with mirrors, the fish in a bed of disguise. He is open enough regarding his fetichism, his deception, his revenge on the machine, his classicism, his modesty, his anonymity, his sado-masochistic tendencies, his ontology of eggs, black vinyl and Secret Police. His enthusiasms are infectious. His artistry is equalled only by his shameless aplomb:

> The film of the nurse and the doctor
> lasted two hours,
>
> and that of the girl and schoolmistress
> almost two more;
>
> at last, however, they got to
> the pièce de resistance,

a five minute study of Adeline
buckling her spats.

Zuk is known in part by the company he keeps: Zazie, Lulu, the Countess, and America (the beautiful) deliver their lines like old troupers; God is in the wings with Blok the banker; Arthur Darkness (the heavy) upstages Nana's German Shepherd. Schwitters, guesting, fakes it with Sappho. Then the lady with the walk-on part (in bloomers and a pubic wig) drops broad hints in an aside: "Zuk, c'est moi." Zuk, therefore, takes other parts besides his own, and is himself impersonated. The "cult of invisibility," to which he adheres, proposes that "each poem brings a new author into existence." So the audience's curiosity about the character hogging the spotlight might also extend to the one who is cracking the whip back-stage:

The Professor has almost completed
his volume on Zuk:

The volume on Zuk, however,
is undecided

Whether or not the Professor
is complete

and is obliged to ask
for outside opinions.

The cover of *Private Speech* offers a collage, also by the poet, which sights along a corridor, the wing of a Freudian clinic. Slick, rounded limbs and bodies block your path and edge through doorways. Papa's homburg hat hangs over the exit like a cowl. The edifice rests in space; what lies beyond the open facing door is as black as the floor that falls beneath your feet. Inside the book the landscape alters; inevitably we find a reordering, a different resonance, pale impressions of nightmare, a waking to discover footprints of former inhabitants

and watch the fragments of voices
form in air

nameless voices
destroying the taste of names.

The messages of this dimension are protean, riddling; creatures quail or lie in wait, words decay like sand, and all the forces of nature are invoked. The protagonist as poet, lover, shaman, seeks a private speech to use in the face of dissolution, to discover light and ease —

the way the river
is careless about the rocks
that give it voices

— and also to know a strength rooted in praise.

The brief, crisp sections of the poem remind one of Wallace Stevens — but *Private Speech* owes little to that poet's typical philosophy or imagery, having less control, more appetite.

The Hunting Dark is divided into four sections, the first, "They All Come Back", containing several vivid portraits and incidents, like "Peter" and "The Friday Fish", which draw for the most part on past experience. They are commemorative, nostalgic, but each has a wound of a kind, a suddenness of painful recognition:

One place we met
a Halifax crashed in the stream.
They heard the gunner
screaming. The scar on the bank is
brown there yet . . . ("Chapel Hill")

The book's title is taken from a line in "New Bedford," a poem that handles Lowell themes in Lowell country and writes well up to that taxing standard. In "Dirty Snow" the dark has another epithet — a brilliant one — that clenches the poem like a fist, even as the image is perfectly expanded:

Jacob also
slid into the rivering dark
without a word

and altered the tide of the sea.

"At the Centre" and the other sections "It Could be Love" and "A Kind of Resonance" are less moving, although they are just as ambitious. There is a switch to the immediate present, still mindful of the past, but marked now in calendars and the glass. Here a brave attempt is made to keep balance, to walk "the highest wire" of creativity, to find a capacity for love in a time that is vertiginous, chaotic, where everything

flies
upwards, beats
itself to death. ("Warring with Emblems")

There is an aspiration, a stretching of the spirit in the final poems, but also some hesitance and an attenuation, because the poet's strength — although he may wish to be "a more delicate fabulist" — remains in the substance of his memories —

an occasion
trapped by its own discovery

in love, in poetry. *Private Speech* handled these themes more concisely without a disembodiment.

The power of Robin Skelton's best poetry is derived from the authority of his personal voice and equally from the scope of his sense of history. That he is a prolific and skilful writer is obvious; and it is clear, too, that since his first arrival in Canada in 1962, he has played a large part in shaping the artistic taste of this country through his writing and teaching, his editorial sense, and his encouragement of the other arts. He has candour and he speaks for his time.

THE POET AS GUNMAN

Andreas Schroeder

MICHAEL ONDAATJE, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid.* Anansi, $6.50 cloth, $2.50 paper.

HAD MICHAEL ONDAATJE not come out with his lyric/dramatic *The Man With Seven Toes* in 1969, I would have said that nothing in his previously published work really prepared me for his recent award-winning *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid.* In fact, in terms of the quite considerable improvement in Ondaatje's recent verse as compared to the earlier *Dainty Monsters,* I'd say the statement still holds true. The many lamely constructed similes of *Dainty Monsters* and the often lurid lyric excesses of *The Man With Seven Toes* are a far cry from the more carefully crafted, casually understated material of *Billy the Kid.* Negotiating this book, I sensed a sure-footedness, a control which I have never felt in Ondaatje's earlier books. Indeed, if he hadn't used the historic framework of the adventures of Mrs. Fraser (*The Man With Seven Toes*) in a manner somewhat prophetic of his similar technique in *The Collected Works of*

Billy the Kid, I would have found little area for comparison whatsoever.

The rather unusual choice of an old Wild-West saga — the story of Billy the Kid — as a literary vehicle struck me at first as dubious, but strikes me now as quite an intelligent choice to have made. For one thing, though much has been written about the incidents surrounding the Kid's life — the early shootings, the cattle rustlings, the Lincoln County wars and finally his fatal shooting by Sheriff Garrett in Fort Sumner in 1880 — very little record remains (or has existed) of the Kid's own version of his story, of anything which might have given the reader more of an insight into his character than the descriptions of those who claimed to know him. Somehow, even after each of these people has had his say, the Kid still remains essentially a silent, mysterious puzzle, an assemblage of pieces of hearsay and history representing a man whose deeds were clear, but whose reasons for perpetrating them were not. For this reason there was plenty of room for Ondaatje to develop and amplify, with few restrictions, an entire personage to whatever specifications he pleased, and, on top of this, to plunge quickly into deep water without having to waste unnecessary space with lengthy explanations and introductions, since the exterior, physical realities of his subject were already general cultural property.

In *The Collected Works*, then, Ondaatje projects himself into the minds of the Kid and Sheriff Garrett to retell the saga from the inside, writing down the reminiscences, jokes, casual thoughts, answers to simulated questions and even hallucinations which may have passed through the two men's minds. Using poems, prose sketches, "eyewitness" reports, diary-like notations and an ostensible newspaper interview with the Kid, Ondaatje restores to the saga the third dimension it had lost by having become an old tale always told from a single storyteller's point of view. Ondaatje's "new version", in fact, becomes one of the most intimate kinds of documentary imaginable, the camera having completely free access to both public and private sides of the subject(s); i.e. the incidents themselves as well as the minds of the men who provoked them are open to inspection.

Of course, the value of *The Collected Works* as a colourfully reconstituted account of the history of Billy the Kid has only little to do with the value of the book as such, and even less with its winning of the Governor-General's Award. The success of the poetry and prose between its covers goes well beyond its sub-

ject — a telltale hallmark of good literature in any style. And if the person of Billy the Kid consequently evolves into a character almost too sensitive to be a believable gunman, well — history must remain the slave of Art. Frankly, if Billy the Kid had ever really managed to describe a fever-ridden week spent in an abandoned barn in the way Ondaatje has him describe it on Page 17 of this book (unfortunately much too long to quote), he had no business being a gunman in the first place, and probably would have known it.

Indeed, one is always conscious of Ondaatje speaking through the mask of Billy, Garrett, or any of the other characters in the book, but this never detracts from either the story or the verse; the characters, in fact, flourish by this method in a truly dramatic way. Whether any of the historic persons really appeared the way Ondaatje recreates them simply becomes irrelevant; they make a very credible amount of sense within the context of Ondaatje's version of the tale. His story takes on its own rhythms, entirely outside the realities of history.

While I keep itching to quote passages to demonstrate many of the above-mentioned points, *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* is the kind of book which generally defies quoting anything less than the entire section or poem being referred to, particularly since these sections tend to be cumulatively successful as well as individually so. Only a very few, like this oblique little description of Sheriff Garrett, are short enough and can fairly be pulled out of context:

> You know hunters
> are the gentlest
> anywhere in the world
>
> they halt caterpillars
> from path dangers
> lift a drowning moth from a bowl
> remarkable in peace
>
> in the same way assassins
> come to chaos neutral

The clean simplicity, the uncluttered, toned-down, almost easy precision demonstrated in this poem and generally characteristic of the book is probably the happy result of Ondaatje's being forced to assume, at least to some degree, the simplicity of speech his characters themselves would have used. This little exercise has done Ondaatje a world of good, and *The Collected Works* reflects it. Only occasionally, in precisely five poems, does he let his lyric overdrive run away with him to the detriment of the poem, which becomes not only non-believable in context, but simply bad or mediocre poetry outright. That's not a bad average for a 105-page book. Mind you, I don't mean to imply that the rest of the work is therefore necessarily all undiluted genius, but it's certainly strong enough to keep one reading voluntarily and continuously, from cover to cover, without the incentive of a six-shooter in the back.

books in review

AN OFFWHITE HORSE

MORDECAI RICHLER, *St. Urbain's Horseman.* McClelland & Stewart, $7.95.

THIS IS such a complex book that it is difficult to know how to deal with it in the necessarily limited space of a review. Through the opposition of the central symbol, St. Urbain's Horseman, the shadowy and romantic figure of Joey Hersh, a man we never actually meet except in flashbacks, and his cousin Jacob Hersh, Canadian expatriate, a very unromantic figure whom we come to know very well, and through lesser motifs and a large cast of secondary figures, Richler manages, in the space of only 467 pages, to examine the anxiety and malaise which have attacked the very roots of modern society.

Jake Hersh, a man who, like Minever Cheevey, seems to have been "born too late", has found financial success but no self-respect because his life seems hollow and unreal at the core, his happiness ephemeral and undeserved, his sadness merely superficial, a self-induced substitute for the *angst* he really longs for. (It is important, I think, that Jake is a T.V. and film director, i.e. involved in simulated action, fake emotion). On to the figure of his counsin Joey, who was his childhood hero, Jake projects all his dreams of glory and moral commitment, imagining him riding his white horse (Death, the white horse of the Apocalypse?) in an endless search for vengeance, specifically Jewish vengeance. Joey's journal, given to Jake in Israel by Joey's deserted wife, discusses atrocities committed against the Jews during the Second World War (a war in which Jake was too young to participate) and the actions of a certain Dr. Mengele who may still be alive and living in Paraguay, "in his villa with the barred windows off an unmarked road in the jungle, between Puerto San Vincente and the border fortress of Carlos Antonio López, on the Paraná river." (These words come back again and again to chill the reader just as he is lulled into thinking that this is just another comic book in the Portnoy/Beautiful Losers/A Mother's Kisses vein.) In fact, the scramble to reach the top in the film world (so cleverly satirized by the Sunday ball game on Hampstead Heath) has a much darker echo in the description of the frantic Jewish prisoners, trying to flee the hissing gas of the death chamber:

> The bodies are not lying scattered here and there throughout the room, but piled in a mass to the ceiling. This is explained by the fact that the gas first inundates the lower layers of air and rises but slowly to the ceiling.... At the bottom of the pile are the babies, children, women and aged; at the top the strongest.

And Jake worries that he and his wife may have left the gas on and hurries her home from a restaurant to check his sleeping children. Thus against the wildly comic main plot of the story is set the dark theme of those who died (those *Jews* who died at any rate) to feed a nation's paranoia and lust for power. Jake can never forget and Richler makes sure that we can't either.

Because of the seriousness of what may be called the "subplot", for want of a better word, the trial of Jake and his

doppelgänger Harry Stein (a poor boy from England's ghetto, not Montreal's — a self-convinced failure who fiddles taxes for a corrupt and highly successful Jewish accountant, Jake's accountant, and who gets his kicks through bomb threats and attempts at blackmail plus porno photography on the side), funny as it may be on the surface, takes on universal significance. (Is it an accident that Jake mentions "Karl M — I mean Kant" at his trial and Karl Marx again when questioned about his silver-wrapped bullet-like suppositories by the airline detective in Paris? The two K's remind one immediately of a man known only by his initial who endures another, darker, trial.) Jake's supposed crimes are crude and ridiculous — sodomy ("aiding and abetting"), indecent assault, possession of cannabis — but his existential crime is obviously the fact that he is alive and well and living in London (and married to a Gentile, yet) while there are still people like Mengele alive and the ghosts of millions of German Jews, Polish Jews, Jewish Jews, cry out for vengeance. Jake gets off "with costs" and this of course just deepens his sense of guilt. (Harry, who has a criminal record and no one to vouch for him, gets seven years.) Yet Jake will always pay — his terrible self-awareness will see to that.

I have only briefly touched on some of the major points in the novel. Richler manages, as well, to satirize the English, the Canadians (particularly the C.B.C.), most Jews, and stupid working girls who spend their drab lives entering contests in the hopes of someday winning a ticket to paradise. The one character who comes off as *really* good is, oddly enough, Nancy, Jake's Gentile wife. She is the ideal woman, beautiful, sexy (even after three children), intelligent: a woman who could embrace one of her husband's oldest friends to whom she has turned in her worry over Jake's trial, but who says, fiercely, her thoughts on her children all the while, "I mustn't lose my milk." The depraved German *au pair* girl, Ingrid, plus the wives of all his friends and his own female relatives, only point up to Jake how lucky he really is. Perhaps through the image of Nancy with her beauty and her dripping breasts we are to conclude that the sooner the races intermingle, the sooner society might take a turn for the better? Who knows? Richler wisely leaves us to draw our own conclusions.

Readers of this book must read it carefully. Like tiny hammer taps certain key words (tapeworm, General Montgomery, cunt) test our reflexes and extend our awareness of our own enfeebled existence. At slightly more than 1½ cents a page, and at today's prices, this book is a real bargain.

AUDREY THOMAS

LANDSCAPE WITH FIGURES

Tales from the Margin. The selected short stories of Frederick Philip Grove. Edited, with an introduction and notes, by Desmond Pacey. Ryerson Press-McGraw Hill, $7.95.

FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE is a name that refuses to be dismissed from even the shortest list of significant Canadian writers. Discussion nevertheless continues as to the kind and quality of his achievement. It is therefore with more than usual interest and pleasure that one welcomes a collection of twenty-five of his

stories, about half of them previously unpublished and most of the remainder hitherto unavailable to the general reader. We are indebted to Desmond Pacey for bringing these together, from their hiding places, into one volume, and for the introduction and notes that give details of the provenance and chronology of the stories, relate them to Grove's novels and offer a spirited defense of Grove's art of fiction.

Readers — and there will be many — across whose mental landscape Grove moves as a familiar yet mysterious figure will find themselves, as they turn these pages, reassessing his individual quality, deciding what it may be that distinguishes him from others, like Sinclair Ross, whose major work interprets substantially the same terrain. For this reader Grove's uniqueness has come to identify itself with his conception of an entity difficult to name: the natural setting, the background, the countryside, the locale, the place of action. None of these terms will quite serve, because, in Grove's world, the regional terrain is the principal actor. Whereas Sinclair Ross is occupied with what is done to people by their environment, Grove is concerned with the land itself, how it shapes whatever lives or moves upon it. His characters are for the most part acutely and continuously aware of their dependence upon, subservience to, inextricable engagement with the land. The earth and the natural elements act; the characters react.

As maps are drawn of Hardy's Wessex, one might usefully be sketched of Grove's prairie region. It runs athwart the three "prairie" provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. Certain cities are named and known but the decisive action takes place far out in the country, often in northern areas where the bush becomes a light forest and the flat prairie of tradition is unknown. Grove's best-known novels — *Settlers of the Marsh*, 1927; *Our Daily Bread*, 1928; *The Yoke of Life*, 1930; and *Fruits of the Earth*, 1933 —belong to this wide region, more diversified than the term prairie would suggest, rich in contrarieties of contour, vegetation, climatic conditions, and type of settler. Of each and all Grove is closely observant.

It is a landscape with figures rather than figures in a landscape. But we must beware of hasty inferences. Grove is no misanthrope, insensitive to human joy and suffering. He is simply recording, with the faithfulness of one who has been a participant, the peculiar ethos of this region in the decade or so following the First World War. His best-known work, *Over Prairie Trails*, 1922, records how he drove seven times during the course of a severe winter from Gladstone to Falmouth, where he and his wife, respectively, were teaching school. In the mile-by-mile stories of how driver and horses cope with wind and cold and snow, their struggle toward a destination serves to absorb all personal emotion and the fact of arrival dominates and overshadows any reference to the joy of reunion with wife and child.

The resonance of Grove's work results from the repeated ringing note of actuality that it emits. He sees human effort as inextricably involved with material substance. We come to a black track crossing the grey-yellow highway: "There humus from the field is ground together with the clay of the grade into an exceedingly fine and light dust, perfectly dry, which betrays that many loads have already passed from the field to the

yard." On the same page, a wagon appears, "the driver, an elderly, bearded man of unmistakably Scottish cast: broad-shouldered and heavily set, his grave, though not unpleasant face dusted over with grime and chaff." Superficially, these two bits of observation may seem all of a piece; in fact, a closer look and an attempt to sense the cadence of Grove's thought reveal that closer and more loving care has been bestowed upon the road. It is this quite literally down-to-earth actuality that supplies the firm footing for all Grove's literary manoeuvres.

The stretch of country represented in the stories is roughly, as we have seen, the prairie provinces, excluding the larger towns and the older agricultural areas of Manitoba. The time is centred in that period between the arrival of the railways as a major means of transport and the supersession of the horse by power-driven vehicles. Grove is dealing with a frontier where, in one generation, immigrants from eastern Canadian provinces, from the U.S., and from Europe have been striving to make a living and, perforce, to establish a new way of life. The land and the elements are at once promising and threatening: it seems possible for a pioneer, within his own adult lifetime, to reach the status of a patriarch. Yet enormous clouds of unease and ill-omen have been and still are sweeping over at varying altitudes, — the distant fury of international war, the heartbreaking fluctuations in markets for grain, the ignorance and impotence of governments, the absence of medical and other meliorating services. To these large movements Grove's characters pay only spasmodic attention; they are concerned with consequences rather than causes. All man-induced disasters are insignificant beside the uncontrollable forces of the natural world, the capricious seasons of a continental climate in these higher latitudes.

The best of the stories, such as "Saturday Night at the Crossroads", remind one of Turgenev's "Byezhin Meadow". There is the same sense of human activity enclosed and swallowed up in a natural world out of which a mysterious vitality flows. The boy Willy, in Grove's story "The Marsh Fire" seems like a brother to Turgenev's brave Pavel. It is in an unstructured, casual frontier life that the courage and enterprise of the young leap out so readily.

This world has no villains, only a few tricky salesmen of goods and services; it has no contact worth mentioning with government, with the law, with the armed forces, with the church. Policemen, bankers, doctors may briefly appear but they do little to help or harm anyone. There is not even, in Grove's tales, the immemorial cyclical round of agricultural practice. Everything must be devised afresh. The simple search for water is for one man a matter of digging a few feet to find a fresh and abundant spring; for another it is to lose the farm itself in payment of a debt to a well-driller who has gone down over two hundred feet, only to strike brine. In such a world there is little room for sentiment, for ecstasy or for despair; endeavour, endurance and persistence are all. There is always the hope of "advancing if ever so slowly".

Though there are, properly, no social classes, the possession of land and money creates differentials. Grove's response to those who acquire, by direct fraud or legal trickery, what others have laboured to create is unmistakable, unmixed contempt. Nowhere is this contempt more

evident than in his story "Relief", where government money is recklessly wasted by the recipients. Later, as in *The Master of the Mill*, 1944, questions of corporate action and social reform will claim Grove's attention, but not in these early stories of the West. Here, in Spring or Summer, hopefulness exhales from the land itself and boys will not feel the pull of city life, "for the city is supercilious and arrogant to its visitors; the country is humble and friendly to all"; here, when winter storms bring destruction and death, no blame can be laid on anyone: "God's will be done!" says the bereaved mother at the end of Grove's story whose whole meaning is in its title, "Snow".

The editor's introduction makes the point that Grove's apparently stilted dialogue was generally idiomatic for the time and place and that his insistence on detailed observations seldom fails of significance and at times reveals, in a single phrase, a whole way of life. Something depends on the reader's remembrance of things past or his willingness to enter with sympathy and imagination into the life of the western provinces as they were between the two World Wars.

This reader, who was a farm hand in Alberta in the mid-twenties, can record his own shock of recognition. The open landscape where wind obliged what trees there were to crouch in the shallow gullies of the river; the unceasing pressure of the daily round, from dawn to dark, and the annual round from heat to cold, not easily sustained; the settlers, differentiated by their place of origin, England, Scotland, America, Eastern Canada; the catastrophes: a young wife crushed under a hay-sweep, a young man, soon to be married, killed by lightning at the river-crossing; the blooming, hopeful, lively children; the first good crop in seven years; the absence of appliances, of machines, of conveniences, of comforts and the ubiquitousness of baling-wire in all repairs; soft coal at almost no cost to those who dug and hauled it themselves; the close co-operation of neighbours, replacing recourse to institutions; the coyotes and their victims; the overpowering imminence of the land itself, pervading and conditioning every activity, reducing sensibility and language to simple, reiterated forms. The ultimate break-up of the community, most families moving to the West Coast. Grove's stories revive and reanimate one's memories and they stimulate the imaginative reconstruction of our authentic and particularized past: good reasons to be grateful for their having been garnered by Desmond Pacey into this volume.

THE MIND OF THE EXILE

Malcolm Lowry: The Man and his Work, ed. George Woodcock. *Wyndham Lewis in Canada*, ed. George Woodcock. University of British Columbia Press. $4.00 each.

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA Press is publishing a Canadian Literature series, each volume devoted to a single writer or theme and consisting of reprints from this periodical, augmented by new articles, biographical data and bibliographies. Two early issues deal respectively wtih "Wyndham Lewis in Canada" and with "Malcolm Lowry: the Man and his Work". *Canadian* literature? Neither a fifteen-year residence here on Lowry's part nor the coincidence of Lewis's having been born on a yacht in Canadian waters is really a sufficient qualification; Lowry was a migrant Englishman who had roamed the globe, and Lewis was so much a European that his experience when he was marooned in Toronto during the Second World War was that of an exile. Consider, though, the artistic use to which these writers put their Canadian years, and their inclusion in this series is more than warranted. In Lowry's case, it was only in Canada that he could write at the full pitch of his creative powers; the land- and sea-scapes of the Burrard Inlet near Vancouver were the essential catalyst to his imagination. Wyndham Lewis, by contrast, found both the landscape and people of eastern Canada generally cold and inhospitable, but he too transmuted his response into powerful artistic forms.

Lewis's reputation has survived better as an artist than as a writer and again perhaps more as a portrait-painter, of such contemporaries as Eliot, Sitwell and Pound, than as the painter of brilliant symbolic canvases. As a writer of fiction, philosophy, criticism and autobiography Lewis is only now being resurrected from the disfavour and neglect he partly brought on himself through the savagery of some of his satirical attacks and through his early championship, soon renounced, of Hitler. *Wyndham Lewis in Canada* contributes to the re-establishment by documenting one episode in his career and by drawing critical attention, long overdue, to his "Canadian" novel, *Self-Condemned*.

This work, based on Lewis's experiences in Toronto, was dictated during his blindness and published in 1954, ten years after his return to England. It recreates the hopelessness of the world situation in the 1930's and in this respect it resembles Lowry's *Under the Volcano* which, completed in 1947, uses Mexico and the Spanish Civil War to reflect the political scene of the previous decade. Though Lewis's fictional methods are almost diametrically opposed to Lowry's, there are points, particularly in the use of landscape, at which the two novels invite comparison.

Both present the tragedy of a man of unusual potentialities walking into a hell which is and is not of his own making, a path of self-destruction simultaneously caused by and reflecting the universal chaos. The absurdist dilemma of Lowry's Geoffrey Firmin and Lewis's René Harding is projected through landscape. For Firmin, the path of destruction winds through the Mexican landscape, with its gaping ravines, dark woods and threatening volcanoes, while the glimpses of a

salvation longed for but impossible to attain are expressed as the dream of "a house dappled with misty light" between the forest and the sea, in British Columbia. Through all of Lowry's posthumously published work the same paradisial vision persists: the actual setting of the Lowry shack at Dollarton given the name Eridanus and used as the emblem of "simplicity and love".

As the Mexican landscape is to Lowry's novel, so is the Canadian setting to *Self-Condemned*. The cold of an eastern winter and the endless barren wilderness furnish an image of total sterility, the living hell in which Harding is imprisoned. Understandably, Canadian readers have responded less than enthusiastically to a picture of their country as a waste land and themselves as hollow men. In *Wyndham Lewis in Canada*, both Hugh Kenner and George Woodcock identify the shift in vision peculiar to the exile as having shaped Lewis's description. In his case the alien's usual sense of disorientation was exacerbated to the point of paranoia: his very identity as a man and artist was threatened by the loss of his own cultural milieu. Kenner's detailed study of the exile's heightened, almost neurotic, awareness offers a fine corrective to the view that Lewis's picture of Canada is prejudiced and unrealistic, and it leads to an illuminating summary of the novel's method as "from end to end a prolonged vertigo, a slow-motion picture of very little happening." (This, incidentally, could serve also as a description of *Under the Volcano* and the film analogy would be equally appropriate.)

A further corrective lies in considering the opening sections of the novel, where Harding, before leaving England, has a series of interviews with members of his family, clumsily contrived to reveal different aspects of a stultified English society. To discuss *Self-Condemned* as if it were totally set in Canada (as the articles here do) is to lose the image of universal sterility for which the details of the Canadian landscape happen to provide an appropriate correlative. The last lines of the novel likewise are not to be construed as a cheap jab at American academia but as extending the territory of the hollow men to yet another country: "and the Faculty had no idea that it was a glacial shell of a man who had come to live among them, mainly because they were themselves unfilled with anything more than a little academic stuffing."

Lewis's own artistic use of the Canadian landscape was preceded by an analytical comment in an article written about 1942 and entitled "Nature's place in Canadian Culture". It is published here for the first time. In Lewis's view, the overpowering presence of the northern wilderness is the Canadian's only unique heritage and the way to develop a distinctively national culture is "through utilization of *the scene*, in the widest sense, of a given human group, as against the acquisition of a cosmopolitan culture." Finding no first-rate literature in the country at that time, Lewis focused his attention on the Group of Seven, and in particular on A. Y. Jackson who "stands for the savage backdrop of Canadian life, in contrast to the central-heated sophistication of what is urban and nondescript".

The Canadian aspects of Lewis's own work as a painter are documented in an article by Sheila Watson, from his service as a Canadian war artist in the First World War to his exploration of war and

crucifixion themes and his commissioned portraits during his residence in Canada in the Second World War. There are now about sixty of Lewis's paintings in Canadian hands; it would have been a useful addition to the bibliography if at least a partial list of their locations could have supplemented the few names given by Mrs. Watson.

Several articles in this and the Lowry volume present personal recollections of the writers as people, ranging from the embarrassing to the genuinely helpful. In the latter class, Father J. Stanley Murphy's account of Lewis at Windsor throws interesting light on the process whereby autobiography is transmuted into fiction. The memories of Malcolm Lowry are not so useful, though they give some information about his writing habits and create a picture of a man rather different from the one projected through the various personae of his novels.

In general, however, the Lowry volume is the richer of the two, inevitably so perhaps, considering the productivity of his years here. There is a special appropriateness in the publication of Lowry studies by a university that holds his archives and from a geographical area so crucial to his development, but one wonders sometimes if Lowry's enthusiasm for British Columbia has not been overreciprocated in this collection. Each of Lowry's available works is given critical attention, and there is a sense of strain when the posthumously published are considered as if they were of the same calibre as *Under the Volcano*. This novel was the only published work Lowry was prepared to acknowledge; his early *Ultramarine* he dismissed as "an absolute flop and abortion". It may be that he set himself impossibly high standards but it was surely artistic judgment as much as anything that kept him from completing his work. His preface to the French edition of *Under the Volcano* (given here in a translation by George Woodcock) and the letter to his publisher when the novel was rejected, show a critical perfectionism that demands respect. It is certainly essential for the scholar to examine the Lowry archives in order to see his total development as a writer, but let him keep a sense of perspective to distinguish between the finished work of art and the forever incomplete.

Critics rise best to the challenge of fine work and inevitably the most stimulating articles in this collection are on *Under the Volcano*. The emphasis is on themes, mythical motifs and structure, with particularly illuminating studies of the effect on the novel's form of two Lowry passions, for film, in an article by Paul G. Tiessen, and for jazz, in an essay by Perle Epstein, who has previously explored the Cabbalistic elements in *Under the Volcano*. It is only in Tiessen's article that attention is drawn to Lowry's poetic prose, with a scrutiny of the manner in which the rhythms reflect camera technique. The small selection of Lowry's verse, included with a preface by Earle Birney, seems to me to demonstrate that all of Lowry's poetic genius flowed into prose; some are neatly-turned lyrics but the images lack the immediacy and intensity of their prose counterparts.

The Lowry volume is commendable then not only for the calibre of many of the studies it presents but for the multitude of directions it suggests for further enquiry. It is a valuable pioneer in the rich but as yet scarcely explored field of Lowry criticism.

JOAN COLDWELL

TWO TORONTOS

RICHARD WRIGHT, *The Weekend Man.* Macmillan.
JUAN BUTLER, *Cabbagetown Diary: A Documentary.* Peter Martin Associates. $2.95.

RICHARD WRIGHT'S *The Weekend Man* and Juan Butler's *Cabbagetown Diary: A Documentary* are novels based partly on their author's experiences. Wright, born in Midland, Ontario, in 1937, worked in publishing in Toronto for several years before he moved to Peterborough with his wife and son. The chief character of *The Weekend Man* is Wes Wakeham, a thirty-year-old native of Middlesburgh, Ontario, who has attended the University of Toronto, worked at various jobs in the city, and married a girl from Rosedale. At the time of the story, he is living in a high-rise apartment in a Toronto suburb, selling books for "Winchester House, a small Canadian subsidiary of Fairfax Press of London and New York", and trying to work out a reconciliation with his wife Molly and a solution about their son Andrew, a mongoloid. Butler, born in London, England, in 1942, "came to Canada at age six — Gradeschool some Highschool some Reformschool lots of Streetschool — worked as shoesalesman carwasher insurance clerk labourer etc. etc. — fed up — went to Mexico — taught English — came back — barwaiter — went to Europe . . . fed up — came back — insurance clerk again bartender." Michael, the chief character of *Cabbagetown Diary,* has grown up in Toronto, been to reform school, and gained most of his education in the streets, although he has "always liked reading". At the time of the story, he is living in "an $8 room" in Cabbagetown and working as a bartender "at the Lord Simcoe Ladies' Club, a real highclass place, where all of Toronto's rich bitches hang out."

Not only the chief character but also the image of Toronto in each novel reflects the different background of its author. Wright's Toronto is that of Butler's "rich bitches": college-educated young professionals, often from small towns, trying to make it in the high-rise, hi-fi apartment complexes and highly-mortgaged houses of suburbia; successful older businessmen with homes in Rosedale and cottages in the country; alcohol-and-steak businessmen's lunches, alcohol-and-pretty sandwich parties, and wine-and-lasagna dinners at Italian restaurants; evening courses, occasional illicit sex, trips to Europe, and new cars. Butler's Toronto is Cabbagetown: Indian prostitutes, drunken winos, high hippies, repentant preachers, noisy taverns, dirty rooming houses, greasy spoons, casual sex, violent fights, trips to prison, and souped-up cars. Neither image is particularly appealing. Although their truth is helped by the first-person narration of the chief character, concrete sketches presented with cinematic swiftness, and witty comments on contemporary issues like the bomb, Vietnam, and — in *Cabbagetown Diary* — Mayor Dennison and the politicians at City Hall, both tend to become clichés.

On the whole, Richard Wright is more successful than Juan Butler at turning his surface realism into a complex, emotionally acceptable statement about the malaise in contemporary urban society. Fairly simple sentence structures and colloquial but correct diction locate the reader in the "here and now", and help him accept the truth of the daily events that Wakeham describes. The author's use of Christmas as a setting gives the

reader's imagination an obvious, but emotionally charged, symbol to work with. His focus on "the weekend man", "a person who has abandoned the present in favour of the past or future" and who suffers *nostalgies* as a result, and the various changes rung on this concept, eventually allow the reader to grasp Wakeham's plight as "felt knowledge" and to consider his own life more subtly.

While Wes Wakeham and his Toronto drew me in, Michael and his Toronto finally turned me off. The novel's epigraph is a quotation from the Toronto *Telegram* about Allan Gardens, "a downtown oasis . . . 12 acres of pathways, flower beds, fountains and trees — bounded by Carlton, Gerrard, Jarvis and Sherbourne Sts." Butler sets out to destroy this image of a garden paradise and to describe it as it is. For Allan Gardens is the heart of Cabbagetown, "the worst slum in Toronto". Butler certainly demolishes the first image. The tough, shrewd bartender who's playing the game of life by catering only as much as necessary to his "rich bitches" and laying the poor ones as much as possible; his "damn", "Christ", "old scrag", "Peckerhead" language; his images of the slumdwellers; and his summer romance with Terry, the narrative that holds *Cabbagetown Diary* together: all obliterate the initial image of a "downtown oasis". They also replace it with one that seems more real. A casual walk down Jarvis Street provides many sights similar to Butler's. But several questions remain. If Cabbagetown and its heart are not paradise, are they the Bosch-like hell that Butler creates? Is his documentary, despite its surface realism, just another contemporary melodrama in which slang, sex, and sensation have replaced the "slop silly slop" of this popular nineteenth-century form of fiction? Is the reader really given, as Robert Fulford suggests, a "remarkable" — presumably because it's true — "glimpse of the underbelly of Toronto"? I doubt it myself.

MARY JANE EDWARDS

ROCK GOTHIC

JOHN FRANKLIN, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea.* M. G. Hurtig. $20.00.

IN 1819, under orders from the British Admiralty, an expedition commanded by Captain John Franklin set out to map the shores of the polar sea, from the Coppermine River eastward. Franklin's party consisted of five Englishmen, including a Mr. Wentzel, clerk of the North West Company; seventeen Canadian "voyagers", these probably being of mixed French and Indian blood; and three interpreters, all Indians. In addition, two Eskimos, plus a large number of Copper Indian hunters, were employed by the Franklin expedition.

Franklin's principal base was Fort Providence on Great Slave Lake. His final jumping-off point for the Coppermine River was Fort Enterprise on Winter Lake. In 1820, two years after leaving York Factory on Hudson's Bay, the Franklin expedition proceeded north in birch canoes to the arctic sea — achieved overland by only two white men previously, Samuel Hearne and Alexander Mackenzie.

Copper Indian hunters and their chief, Akaitcho, provided game along the route. The Hudson's Bay Company and the North Westers supplied both food and

other necessary provisions. Wentzel, the North Westers' clerk, accompanied Franklin to the Coppermine River's mouth, and returned south. Then the birch canoes, which had traversed inland rivers and countless portages, took to the northern seas, hugging the coast, which was mapped for 550 miles east to Point Turnagain.

Franklin's original plan, after mapping the coast eastward as far as possible, had been to return west to the Coppermine and travel south along the river to Fort Enterprise, where supplies would be stored for him. However, if the summer was too far advanced or they ran short of food, plans would be changed, and the expedition would journey south across the barren ground from some undetermined point along the sea coast. As it turned out, they did run short of food, and at a time when the season was far advanced toward arctic winter. Coronation Gulf and the newly-named Hood's River was the route taken to Fort Enterprise.

It was a man-killing trip across the barrens! In fact, six men died: four of starvation, one murdered, one executed for the murder. The battered birch canoes were abandoned shortly after leaving Coronation Gulf. Caribou (which Franklin calls "deer") were nearly nonexistent; any that were sighted proved too fleet of foot for the weakened, near-starving barren ground hikers. "Tripe de roche" (edible lichen on rocks), putrid animal carcasses and wolves' carrion were their food. Along the way, Michel Terohaute, an Iroquois Indian, killed an English officer and was himself killed by another of Franklin's officers. It seems likely that the Indian, perhaps driven insane by hunger, had been eating the bodies of some of his dead companions.

Fort Enterprise was reached eventually, but the expected food supplies were not there. With total catastrophe in sight, Lieutenant Back travelled farther south, searching for Akaitcho and his Copper Indian hunters. After finding the Indians, sleds of food were sent back to rescue the main party at Fort Enterprise from starvation. At which point, in the fall of 1820, the long journey that took four years was really at an end.

This book is a reprint of Franklin's original volume, and a very impressive reprint. It has thirty pages of plates (reproductions of the early steel engravings), many in colour, and includes four detached maps, plus several long appendices relating to flora and fauna, etc. If not quite a work of art, the book comes close to being one.

But reverting back to the expedition itself, Franklin's narrative leaves me very unsatisfied. Apart from being a lousy writer (Back was much better), Franklin's conduct of the expedition seems to me (and others) an ample explanation of his later tragedy — a tragedy that sent dozens of English captains searching westward for the vanished Franklin as well as the North West Passage.

For instance, why weren't the food supplies more efficiently arranged? Everyone, including Franklin, knew that travelling over the barren ground was no English tea party. And why didn't Franklin rely on travelling west by sea (according to his original plan), and returning on the basis of his *actual* food supplies on hand, rather than relying on problematical game along the route? Why, why, why? All this being hindsight, of course.

In addition, the curious story of Michel, the cannibalistic Iroquois, seems

to pose more mysteries in Franklin's narrative than it solves. Probably Lieutenant Back and the Copper Indian chief, Akaitcho, were — as some historians have asserted — the reasons the entire expedition didn't perish. Back nearly died himself on this desperate journey south in search of supplies to aid Franklin. Akaitcho and his hunters provided the most vital necessity of all: food.

Here's what Franklin said of Akaitcho and his people: "the art with which these Indians pursue their objects, their avaricious nature, and the little reliance that can be placed upon them when their interests jar with their promises . . ." And later: "Dr. Richardson, Hepburn and I, eagerly devoured the food, which they imprudently presented to us, in too great abundance, and in consequence we suffered dreadfully from indigestion." Also Dr. Richardson: ". . . we placed no confidence in the exertions of the Canadians who accompanied him (Franklin, that is) . . ." Contrast this against the Copper Indian chief, Akaitcho's own words (Englished by Franklin): "I know you write down every occurrence in your books; but probably you have only noticed the bad things we have said and done, and have omitted to mention the good."

On the evidence of this book, Akaitcho, the long-dead Indian chief who accompanied the long-dead English captain, John Franklin, may have had a point. Franklin and the officers under his command seem to me a bunch of upper-class English snobs lording it over what they suspected might not be an inferior race. But because Franklin and his men both endured and achieved much — are in some sense underlying rock-gothic in Canadian history — I suppose they were also heroes.

A. W. PURDY

INEXHAUSTIBLE RICHES

PETER BUITENHUIS, *The Grasping Imagination, The American Writings of Henry James.* Toronto. $12.50.

ANOTHER BOOK about Henry James? Apparently the riches in James are so inexhaustible that even Leon Edel has failed to deplete them. Was there ever a writer who presented academic critics with such tantalizing material for exploitation — ambiguities to unravel, symbols to elucidate, themes to interpret, structures to dismantle? Professor Edel has pulled off the critical coup of the century by cornering the James monopoly; and has made the most of it by writing a non-chronological biography which could conceivably be stretched out for the rest of his life.

Under these formidable circumstances, to say anything new, one might think, would be a hurdle to daunt the most ardent Jamesian. Yet despite the redundancy of James studies, Professor Peter Buitenhuis has managed in *The Grasping Imagination* to write a highly competent, lucid, and balanced study of James's attitude toward his native land. There has been a good deal of controversy on this question, the issue muddied by the enticing image of James as an ambivalent figure torn by conflicting loyalties. Buitenhuis clarifies rather than simplifies James's feelings by concentrating on his American novels, stories, and travel pieces, and by quoting comments about America from his letters — even from some never published before. When James went to Europe he knew that he had found his temperamental ambiance. But America happened to be the place where he had

been born and he had to learn to come to terms with a circumstantial accident. To avoid the confusion of cherished academic ambiguities, there is a lot to be said for the advantages of concentrating on a chronological sequence of development and change as Buitenhuis does.

The title of Buitenhuis's book is taken from a passage in an 1871 letter to C. E. Norton: "The face of nature and civilization in this our country is to a certain point a very sufficient literary field. But it will yield its secrets only to a really *grasping* imagination." Professor Buitenhuis traces his unsuccessful early attempts to grasp these "secrets" by looking in vain for echoes of Europe. Failing here, he felt rejected by Europe until that triumphant day in 1875 when he could write home: "I take possession of the old world — I inhale it — I appropriate it!"

From this point on, despite his ambition to be so "saturated" by both cultures that a reader could not detect whether the author was American or European, James could comfortably settle into what was essentially the environment which stimulated his imagination, the only country where it would have been possible for him to develop his creative powers fully.

To me the most interesting section of the book is Buitenhuis's account of James' return to America after twenty years in 1904 — as though to a strange and exotic country. The result of his arduous journey, *The American Scene,* is in its way comparable to Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* as an examination of a culture by a detached, inquiring observer. In a previously unpublished letter, James wrote with anguished candour: "This country is too *huge* simply, for any human convenience, and so unutterably empty that I defy any civilization, any mere money-grabbing democracy to make on it any impression worthy of the name." In *The American Scene* James could not fail to see modern America as a degeneration from the peaceful homogenous country of his boyhood to a dual "fall" from innocence in the destructiveness of the Civil War and the unsettling surge of mass immigration. The America of his youth failed him because it was not Europe; the mature America to which he returned disappointed him because it had lost his youth. His emotional recoil expressed itself in fictional form in a series of doppelgänger stories in which the author speculated on what he might have become had he never left America.

Unfortunately Professor Buitenhuis seizes on too many advantages to press a point home by attacking other critics, notably Maxwell Geismar and Van Wyck Brooks, although he seems possibly unduly deferential to Leon Edel who, after all, is not the reincarnation of Henry James. But has Professor Buitenhuis *any* idea how often he has used the words *schema* and *schemata*? Surely there are other alternatives.

A final word of praise should go to the University of Toronto Press for the production of a remarkably attractive book.

PHYLLIS GROSSKURTH

THE PAPER NORTH

J. MICHAEL YATES, *The Great Bear Lake Meditations.* Oberon Press. Paperback, $2.95 (Hardcover edition available.)

FOR OVER TWO THOUSAND YEARS the West has been inhabited in part by the

ghost of Plato — who makes, appositely, a drunken and imaginary appearance in these pages. Mallarmé, a descendant of the neo-Platonists and alchemists, wrote: "The world exists to end in a book." And Michael Yates rhymes: "Carefully I mix alcohol, lake and me. In this manner, this north has come to be." *This north* is the written record; it is this that is the ultimate, not the terrain and its people, who exist quite independent of Mr. Yates' awareness, or lack of awareness, of them. For he has carried with him as intellectual luggage Rimbaud's dicta that *"I" am someone else* and *reality lies elsewhere*. True heir of the Symbolists, his striving is for union with *le néant*.

This is to place the book, not condemn it. Consciousness, rather than what one is conscious of, has become the centre. *"Perfect consciousness . . . contains its own everything."* In place of Plato's archetypes, we have a pantheistic solipsism. Aristotle said that only a beast or a god could live alone. *The Great Bear Lake Meditations* is a record of a man who seeks, by himself, to become both beast and god. Honesty or compulsion has made Mr. Yates imply why he has rejected companionship. Engaged in a nominalistic magic ("the sight of ticking and the sound of light"), he is an inverted Milton of the tundra. Unlike Milton's epic poem, his prose rhymes constantly. Ten sentences end in eight rhymes: breath/death, will/still, shore/sides, time/line, to intervene/darkening green. Perhaps the prose is something he has inhabited, not constructed so that it might image the subject — a difficult task when the subject is its own object.

The book is made up of inter-related paragraphs on unnumbered pages. There are four principal characters: I, you, he and one. The depersonalization presented comes from a sought loneliness; it also comes from saturation in the Symbolist malaise, where the Inner supplants the Outer, where "the other" exists to be conquered — by words. It is from this and its inevitable consequences that Mr. Yates fled north. Yet the book is an account of a prolonged inaction, a basic refusal. If Aristotle built his metaphysics on the premiss that a thing cannot both be and not be, Mr. Yates has rejected the existent for the sake of an Hegelian inner process where thought dominates being — and the self. Like Mallarmé, he has opted for this Hegelian ultimate, which is Nothing, the ground of all being.

In contact with others, reality intrudes. In a northern town he watches a house burn. The owner, several blocks away, "is perhaps me, but his heavy clothing makes it difficult to know." It is the principle of the hypallage imposed upon the real. To me the real seems absent in the water from the fire-house at "minus sixty": at home hydrants froze at forty below. In this town or a similar one Mr. Yates endures a bitter winter, though he spends "as little time at home as possible". Try it, at that temperature. When home, he has Bach at top volume, a vested suit and tie, Scotch, and the time to read some twenty volumes of Henry James. For some reason he cannot accept the frost on the inner walls, yet also welcomes it: he has "cold horrors" to hound him through the night, and another paragraph for his book.

Though Mr. Yates did not learn much from Henry James, Henry James could have placed Mr. Yates in a subtle moral context. Certainly Conrad did: Decoud and Razumov are two among many of his characters who dwell in chosen isola-

tion: Conrad knew who they were and what they were doing.

Whether Mr. Yates realizes it or not, he has written a latter-day *Paradise Lost*. The cast includes Adam, Eve, the serpent, the fall, Noah, the Tower of Babel, Abraham and Moses. In choosing the Gnostic path, Mr. Yates has expelled reality from himself (by trying, like an anti-god, to make his own reality), and he becomes preoccupied by death: from fire, water or ice. He wants, like Conrad's Decoud (*Nostromo*), "to try to know I am drowning as I drown." Alas, his diary, as in *Under Western Eyes*, has come into the hands of one who would also say "Words are the great foes of reality" — unless one makes them servants to that reality. Like Conrad's teacher of languages, I am familiar with the terrain presented: I was brought up in the north; I spent months in the bush; I have known some who have gone mad and others who have ended their own lives. In Hemingway's *Big Two-Hearted River* the protagonist is under intense interior stress but, by implying it only, Hemingway made of his story a greater work of art and the stress more real.

Yet this may not be fair: the true stress in Mr. Yates' book comes from the things he keeps out: consciousness struggles to obliterate conscience. In the last paragraph he dramatizes a suicide attempt that one has the right to consider unsuccessful. The pistol at his head is a Platonic pistol, the reality of which lies elsewhere. This man has shown in the past that he has talent; there is no necessity to trespass in the realms of non-being. Even to produce the book just reviewed is to establish another thing that is. If reality has no significance, neither has the book nor the situation uselessly fled from. At sixty below the snow sometimes evaporates.

JOHN REID

MARCEL DUBE

MAXIMILIEN LAROCHE, *Marcel Dubé*. Editions Fidès.

MAXIMILIEN LAROCHE a fait de nets progrès stylistiques, depuis la parution de sa préface à *Zone* de Marcel Dubé. On se souvient sans doute de l'illisibilité et de la pauvreté stylistique se cette préface. Depuis, il semble que Laroche se soit repris, puisque son dernier livre fait montre d'une intelligence syntaxique tout à fait valable. Ceci dit, et ce liminaire grammatical exposé, commençons par les aspects négatifs de l'ouvrage, avant d'en dégager les éléments positifs, heureusement plus nombreux.

Je ne sais pas pourquoi, mais la première partie du livre me semble être un "devoir" de collégien (du chapitre I au chapitre IV, en gros). Un "bon devoir", tel qu-on les écrivait autrefois; mais on éprouve tout le temps l'irrésistible envie de corriger le texte. Les termes de "destin", "destinée", "fatalité", reviennent constamment sous la plume de l'auteur, hors de propos: j'en ai compté cinq au deuxième paragraphe de la page 131! (et il ne s'agissait que du mot "destin"). Comme si le théâtre de Dubé était une sorte de tragédie grecque. Je sais bien que la thèse principale de l'auteur est de montrer que l'évolution du théâtre de Dubé va dans le sens du passage de la tragédie au drame (que de fois ne nous a-t-il pas cité cette phrase de Dubé: "La tragédie est un acte de foi"?) mais cette accumulation de références au "destin" et à la "fatalité", ainsi qu'au théâtre

antique, me semble dépourvue de tout fondement. D'autre part, on aurait aimé voir développée davantage la thèse séduisante selon laquelle le théâtre de Dubé n'est, en dernière analyse, que l'émanation sublimée d'un groupe social (celui des canadiens-français des années 50 et 60), véritable créateur de l'oeuvre de Dubé. Cet aspect de la question est à peine esquissé aux pages 42, 82 et 86: "Drames collectifs et drames individuels sont liés. Le conflit des personnages est lié à la crise même de la société et leurs déchirements sentimentaux ne peuvent se dissocier des antagonismes sociaux" (p. 82), et "Le lieu des conflits, percé de mille ouvertures, est un espace éclaté à l'image de cet éclatement des familles, des groupes ou de la société dont Marcel Dubé nous donne le spectacle" (p. 86). Et c'est tout: Laroche nous laisse le soin de la démonstration scientifique de ces affirmations.

La deuxième partie de l'ouvrage est néanmoins bien plus intéressante que la première. Laroche pose comme hypothèse que, dans le théâtre québécois d'une façon générale, et dans celui de Dubé en particulier, les "mères" et les "femmes" (qui deviendront mères) sont les alliées des jeunes (quel que soit leur sexe), et que si le fils se révolte contre le père, comme détenteur d'une autorité non méritée, c'est parce que le père québécois n'est pas à la hauteur de son rôle: il ne se conduit pas comme "adulte", politiquement et sociétalement. Dans un autre chapitre, l'auteur établit des comparaisons intéressantes entre la thématique du théâtre américain (Albee, Miller, Eugene O'Neill) et celle du théâtre québécois. Laroche essaye de nous montrer, à l'aide d'exemples précis, que la signification ultime de la révolte du fils contre le père est fort différente, dans les contextes socio-historiques américain et québécois. Etre né dans les zones grises de la société (voir *Zone*, de Dubé) ne revêt pas le même sens ici que chez nos voisins du Sud.

Enfin, un choix de textes des principales pièces de Dubé — *Zone, Un simple soldat, Le Temps des Lilas, Les Beaux Dimanches, Pauvre amour* figurent en annexe.

Malgré ces aspects positifs, le lecteur reste quelque peu sur sa faim. Car le véritable problème n'a guère été posé, ou si peu (disons qu'il n'a pas été développé comme il l'aurait dû, à notre sens tout au moins): si le théâtre de Dubé a eu le succès qu'on sait, s'il a répondu à un besoin (et qui le nierait?), c'est que, par-delà le tempérament personnel de Dubé (sur lequel insiste trop Laroche), il s'est sans doute agi de tout autre chose: l'argent, le luxe et le confort matériel outrecuidant (qu'on retrouve dans la quasi-totalité des pièces de Dubé) sont des valeurs normatives de l'environnement anglo-saxon et protestant (qu'on relise donc ce chef — d'oeuvre de Max Weber: *L'éthique protestante et l'esprit du capitalisme.*) Les modèles ou *patterns* "latins" et "catholiques" — qu'on pense au milieu social où Dubé a baigné dans toute son enfance — sont aux antipodes des normes qui définissent le "succès" à l'américaine ou à l'anglaise. C'est une différence de taille, sur laquelle il serait bon de s'attarder dans un ouvrage futur.

GILBERT TARRAB

COUNTRY ISLANDER

EDWARD D. IVES, *Lawrence Doyle, the farmer poet of Prince Edward Island: a study in local songmaking.* University of Maine, $7.95.

PROFESSOR IVES' study of Lawrence Doyle arises from his interest in Maritime folksongs and folklore and his patient search to discover the actual men and events that lay behind them. (Two earlier books study the "local songmaking" of Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick country composers Larry Gorman and Joe Scott.) Relaxed in pace, this new book has three aims: to transcribe (with all known variants) the words and music of Doyle's songs, to reconstruct the events that inspired them, and to engage the reader in the life and times of Doyle himself. Except for a style that plunges into saccharine coyness at times, and a general failure to distinguish between "popular" and "popularized" biography (and so to reach a consistent tone), it proves reasonably successful.

The glimpses of late nineteenth century rural life in Prince Edward Island, that is, vivify not only Doyle's songs but other literary pictures of that place and time as well. (Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* is a sentimental case in point.) They depict a socially conservative, pragmatic, convivial, gossiping, occasionally quarrelsome, politically conscious and politically divided community; the elements are the same as those that characterize literary small towns from Mephibosheth Stepsure's rural Nova Scotia to Salterton and Mariposa. Doyle's response to such a climate, acidulously good-humoured, like McCulloch's and Davies', punctured pretension and foible with ironic exaggeration, as in "The Bear at Grand River":

> "Oh I don't mind the shot, it's the noise
> makes me run,
> If the snow wasn't deep I would soon show
> you fun;
> You're a hard looking crowd, I solemnly
> declare,
> Alas, the cruel fate that has made me a
> bear" . . .

or "The Picnic at Groshaut":

> See how Noah was respected, in the Ark he
> was elected
> And from grapes he caused the richest wine
> to flow;
> When he made the wine, you see, he got
> drunk as drunk could be,
> Just as drunk as any man was at Groshaut.
>
> Perhaps it was a shame but there's no-one
> for to blame,
> 'Twas nothing but an accident, you know;
> 'Twas continued the next day but the spirit
> died away
> And the cider changed to water at
> Groshaut . . .

or that mad narrative of a bashful villager, "Fogan MacAleer", whose periphrastic attempt to purchase a horse leads to his betrothal and a dowry instead:

> And turning round to Lauchlan Ban in
> tones both loud and clear
> Says Fogan, "I'm a happy man to gain your
> daughter dear."
> So it turned out contrary, not the mare he
> got but Mary —
> He got Mary and the mare, don't you know
> what I mean?

Ives' commentaries apparently try to keep pace with such spirited entertainment:

> Imagine, if you will, Lawrence Doyle, farmer and solid citizen, driving his cart along this approach causeway turned into a long slough of sticky red mud by the fall rains, the wagon sometimes to the hubs, the poor horse on occasion going almost to the shoulders. Further imagine him going up over the rickety makeshift span; he was a carpenter, and his practiced eye would have seen the shoddy work all too plainly, which would have added to his sense of outrage.

> . . . All this and much more: a fuming Irish mix of red mud, bad carpentry, political skulduggery, and a poetical turn of mind. Out of it came "The Bay Bridge." Who knows, he may even have thought it up on the way home, after passing through the mess a second time.

The approach, instead, tends to mask the genuine research being done.

Ives is content ultimately to identify and describe these works; he investigates briefly the local song tradition in which Doyle can be placed, and digresses still more briefly into a discussion of newspaper verse, but to probe the aesthetic merits of the verse and to discourse upon its relationship with Canadian poetry remain outside his domain. Yet one of the most interesting suggestions of a book of this kind, which takes occasional verse seriously, concerns the continuity between folk poetry and established literary figures. Canadian criticism, for example, has often implicitly suggested that writers like Carman were influenced by their schooling more than their locale. While a Classical education and fashionable Emersonian transcendentalism obviously influenced Carman strongly, and while no-one would identify his vagabondage with Doyle's rural viewpoint, the technical parallels between the two writers do become striking. Exaggerated rhyme, deliberate repetition, and sheer energy characterize both. The writings of McCulloch and Haliburton, vivid with the local dialect voice and the shrewd asperity of country politics, offer predecessors and prose counterparts. But such Maritime sensibility is more than regional perspective. Fred Cogswell, in another context, has pointed to features of attitude and style that link Carman with Pratt and so with modern linguistic experiments; a link in the other direction with the local songmakers establishes native roots as well as academic and literary ones for modern Canadian poetry.

W. H. NEW

THE MIGRANT

Wyndham Lewis on Art: Collected Writings, 1913-1956, edited by Walter Michel and C. J. Fox. Funk & Wagnalls, $10.00.

WYNDHAM LEWIS'S connections with Canada were elusive but as patterned as a horoscope: French Canadian ancestors, birth on a yacht off the Nova Scotian coast, appointment as a Canadian war artist (War I) when nobody thought of him as anything but a British painter, and finally those years of discontent in Toronto (War II) out of which emerged *Self-Condemned*. Some of his finest paintings found their way to Canadian collections, and some of his best critics have been Canadians.

It is therefore fitting that what looks like the definitive collection of Lewis's art criticism — *Wyndham Lewis on Art* — should be edited jointly by an American, Walter Michel, and the most dedicated of Canadian Lewis scholars, C. J. Fox. It is a comprehensive collection of such of Lewis's writings as can be regarded specifically as those of a critic of the visual arts. His more philosophic work on the arts in a wider sense is necessarily excluded; space would not have allowed its presence, and in any case Lewis's major works are all either in print or in the process of being reissued.

Wyndham Lewis on Art is really a combination of manifestoes, in which Lewis is very much the Vorticist theoretician about art, and of critiques of specific

artists and paintings in which a completely different aspect of Lewis' mind comes to the surface. He becomes the observer, viewing the work for itself and in its own terms, and his comments are direct and eminently sensible. While most art critics regard a picture as a vehicle for expressing their own theories (for essentially they are *literary* men), with Lewis — himself a *painter* — you have the sense of a man who really looked, looked intently — until he went blind — and tried to tell us what he actually saw. One can ask no more of an art critic, and usually gets far less.

There is only one piece in this collection that has a specifically Canadian application. It is the essay, "Canadian Nature and its Painters", which appeared in *The Listener* in 1946 and which, apart from praising highly the work of A. Y. Jackson, pointed out that in a very special way Canadian painting was bound to be regional, as was all Canadian culture.

> Canada will always be so infinitely bigger physically than the small nation that lives in it, even if its population is doubled, that this monstrous, empty habitat must continue to dominate it psychologically, and so culturally . . .

It is a thought that in recent years has become one of the clichés of Canadian criticism, dulled by repetition. When Lewis said it a quarter of a century ago, the thought was new, as so many of his thoughts were. It is not only ornithologically that Canada has been, as George Woodcock once remarked, a country of splendid birds of passage.

ANTHONY APPENZELL

THE GENTLE JOURNALIST

"Blair Fraser Reports", ed. John Fraser and Graham Fraser. MacMillan. $8.95.

BLAIR FRASER did not succumb to the pompous twaddle that passes for prose in the Press Gallery. He spent a total of 21 years in Ottawa, and now two years after his death by drowning, the pieces he wrote from the Gallery still have point and freshness. A sampling of these reports have been put together by his sons John and Graham. The Canadian pieces were chosen by Graham, a reporter with the Toronto *Daily Star*; those from abroad by John, a member of the External Affairs Department. For the most part they have chosen well.

But what intrigues me is the form and pattern of the man's life itself, and its sum. The memoir Graham has written for the book is the best guide to that life. Fraser was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, where his father worked in the Dosco steel plant and later became general superintendent. The eldest of six children, he suffered from asthma that was not helped by the damp and smog of his home town. The first outcome of this sickly start on life was that he "felt that he had been coddled and spoiled as a child, and as if to purge himself of this, he worked summers at the steel plant to earn his university tuition."

His father was a strong force in forming this stubborn drive to make good in whatever came hard. After Fraser finished at Acadia University he taught at a small private school near Montreal, and, unhappy, complained in letters to his father. As anyone with Calvinistic parents knows, this is not always a wise course.

Back came a white-hot letter from John Hugh Fraser.

> . . . forget your likes and dislikes, your food and your living quarters, your friends and your enemies and all the other damned idiotic bunk that you seem to be worrying about, and concentrate on being the best damned teacher that Stanstead ever had. Get out of there with a record that will get you a good increase on your next job, whatever it may be.

After Fraser joined the Montreal *Herald* he thought of earning another degree in English back at Acadia. For his father, this made no sense. "I think you can write well enough now, and the next step should be to go find something to write about. The function of writers, as I understand it, has always been to instil their ideas into the public mind, and I am wondering what ideas, if any, you have to inject into the rest of society." This is a narrow view of that function, but one with much latent power, and Fraser stayed in reporting.

He joined the Montreal *Gazette* in 1933 and in his 10 years there worked long weary hours at jobs ranging from proofreader on up to associate editor. In 1943 he joined *Maclean's* as the magazine's Ottawa man and became known across Canada for his columns and reports. For short periods he became *Maclean's* editor and correspondent in London.

Fraser's career was marked by taste and restraint. In 1951 he broke the news that Mackenzie King had consulted mediums during his life. As Graham says, "It was an astounding revelation about a very private man, only recently dead, but Fraser took pains to avoid a sensationalist treatment of the news." He was thoughtful, and he was trustworthy.

When he was taken to court over a story he wrote, he refused to name the sources of his facts. Although the court would not accept it, this stand earned him the respect of fellow newspapermen who regarded talks with sources as privileged as those between lawyer and client. One wonders if Fraser were not too chummy with his contacts. After all, he took long canoe-trips with friends like the U.S. Minister to Canada; a former vice-chief of the general staff; a vice-president of Canadian National Railways; and the president of the Canadian Bank Note Company.

No one, however, can doubt that he had "complete, unswerving integrity", as his son says. He was not a mouthpiece of the Liberal Party and decried that party's handling of the Pipeline debate that led to its fall in 1957. But his friendships with Liberals like Lester Pearson were very strong, and their values were his.

In a sense, Fraser's work was the result of this wedlock of shared values. He was perhaps too understanding of problems faced by the powerful, and too much at ease with the presence of thick, sealed files and discreet Rideau Club dinners. One wishes he were something he was not — a bastard.

Hugh MacLennan once told me that Fraser had studied Gibbon, and this reading gave him an overview of the affairs he daily covered in Ottawa. Graham mentions Gibbon and also how impressed Fraser was with Toynbee. Indeed, *Reports* shows how keen was his concern for history. In his canoe-trips too, he found a kinship with Canada's past. It is odd that, unlike Fraser, the journalists who live in history are rash, angry, unreasonable men who were willing to go for the jugular or the groin.

FRASER SUTHERLAND

TRANSLATIONS

Floralie, Where Are You? (Anansi, cloth $6.50, paper $2.50) is the welcome English translation of Roch Carrier's recent novel, *Floralie, où es-tu?* Readers will find a review by Ronald Sutherland in *Canadian Literature 44*. Once again the translation is by Sheila Fischman, and in our view it is more felicitious than her earlier translation of Carrier's *La Guerre, Yes Sir!*

Vasyl Stefanyk was one of the most respected of Ukrainian writers, and, to celebrate the centenary of his birth, a group of his stories has been translated and published in Canada under the title of *The Stone Cross* (McClelland & Stewart, $5.95). The translation is by Joseph Wiznuk in collaboration with C. H. Andrusyshen of the University of Saskatchewan, and Professor Andrusyshen has added an introduction which narrates Stefanyk's life and critically discusses his work. G.W.

ON THE VERGE

***** *Letters to Molly: John Millington Synge to Maire O'Neill.* Saunders, $12.00. This is an indispensable volume for those interested in Synge or in the Irish theatrical renaissance in general. From 1906 to 1909 Synge was engaged to Molly Allgood, who created the part of Pegeen Mike in *The Playboy of the Western World*, and later followed a successful acting career as Maire O'Neill. Not until after Molly's death in 1952 did biographers recognize the relationship, and only now are Synge's 400 letters to Molly published under the tactful and competent editorship of Ann Saddlemyer of the University of Victoria. They throw an extraordinary new illumination on his final years of achievement and tragic physical decline.

***** ROBIN SKELTON, *The Writings of J. M. Synge.* Oxford University Press, $8.75. As is perhaps appropriate in such a far western island, Victoria has become a great centre of Synge studies, with Robin Skelton editing the standard *Collected Works* and Ann Saddlemyer contributing to it. Skelton's critical volume, *The Writings of J. M. Synge*, is the culmination of a long interest and much work. Synge has often been miscast by critics as a representative of the Celtic Twilight or — more frequently in recent years — as a playwright dominated by Irish nationalism. In fact, there was a vigour, a gaiety and — at times — a tragic starkness about Synge that were the reverse of those half-moods suggested by twilight — Celtic or other — and his attitude was so far from that of the nationalists that they often condemned his plays as an insult to the dignity of Ireland. It is the virtue of Skelton's study that he insists on these aspects of Synge's work, and at the same time demonstrates how Synge's personal talent transfigured the life of the Irish peasants he presented, without in any way mitigating its harshness and frequent brutality, into a visionary landscape of man's condition.

**** *Out of Silence*, photographs by Adelaide de Menil, text by William Read, new press, $7.95. *Indian and Eskimo Art in Canada*, photographs by Dominique Darbois, text by Ian Christie Clark. Ryerson, n.p. These are two fine accounts of the arts of Canada's native peoples. *Out of Silence* is the more important, since it records the decaying sculptures that still remain *in situ* where Indian villages once stood on the coast and islands of British Columbia. Already, since Adelaide de Menil made her journey in 1966-8, some of the carvings she recorded have gone out of existence. *Indian and Eskimo Art* does not have quite the same urgency, since the many fine illustrations it contains are of Indian and Eskimo artifacts (most of the former from the Coast culture) preserved in museums. They were selected from around the world for a special exhibition at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris, and, magnificently photographed, they form a fine record of a group of sculptures close in time to the present but now as distant in spirit as the classical sculptures to which Lévi-Strauss has not inaptly compared them. The texts in both cases are slight and self-effacing; properly so, since in these books the illustrations speak eloquently enough for themselves.

*** ADRIENNE CLARKSON. *True to You in my Fashion.* new press, $5.95. In the good old days of the Surrealists, we were fond of proclaiming the aesthetic qualities of *objets trouvés*, and I remember how in the early

years of Mass Observation, when it was still run by poets like Charles Madge, Kathleen Raine and Ruthven Todd, we would seriously discuss the unconscious eloquence, the natural poetry, of bits of speech hurriedly taken down in shorthand (it was before the days of easily accessible tape recorders) by observers standing at street corners or under the Clock at Paddington Station. Now Adrienne Clarkson has produced a fascinating volume of what one can only call *romans trouvés*, unintentional novellas. In presenting the substance of a series of interviews conducted with men on the subject of marriage, she tells us that she has performed the minimum of editing, even the minimum of questioning, and I see no reason not to accept her assurance. But one must at the same time say that the scripts, as they have turned out, are an extraordinary tribute to Adrienne Clarkson's skill as an interviewer, for almost every one of them is a psychological document of deep interest, and some are very evocative indeed in their recreation of the substance of human relationships and even — in a surprisingly unsentimental way — lyrical in their portrayal of small worlds of feeling. Collectively, they present the moral landscape of an age, and raise the question of how different we are from other ages. Different from the Victorians perhaps — but different from the people of the Restoration? Or the Regency? Or of any time when the restraints of a paternalistic social system are temporarily relaxed?

*** VICTOR PETERS. *Nestor Makhno: The Life of an Anarchist.* Echo Books, $3.75. Makhno was the leader of the anarchist guerillas who, during the Russian Civil War, occupied a large part of the Ukraine, contributed materially to the defeat of the White Armies of Denikin and Wrangel, and held their territory against the Red Army until they were defeated by treachery rather than by military means. No full account of Makhno's career has hitherto been written in English or by a non-partisan (of the three previous narratives all were written in Russian — one by Makhno himself and the others by supporters, Arshinov and Voline), and Dr. Peters brings to the task not only a laudable objectivity but also a familiarity with the background, since he is the son of a Mennonite peasant farmer who came to Canada from the region once dominated by Makhno. Dr. Peters has been able to trace, among the Mennonite community and among Ukrainians now living in Canada and the United States, a fair number of surviving witnesses to the events of that time and even some participants in the Maknovite Insurgent Army. The result is a well-documented and in some respects original work which certainly deserves a respected place in the history of Russia and of anarchism alike.

*** JEANNE MIHINNICK. *At Home in Upper Canada.* Clarke Irwin, $22.50. An excellent picture book, and a good deal more, on the physical background of life in Ontario a century ago. Jeanne Mihinnick, beginning with a lyrical and most appealing description of the gardens of colonial times, proceeds to the equipment, in every detail, of town and country houses of the decades before Confederation. The illustrations are remarkably well-chosen, and in general *At Home in Upper Canada* is a notably intelligent and visually satisfying contribution to our social history. Decorative, informative, entertaining, impeccable in scholarship, and recommended.

** *Theatre and Nationalism in 20th-century Ireland*, edited by Robert O'Driscoll. University of Toronto Press, $8.50. A collection of papers delivered in a seminar at St. Michael's College in Toronto. The quality — as always with volumes based on such occasions — is uneven, and the title somewhat misleading, since it is only papers on Sean O'Casey and Samuel Beckett (whose *absence* of nationalism is emphasized) that really belong to the period after the Easter Day rising. Ann Saddlemyer writes well on the leading figures of the Abbey Theatre, Robert McHugh has some interesting things to tell about the roles of Irish dramatists and actors in the events of 1916, George Harper discusses the strange mixture of complementary and contradictory in the relationship between Yeats and Maud Gonne (without either coming very much alive in his narrative) and there are some curious letters between Yeats and Shaw. As with most such symposia, one wonders whether the three or four passable essays are really worth the price of a whole volume.