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POETS PAST AND FUTURE

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BY PATRICK ANDERSON, SANDRA DJWA, BARRIE DAVIES, PETER STEVENS, WARREN TALLMAN

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Opinions and Notes

BY FRED COGSWELL, DESMOND PACEY

A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW

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contents

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MEDAL FOR POPULAR BIOGRAPHY 1972

FEWER BOOKS THAN USUAL were submitted for competition in 1972, and it almost seemed as though biography as a literary and historical art form — whether blocked by critics unfriendly to history or for other reasons — were dying. Of the books that warranted serious attention, there were almost as many in autobiographical as biographical form.

Among the former, the first volume of Lester B. Pearson's *Mike* and Arnold Heeney's *The things that are Caesar's* came from the pens of men who had been, in their times, major mandarins. Pearson's autobiography, covering his civil service period, was frank, interesting and informative; yet strangely, it lacked the most engaging quality of the man himself. Heeney's work, full of bright promise, dimmed perceptibly with the passing pages.

Ronald A. Keith's book on Grant McConachie, *Bush Pilot with a Briefcase*, failed in warmth and candour by comparison with a book considered in an earlier year by this committee, W. A. Bishop's biography of his father, Canada's air ace of the First World War. Hugh A. Dempsey's *Crowfoot* was competent and timely, but not outstanding. And A. J. P. Taylor himself conceded the dual deficiencies of his *Beaverbrook*: too little on the subject's private life and too much of the author's adoration.

Our doubts about the current state — and future prospects — of the biographical form were removed, however, by George Woodcock's pithy and perceptive examination of *Gandhi*. This masterful display of control over subject and language can also be seen in the same author's recent work on Herbert Read and his book on Aldous Huxley, *Dawn and the Darkest Hour*. Thus, this year's award to George Woodcock is not only founded on a splendid specific volume, but on a general significant contribution to the field of biography.

CHARLES W. HUMPHRIES

editorial

PERIODICAL PRECARIOUSNESS

PERIODICAL CRITICISM has always lived precariously in Canada. During the past decade or so there has been an apparent change, and one's mail has tended to contain an unwonted proportion of journals of literature and the related arts, and to a less extent of affairs and social sciences. But this has been a nurtured growth, which would hardly have been possible if it had not been for (a) the willingness of the Canada Council to support such publications and (b) the appreciation by many of our new universities and colleges of the prestige that accrues from allowing literary or scholarly journals to appear under their auspices.

I am concerned here not with the pros and cons of subsidized publication, though one cannot declare too often the need to regard with caution even the patronage one accepts, nor I am concerned with the larger question, which would need a whole issue of *Canadian Literature* to discuss adequately, of the dilution or distortion of quality that may come from excessive nurturing. I am interested rather in those magazines that have survived over decades without such institutional help.

Two such journals have recently been celebrating significant anniversaries. *The Canadian Forum* has reached its golden jubilee; *Saturday Night* has gone beyond even its diamond jubilee, for it is now 85 years old. A third notable survivor, *Maclean's*, according to my calculation, is 77. The University of Toronto Press has just published, under the title of *Forum* ($7.50), a thick and generous selection of articles, poems and stories from the fifty years of *The Canadian Forum*, edited by J. L. Granatstein and Peter Stevens. A similar selection from the past of *Saturday Night* is due to appear some time this spring from new press, prepared by Morris Wolfe and Robert Fulford, who has been the maga-

zine's editor for several years. *Maclean's* has not announced any celebratory event, but the journal proclaimed its transfiguration into modernity a year or so back, when Peter Newman took over the editorship.

One of the reasons for the survival of journals which do not have a narrowly specialist public is usually, indeed, their power of transformation within fairly clear limits, their flexibility towards the currents of the times while at the same time retaining the loyalty of their own particular constituencies among the population. It is rarely, indeed, that a magazine, having established a readership defined by education and class, moves outside it, though it only survives if it adapts itself to the shifts in taste and attitude within that readership (to which of course it will have contributed, for the relationship between journal and readership tends in time to take on a symbiotic character).

Short of looking through the back files of *Saturday Night*, which is precisely what Messrs. Fulford and Wolfe have been doing on our behalf, it is difficult before the appearance of the projected *Saturday Night Scrapbook* to chart exactly the course which that journal has taken. But I believe, from what I remember of it in Sandwell's and Edinborough's days, and from dipping through *A Voice from the Attic* (the collection of Robertson Davies literary pieces from *Saturday Night* a quarter of a century ago now republished in the New Canadian Library), that it always attracted a well-read middle-class public, generally liberal in inclination, willing to have the arts explained to them, but perhaps more interested in political events and social changes; its base has always been eastern Canadian, and it has moved from a vague continentalism towards a fairly hard-edged nationalism as the people who read it have moved.

Maclean's, appearances to the contrary, has always been the journal of the lower middle-class non-book-reading public; it is curious to note that though under its new readership the journal has boasted that it is now employing *real* writers — writers are now figures embodied in national myth — it in fact does very little to tell its readers about the books those writers publish, and indeed in many issues contains no comments at all on recent books. Sports, the outdoors, popular politics, popular music, films, talk of doom, and gossip about Canadian celebrities: these still — in slightly changed forms from the past — loom large in its contents. On the other hand, the fiction which once occupied a considerable proportion of its space has vanished, owing to a process of long attrition during which its readership found their need for fantasy increasingly appeased by radio and television; their need for opinions and facts and true life stories, significantly, was not, for here print seemed still to give a needed validation. In another

important way *Maclean's* has changed with its readership; *Saturday Night* was always an urban journal, but *Maclean's* was largely read in the country, and then it had a fairly direct attitude towards rural matters. Now its readership has mostly migrated to the towns, and the life of the country has become in its pages a matter of nostalgia rather than of experience.

There are, however, two constant characteristics of *Maclean's* that have never fundamentally changed. One is its studious avoidance — which *Saturday Night* has never needed to follow to quite the same extent — of giving any appearance of intellectuality, of the highbrowism which makes its readers uneasy; if scholars or artists appear in its pages, it is for their controversial or romantic appeal, not for their scholarship or their art. The other is a Torontonian puritanism which appears and reappears in a Protean variety of guises. It was only ten years ago — astonishing as it may now seem — that Pierre Berton was dismissed from the staff of *Maclean's* for having expressed in one of his articles views, on current hypocrisies regarding sex, that were unacceptable to the readers. The attitude of readers has changed, and that of *Maclean's* with it; subjects that could not be discussed a decade ago are now fair game. Yet puritanism is an insidious thing, which always finds new guises. One of them in recent years has been the smugness of radicals and modish radical fellow travellers regarding the simplicity and honesty and purity of their own way of life as compared with that of others. A recent example of this so-called "new journalism" in which the writer uses his (or her) assumed superiority and sensitivity as a gauge by which to judge her (his) subject, was an article on Adrienne Clarkson by Melinda McCracken, which doubtless pleased many conservative readers because it "exposed the inconsistency" of those who live what they conceive to be a civilized life while embracing liberal causes. Others, however, were disturbed not because they were Adrienne Clarkson's partisans (many were far from that) but because the whole tenor of the article seemed an ominous symptom of the return of Malvolio (in jeans and scuffed sandals rather than cross-gartered) — and when Malvolio returns it is surely time to expect Savonarola!

The secret of *The Canadian Forum*'s survival — as the material which Professors Granatstein and Stevens have collected amply displays — is that it has kept its faithful and very special public by fulfilling two functions, of the only continuing forum of opinion where anyone from radical conservatives to anarchists could write in a generally tolerant atmosphere, and of our one literary journal durable enough to last for fifty years. What the *New Statesman* and the *Spectator* were for Britain, *The Canadian Forum* has been for Canada — the

magazine where people of generally intellectual turn of mind could find the matters of contemporary concern that interested them freely discussed; the frame was always Canadian, and in its own way the *Forum* was always nationalist, or at least anti-imperialist and anti-continentalist. But, more than that, because it was the one literary journal of any significance that did survive from the early 1920's to the present, and because many of its founders and editors were critics and poets, its record has been intimately linked with the modern movement in Canadian poetry, beginning with Pratt and Scott and Smith and continuing to the younger poets of today. *Forum* — the anthology — is thus an invaluable introduction to the imaginative and intellectual life of our time and country, and astonishingly good value, since its broad three-column format gives room for three times as much material as the ordinary 400 page book. Every reader of the *Forum* will probably find favourite pieces left out, but it is a sign of a good journal if so large an anthology can be collected and seem incomplete.

A RECEPTIVE ATMOSPHERE and editorial enthusiasms are responsible for a number of new journalistic ventures which are worth mentioning briefly. From Fredericton comes the *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, of which each issue contains a group of short stories and fragments of novels in progress, and a balancing group of critical articles. It claims in its first issue to have "the finest sustaining collection of . . . Canadian criticism and reviews available"; eyebrows raised, one waits to see. *Ariel* ("A Review of International English Literature"), started in Leeds, has now moved to Canada and this year begins publication from Calgary; it has an interesting selection of articles, rather like that in the English *Critical Quarterly* and may well provide serious competition with the *University of Toronto Quarterly*. *Exile* is another quarterly of international pretensions, from York University, in which imaginative writers are — we are told — to be allowed to appear "without a praetorian guard of critics"; excellent idea, if we are allowed to see the imaginative creations of such writers, but when they become auto-critics by talking at boring and meandering length about their own work, as up to now they do in *Exile*, one sees a point in the professionals doing it for them. All these are quarterlies. *Northern Journey*, from Ottawa, appears to be an occasional periodical, containing an interesting variety of critical writing, journals, poems, stories, drawings, photographs, by contributors who vary from first-timers to established writers spanning the generations from Atwood to Livesay and from John Colombo to Barker Fairley.

G.W.

A POET PAST AND FUTURE

Patrick Anderson

By JUNE 1971 I had been away from Canada for twenty-one years. For ten of these years I had been without my Canadian passport, and the little certificate which documented my citizenship and whose physical possession was one of the last acts of a despairing nostalgia; I had asked for it in Madrid and received it in Tangier. Of the two documents the passport was the more precious. It became the symbol of a fine transatlantic mobility; of dollars, supposing there were any; of a difference not easily defined; and it made me almost a tourist in the land of my birth. I had taken refuge in it on the one or two occasions when anti-British students ganged up on me in Athens. Once, indeed, when I showed it to an inquisitive waitress in a bar she had expressed some disbelief, pointing (as it seemed to me) to something sad about my face, the hollows under my eyes, the growing wrinkles of middle-age, as though a person so world-weary was unlikely to belong to such a fresh and vigorous part of the world.

The odd thing is that last summer, despite the above experience, I found myself sitting at my work-table in rural Essex writing poems about Canada. F. R. Scott had just posted me a batch of papers left in his house since, I think, 1947; the batch was nowhere as big as I expected; much of it was any way poor stuff, strained, rhetorical, beset by what Thom Gunn has called "the dull thunder of approximate words"; but there was an evocation of a lake-scene in the Eastern Townships which, with a great deal of revision, might just about do (it became the new "Memory of Lake Towns"). And then, almost simultaneously, a packet at the bottom of a cupboard produced various scribbles on the writing paper of the Hotel Morin, Baie St. Paul, scribbles which had been intended to delight my friends on the recently formed *Preview* but which had come to nothing in that

summer of 1942, and some of these lines I started to incorporate, with critical commentary, in a long new poem recalling that holiday ("Remembering Baie St. Paul"). An incident when a cop challenged me after midnight in a vacant lot opposite McGill provided the entirely new "Frisked!"; there was a piece about invigilating an exam at the long defunct Dawson College; and soon I found I was once more pondering the theme of snow (and, God knows, emptiness, childhood, negation, transformation, excitement, awe) which had been part of the rather gimcrack symbolic system with which I used to approach Canada, and which by no means always fitted in with my supposed Marxism.

Such poems were in obvious contrast with those I had been writing since my "poetic revival" of three to four years before, although the difference was principally of subject matter and the necessary dependence upon memory and the drama of time. My present work — and here I must apologize, perhaps already too late, for the autobiographical insistence, indeed the sheer egoism, demanded by my subject — my present work was drawn pretty directly from personal experience and concrete objects carefully and respectfully observed. As I sat at my window I faced an assimilated world: the plants on the sill, the clumps of lime trees, the stones of the path, the twist of the small road, the garden, the oaks by the farm, the distantly flashing lake, the house and its bibelots, even the Ford parked in the drive, had each at least one poem to itself. An ex-rhetorician maybe, I was now in danger of abasing myself before the ineffable solidity of fact; I was surprised how often I thought affectionately of Robert Frost and Edward Thomas.

As to this "poetical revival", which meant going over the old stuff (but there were plenty of poems I didn't remember, for I had only a smattering of magazines and papers) and then clearing up the naggingly not-quite-dead bits and pieces, embedded in psychological blocks, of my last burst of activity in 1954-57, and then starting afresh, it was a renewal partly prompted by an accumulation of evidence from Canada that I wasn't entirely forgotten there — that there was even, hopefully, a "renewal of interest" in my work. I heard that someone had fed "Poem On Canada" into a computer. Mr. C. X. Ringrose got in touch with me over his kindly, often perceptive but also inaccurate "Patrick Anderson and the Critics".[1] I read handbooks. I found a quotation here and there. Young girls from Alberta high schools wrote me that they had been assigned to appreciate my work, and where could they find some? Professor Wynne Francis's piece on the Montreal Poets reached me after a time-lag of several years.[2] And then, years later again, F. R. Scott sent me the typed transcript of a tape-

recorded conversation between some of the *Preview* editors which had taken place at a sort of reunion in 1966. Those present, apart from Scott, were Neufville Shaw, Bruce Ruddick and Margaret Surrey; the latter, as Margaret Day, had been a member of the group for only a couple of months.

Reading this transcript was a bewildering, moving, embarrassing experience even to an incorrigible autobiographer such as myself. For about twenty pages the editors returned again and again to what they evidently considered my charismatic presence although, doubtless, they were also recovering their lost youth. I appeared as a kind of cult hero, like Percival in *The Waves*. And then, not unexpectedly, their enthusiasm flagged a little. Notes of qualification began to creep in. Bruce admitted I had had faults of personality, all the more sinister for being unspecified; Margaret felt that I had written only one good poem, the early and once popular "Summer's Joe"; Neufville wondered why he hadn't felt much urge to look me up when he visited England. Finally they all agreed I was dead as a poet, hadn't written any poetry in years; my six or so prose books didn't concern them much. In this rather alarming atmosphere of myth I couldn't help reflecting on a rumour I had been told about some years before, namely that I had been "seen on St. Catherine Street". Nor was this all. The editors went on to refer to another story which had apparently been current, the story that I was physically as well as poetically dead, my throat slit in a tavern brawl. (And indeed when I did finally get back to Canada last fall, and was dining with the Surreys on my first night, my old friend Hugh MacLennan happened to be at the next table, from which he told me with a look of gentle incredulity that he had read my obituary long since — "Oh yes, you died, I'm sure of that. You died after a protracted illness".) No wonder that a woman present at the tape-recording, but not herself an ex-member of *Preview*, described it as a *séance,* adding "I was bored, got rather drunk and broke up the proceedings by falling down the stairs." In this portentous context, reminiscent of the "passing" of Oedipus, Tennyson's King Arthur or the late James Dean, I had been sacrificially murdered and then born again on a Montreal street.

HOWEVER, BY THE TIME the transcript arrived, plans were already afoot for my returning to Canada for a brief tour of readings. There were several things I wanted to say. What I now knew of the generally accepted picture of the literary scene in the Forties seemed often inaccurate and some-

times unfair. No doubt my trip, supported by articles such as this present one, would enable me to attempt a rectification, an apologia.

One point I wanted to get rid of right away: I had not left Canada in the early summer of 1950 with the automatism of an Englishman naturally seeking his own country after a wartime period abroad. In fact over the next ten years prior to the dreadful moment when "landed immigrant" and "new citizen" must revert to "foreigner" — I had made many attempts to return, had written to many universities, had sought the advice of many friends. When Ronald Hambleton, a poet I much admired, interviewed me at the B.B.C. for transmission to Canada (this would be in the late Fifties) I recall becoming a little uneasy at the pathos of my plea to be allowed to return. And once an official at the High Commissioner's office, perhaps slightly misunderstanding my position, advised me to "do what adventurous youngsters have always done — get up and go!" even if it did mean "a process of shaking-down on one of our farms or in one of our lumber-camps."

Maybe my desire not to lose faith with Canada became a bit sentimental. I signalized it by including substantial pieces on my adopted homeland in every one of my early prose books where such an excursus was even remotely possible; there are long passages in *Snake Wine* (1955), *Search Me* (1957), while the *Character Ball* (1963) has no less than five story-chapters relating to Canada. In these books, which the critics usually described as "poetic" and which often contained sensuous material on the threshold of poetry, I brooded on various Canadian experiences, but not I trust without irony or humour. To tell the truth, I haven't felt particularly English for many years. "Englishness" is a muddle to me, as well as being associated with dark, awkward, painfully rejected areas of my childhood. The term is super-saturated, exhausted with the multiplicity of its implications. "Canadian", which outlines an emptiness, gives the artist freedom to move.

But the subject which needed most critical re-assessment, and where I might be able to say something of value, seemed to begin with the relations between the two little magazines, *Preview* and *First Statement*, which are generally considered to have dominated the literary scene in what Professor Wynne Francis has called "Canada's most exciting literary decade". It was here that inaccuracies seemed particularly rife.

They began, surprisingly enough, with Professor A. J. M. Smith's introduction to the *Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* — surprisingly because Arthur Smith is not only a leading literary historian and critic, but was himself fairly close to

Preview and became linked with its members when they contributed to the founding of *Northern Review* (he was a member of that journal's editorial board). Smith's statement that Anderson "in association with F. R. Scott, P. K. Page, Irving Layton, Louis Dudek . . . edited the experimental literary journal *Preview* is precisely 50% wrong, for Layton and Dudek were, of course, among the leaders of the opposition. And yet this egregious howler, perpetrated as near to the events as 1960, has its paradoxical interest, for if Smith — whose editorship has been called by Milton Wilson "a model of discrimination and scrupulous choice" — was right in his *feeling* about Layton and Dudek (he just couldn't be right about the *facts*), then the whole long argument that *First Statement* produced the vital, virile, honest, native element in modern poetry, and that *Preview* produced the over-complex, sophisticated, mannered, effete (and, indeed, cosmopolitan) element, becomes shaky indeed.

It is this argument which is at the back of Wynne Francis's "Montreal Poets Of The Forties". Written in a jaunty popular style, Professor Francis's article is amiable and, in its light way, readable throughout. But it does not strike me as a fair picture and it does not use words with the respect and wariness one expects from a critical mind. It was, of course, written a long time ago, out of what seems an excited identification with the Stanley Street people; it has its points and its insights; perhaps necessary as a gesture, it is only questionable as an attempt to write history. The general theme, which caused pain or at least irritation to us on *Preview*, is that the supposedly rival *First Statement* consisted of brash but highly creative and dedicated bohemian ruffians, battling it out on the edge of subsistence, facing life in all its naturalistic squalor, while the members of *Preview* were prosperous, professional, upper middle-class men and women, moving easily (and apparently often in academic dress) from the "stately buildings" of McGill and the "swank" boutiques of Sherbrooke Street to the "spacious lawns and lovely homes of Westmount". In order to build us up as Establishment figures, to make us into a big Goliath of an army for the Davids of Stanley Street eventually to defeat ("Patrick Anderson's influence was dwindling . . . ") she has frequent recourse to the plural: "most were not newcomers to the literary scene . . . most of the other poets on the *Preview* roster had published frequently in such magazines as *Poetry Chicago* . . . Several of them were McGill professors . . . the large private houses of *Preview* supporters . . . a veritable galaxy of accomplished writers etc."

To my mind these statements, mediated by such words as "most", "several", "galaxy", are totally misleading, especially as they are meant to refer to the early

days of the magazine when it was making its name. *Preview* was always a very small group. The masthead of number 2 (I seem to have lost the first) consists of six names, one of whom was to withdraw immediately. This leaves us with four young and struggling writers (Page, Shaw, Ruddick and myself) and with the older and already well-known Frank Scott, to whom we assigned something of a paternal role; he was supposed to approve and advise but not to initiate; indeed we were sometimes a little suspicious of him because we thought that, with his passion for collecting little magazines and sponsoring movements, he might want us to close down once we had achieved some success. However hard she tries, Professor Francis can extract from this bag precisely 1 (one) professor with the then notoriously low McGill salary plus 1 Westmount house, to my mind interesting rather than "lovely", and so far as I recall without a spacious lawn. I very much doubt whether any of us four had already appeared in *Poetry*; I certainly hadn't. The fact that we were making *Preview* a show-case for our work proves that we were new to the literary scene: that was the whole point. And, far from being established, Shaw had transferred from teaching to a temporary job in a factory, Ruddick was a medical student, P. K. Page had a wartime job amongst her stenographers, and I was a teacher on insecure tenure at 130 dollars a month for only ten months of the year. None of us had a house of his own. I paid 17 dollars a month for my "mews".

Professor Francis is kind to me but her approach has the same picturesque and dramatic touches which enable her to begin her article with hundreds of words on the proletarian ambiance of *First Statement* before having to admit that *Preview* came first and that, although she hardly dares to believe this, the future editor of *First Statement*, John Sutherland, applied for membership in the senior group. I was a "poet aflame with purpose". I was "Audenesque in appearance and mannerisms", although on what evidence she bases a comparison of our quirks of behaviour I cannot think. But it is with my imminent departure from Canada that she is seen at her most portentous: "He felt towards the end that he had failed, that Canada had somehow won. His leave-taking was more like a baffled retreat . . . " This is nonsense. *Towards the end* I was probably happier than I had been for years. (There are such things as private lives and personal reasons as well as the mystical game of wrestling with Canada, although in fairness I have to admit I had enjoyed playing that game.) Far from feeling that *I had failed* I thought my new poetry much better than my old, and was grateful to John Sutherland for a 26 page-long, perceptive and often highly critical review of my work in which he nonetheless recognized and even celebrated the

new qualities.[3] As for a *baffled retreat*, I departed from Montreal with considerable bounce, agog for new adventures, by no means certain that my absence would be either long or permanent. Technically I was still employed by McGill. And when, around August, having already booked my passage back, I did break that academic tie I was rewarded with two wonderful years in Singapore.

Let me attempt to put the situation with regard to *Preview* into a (substantial) nutshell.

I. It appeared in the spring of 1942 as a mimeographed foolscap folio, its shape and general appearance owing much to *The Andersons*, a single issue publication which my wife, Peggy Doernbach, and I had sent to friends at least a year before — and whose appearance, in its turn, was rather similar to a magazine I had produced at Sherborne School in 1932. II. It announced itself as a "literary letter . . . not a magazine", doubtless because we wished to republish some of the work later, and was therefore not on sale to the general public. III. It achieved some immediate success, being welcomed by Arthur Phelps in a radio talk and receiving letters of approval from the American editors, George Dillon and James Laughlin. Smith also approved, putting poems by P. K. Page and myself into his pioneer *Book Of Canadian Poetry* (1943) where there was as yet no whisper of Layton, Dudek, and Souster. IV. It was the vehicle of a group of young people living in wartime conditions and neither prosperous nor yet with much in the way of professional prospects, together with F. R. Scott and, later, the not notably well-off lawyer-poet, A. M. Klein, who was to be given a special "visiting writer" type of job at McGill. Its meetings to discuss contributions were down-to-earth; you only drank if you brought your own beer. It owed much to two women, my wife and Kit Shaw. It occasionally opened its pages to outside contributors such as Mavis Gallant, Denis Giblin and James Wreford, who became a sort of editor-at-a-distance. By that time it was being published in quarto form, with a simple cover. V. Its editors declared themselves anti-fascists but only I, who became entangled in the far-left, deserved Professor Francis's term "doctrinaire". Professor Francis uses the plural quite unforgivably when she says "Many of them displayed strong sympathies with a continental communism of the Auden-Spender-MacNeice variety", quite apart from the fact that "continental" is meaningless (which continent?) and that MacNeice was nowhere near the communist position. The editors drew much of their writing from a social concern with the experiences they met. VI. John Sutherland, who used to take pot-luck luncheons with me, proposed himself for membership of *Preview*, supporting his claim with a prose poem about a bee

which got grassblades stuck up its nose. Perhaps jealous of my new-found security in the group, I advised against Sutherland's immediate admission. Sutherland soon started *First Statement.* Irving Layton proposed himself, or was proposed, for membership. He was interviewed but not invited to join. VII. *Preview* didn't take all that much notice of the new magazine. They probably respected John Sutherland but had the feeling that he was surrounded (then as in the days of *Northern Review*) not by exciting bohemians but by callow, semi-literate youths whose voices had only recently broken. His acquiring a press, and the pleasant appearance of the first books he published, tended to change their attitude. Thus he published my first book, *A Tent For April* (1945), but not, as Professor Francis says, because no commercial publisher would have it; I was already preparing a book for Ryerson. VIII. Eventually the two groups came together. I recall that I suggested *Portage* for the title of the new magazine, and then the too pretentious *Northern Review.* Editorial sessions were not, as Professor Francis claims, "stormy" but *Preview* people did insist that Sutherland give up most of his lower-case gimmickry after the first issue. It is incorrect to imagine that the *Preview* group was immediately eclipsed because Sutherland became managing editor: in charge, that is to say, of the business side. They contributed much. A spot-check shows them dominating the third issue. Long after the notorious resignation I was represented by a substantial group of new poems in the spring of 1949.

There is, of course, more to quarrel with in "Montreal Poets Of The Forties" than the niggling problem of facts. There is the suggestion that *Preview* poets "excelled in tightly-structured metaphysical exercises . . . highly metaphoric poems rich in Marxist and Freudian allusions", a line of approach which is quickly connected with the term "imported" and then, obviously more suspect, "English" followed by a frequent reiteration of the epithet "sophisticated" — even Smith has a touch of colonial naiveté when he describes me in the Oxford anthology as having a "sophisticated European sensibility", as though Americans and Canadians were still wet behind the ears. In contrast to this, *First Statement* believed in "a masculine, virile [notice the indicative redundancy] poetry of experience . . . They would not write of the phoenix and the hyacinth but of Berri Street and De Bullion. Scorning the *artifice* [my italics] of metaphor and symbol . . . etc." Now it was an American critic, Cleanth Brooks, who first taught me the functional nature of metaphor and it was an American poet, Hart Crane, who showed me the varied use of symbol in "The Bridge" and my favourite "The Broken Tower". If a symbol is *artifice* then surely it doesn't amount to

much? The fact that I acquired my "modernism" during two years in New York is often forgotten (see for instance "Dramatic Monologue" in *Preview*, June 1942 or, indeed, "The Plotter" in *The Andersons* and later, oddly enough, in *First Statement*).[4]

When Bruce Ruddick wrote in a poem of "the dark tough slum of the rectum" he was, as a young medic, writing directly from his experience and, not that it matters much, we can be pretty sure that he didn't have a phoenix or hyacinth in sight. His rectum was, one suspects, neither "imported" nor "English" but resolutely Canadian or, better, universal. Furthermore one has only to read quickly through *Preview*, whether with particular attention to such poems as Ruddick's "Plague", Page's "The Stenographers", Scott's "Boston Tea Party", my "Drinker" and "Portrait", Klein's "Rocking Chair", or the prose in which Neufville Shaw met a factory worker, P. K. Page evoked a tubercular French-Canadian family or a bourgeois poetess presiding at tea, Bruce Ruddick described a conversation on the way to a lunatic asylum in "Old Minka's Weather" or I encountered a mixed-up American soldier, to see that *Preview* writers drew very heavily on their actual living and were able to express this with crisp simplicity and vernacular tang. There isn't much of the "metaphysical exercise", but then writers don't often publish their *exercises*, do they? I should say we were compassionate people, often writing from anger, often writing quickly and loosely, and far from "the cold, intricate brilliance of . . . intellectual gymnastics" which Professor Francis sees in us.

I have only to add here that some of the *First Statement* brickbats could be justifiably hurled at me although I suspect I was too muddled to be "brilliant" and too romantically naive to deserve their other epithet of "sophisticated". I was neurotically compulsive as a writer, had to produce at least one poem per weekend, enthused over now one "influence" and now another, tried far too many things, was often word-intoxicated (rather, alas, than aiming for the "tightly-constructed" or even the "intellectual") and had remarkably little confidence in myself. I was also undeniably English although I had had little to do with the "Poets of the Thirties" while I was in England, my heroes still being Housman, Yeats, Owen. On the other hand I must have had a bit of judgement, if only because I omitted such a mass of my *Preview* work from my collected volumes. There are many poems in the magazine which I can scarcely bear to read and several which I had forgotten completely. I have been in danger of subscribing to the legend that I was simply an imitator of Thomas and Barker,

since I had periods, or just hours of the day, when my dependence on someone or other was grovelling.

In a brief critical note to my entry in *Contemporary Poets of the English Language* (St. James' Press) Mr. John Robert Colombo comments on my three volumes of poetry in the following terms: "The poems suggest a wide reading in Eliot and Auden and especially Dylan Thomas . . . He had been called, perhaps unkindly, 'a kind of tea-drinking Dylan Thomas'." The last phrase is arresting, comic and memorable, but is there any possible justification for finding in the 97 poems published in book form more than seven or eight which show any Thomas influence at all? As for reading widely in Eliot and Auden, didn't *all* of us in our youth read *all* of them? Since Mr. Colombo assigns my "Poem of Canada" to the wrong volume, he may well betray here a failure to check on what I really wrote. Poverty, by the way, forced me to drink tea; by the time I was writing my five or so "late" Thomas poems in 1947-49, one of which was addressed to Thomas himself and set in a bar, I was putting down about as much beer as he was. Were Mr. Colombo not the most incommunicative and letter-shy of editors I should enjoy tackling him on these points.

Furthermore, when I look, for instance, at the twelve poems printed in *Poetry* for March 1943, and which were subsequently awarded one of that journal's prizes, I can find no Thomas or Barker, not much trace of anyone else, little by way of notably "English manner", but instead a quiet voice speaking with directness and simplicity ("War Dead", "Military Camp", "The Airmen"). And only a night or two ago, shuffling some mouldering package which I hadn't looked at carefully for twenty-five years, I came across a dozen unpublished poems from the same high old days of *Preview* which seemed, so unfamiliar they were, to present me with a new poet altogether, very young, very lyrical, very brief, writing often a lean free-verse in which he responded to the rich darkness of a Montreal alley, a neighbour's dress on the line, people crowding round an orator at an open-air meeting, a blind man, a group listening to music, a male neighbour dressing for a party or "Notes For A Dream Landscape". At least at the moment of re-discovery these poems seemed as light and precise as butterflies. Still what I emphasize now is that I had plenty of faults but that these should not be allowed to obscure the clear-eyed directness of my colleagues.

THE SAME SLANTING towards *First Statement* is seen in *The Making Of Modern Poetry In Canada*, edited by Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski. This is certainly a very useful book despite its unscholarly lack of an index and its rather smug claim to present "essential articles" but it quotes not a single one of *Preview*'s always succinct editorial notes, which at times amounted to manifestos, while its chapter on "The Early Forties" when my magazine undoubtedly led the field, is largely concerned with the opinions of John Sutherland and with material concerning the editorial split in *Northern Review*, a journal which only began in late 1945. Louis Dudek seems the more excitable of the two editors. In 1954 he numbers me amongst those "as angry and concerned about life values and the realities as ever, and no longer to be shelved away as 'socialistic', or 'imitative' of English trends" but by 1958 he sums up *Preview* as "derivative" and showing an "esoteric" unawareness of the need for local literary stimulus, for variety, for native expression, a position echoed in an article of the same year by the opinion that of the *Preview* group, with the exception of Klein and Scott, "none have (sic) survived".[5] The victory has, of course, gone to Layton, Souster and himself, poets "characteristically rooted in Canadian life and speech" and spurning "the engrafted English stock". Thus, in the four years between 1954 and 1958, years in which I produced the Canadian sections of my first two prose books and also the radio play, "A Case Of Identity", with its scenes of poetry making in Montreal and its conversation with John Sutherland at the Coliseum skating rink, I had somehow fallen by the way.

Professor Gnarowski has at times something of the vivid imprecision, the picturesque brandishing of words, that we have seen in Professor Francis.[6] A *strangely* tense yet respectful entente existed between the *elder* statesmen of *Preview* and the *turbulent turks* of *First Statement* (my italics) but what does the Professor mean? Was there an "entente", was it "tense", why was it "strangely " tense? — to proceed no further. *Preview*, we are told, belonged to those who believed in "a universal content of ideas lodged in an English-language culture, dominated by a social theme which could be best expressed in the cosmopolitan language of the intelligence." Well, what — as a supporter of the opposition — does he want? Specifically Canadian ideas not viable elsewhere, lodged in a culture of gobbledygook and expressed in the native — but it isn't — language of the intestinal tract? (This would tie in with *First Statement*'s hippie primitivism and bad manners as instanced by Professor Francis not me: "huzzahs . . . insults . . . to fight, spit, sweat, urinate and make love in their

poems.") Certainly there is a hint of D. H. Lawrence a few lines further on. The disappearance of my colleagues and myself from *Northern Review* led to "the emergence of a more virile grouping among the poets of Montreal". I always think recourse to virility as a value-judgement is dangerous, especially where women are concerned (*their* manly Miriam Waddington versus *our* languishing Patricia Page); it smacks of the Hemingway-Callaghan fight and makes me want to match Bruce Ruddick, who used to roll naked in the snow and was one of the most belligerent men I have met, against, say, the undoubtedly ebullient Irving Layton.

I can't really let "elder statesmen" pass, not when I think of myself at 29 humping a large puppet-theatre onto a truck with the assistance of one Jewish boy-boxer and two elderly ex-Wobblies in order that Peggy Doernbach and I could present our plays to a house-meeting somewhere in the Cartier division; it just doesn't sound elderly, to my way of thinking, and it isn't all that "esoteric" or "sophisticated" or "English" or "effete". But there is a more important point than this. Professor Gnarowski says straight out, and apparently from the viewpoint of 1943-44, when he himself certainly wasn't around, that the *First Statement* people "were obviously destined for the greater achievement". I shouldn't think that this was so at the time; whether it is now is a matter of critical discussion, though one would have thought that events have developed beyond the time for either group to have much relevance beyond an historic one — I cannot believe that substantial numbers of poets today are against what Louis Dudek once called "the unreal universe of language" or what Michael Gnarowski describes as "the cosmopolitan language of the intelligence". Canadians are not brutes or philistines. But, since this is an apologia in its way, I can't help feeling the literary historians of the future may have considerable respect for the achievements of *Preview*: Page's *As Ten As Twenty*, Klein's *The Rocking Chair*, the later poems of Frank Scott and the like. And, to instance a mere contributor, hasn't the work of Mavis Gallant shown exciting development? What else may turn up?

AND THEN, in October of last year, I found myself back in Canada. The experience was not of the sort that I feel capable of examining in these pages. It was one of the big occasions of my life: but bewilderingly quick, sharp, poignant. In a sense I was constantly rubbing my eyes. I didn't really have time to think. Although I had planned to take notes, record conversations

on tape, make use of my camera, I did none of these things. I had brought several folios of poems with me but I felt thoroughly confused by the typed sheets and seemed to make my choice for readings in a slapdash but unadventurous way, as though I scarcely knew my own work. I felt a reluctance to return to my early, Canadian poems, the anthologized pieces in particular, but at the same time I took few risks. In any case the "poetry reading" brings out the ham in one, makes one play for laughs; how can one come out of the blue, a man absurdly half a myth, and a fading myth at that, to share with strangers those intimate strategems, those crucifixions upon some half-understood but all-demanding meaning?

In Montreal, Ottawa, Lennoxville it was a period of Indian summer. The leaves already looked brittle as paint. Their stillness was arguably the stillness of art, but not quite the art of one's favourite painter. Not even the passing of Mr. Kosygin in one direction, and Miss Germaine Greer in another, nor the departure of yet one more member of the League of Canadian Poets flying east, flying west, with his typescript in his briefcase, was likely to agitate them much. To me the air was charged with greetings. From time to time I would relax with an old associate, as likely as not from *Preview*, as though we sat together on a hill and viewed a distant prospect, out of which our friendship rushed forward to suffuse us as the sun races up from behind a passing cloud. Who talks of literary problems, new work, book-reviewing, publishers' advances, the difficulty of running an English department, at such a moment? I would withdraw from my friends to a Montreal tavern. I was used to being alone and just looking. I was faithful to Peel Street.

If to my friends I was a figure of the past, and all the more so because there had been little communication between us over the years, to the various academics I met I must often have seemed no more than a provider of footnotes for a literary portrait long since completed. I sensed a possible awkwardness here. "Patrick Anderson of *Preview* . . . of the Montreal literary scene in the Forties . . . that would-be Marxist with his unproletarian tone of voice and his obsession with snow", and here the fellow was, full of twenty years of book-writing and journalism and criticism, positively an English man of letters in his small way, and actually claiming to be writing poetry still, to be riding quite a creative wave, with *Canadian poetry* (whatever he meant by that) as a not inconsiderable part of the product! It so happened that the people I have had to take issue with here, Professors Francis, Dudek, Gnarowski, were amongst my amiable hosts. I was able to talk things over with them and to offer my version of dis-

puted facts, having regard rather to the *Preview* group as a whole than to my own work of then and now. (A poet's sense of what he is doing is in any case both intimate and technical; he does not communicate easily his concern with raindrops splintered upon a flushing pane or the way the colour of a flower at night is guessed before it is made out, nor how a theme puts itself at risk as it is coaxed into one form amongst many possibilities, or a mood slowly discovers itself among wandering patterns of words.) But had I realized earlier that my especial sponsor, Michael Gnarowski, was still firmly committed to the "other side", believed my third volume, *The Colour As Naked*, a too-literary anticlimax to the preceding collections, and proved himself therefore entirely unconverted by Mr. C. X. Ringrose's arguments, I might well have remembered to quote that gentleman's conclusion to his article on myself and the critics: "If Patrick Anderson ever does return to Canada, he would be justified in demanding a reassessment of his poetry, or at least that we abandon the current clichés about his work."

A warmer attitude was noticeable elsewhere: In that final crowded meeting at my old university of McGill, Louis Dudek insisted on taking the chair and paid me the compliment of the most flattering introduction I have ever received, a compliment all the greater because he insisted on himself reading aloud a poem I had thought long unfashionable and about whose flourish of images I still had doubts — none other, in fact, than "Winter In Montreal".

One product of my tour was that I read, and certainly with enjoyment, *The Selected Poems Of Irving Layton.* I had been led to believe two things: first, that Layton had been for many years the front-runner amongst modern poets, especially those of the *First Statement* persuasion; and second, that the discovery of a "native", "virile", Canadian voice had had much to do with Ezra Pound (that most cosmopolitan of poets), W. C. Williams, the Black Mountain, Charles Olson's projectivism and so on. To my great surprise I found that Layton was writing like a *Preview* poet somewhat matured: traditional, if a little loose, socially-concerned if also romantically self-preoccupied, often Canadian in subject matter but "engrafted" with many another stock, above all a Laytonian rather than a nationalist. Couldn't he have written my "Frisked"? — and couldn't I, if he'll forgive me, have had a fair shot at his "Berry Picking"? Ignorant as I still am of Souster and Dudek in any depth, I began to suspect that the long and for all I knew boringly familiar controversy which I have been arguing about here was never very meaningful, and lost its small but conceivably useful bite way back in the early Fifties.[7]

One final point. I am no philosopher but I have been intrigued for years by T. S. Eliot's suggestion that the appearance of a new writer, and presumably also the reappearance of an old writer reborn, subtly alters the literary perspective. As I sit here in my Essex farmland, nearly twenty-two years out from Canada — or better, nearly six months — and put my pen down on paper to continue work on a poem or to finish this present article, I am very slightly and almost imperceptibly changing the situation three thousand miles away.

NOTES

[1] *Canadian Literature*, No. 43, pp. 10-23.

[2] "Montreal Poets of the Forties", *A Choice of Critics*, Oxford University Press, 1966.

[3] *Northern Review*, Vol. 2, No. 5, April-May 1949. I led off this issue with five new poems, including "An Apple before Bedtime".

[4] When I read the long series of journals I kept in New York, and which include my preliminary visit to Montreal and Quebec in 1938, I am surprised at how quickly I became Americanized. I seem never to have fallen back on a cultural base in England. Nor, to judge from the endless bits and pieces of reportage, diary, political analysis, did I do so in the Forties. As a practicing poet I felt closer to (less afraid of) American poets than English.

[5] *The Making of Modern Poetry in Canada*, ed. Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski, Ryerson Press, 1967, pp. 172, 212, 280. Dudek goes so far as to state bluntly that it was "*First Statement* which became *Northern Review*", forgetting that the dying John Sutherland still counted, if not quite legally, *Preview* among his three ancestors in the summer of 1956.

[6] *Ibid.*, The Role of Little Magazines in the Development of Poetry in English in Montreal," pp. 212-222.

[7] I don't believe you can construct a literature on the basis of Imagism, a useful but short-lived movement, or on the proponents of the "new austerity" and the "anti-poem".

LAMPMAN'S FLEETING VISION

Sandra Djwa

READING THE POETRY of Archibald Lampman, we are reminded again of the Victorian capacity for dualism: he appears to accept both the Socialist vision of human progress and the Calvinist sense of man's inescapable evil; a professed non-believer, he explores the ways of stoic and hedonist without ever losing his own devotion to a reinstated Pale Galilean; a pacifist of sorts, he shrinks from violence yet writes several fascinated explorations of the psychology of brutality. In Arnoldian frame, Lampman regularly suggests the need to "moderate desire" despite which some of his best poems are celebrations of anarchic passion. An idle dreamer, a self-proclaimed troubled soul, a Utopian, a feminist, and a critic of society . . . The list of epithets gleaned from the poetry are often self-contradictory; yet, most often, Lampman's varied poetic stances are related to his exploration of an abyss which he perceives gaping between the benevolent nature which he would like to affirm and the often unpleasant "reality" of everyday life.

This rift between the real and the ideal world is bridged, although not always successfully, through the metaphor of the "dream". Lampman's first poems are superficially descriptions of the peace, beauty and truth received by the poet as he "dreams" in nature, but the reader is always made aware of the unpleasant "real" which the idyllic vision attempts to subjugate; the "dissonant roar of the city" intrudes into the "easeful dreams" of even such idylls as the early poem "April". The Victorian parable of the high dream struggled into fruition ("The Story of an Affinity") and the Utopian vision ("The Land of Pallas") are all undercut in Lampman's canon by assaults of human viciousness and cruelty ("The Three Pilgrims") or by the perversions of human reason expressed in the nightmare vision of the coming machine world ("The City of the End of

Things"). In fact, a characteristic development of many of Lampman's later poems is that of the dream dissolving into the nightmare as in his sonnet, "Winter Evening":

> Tonight the very horses springing by
> Toss gold from whitened nostrils. In a dream
> The streets that narrow to the westward gleam
> Like rows of golden palaces; and high
> From all the crowded chimneys tower and die
> A thousand aureoles. Down in the west
> The brimming plains beneath the sunset rest,
> One burning sea of gold. Soon, soon shall fly
> The glorious vision, and the hours shall feel
> A mightier master; soon from height to height,
> With silence and the sharp unpitying stars,
> Stern creeping frosts, and winds that touch like steel,
> Out of the depth beyond the eastern bars,
> Glittering and still shall come the awful night.

In his earlier work, Lampman appears to accept the truth of the visionary experience: dreaming in nature, he can proclaim "dreams are real and life is only sweet". But the primary difficulty with continuing in the dreaming state, as even an Endymion must discover, is that the poet is not always able to keep "reality" at bay. Eventually, he does find it necessary to ask himself whether the visionary experience is indeed a true insight into higher truth or simply the embroidery of a cheating fancy. The question is stated quite explicitly in Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale": "Was it a vision or a waking dream/ Fled is that music: do I wake or sleep?" Lampman's aspiring "Vision of Twilight" concludes with a similar questioning of reality: "Comes my question back again — / Which is real? the fleeting vision?/ Or the fleeting world of men?". Is the true reality the product of our imagination, "the fleeting vision," or is it "the fleeting world of men?" Lampman's use of the same adverb to describe both states (and the fact that both are perceived through a poem which is itself a "vision") points up his transitory sense of both states and may be taken to support the view that he often sees the "visionary" and the so-called "real" world from the essentially passive state of the observer in the dream.

Curiously, Lampman began to write poetry not as a direct response to the dream visions of the major romantics (Keats' *Hyperion*, 1819, or its Victorian descendent, Hengist Horne's *Orion*, 1843), but rather under the influence of a derivative Canadian work in the late Victorian stream, the *Orion* (1880) of

Charles G. D. Roberts. Orion, a latter day Endymion, is "a dreamer of noble dreams"[1] and Lampman, when first reading Roberts' *Orion*, was plunged into a state of "the wildest excitement": "A little after sunrise I got up and went out into the college grounds... but everything was transfigured for me beyond description, bathed in the old-world radiance of beauty." Lampman was particularly delighted that "those divine verses... with their Tennyson-like richness" had been written "by a Canadian... one of ourselves".[2]

Lampman's first books, *Among the Millet* (1888) and *Lyrics of Earth* (1895), are clearly a response to Roberts' *Orion* and *Songs of the Common Day* (1893). But although Lampman adopts much of Roberts' romantic dream mythology, (the "sleep" of time and winter, the "dream" as a description of human life, and the Pan myth as it relates to nature's "dream" and poetic experience) his stance in nature is somewhat different from that of Roberts. From a comparison of Lampman's early sonnet, "In November", with Roberts' sonnet, "The Winter Fields", we can see that Lampman's "dream" is not only transcendental metaphor but also poetic process. The octave of each sonnet describes the wintry landscape, but in the sestet Roberts then deserts the fields for a dream-wish projection of the future; Lampman, in opposition, brings the reader back to the still figure of the poet:

> I alone
> Am neither sad, nor shelterless, nor gray,
> Wrapped round with thought, content to watch and dream.

This conclusion reinforces our awareness that the poem itself has come about because the poet, as observer, has stood and "dreamed". In that sense, his conclusion is a low modulated affirmation of the impartial "truth" of the experience just described.

As John Sutherland and Roy Daniells both have noted, it is the figure of the poet as apparent idler and dreamer which appears throughout Lampman's poems, especially in such poems as "Among the Timothy" or "At the Ferry" where the narrator states, "I look far out and dream of life."[3] In this "dream" or "reverie" he gives himself up to the "beauty"of sense impressions from nature. These impressions are analogous with high truth because Lampman prefers, as did the early Keats, the easy equation of beauty and truth. Furthermore, the truth of nature is a truth spontaneously given:

> ... I will set no more mine overtaskèd brain
> To barren search and toil that beareth nought,
> Forever following with sore-footed pain

The crossing pathways of unbournèd thought;
But let it go, as one that hath no skill,
To take what shape it will,
An ant slow-burrowing in the earthy gloom,
A spider bathing in the dew at morn,
Or a brown bee in wayward fancy borne
From hidden bloom to bloom.

Similarly, the poems "Ambition" and "The Choice" declare that for "poet" and "dreamer" it is all sufficient to "Sit me in the windy grass and grow/ As wise as age, as joyous as a child".

The romantic inheritance from which Lampman derives this wise passiveness is almost surely Wordsworth's "Expostulation and Reply". Wordsworth's conclusion, "Think you . . . That nothing of itself will come,/ But we must still be seeking?" would seem to underlie Lampman's assertion that he will "let it go . . . / To take what shape it will". No longer will he attempt to impose his willed structure on the world outside and so shape the poetic happening (as do, for example, Heavysege, Crawford, and Roberts) but he will rather sit passively and so allow the powers of nature to impress themselves upon poet and his art as do the minutiae of "ant", "spider" and "bee" from "Among the Timothy".

This formulation would seem to be a fairly accurate description of Lampman's nature poetry; if in Roberts' work there is most often an active straining for apotheosis, Lampman's poems, such as his sonnet, "Solitude", are most often a series of associations tied together by natural sequence and by the fact that they are the related perceptions of the recording poet:

How still it is here in the woods. The trees
Stand motionless, as if they did not dare
To stir, lest it should break the spell. The air
Hangs quiet as spaces in a marble frieze.
Even this little brook, that runs as ease,
Whispering and gurgling in its knotted bed,
Seems but to deepen, with its curling thread
Of sound, the shadowy sun-pierced silences.
Sometimes a hawk screams or a woodpecker
Startles the stillness from its fixed mood
With his loud careless tap. Sometimes I hear
The dreamy white-throat from some far off tree
Pipe slowly on the listening solitude
His five pure notes succeeding pensively.

But the point should be made that this is not only passive sense impression. Lampman's characteristic stance is one in which, Meredith-like, he insists upon cultivating the faculties of seeing and hearing: "Let us clear our eyes, and break/ Through the cloudy chrysalis". No longer "blind", man is enabled to see "The threads that bind us to the All,/ God or the Immensity" (Winter-Store). In the sonnet "Knowledge", Lampman describes the life which he would like to live as one "of leisure and broad hours,/ To think and dream" while "An Athenian Reverie" states explicitly that the function of these "broad hours" is to inquire into the deeper meaning beyond the surface phenomena of life. This whole association of "dream" and "knowledge" is given an Arnoldian context in the earlier poem "Outlook" where it is asserted that the true life is "Not to be conquered by these headlong days" but to allow the mind to brood "on life's deep meaning": "What man, what life, what love, what beauty is,/ This is to live, and win the final praise."

Despite the easy conventionality of these lines, Lampman's work does suggest a genuine preoccupation with the nature of the buried life, the hidden stream, the authentic self which Arnold in "Resignation" describes as lying unregarded beneath life's phenomena, a hidden self which must be tapped if man is to find peace and a moral guide for his existence. The protagonists of Lampman's major narrative poems — the dreamer of "An Athenian Reverie", Perpetua, David and Abigail as well as Richard and Elizabeth of "The Story of an Affinity" — all ask variations on the general question "What is this life?" More often than not, their moral struggles with themselves lead to an affirmation based on the fleeting "vision", a glimpse of that higher reality which they understand to underlie surface phenomena.

THE INSISTENCE that the poet should put himself in touch with nature's underlying truth seems to have been a part of Lampman's early thought. F. W. Watt (writing in *The University of Toronto Quarterly* in 1956) describes Lampman's early fable "Hans Fingerhut's Frog Lesson" which was first published in the periodical *Man* (1885). Clearly an allegory of the artist in society, it describes a young poet failing to receive popular recognition who then reviles man and nature. For this *hubris*, he is metamorphosed into a frog until he learns to interpret nature's cosmic plan, described by Watt as "cosmic optimism based on a stoical acceptance of one's lot and faith in Nature's maternal

purposes".[4] Initiated through suffering, Hans Fingerhut undergoes a moral transformation: "From that day the great songs that he made were nothing like his former ones. There was never anything bitter or complaining in them. They were all sweet and beautiful and wise."[5] This easy parable of the poet's reconciliation with himself and with society might be compared with Lampman's own pronouncements on the nature of unhappiness:

> All our troubles in reality proceed from nothing but vanity if we track them to their source. We form an ideal of ourselves and claim what seems to be due to that ideal. The ideal of myself is entitled to love and approbation from my fellow creatures: but the love and approbation does not appear, and I fret and abuse the constitution of things. To the ideal of myself money and power and practical success are no doubt due, but they do not come, and again I abuse the constitution of things. (1896)[6]

Lampman's early complaints that his poetry was not properly appreciated, his continued penury, his unhappiness with the tedium of the Ottawa Post Office, grief over the death of a young child, suggestions of an unrequited love, and, above all, his fatal illness and early death are all legendary and have contributed to the view of Lampman as a Canadian John Keats. Despite the evidence of D. C. Scott's letter to Ralph Gustafson (17th July, 1945) which argues "the cast of Lampman's nature was not towards melancholy",[7] much discussion of Lampman has interpreted the poetry to infer that Lampman did consider himself heir to "The woe and sickness of an age of fear made known". The truth of Lampman's situation may have been somewhat less onerous; writing for the *Globe* in 1892, he proclaims: "No man is more serious than the poet; yet no man is more given to expressing under different circumstances the most opposite statements."

Implied in Scott's letter to Gustafson and in his Introduction to *Lyrics of Earth: Sonnets and Ballads*, 1925, is the suggestion that some of the "ills" which plague Lampman's poetic world may have been an imaginative recreation of Socialist thought rather than Lampman's actual experiences in Ottawa, circa 1890. Certainly, we do notice there are very few poems referring to Ottawa life which are grounded in the realistic mode. Even when presented in a poem specifically titled "Ottawa", the city is not recognizable as any place having a Canadian habitation and a name but is instead the city of misty romantic towers or the city of industrial greed and social oppression. It is also true that other than for the sensitive nature poetry of the first two books, Lampman's later work does become a repository for the Victorian stock concerns of religious bigotry ("To an Ultra Protestant"), social injustice ("Epitaph on a Rich Man"), evolutionary

progress ("The Clearer Self"), the machine age and utopias ("A Vision of Twilight").

However stereotyped the invocation, there is a note of genuine melancholia running throughout Lampman's poetry. The early sonnet "Despondency" bleakly views the future: "Slow figures in some live remorseless frieze/ The approaching days escapeless and unconquered". He concludes that life itself is "Vain and phantasmal as a sick man's dream". A poem such as "Sapphics" which urges man to follow the stoical fortitude of nature also presents a personal application: "Me too changes, bitter and full of evil,/ Dream after dream have plundered and left me naked,/ Grey with sorrow". "Loneliness", like Margaret Avison's "The Mirrored Man", starkly reveals an inner self:

> So it is with us all, we have our friends
> Who keep the outer chambers, and guard well
> Our common path;
> For far within us lies an iron cell
> Soundless and secret, where we laugh or moan
> Beyond all succour, terribly alone.

Other than for a large cluster of images which makes reference to the "dream" or "vision" in relation to the "beauty" of nature, Lampman's poetic vocabulary is often concerned with the negative emotions of "pain", "misery", "fear", "loneliness", "loss" and "emptiness". The particular association of the "dream" with "grief" and "death" which begins to dominate about 1894 particularly in relation to poems such as "Chione" and "Vivia Perpetua", suggests Lampman's grief at the death of his infant son. Similarly, the long narratives, "David and Abigail" and "The Story of an Affinity", parables of impossible love brought to fruition, may be given a new rationale if they are viewed in the light of the autobiographical "A Portrait in Six Sonnets" and Lampman's stifled affection for Katherine Waddell.[8] It is perhaps because of this growing burden of unhappiness, coupled with the beginning of his own fatal illness, that Lampman writes in 1895:

> I am getting well weary of things. I was so far gone in hypochrondria on Saturday last that I had not the spirit to go to my office at all. I went straggling up the Gatineau Road, and spent the whole day and most of the next under the blue sky and the eager sun; and then I began to perceive that there were actually trees and grass and beautifully loitering clouds in the tender fields of heaven; I got to see at last that it was really June; and that perhaps I was alive after all.[9]

For the early Lampman, as for his alter-ego Hans Fingerhut, the cure for

melancholy was to return to nature. And, as in the early poetry of Keats ("I Stood Tip-Toe Upon a Little Hill" or "Sleep and Poetry") the realm of "Flora and old Pan: sleep in the grass" is invariably associated with the poet's "dream". In addition, Lampman endows nature with the instinctive apprehension of eternal truths. Throughout Lampman's verse, there runs a conscious-unconscious antithesis in which the creatures of nature are associated with the instinctive knowledge or "dream" which underlies creation, while man is made miserable by his own nagging consciousness. Consequently, in poems such as "An Old Lesson From the Fields", and "Comfort of the Fields" the lesson given to man is the injunction to experience the true "power" and "beauty" of life by putting away conscious knowledge. At one with the other creatures of the field, he can drain "the comfort of wide fields unto tired eyes".

This emphasis on a wide passiveness would seem to be related to the idea that the poet, standing a little apart from both nature and himself, is not only in a position to be impressed upon by the moving "frieze" of nature, but is also enabled to see into the fixed plan or "dream", which he hypothesizes as underlying the active surface motion of nature and the universe. In Lampman's work, as in the early verse of Roberts, the frogs have a special function as emissaries of the poet's "dream". In the poem "The Frogs", they are specifically associated with a lack of conscious thought: "Breathers of Wisdom won without a quest,/ Quaint uncouth dreamers". For Lampman, the frogs become a way of communicating with the eternal first principle:

> Often to me who heard you in your day,
> With close wrapt ears, it could not choose but seem
> That earth, our mother, searching in what way,
> Men's hearts might know her spirit's inmost dream;
> Ever at rest beneath life's change and stir,
> Made you her soul, and bade you pipe for her.

As he listens, "The stillness of enchanted reveries/ Bound brain and spirit and half-closed eyes,/ In some divine sweet wonder-dream astray", so that the "outer roar" of mankind grows "strange and murmurous, faint and far away":

> Morning and noon and midnight exquisitely,
> Wrapt with your voices, this alone we knew,
> Cities might change and fall, and men might die,
> Secure were we, content to dream with you,
> That change and pain are shadows faint and fleet,
> And dreams are real, and life in only sweet.

In effect, the peace and comfort of the eternal dream, unconsciously experienced by the frogs, is passed on to the poet who lays himself open to this experience. In another poem "Favourites of Pan", Lampman adapts Roberts' earlier poem "The Pipes of Pan" to suggest that the poetic voice of Pan (the "dream") is carried by the frogs.

In the first two books, the "dream" is the direct result of sense impressions from nature; in the long narrative poems, "The Story of an Affinity" and "David and Abigail", re-worked during the early 1890's, the "dream" carries the implications of religious or social "vision". In the first of these (title given as "My Story of an Affinity" by Bourinot[10]) we find in Margaret, a woman of sensitivity and independence, an embodiment of the topical feminism of Lampman's essay for *The Globe*:

> Give [women] perfect independence, place them upon an exactly even footing with men in all the activities and responsibilities of life and a result for good will be attained which is almost beyond the power of the imagination to picture
>
> (1892-93)[11]

Both Margaret and Abigail are women of charm and dignity whose actions have overtones of the philosopher-queen of "The Land of Pallas". Lampman's stress on the "Beauty" and "Peace" of this utopian land and the detail in which "the wise fair women" are described as bringing out baskets of food to their men in the fields, all suggest William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890), as does this conventional passage of Socialist economics:

> And all the earth was common, and no base contriving
> Of money of coined gold was needed there or known,
> But all men wrought together without greed or striving,
> And all the store of all to each man was his own.

The insertion into this utopia of a "ruin" describing "The woe and sickness of an age of fear made known" is equally suggestive of the museum of machines and the attack on codified religion from Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872):

> And lo, in that gray storehouse, fallen to dust and rotten,
> Lay piled the traps and engines of forgotten greed,
> The tomes of codes and canons, long disused, forgotten,
> The robes and sacred books of many a vanished creed.

Most interesting is the concept of Pallas, "the all-wise mother" which seems to blend the earth goddess of the first nature poetry with "the wise fair woman", a development, perhaps, of the Pre-Raphaelite Burne-Jones ideal by way of Mor-

ris's Ellen and Katherine Waddell. The noble women of Lampman's major narratives are all characteristically "grey-eyed", conforming in stature and in dignity to that ideal figure of "A Portrait in Six Sonnets":

> Grey-eyed, for grey is wisdom — yet with eyes,
> Mobile and deep, and quick for thought or flame
> A voice of many notes that breaks and changes
> And fits each meaning with its vital chord,
> A speech, true to the heart, that lightly ranges
> From jocund laughter to the serious word,
> And over all a bearing proud and free,
> A noble grace, a conscious dignity.

In "David and Abigail," the spiritual vision is associated with its feminine exemplar in the manner of Keats' *Hyperion;* Abigail's "high dreams" are related to the desire to emulate "those great women praised of old," a Miriam or Deborah whose courage and wisdom supported the tribe. To the lovestruck David who is plunged into "dreams" at the first sight of Abigail, she is, as the maidservant Miriam astutely remarks, "the vision of the wise fair woman." Similarly, in the long narrative poem, "The Story of an Affinity," the "vision" of Margaret is the catalyst which "burst[s] the bolted prison of [Richard's] soul" and transforms an aimlessly violent existence into the nobler "dream" of a formal education and the development of the self which will enable him to claim Margaret's love. Margaret's own dreams are for a life of which William Morris might have approved: "full of noble aims,/ A dream of onward and heroic toil/ Of growth in mind, enlargement for herself/ And generous labour for the common good." For Richard, the "dream" of Margaret proves a passport to the authentic self which guides him through ten years in the city and undergirds the shared "dream" of their future together.

This insistence on the "dream" or "vision" as the mainspring of human experience is sometimes likely to strike the modern reader as a somewhat naive wish-fulfillment device: Nabal, Abigail's gross, wine-bibbing husband is indirectly but conveniently dispatched from a love triangle by the after effects of a great, black "dream". Yet, even while amused at the facility of this structure, we are somewhat sobered by Lampman's earnest attempts to re-define the primary experience of his poetry, the "dream", in terms of a moral guide for man's behaviour in society. Like faith, the dream has the great advantage of being undeniable as it is at once its own genesis and justification.

Among the Millet and *Lyrics of Earth* demonstrate that the dream enabled

Lampman to write some of his most striking poems; the charm of the unusual narrative "In November" is the evocation of the tranced state in the mind of the observer-poet. Loitering in the November woods, he finds himself motionless amidst a group of mullein plants, and feels as if he has become "One of their sombre company/ A body without wish or will." A sudden ray of thin light, (associated with the glimpse "of some former dream") induces a moment of "golden reverie" to man and plant. The attraction of this poem lies in the nicely understated kinship between man and nature and also in the narrator's shock of emotional discovery, a discovery which we as readers share:

> And I, too, standing idly there,
> With muffled hands in the chill air,
> Felt the warm glow about my feet,
> And shuddering betwixt cold and heat,
> Drew my thoughts closer, like a cloak,
> While something in my blood awoke,
> A nameless and unnatural cheer,
> A pleasure secret and austere.

In this poem, as in the earlier poems, "Among the Timothy" and "At the Ferry", the dream is linked with Lampman's passive apprehension of nature and as such it does not interfere with his observations. In fact, it adds an effective (because unexplained) suggestion of the supra-natural. But serious problems do arise in later poems when Lampman attempts to invoke the dream in connection with vague abstractions and unrealized experience; the dream then becames a substitute for reality rather than an agent for perceiving it.

A rationale for the early "dream" experience together with some of Lampman's most characteristic uses of the word itself is to be found in the long narrative poem "An Athenian Reverie". A Greek watching "before the quiet thalamos" falls into a "reverie" compounded of the memories and associations of his past and present life. He views the land itself as if it were "breathing heavily in dreams" and speculates on the "dim dreams" of the wedding guests. Moving to a larger generalization, he concludes that love itself is "one all pampering dream" but this he rejects with the alternative of Tennyson's "Ulysses": "to me is ever present/ The outer world with its untravelled paths,/ The wanderer's dream." In this same Tennysonian vein, he describes as "greedy and blind" the multitude of people for whom life is a "dull dream" to which they never awaken. In contrast is the rich life of the man "who sees":

> to whom each hour

Brings some fresh wonder to be brooded on,
Adds some new group or studied history
To that wrought sculpture, that our watchful dreams
Cast up upon the broad expense of time,
As in a never-finished frieze.

The process described here is actually the process of the poem itself, the dream or reverie which moves over the surface of the dreamer's life casting up memories and associations upon the mind. The Keatsian romantic rationale for the experience, reminiscent of *Endymion*, is also quite explicit:

Happy is he
Who, as a watcher, stands apart from life,
From all life and his own, and thus from all
Each thought, each deed, and each hour's brief event,
Draws the full beauty, sucks its meaning dry
For him this life shall be a tranquil joy.
He shall be quiet and free. To him shall come
No gnawing hunger for the coarser touch,
No made ambition with its fateful grasp;
Sorrow itself shall sway him like a dream.

The dream which is also the poetic process becomes at once a means of apprehending life and an antidote to it; detached from the surface flux of life man acquires both the god-like vision and the god-like immunity to pain.

The importance of this whole cluster of associations in Lampman's poetry is perhaps the imaginative conversion which he is enabled to make; in effect, he is able to reverse the categories of "dreams" and "reality". Because the "true life" of existence is available only to the detached observer in the dreaming state, reality itself can be dismissed as a harmless dream; the inspired dreamer will find "sorrow itself shall sway him like a dream". The great advantage of this structure is that the dream, coupled with the stoic stance, becomes a way of circumventing the pain of every-day reality.

THE PROBLEM inherent in this way of looking at the world is that it is not always possible to maintain the dream and so keep reality at bay. This difficulty is particularly apparent in poems such as the revised "Winter-Store" from *Lyrics of Earth* (1895). In the earliest poems, the high "dream" is sufficient

to hold unpleasant reality in check; the "dissonant roar" of the city intrudes into the poetic dream but it does not take over. But, in the second version of the poem "Winter-Store", there is a schism between the two thirds of the poem which deals with the poet's "dream" in nature and his tranquil winter recollections, and the last third of the poem which is a sudden intrusion of the Socialist vision of the unhappy city. Lampman is no longer able to rest in a Meredith-like beneficent nature, at "one with earth and one with man". Instead the poem develops into a sudden and forceful "vision sad and high/ Of the laboring world down there":

> . . . through the night,
> Comes a passion and a cry,
> With a blind sorrow and a might,
> I know not whence, I know not why,
> A something I cannot control
> A nameless hunger of the soul.

If the voices of the frogs can bring assurance of nature's cosmic plan, the "dream" which underlies the flux of existence, there are other voices which remind Lampman of the fear and sorrow which are also a part of human life. The voice which comes out of the depth, "the crying in the night" of Lampman's much anthologized "Midnight" would seem to be part of a larger sequence of poems dealing with the fearful aspects of existence. In this sense, the comforting noon-tide "dream" has its complement in the midnight sleeplessness which will not allow "dream", ("New Year's Eve") or, as in Roberts' work, in the nightmare which grows out of the dream itself.

In the poem "Winter", strange voices rave among the pines, "Sometimes in wails, and then/ In whistled laughter, till affrighted men/ Draw close". The protagonist, Winter, becomes a fearful artist prototype:

> . . . Far away the Winter dreams alone.
> Rustling among his snow-drifts, and resigns,
> Cold fondling ears to hear the cedars moan
> In dusky-skirted lines
> Strange answers of an ancient runic call;
> Or somewhere watches with his antique eyes,
> Gray-chill with frosty-lidded reveries,
> The silvery moonshine fall
> In misty wedges through his girth of pines.

The voice of Winter's "ancient runic call" becomes associated with cruelty and

death: "The shining majesty of him that smites/ And slays you with a smile". In "Storm", the "blind thought" which impels the wind's cry is associated with repression. "All earth's moving things inherit/ The same chained might and madness of the spirit":

> You in your cave of snows, we in our narrow girth
> Of need and sense, for ever chafe and pine;
> Only in moods of some demonic birth
> Our souls take fire, our flashing wings uptwine;
> Even like you, mad Wind, above our broken prison,
> With streaming hair and maddened eyes uprisen,
> We dream ourselves divine.

In "Midnight", the landscape is again desolate and associated with cold and snow; the narrator, alone and sleepless at midnight, hears some unidentified "wild thing" crying out of the dark. Because of his implied spiritual isolation, we tend to speculate that the voice which the poet hears is a projection of his own grief. Yet, significantly, Lampman does not admit the personal reference which indicates a consciousness of interaction between man and his surroundings as does say, Coleridge, in "Frost at Midnight", but prefers to assign the voice of fear to some undefinable part of the external world.

This poem seems to indicate some of the disadvantages of a theory of poetry which postulates that the mind must wander freely the better to apprehend nature's infinite dream. When weary and despairing, the poet's mind might well find quite opposite principles in nature to that of Hans Fingerhut's "cosmic optimism" yet even intimations of demonic forces must be equally accepted as truth because the mind has given up his own autonomy. We can speculate that as Lampman became more depressed — the burden of death, ill-health, a stifled affection and apparent public indifference to his work detailed in the letters to Edward Thomson; — the press of this reality becomes too strong for the protective dream structure and its opposite, the nightmare, takes over. Such a development is implicit in the metaphor and, we might infer, in Lampman's own personality. This tendency is prefigured even in the first book where the poetic voices of frog and cicada are replaced by the fearful cry of "Midnight".

In Lampman's work we see mirrored the dilemma of the later Victorian romantics; he accepted a romantic mythology — the Wordsworthian belief that it is possible to be "laid asleep in body" and so "see into the life of things" — at the very moment when changing social structures, the Darwinistic imperative, and above all, the loss of a settled faith, made it impossible to assert man's

spiritual transcendence in nature. For most of his poetic career, Lampman seems to have willed himself into a denial of these facts: "Pan is gone — ah yet, the infinite dream/ Still lives for them that heed" until that time came when he was no longer psychologically able to participate in the comfort of nature's dream. It is then that there is a great press of new realities — assertions of man's continued cruelty to man, bitter indictments of social injustice, and horrible visions of religious persecution.

Perhaps, as Lampman's own "high dreams" for the future are shaken, he turns to the example of the protagonist of Tennyson's *Maud* and engages himself in the pursuit of the social good. The aspiring "dream" of social progress begins to replace nature's "dream", and this new direction in Lampman's thought is pointedly indicated by the title of his last book, *Alcyone* (1899). The name of this star is meant to suggest man's "wider vision" and this perspective, a Socialist evolutionary vision of cosmic design, is perhaps meant to be contrasted with the narrow and destructive insularity of the man of no vision, the "Idiot" (Greek, *idios*) from the poem "The City of the End of Things". This poem, a nightmare vision of the logical end of man's selfishness and greed, is a descriptive *tour de force* of the death-bringing city of machines.

At this time, Lampman was a member of an Ottawa group which met regularly to discuss Socialism and Science. Animations of Socialist thought, particularly the attack on wealth and social injustice ("To a Millionaire", "Avarice") and Socialist utopias ("A Vision of Twilight", "The Land of Pallas") now begin to fill the vacuum left by the "dream" in nature. Lampman has sometimes been described as a Fabian but his insistence on the social function of "Beauty" and "Art" would seem to suggest that he had been influenced by the aesthetic of William Morris. Certainly, the conclusion of "A Vision of Twilight" is particularly suggestive of the social "dream — vision" structure of Morris's conclusion to *News From Nowhere*. Yet, despite the framework of cosmic optimism provided for *Alcyone*, Lampman's Socialist heavens do not carry with them the beneficent assurance of nature's "infinite dream"; the poet-wanderer returns from his vision of the ideal city, as the first version of "The Land of Pallas" makes explicit, no longer able to find his way back to the social vision, and unable to make the inhabitants of the real city listen to his dream of a better world. In poems such as "The Land of Pallas" and "A Vision of Twilight", Lampman raises the same questions which had hovered on the fringes of his earlier verse — an inquiry into the meaning of life, especially the problem of evil. Such a rationale is provided by the inhabitants of vision city, "They declare the ends of

being/ And the sacred need of pain"; but unfortunately, the narrator can no longer accept this truth and unquestioningly agree that "dreams are real, and life is only sweet". Instead, "A Vision of Twilight" concludes with an admission of a loss of faith: "But in veiling indecision/ Comes my question back again — / Which is real? the fleeting vision?/ Or the fleeting world of men?"

Yet, if we are to accept the pattern of rebellion and reconciliation implicit in Hans Fingerhut's experience, or to note the continually remade "dreams" of an Abigail or a Margaret which reassert themselves in lowlier forms in the face of adversity (Lampman was re-writing "David and Abigail" at the time of his "spiritual revolution") and to note that he was actively attempting to move out of the restrictions of his old nature poetry, we might conclude that Lampman was developing beyond the youthful Keatsian realm of "Flora, and old Pan" into a concern with "a nobler life . . . the agonies, the strife of human hearts". Lampman's later poetry, in particular, "A Portrait in Six Sonnets" dated by Scott 1895-99, is a direct inquiry into human personality in a manner that far exceeds the lovesick "dreams" of "The Growth of Love". This sequence also implies that the higher vision is now to be associated with Katherine Waddell: "Touched by her,/ A World of finer vision I have found".

Further, his stoic observation of 1895, "It is necessary for every man when he reaches maturity of understanding to take himself carefully to pieces and ascertain with pitiless scientific accuracy just what he is, then he must adjust his life accordingly", is a far cry from that boyish romanticism which had earlier led him to identify with Keats, and suggests that Lampman was undertaking that mental stock-taking which leads to a new vision of the self and of the world. In particular, his interest in Socialism would appear to be an attempt to move out of the restrictions of nature poetry into what he saw as the real world of men. Writing for *The Globe* in 1893, he argues that "the greatest poets . . . have been men of affairs before they were poets, . . . those men who have been poets only have belonged, however illustrious, to the second class." In April 1894, writing of an early poem derivative of Keats, he asserts, "I am only just now getting quite clear of the spell of that marvellous person."[11] In this context, we may see Morris's Socialist "vision" as Lampman's vehicle of escape. Such a movement from the romantic "dream" to a new sense of social reality would be consistent with the experience of Lampman's good friend and fellow poet, Duncan Campbell Scott. Like Lampman, Scott began to write under the influence of Keats and Charles G. D. Roberts but soon began to move away from the infantile reaches

of dream (*The Magic House*, 1893) when he encountered the realities of Indian life (*New World Lyrics and Ballads*, 1905).

The poem which Lampman was working on four months before his death in 1899, "At the Long Sault: May, 1660" does reconcile man, nature and the social vision. It also suggests a new view of nature which is neither the entirely beneficent nature of the dream nor the entirely fearful nature of the nightmare: instead both beauty and fear co-exist within nature and are reconciled. If the poem begins in the old ideal mode, "The innocent flowers in the limitless woods are springing", Lampman for the first time, admits that even a beneficent nature might have its serpent, the soaring "grey hawk" of the first stanza. Again for the first time, he does not try to escape this evil by assigning responsibility for it to the intrusion of the "toiling city", his own antithesis to a comforting nature. As a result, "At the Long Sault" becomes a moving acceptance of all "the savage heart of the wild" as Daulac's men, one by one, fall before the Iroquois:

> Each for a moment faces them all and stands
> In his little desperate ring; like a tired bull moose
> Whom scores of sleepless wolves, a ravening pack,
> Have chased all night, all day
> Through the snow-laden woods, like famine let loose;
> And he turns at last in his track
> Against a wall of rock and stands at bay;
> Round him with terrible sinews and teeth of steel
> They charge and recharge; but with many a furious plunge and wheel
> Hither and thither over the trampled snow,
> He tosses them bleeding and torn;
> Till, driven, and ever to and fro
> Harried, wounded, and weary grown,
> His mighty strength gives way
> And all together they fasten upon him and drag him down.

The dream, no longer a passive gratification of the senses, is now the high ideal of heroic action for the good of society, the "sleepless dream" which impels Daulac and his men "To beat back the gathering horror/ Deal death while they may/ And then die". The town, safe and unknowing, does not "dream" that "ruin was near/ And the heroes who met it and stemmed it are dead." In the last stanza, reconciliation is achieved as violence modulates into pastoral: the metre of the poem changes to the lyric elegaic as the flowers of French chivalry are gathered back into the natural world:

The numberless stars out of heaven
  Look down with a pitiful glance;
And the lilies asleep in the forest
  Are closed like the lilies of France.

NOTES

[1] Richard Hengist Horne, *Orion*. 10th ed. (London, 1874), v.

[2] Archibald Lampman, *Lyrics of Earth: Poems and Ballads*, edited and with an Introduction by Duncan Campbell Scott (Toronto, 1925), 8.

[3] John Sutherland, "Edgar Allan Poe in Canada", *Archibald Lampman*, ed. Michael Gnarowski (Toronto, 1970), 159-178; Roy Daniells, "Lampman and Roberts", *Literary History of Canada*, gen. ed. Carl F. Klinck (Toronto, 1965), 389-98.

[4] F. W. Watt, "The Masks of Archibald Lampman", *Lampman*, 205-206.

[5] *Ibid.*, 206.

[6] Arthur S. Bourinot, ed., *Archibald Lampman's Letters to Edward William Thomson, 1890-96* (Ottawa, 1956), 33.

[7] "Copy of a Letter to Ralph Gustafson", *Lampman*, 154-58.

[8] Scott, *Lyrics of Earth*, 38; Gnarowski, *Lampman*, xxiv; Bruce Nesbitt, "A Gift of Love", *Canadian Literature*, No. 50 (Autumn, 1971), 35-40.

[9] *Lyrics of Earth*, 23.

[10] Bourinot, *Letters*, 18.

[11] *Lyrics of Earth*, 31-32.

LAMPMAN AND RELIGION

Barrie Davies

THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS and religious position of Lampman, as Desmond Pacey points out in *Ten Canadian Poets*, have been almost entirely ignored or taken for granted by previous critics with the exception of Pacey himself and Roy Daniells. In the *Literary History of Canada* Daniells writes that Lampman's "connection with the Christian tradition is of the most exiguous and awkward kind."[1] Desmond Pacey is concerned "to document the case for believing that he (Lampman) had severe religious doubts."[2] The present essay is an attempt to enlarge upon the insights and intuitions of these two critics.

Lampman — like Emerson, Thoreau, and many of the English Romantics — was not irreligious but did experience a growing revulsion against orthodox religion. It is convenient to deal with Lampman's religious experience in three stages; his rejection of institutional religion, his perplexity and doubt, and the nature of his religious beliefs. At the same time, it is important not to forget that such an order is artificial in that it fails to reflect the fluctuations between rejection, belief, doubt, and affirmation.

In context, it is useful to remember Lampman's background. For the first twenty-one years of his life Lampman lived in a staunchly Anglican environment. Is it not significant, therefore, that there is no evidence which shows that Lampman considered following in his father's footsteps? At the same time, the fact that Lampman did not enter the ministry is representative in the sense that it can be duplicated in the experience of many literary men in the nineteenth century throughout Canada, America, and England. Charles G. D. Roberts was born in the rectory at Douglas, and D. C. Scott in a Methodist parsonage in Ottawa. W. W. Campbell, born in the Anglican Mission at Berlin, eventually entered the ministry but like Emerson publicly renounced it. The nineteeth century was a time when many sensitive men and women found it difficult to accept an orthodox religion increasingly undermined by the findings of science, anthropology, and the Higher Criticism. Having established that Lampman's distrust

of institutional religion was broadly representative and not unique, it is necessary now to detail his disagreement. Such details also imply, because of negative emphasis, the religious ideas which he affirmed.

In his essay on Shelley, "The Revolt of Islam",[3] written whilst he was still at Trinity College, Lampman is shocked by what he calls the "atheistic opinions and daring blasphemy"[4] of Shelley's poem. But the essay does not reflect a straightforward, orthodox reaction. Lampman clearly admires Shelley and we have an example here of something which was to become characteristic of Lampman's writing, the transference of religious terms to nature. Shelley is a "pure worshipper of nature" and "one of her peculiar priests".[5] The essay seems to me to foreshadow Lampman's own quest, which is best described by the words he uses to portray Shelley's search for "some natural code of faith which to his mind conformed more closely to the workings of his only instructress, nature's self."[6]

Like Emerson and Thoreau, and the Deists and Unitarians before them, Lampman rejected many aspects and beliefs of institutional Christianity. His own time he described as "a philosophic age when people are beginning to realize with a sort of poetic clearness their true relations with nature and life."[7] Elsewhere, whilst protesting against contemporary translations of the Bible, he has a further comment upon the changing temper: "The men of the sixteenth century knew how to translate the Bible, because they believed it in a sense which is not intelligible even to the devout people of our day, and because they were saturated with its spirit."[8] Both these comments imply that for the sensitive, thoughtful and informed man, subscription to orthodox beliefs with the passionate intensity of earlier eras was no longer possible.

At the same time, Lampman realized that the majority of people clung to a moribund Church and regarded with suspicion any attempts to establish a personal belief which provided an intensity and meaning lacking in institutional religion.

Lampman hated anything which followed blind custom both in religion and in other aspects of life. Throughout his work, Lampman clearly and without histrionics established his own point of view which was always in reaction to the deadening quality of the experience of the mass of mankind. W. W. Campbell, his flamboyant contemporary, during the first three weeks of the column in *The Globe*, in which he and Lampman collaborated, used the findings of anthropology to show that much of the Old Testament and the Story of the Crucifixion were mythic and condemned as "poor and tottering" a religion "bolstered up by

ignorance".[9] Emerson had done much the same thing fifty years earlier as a prelude to a statement of his own belief, but clearly the religious attitudes in Canada were still rigid, for Campbell's article brought a shocked rebuke in the Monday editorial, which expressed "strongest disapproval" and condemned and repudiated "most emphatically his religious ideas".[10]

W. W. Campbell had begun his *Globe* column with some reflections on the growing class distinctions, the increasing disparity between the rich and the poor in Canada, and had castigated the churches for their indifference to the "destitution, degradation and misery both within the shadow of the same church spire, or within the sound of the same Sabbath bell". He ended: "Religionists may cry out about the hopelessness of mere humanity as a religion, but it would be better did they put a little more hope into the anguish of the world by putting more of the humanities into their religion."[11]

There have been many who have felt that institutional religion has often been conservative and reactionary. Thoreau, for example, believed the Church to be a very timid organization and a tool of materialism. A criticism of this kind of collusion is implicit in Lampman's "The Story of an Affinity" which emphasizes the richness of the church, the "grandeur", the "silken ceremonies", and the "velvet stalls". The pastor preaches on love and the brotherhood of man, but to a congregation composed of the "rich and the proud", who remain indifferent. The Church thus continues to announce the radical doctrines of Christ but has made them largely ceremonial. It is no wonder that Lampman in the *Globe* column for May 1892, like Emerson in "The Divinity School Address", calls for "genuine and effective" sermons to be delivered only by the most gifted preachers moving from parish to parish.

In the same column for September 1892 where he is attacking excessive wealth, there occurs the clause, "if it be true that there is a life beyond the grave". An orthodox Christian would not have expressed qualifications or doubt. Lampman seems not to have shared the belief in an afterlife, or rather he was concerned with the possibilities of the present life and this is where he wished to place his emphasis. In the column for November 1892 he incidentally dissociates himself from the popular belief in the afterlife. The tone of the language, which has a touch of Thoreauvian mockery, disapproves of the devaluation of the present life for something illusory: "Whether we accept with the mass of mankind the belief in a happy immortality of the soul, or whether we refuse to busy our thoughts with that great after-blank into which we cannot see how we shall penetrate with profit, in neither case will the sound-hearted man and the true

lover of humanity and life look upon death as in anywise a hideous and desperate thing."

Lampman did not endorse the doctrine of Original Sin. As early as his essay, "The Revolt of Islam", he approves Shelley's "magnificent dream", when men freed from the corrupting social institutions are able "to follow the instincts of natural goodness and virtue which should gradually lead them to perfection, to pure, glorious, unselfish happiness, without the further aid of laws and systems of morals."[12] Lampman continuously played down the other world of orthodox religion in order to assert the infinite possibilities of the present life and the innate capacities of human beings. Man needs neither Divine Grace, the Church, priests, nor theology and dogma. With Emerson, Lampman regarded the belief in a "system of post-mortem rewards and punishments", to use his words from the *Globe* column for April 1893, as false and degrading.

His poem, "Virtue", is an explicit rejection of external control and fear. Men cannot be bribed or frightened into virtuous behaviour. The only authority for the virtuous life comes from the "inward light", which produces "the God-like habit". Only when he thought of the Hon. John Staggart did Lampman regret "that the old theological fable of hell fire is not true."[13] In the poem the reaction to orthodox religion is openly contemptuous. Religion is a "grudged control", producing not virtue, but something peevish, crabbed and rancid, a "sour product". Religion has become petrified and reactionary, a "custom" maintained by the "sharp-eyed", and relying heavily on the enforcement of crude conceptions of a "painted paradise" or a "pictured hell". By contrast the reader familiar with Lampman's work realizes how personal and characteristic at times are the religious insights found here. By this I mean the emphasis on clarity, light, flowing movement, and self-fulfillment, whilst the line "Bathed in the noon-tide of an inward light" is more informative of one aspect of that most typical of his poems, "Heat", than many pages of critical commentary.

An untitled poem, left in his manuscript book for 1889 to 1892, is significant in showing how radically Lampman's religious ideas had changed in the ten years since he had left Trinity College:

> How dealt the world, Oh Christ, with thee,
> Who shrank not from the common rod,
> Whose secret was humility?
> They mocked and scourged; then hailed thee god.
>
> And built out of thine earnest speech,
> Who gifts had for the simplest needs,

Whose meaning was in all men's reach,
The strangest of phantastic creeds.[14]

Like the New England Transcendentalists, Lampman no longer believed in the supernatural origin of Christ. He considered, as Emerson did, that Christ was a great ethical and moral teacher but nevertheless a man whose meaning could be understood and attained by all men. The moral precepts of Christ had been corrupted and perverted by orthodox religion and made into an elaborate mystery.

Lampman's impatience with sectarian theology may be partly explained from two points of view. He had been influenced by the findings of anthropology and archeology and was very much aware of the rise and fall of religions. In the poem, "In October", the sound of the falling leaves resembles the "failing murmur of some conquered creed". Later it will emerge that Lampman did not believe that the truth was confined to any particular religion but that many religions testified to truth.

Because of his view of Christ, Lampman maintained that there were central and constant truths in original Christianity. The variety of dogma had confused and distorted their simplicity and beauty. Such attitudes motivate "To An Ultra Protestant". The poem is an explicit rejection of institutional religion, and, with it, all the impediments which Emerson and Thoreau saw as "crutches", propping up a frigid and lifeless creed.

A letter from Lampman to E. W. Thomson, dated November 2, 1897, is an important document in this context. It provides a summary of Lampman's quarrel with orthodoxy and further details of the nature of his rejection. For these reasons, I quote the letter in full and restore a meaningful passage which is missing from it as quoted by A. S. Bourinot in his edition of Lampman's letters:

> Yesterday was a holiday and the day before was Sunday and I went to Church, a thing I do about three times a year. It always depresses me to go to Church. In those prayers and terrible hymns of our service we are in the presence of all the suffering in the world since the beginning of time. We have entered the temple of sorrow and are prostrate at the feet of the very God of Affliction.
>
> "Lead kindly light
> Amid the encircling gloom"
>
> Newman hit it exactly. It is the secret of the success of Christianity. As long as there is sorrow on earth, the pathetic figure of Christ will [next three words mutilated] days when men were children, they were worshippers of light and joy. Apollo, and Aphrodite and Dionysias were enough for them, but the world is

> grown old now. It has gone through so much. It is sad and moody and full of despair and it cleaves to Christ its natural refuge. I must say, however, that Sunday is a day that drives me almost to madness. The prim black and stiff collars, the artificial dress of the women, the slow trouping to the church, the silence, the dreariness, the occasional knots of sallow and unhealthy zealots whom one may meet at street corners whining over some awful point in theology, — all that gradually presses me down till by Sunday night I am in despair and would fain issue forth with paint and brush and colour the town crimson.[15]

LAMPMAN CONTINUED to go to church infrequently until the end of his life, but it is clear that orthodox religion was not only unsatisfying but also profoundly distasteful to him. The original insights of Christ are no longer in evidence. Orthodox Christianity is prim and restrictive, a dreary ceremonial maintained largely by people who are themselves sick and whose interest is chiefly aroused by sterile casuistry. Most important, there is expressed here a conflict between Paganism and Christianity. Lampman valued the experience of the Greeks because he felt that in their vision of the world the emphasis was placed upon an easy correspondence between the world of man, gods, and nature. What Lampman sought was a belief which would give man a sense of "light and joy" and in which there was room for the spontaneity, total absorption, and imaginative play of childhood. In other words, he could not be content with a religion which appeared to encourage men to remain in a crippled state, dependent upon "the very God of Affliction", or with a ceremony which was an expression of gloom and despair.

Thus eventually, for Lampman, Christianity became synonymous with human distress, and was unacceptable because it failed to give men a greater sense of their own potential. Further evidence for this statement is provided by "Storm Voices". This poem is not, as many other poems of Lampman are not, simple description. The besieged house is the contemporary individual, and his condition is critical. Inside the house, the poet is aware of the tremendous forces for dissolution, and the darkness and rain blot out any kind of perception from a window already "narrow". Only if the poem is read in this way do such phrases as the "surging horror" in the night become meaningful. The storm stands for all of the contemporary conditions which Lampman felt diminished man. The poem is especially relevant because the storm is explicitly identified with a religious crisis. The fury of the storm is the "thunder" of organs and the "burst" of

hymns, and the darkness is the "gloom" of a cathedral. Once more orthodox Christianity is experienced as a religion of desperation and despair, contributing to the sadness and vexation of men who have lost the capacity for wonder and the ability to respond to the infinite which is at the centre of religious feeling.

It is understandable, therefore, that in "The Land of Pallas", expressive both of Lampman's ideals and criticisms of contemporary society, the "robes" and "sacred books" of "many a vanished creed" are kept only as a reminder and a warning. In this land worship is "priestless", but of course Pallas is a religious state. Religion here, freed from its institutional aspects, has taken on a new intensity. The men and women of the land do in fact appear to be divine, and the worlds of man, nature, and the spirit are in continuous intercourse and harmony. Nevertheless it is men and women that Lampman is describing. He is indeed setting forth the ideal, but the ideal for Lampman is synoymous with the potential and the attainable. The religious faith and beliefs of the people are clearly not orthodox or traditional. Later I shall attempt to set forth the characteristics of Lampman's beliefs which are close to those found in the land of Pallas. For the moment it is enough to point out the close connection here between religion and nature, the sense of the immanence of spirit in the world, and the divinity of the human. Such characteristics are hardly compatible with orthodox Christianity.

The question of Lampman's religious doubts, using the word religious here to describe not only Christianity but other beliefs as well, may be dealt with briefly. Lampman's feeling that the Church had become moribund and oppressive can be found in many writers and intellectuals of the nineteenth century and is part of the general cultural dislocation of the century. As long as Lampman was deprived of a tradition, and until he was able to replace it with beliefs forged out of personal knowledge, there were bound to be evidences of despondency and nihilism. At the same time, his personal convictions, always elusive and hard won, sometimes failed him and brought further moments of deprivation. However, when observed in the context of his work as a whole, uncertainty and disbelief are not dominant. Moreover, these feelings must not be confused with the anguish often evinced in his work, which was the result of Lampman's awareness that the mass of mankind were ignorant of, or indifferent to, knowledge and powers which the poet believed could transform the quality of man and his existence. Desmond Pacey has pointed to some of these moments of doubt in "Despondency" and "Winter Evening". The poem "To Chaucer" is very important here as it charts the historical decline in orthodox faith from the Middle

Ages, down to the "doubt" and "restless care" of the contemporary situation.

In the introduction to his book, *The Disappearance of God*, J. Hillis Miller portrays the nineteenth century as a time when poets came to feel that either the lines of communication between man and God had been dislocated or God had fled from the world. One consequence of this feeling is the evocation of a Golden Age when God dwelt on earth and a close affinity existed between the divine and the human. Miller goes on to write that the Romantic poets,

> still believe in God, and they find his absence intolerable. At all costs they must attempt to re-establish communication. They too begin in destitution, abandoned by God. All the traditional means of mediation have broken down, and romanticism therefore defines the artist as the creator or discoverer of hitherto unapprehended symbols, symbols which establish a new relation, across the gap between man and God. The artist is the man who goes out into the empty spaces between man and God attempting to create in that vacancy a new fabric of connections between man and the divine power . . . The central assumption of romanticism is the idea that the isolated individual, through poetry, can accomplish the "unheard of work", that is create through his own efforts a marvellous harmony of words which will integrate man, nature, and God.[16]

"To Chaucer", and several other poems by Lampman, belong to the category which Miller is describing. The Middle Ages is seen as a Golden Age and is significantly described in seasonal and youthful imagery. By contrast the present is felt to be a fallen world, a Paradise lost, or a Heaven which must be laboriously sought. But the present is not totally unredeemed, and this fact accounts for the paradoxes which become apparent in the poetry about to be examined and for the sense of struggle alternating between joy and hope which accompanies the attempt at "a new fabric of connections between man and the divine power".

Underlying many of Lampman's poems on the seasons is the theme of death and resurrection. By this I mean that the seasonal movement arouses in the poet a religious emotion similar to what the Christian has towards the death and resurrection of Christ. Furthermore the poet is so closely identified with the seasonal pattern that he too undergoes a death and rebirth which is felt to be physical, emotional, and spiritual. This theme viewed from a slightly different angle may also be interpreted in terms of separation and re-union. It is the theme of the Prodigal Son, of the child who has lost its mother, of the sense of being cut off from the natural sources of grace as in "The Ancient Mariner".

The tone of "In October" is defined by religious imagery — the "tall slim priests of storm" and the leaves which utter "low soft masses" for the death of

the year. For the poet, too, it is a time of penance, and his heart goes out to "the ashen lands".

In "Ballads of Summer's Sleep", the alternation of the seasons becomes a religious struggle in which victory will be obtained only when "the slayer be slain". This image is very close to that of Christ's victory over death. It is also similar to the battle of the priest-kings at the beginning of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, a battle which Frazer later identifies with vegetation rituals of death and revival. The same emphasis is there in "Winter Hues Recalled" where February is "the month of the great struggle twixt Sun and Frost". In "The Coming of Winter", the seasons are personified throughout. Summer is a god dying in the shadow of the mighty "slayer" winter whilst the earth prays and mourns in black. The earth is now a widow who will be forced into marriage with winter.

Several other poems, such as "Autumn Waste", "The Ruin of the Year", and "The March of Winter", marked by the same theme and similar structure and imagery, serve to underline that such a preoccupation is not merely fortuitous. Moreover, the two Greek myths most pertinent here, Adonis — Persephone and Demeter — Persephone, are explicitly referred to in Lampman's poem "Chione", which is another poem of death and descent into the underworld.

In "Sirius", Lampman provides variation by drawing on Egyptian mythology, but the concern is the same as in the poems already mentioned. Isis or Hathor was the wife of the fertility god, Osiris, also identified with the sun. The great star of Isis was Sirius, which betokened the rising of the Nile and the resurrection of Osiris. In Lampman's poem the waning of the "old night" and the rising of the star cause the poet to cry aloud to Hathor for he is "smitten by her star".

Clearly for Lampman, Spring, Autumn and Winter are the equivalent emotionally of Easter, Lent and the Passion, and it is interesting to read in Frazer something which Lampman may have intuited or thought out:

> When we reflect how often the church has skilfully contrived to plant the seeds of the faith on the old stock of Paganism, we may surmise that the Easter celebration of the dead and risen Christ was grafted upon a similar celebration of the dead and risen Adonis[17]

It is worth speculating, too, that when Lampman expressed his disgust with orthodox religion in the letter to Thomson which I quoted earlier, and opposed the pale figure which institutional religion had made of Christ with Apollo, Aphrodite, and Dionysus, he might have been setting up his own Trinity. The choice is significant, for Apollo is associated with the sun and light and his return was celebrated by festivals in the spring. Likewise Aphrodite is associated with

the fertility of the spring and Dionysus is a vegetation god who underwent the pattern of death and rebirth.

In the general context, the poet tends to dramatize himself in two significant and interrelated ways. He is both a dead god awaiting the moment of rebirth and a man divided from the divine source within himself and the world of nature. The possibility of re-entry into a divine harmony still exists, but the occasions are limited in the contemporary situation as opposed to a past when union between man, nature, and god was continuous and characteristic. Christianity, especially in its institutionalized form, is for the poet one of the factors which has contributed to this fragmentation.

In "Favourites of Pan", the god flees before the "new strains" of "hostile hymns" and "conquering faiths". The synthesis caught in "A Vision of Twilight":

> When the spirit flowed unbroken
> Through the flesh, and the sublime
> Made the eyes of men far seeing,

is no more. However, "the infinite dream" may be attainable "for them that heed". In the "Return of the Year", characterized as the title suggests by imagery of conflict and rebirth:

> This life's old mood and cult of care
> Falls smitten by an older truth
> And the gray world wins back to her
> The rapture of her vanished youth.

At such times, the poet knows, "The Gods are vanished but not dead". Hence, like the loons, in the poem of the same title, the poet will search for the exiled Glooscap, or in "The Lake in the Forest" will experience in the wilderness the spirit of Manitou.

Contemporary man has been left only with the fragments of the medieval symbols of faith and correspondence with the Divine. Lampman puts it thus in "Voices of Earth":

> We have not heard the music of the spheres,
> The song of star to star . . .

But in this poem there is not that sense of poignancy and horror as, for example, in Arnold's "Dover Beach", because earth does have voices, signs and symbols, which awaken in man organic knowledge, "bedded" in his heart.

In Lampman's poetry, nature is nearly always called "Mother" or "Great

Mother", terms synonymous with Rhea or Cybele, the "Mother of the Gods" of the Ancients. In "Freedom" the poet leaves the city and is re-united in the arms of his mother. Cast out of Paradise or Heaven the poet's heart in "Among the Timothy", which was a "heaven", is dead like the white leaves that hang through winter. But the poet lies in the earth as if buried, and his spirit passes into "the pale green ever-swaying grass" to return re-invigorated. In "The Meadow", as the earth burgeoned with April so the poet's spirit "sprang to life anew". Finally, in "Storm", the dead poet buried in his grave, "his narrow girth of need and sense", experiences divinity in moments of "demonic birth".

THE DISCUSSION of Lampman's dissatisfaction with orthodox religion has led logically to the world of nature which gave the poet an outlet for, and an image of, his religious sentiments.

"Life and Nature" provides a transition from the rejection of orthodoxy to Lampman's later religious position as it emerges through rather than in nature. To put it simply at the outset, nature is felt to be an intermediary, a means whereby the religious experience is expressed and realized. The title is misleading because it compresses too drastically the ideas behind the poem. Essentially the poem contrasts life or nature with orthodox religion, which the imagery indicates to be synonymous with death. Once again the poem is an example of Lampman's ability to find correlatives for a state of mind, for a spiritual struggle. The poet enters the city which is still and deserted and is overcome by the desolation which the inhabitants offer as worship to their God. Tormented by a lack of purpose and direction, driven to the point of distraction and madness he finds his attempts to assert life perverted into their opposite. He leaves, goes into the depths of nature where he lies down and undergoes a metamorphosis, a dying into life achieved by the loss of self in the procreative sound and movement.

Lampman, then, found "a natural code of faith". The several influences which moulded the correspondence between matter, mind, and the Divinity appear to be diverse, but all contributed to the essentially eclectic religious position arrived at by Trancendentalism; they include Plato and Greek philosophy, Shelley, Emerson, Coleridge, Eastern mysticism, Amiel, Arnold, and W. W. Campbell.

The parts of "A Story of an Affinity", which tell of Richard's quest for knowledge are a likely guide to Lampman's own reading. Richard meditates on "Plato's vast and Golden dream": Lampman's writing shows that he had ab-

sorbed Plato's belief in another world beyond the material, a world of immutable essences, Forms or Ideas, especially beauty, truth, and harmony. Later Richard learns from Coleridge the "heavenly likeness of the things of earth". Coleridge, of course, is central to any discussion of Transcendentalism. He had absorbed the ideas of the German idealists, especially those of Kant, and was a major formative influence upon Emerson. What is most relevant here is Coleridge's preoccupation with spiritual unity and the belief that the Platonic Ideas, manifested in the material world, may be perceived by the imagination, which is essentially the faculty that reconciles opposites in a new harmony.

The poem "Earth — The Stoic" reveals other Classical influences apart from Plato which help to build up our picture of Lampman's cosmology. In the poem, Lampman speaks of the "fiery birth" of the universe and the "sheer will" which earth communicates to the heart of man. The original meaning of spirit was the conception of the Stoics of a fire-like principle, animating and energizing the Cosmos. The earth is the Stoic and is imbued with the spiritual principle, especially as it manifests itself in the force of heat. With all the images of light and heat in Lampman's poetry, and one central poem entitled "Heat", there is surely little need to emphasize how important the Stoic conception of the universe is to our understanding of Lampman's poetry.

Carl F. Klinck, tracing the spiritual difficulties of W. W. Campbell, Lampman's friend and, as we have seen, his collaborator in the *Globe* column in 1892 and 1893, writes: "Until the end of his life, he [Campbell] was Canada's chief popularizer of what he called idealism, and what the historian will call transcendentalism."[18] It is at least probable that Campbell was able to provide Lampman with opportunities for discussion of the ideas and major documents of transcendentalism, especially those of Emerson, with whose work Campbell was very familiar.

Indeed Emerson was probably the most congenial and important influence upon Lampman in the particular area under discussion. There are striking similarities between both men's work, and I propose to allow Lampman's religious position to emerge in conjunction with references to the ideas and writings of Emerson. Lampman considered Emerson to be a nature poet "in the fullest sense". His "sympathy with nature" is a "sympathy of force" which draws him to nature because "in the energies of his own soul he is aware of a kinship to the forces of nature, and feels with an elemental joy as if it were a part of himself, the eternal movement of nature."[19] In his essay on Keats, Lampman stated that

the concern of poetry was with "essences" which accorded with "That divine and universal harmony". He also writes in the same essay:

> Whatever creation of the human imagination is genuinely beautiful is produced by an impulse derived from, and allied to the power of the Divine Creator himself, and it has the right to exist. There is an energy in the spirit of the true poet which realizes what he creates . . . [20]

An unpublished essay, "The Modern School of Poetry in England", also asserts that "all true art must rest upon a sense of wonder — a sense of the invisible that is around everything."[21]

In these various statements, it seems to me, are to be found the aesthetic and moral sentiments usually associated with the Transcendental vision of experience, and since the beautiful is "allied to the power of the Divine Creator", the experience is essentially religious. Nature in "Earth — the Stoic" is conceived of as being imbued with an animating principle known interchangeably as force, energy, or spirit. Emerson is a true nature poet because he is aware within himself of an energy akin to that of nature which partakes of universal movement. The central essence is harmony, and this is universal and divine. The imagination, or the poetic faculty, is concerned with the perception of invisible harmony and so "realizes", that is, creates, a reality which is both divine impulse and a divine achievement. Thus nature, art, the imagination of the poet, and the divine mind are one. The religious experience is synonymous with a sense of unity between the individual, nature, and what Emerson called the Oversoul, or is a correspondence between the spirit or energy in nature, the spirit or energy in man, and Divine Spirit or Energy. These last two terms are both Lampman's and Emerson's favourite expressions for their God. Man at such mystical moments is divine, and Deity, Spirit, Force, or Energy is both immanent within man and nature and transcendant or beyond the creation. Thus to describe Lampman as a pantheist is not exact. The more accurate term would be panentheist for God is more than the spiritual presence permeating the universe. Furthermore, the idea of a Christian dualism has no place in Lampman's belief, since he envisages no division between spirit and matter. Here we are close to the insights which make up Lampman's religious position.

Man, then, looking at nature with his imagination, would see analogies between mind and matter and understand them as diverse manifestations of the universal harmony which is the divine unity. For Lampman "true art" rested upon a "sense of wonder" because of the "invisible that is around everything".

Likewise for Emerson the visible creation was "the terminus or circumference of the invisible" and the "invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common". It is clear why Emerson felt that the task of the teacher was "to acquaint man with himself" and why with Lampman he was saddened by contemporary man, "a god in ruins", "the dwarf of himself".

There exists a close similarity between Lampman's and Emerson's attitude towards science and its effect upon the religious view of experience. Broadly speaking one of the effects of scientific findings in the nineteenth century was to make orthodox religious beliefs less tenable, but science could apparently provide sanctions for orthodox beliefs because, as Douglas Bush writes, "much of what crumbled under the pressure of science was rather the adventitious accretions of religion, such as the scientific validity of Genesis, than religion itself."[22] If we consult "The Story of An Affinity", we see that Lampman meant by science primarily astronomy, geology, and biology, those branches which most directly challenged orthodox religious beliefs. The protagonist of the poem, Richard,

> explored the round
> Of glittering space, the heavenly chart, and saw
> The giant order of immense worlds,
> The wheeling planets and our galaxy;
> And far beyond them in the outer void
> Cluster succeeding cluster of strange suns
> Through spaces awful and immeasurable,
> Dark systems and mysterious energies
> And nebulous creations without end —
> The people of the hollow round of heaven
> In trackless myriads dwelling beyond search
> Or count of man — beneath his feet this earth
> A dust mote spinning round a little star
> Not known, nor named in the immensity.
> He probed the secrets of the rocks, and learned
> The texture of our planet's outer rind,
> And the strange tale of her tremendous youth.
> He touched the endless lore of living things,
> Of plant, of beast, of bird, and not alone
> In the mere greed of knowledge, but as one
> Whom beauty kindled with a poet's fire.

The last three lines are particularly important, for though Lampman and Emerson did not object to science itself, they were opposed to the scientific fact uninformed by the poetic imagination as an end in itself.

For Lampman and Emerson, scientific discovery was a welcome ally in changing moribund beliefs, but only as a prelude to newer and essentially religious convictions about the meaning of life. This is one of the themes of a lecture, "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England", given by Emerson in 1880.

The essay is close in idea and phrasing to Lampman's essay in his *Globe* column for April 1893.[23] He begins with a pessimistic view of human nature, human history, and the worst tendencies of his own age, but "in a time when these things are becoming most apparent" he offers a new hope, "a new conception of the higher life". This new conception he identifies as "the child of science" but is careful to emphasize that it is "reinforced by the poetry inherent in the facts of the universe and all existence". Viewed in this way the conception "is not a materialistic one, although at first it may seem so". Instead it is "poetic and intrinsically religious". Men armed with "the new knowledge" can achieve "a breadth and majesty of vision" and this "new spiritual force" will enable men to live "in the very presence of eternity".

Emerson's religious beliefs were influenced by his reading of oriental religions and mysticism. There is evidence that Lampman, too, had read and thought about Eastern philosophy and religion. A knowledge of this aspect of Lampman's reading is useful because it affected all levels of his work, from his thought to the structure and imagery of his poetry. The preponderance of the image of the circle, for example, in his work, as in Emerson's, may well have derived from an acquaintance with Hinduism. In a manuscript book of poems and notes, for 1894 to 1899, there is the following jotting:

> Mir-han-oya — final complete self-consciousness
> Manvantara — the great process of expansion and contraction — the day of Brahma
> Pralaya — the period of concentration, the night of Brahma[24]

These rather cryptic notes are in fact a condensation of many aspects of Hindu religious beliefs and cosmology. Hinduism postulates a universe immense in size and duration, passing through a continuous process of decline and development. The fundamental cosmic cycle is the day of Brahma which is equal to 4,320,000,000 years and known as a kalpa. The god sleeps for a further kalpa known as the night of Brahma and then repetition takes place. Brahma is in the infinite, the unchangeable, the eternal, absolute pure Being on which all that exists depends and from which it derives its reality. The world is an immense series of repetitive cycles and is thought of as being periodically absorbed into,

and emanating from, the Divine Being. Brahma is the inmost essence of all things animate and inanimate, and the ultimate is the impersonal world spirit with which the soul of the individual is mystically identical. The true self is universal consciousness and exists both in itself and for itself or, as Lampman writes, in "the very presence of Eternity". Other attributes of the Divine Being as it appears in Lampman's poetry, such as divine light and energy emanating to the individual soul and the immanence of God in man and the universe, clearly derive from Lampman's acquaintance with Eastern religions.

PERHAPS BY NOW Lampman's religious position and beliefs are clearer, and this essay may be concluded by an examination of how these ideas operated in, and shaped, a number of poems apart from those already scrutinized.

The impulse behind these poems is religious in the sense that Lampman sought to recreate, as he said, the knowledge that "with the fullest intensity of sympathy we are of one birth with everything about us"[25] and to make known the "heavenly likeness of the things of earth". The poems fall into two categories, the alternate sides of the same theme. Man is a god in ruins because in his increasingly mechanized and urbanized society he has lost contact with the vital forces of the natural world. These forces are varied manifestations of the central essence of nature, the spiritual unity of the One, the World Spirit. To recover himself man must die to the material world and resurrect the god within, his true identity. The religious experience occurs when the real self experiences itself simultaneously through nature in the presence of the World Soul. Then all opposites are reconciled, and the feeling is characterized by a sense of clarity and harmony which accompanies the unbroken flow of spirit.

In "Freedom" men have lost their relationship with nature. Though their souls originally "were sprung from the earth" they are now here "degenerate children". "A Prayer" uses the recurring image of modern man physically handicapped and spiritually maimed, "weak", "halt", and "blind". The poet, in a way which recalls the work of D. H. Lawrence, asks nature to recover the men, "Born of thy strength", from the partial, mechanical existence of industrialized society and restore them to integrated, organic wholeness by endowing them with some of her energy and creativity. "Sight" is a series of detailed contrasts. The irony of life is that beauty, harmony, and infinite possibilities surround men, but, shut in by walls and the perpetual winter of the spirit, men cannot attune their inmost selves to the wonders outside and thus remain unconscious to both.

"An Athenian Reverie" is another poem in which man is depicted as a being unaware and unfulfilled. Man ought to be in a state of metamorphosis. Instead he is unable to free himself from the chrysalis. This theme is developed in the image of the tree. Man sits beneath it, half-asleep, enjoying its shade, but is unable to go beyond the simply sensual and immediately apparent to the majestic formal harmony of the source. By contrast, the poet, alert and receptive, struggles with "watchful dreams" to add a little to the "wrought sculpture" and "never-finished frieze" of life. The exact choice of image to convey the fullest meaning is impressive here. The frieze is the middle portion of an entablature linked by the architrave to the column below and by the cornice to the roof above. Life is a magnificent structure, like a Greek temple, and the poet occupies a mediating position between earth and heaven.

"Peccavi Domine" was written as "an act of self-relief".[26] It is an important poem because it displays many characteristics of Lampman's belief, and its paradoxes, abrupt oppositions, and contrasts are akin to the technique, as well as the theme, of Emerson's "Brahma". Emerson's poem is about the absolute unity underlying Maya, or the Hindu principle of Illusion and variety.

Lampman's poem is a study in dejection, a lament in which the poet chastises himself for ignoring his deep perceptions of the unity of the universe and the intuitions of his real self and its relationship with the World Spirit. God has many names and many attributes, "Power", "Poet-Heart", "Maker", "Riddle", and "Energy". The World Spirit is like a sphere composed of interpentrating circles and is present throughout the universe:

> Within whose glowing rings are bound,
> Out of whose sleepless heart had birth
> The cloudy blue, the starry round,
> And this small miracle of earth.

Because the Divine Being "livest in everything", and since "all things are thy script and chart", the task of the poet is to remain alert and interpret the manifold signs of the world. Thus he is constantly moving from the border of illusion to the centre of reality. The Divine Being — "protean", "ever-old" and "ever-new" — is also the central reality of the poetic self. But here the poet feels that he has betrayed the promptings of the "God within" and consequently is separated and alienated from the emblems of spirit in the natural world. Instead of being led beyond the forms of nature to an awesome awareness of unity, as in "Heat", for example, the poet here experiences no expansion of self but rather a

spiritual rebuttal which leads to the sorry spectacle of his "broken soul". His torment is made more unendurable by the evidences of spirit with which the earth shines and glows, evidences which no longer beckon to him but mock and enhance his self-division.

Elsewhere Lampman turns from self-division and the spectacle of fallen man to affirm the correspondence between universal spirit, the spirit of nature, and the soul of man. On these occasions, man is rejuvenated, resurrected from his sensual grave, aware of the infinite in the finite, and of the poetic soul, the imagination, intensely sympathetic to the emblematic quality of nature, and becomes the "expositor of the divine mind".[27]

A characteristic quality of Lampman's poems at such times is that the landscape seems to glow as if lit from within. The natural world, in other words, becomes luminous and transparent as spirit shines through. This experience, accompanied by its characteristic terminology, is a leading motif of Emerson's essay "Nature" because the main concern is to show "how the universe becomes transparent, and the light of higher laws than its own shines through it."[28] Lampman, of course, was not writing an essay, but that the experience I have attempted to define, and which Emerson's essay describes in part at least is there, can be demonstrated in several poems. The poem, significantly titled, "Cloud-break", concretely realizes the experience:

> The islands are kindled with gold
> And russet and emerald dye;
> And the interval waters outrolled
> Are more blue than the sky.
> From my feet to the heart of the hills
> The spirits of May intervene,
> And a vapour of azure distills
> Like a breath on the opaline green.

There is a sudden intensification of colour and the landscape "distills" its essence, becoming "opaline" or translucent with spirit. The experience is momentary and then,

> The chill and the shadow decline
> On the eyes of rejuvenate men
> That were wide and divine.

In "The Bird and the Hour", diverse visual and auditory experiences coalesce to manifest the underlying spiritual essence. At sunset the valley and sky dissolve in molten gold. The song of the hermit bird, the "golden music", is part of the

unifying aspects of the landscape and prolongs the vision which appears to emerge:

> from the closing door
> Of another world.

The frogs in the poem of the same name, are the expositors chosen by nature of "her spirit's inmost dream". "Distance" expresses simply the transcendental vision which is looking beyond the surface of natural phenomena:

> Till this earth is lost in heaven
> And thou feel'st the whole.

In "Peace", "Nature" and "Eternity" are interchangeable since the earth is a "daedal spectacle", an "open radiance", and a "script sublime". The fulfilled man is he whose reality is found "only in the flawless mind". Finally, the source of "The Largest Life" is the recognition of universal spirit, the knowledge that salvation is self-salvation. This salvation enlarges, so to speak, in a universe which is felt to be dynamic, the area of spirit. The "Great Light" becomes "clearer for our light", and the "great soul the stronger for our soul".

Both Emerson and Lampman entitled one of their poems "Xenophanes", and a passage from Emerson's essay "Nature" makes clear why both were fascinated by the ideas and experience of this early Greek philosopher and rhapsodist. Emerson writes:

> Herein is especially apprehended the unity of nature, — the unity in variety which meets us everywhere. All the endless variety of things make an identical impression. Xenophanes complained in his old age, that, look where he would, all things hastened back to unity. He was weary of seeing the same entity in the tedious variety of forms.[29]

Xenophanes asserted a divinity who is true existence as opposed to appearance, the One and the All, undivided and eternal and underlying the universe. Lampman portrays Xenophanes as a wanderer and a searcher after truth, weary in extreme old age of the world of appearance and longing for the reality which he has seen. It is the same "hunger" of Xenophanes which occupies the poetic imagination.

The esemplastic nature (to use a work coined by Coleridge to explain the synthesizing power of the poetic imagination) of universal spirit is the theme of "The Passing of the Spirit". Characteristically the theme is worked out through images of nature and music. The wind is one aspect of the World Spirit, an invisible cause with clearly visible effects. It is also called "the world-old rhapso-

dist" or, in other words, a professional reciter of Homeric poems, an expositor of the elemental and universal. The movement of the wind of universal spirit finds its response in a world which is intensely sympathetic and attuned to the universal cause. Tree after tree begins to sway and sing, blending into a chorus composed of strophe and antistrophe, an "infinite note" which is both initiated by, and a paean to, the universal presence of spirit. Likewise the finite life of individual man, "at sacred intervals", is transformed and completed in the presence of spirit. It is at such moments that "we dream ourselves immortal and are still". Without perplexity or doubt we are awesomely aware of universal harmony which is completed by the soul of man. This, for the poet, is the essential religious experience.

Much has already been said about "Heat", but by way of a conclusion it ought to be added that this is a fine transcendental poem. The landscape liquefies and dissolves and all contraries are unified in the presence of the manifestation of spiritual force. This explains why the poet believes that he has been brought to the experience by "some blessed power". The god within the poet is resurrected and lives in the eternal presence of the divine as it shines through nature. God, who through the centuries became more and more remote, has returned to earth in his original guise, man, and the poet need no longer envy the men of old, for he has vindicated their myth, and re-entered "The glittering world" of that "Immortal", "divine" and "Gay-smiling multitude".

NOTES

[1] *Literary History of Canada*, gen. ed. Carl F. Klinck, University of Toronto Press (Toronto, 1965), p. 394.
[2] *Ten Canadian Poets*, p. 127.
[3] Archibald Lampman, "The Revolt of Islam", *Rouge et Noir*, I, no. 4 (December 1880).
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[7] Archibald Lampman, "At the Mermaid Inn", the Toronto *Globe*, Saturday, November 26, 1892.
[8] *Ibid.*, Saturday, August 20, 1892.
[9] *Ibid.*, Saturday, February 27, 1892.
[10] *Ibid.*, Monday, February 29, 1892.
[11] *Ibid.*, Saturday, February 6, 1892.
[12] Archibald Lampman, "The Revolt of Islam", *Rouge et Noir*, I, no. 4 (December 1880), p. 6.

[13] Letters from Lampman to E. W. Thomson, MS Group 29940, Vol. I, 10 February, 1883, Public Archives, Ottawa.

[14] MS book, 1889-1892, Trinity College Library, Toronto.

[15] Letters from Lampman to E. W. Thomson, MS Group 29940, Vol. I, Public Archives, Ottawa.

[16] J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 13-14.

[17] J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Macmillan Co. Ltd., (London, 1957), p. 455.

[18] Carl F. Klinck, *Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism*, Ryerson Press (Toronto, 1942), pp. 56-57.

[19] Archibald Lampman, "At the Mermaid Inn", The Toronto *Globe*, Saturday, April 22, 1893.

[20] Archibald Lampman, "The Character and Poetry of Keats", pref. note by E. K. Brown, *The University of Toronto Quarterly*, 15 (July 1946) p. 357.

[21] Archibald Lampman, "The Modern School of Poetry in England", MS Group 29940, Vol. I, Public Archives, Ottawa.

[22] Douglas Bush, *Science and English Poetry*, O.U.P. (New York, 1950), p. 136.

[23] Archibald Lampman, "At the Mermaid Inn", the Toronto *Globe*, Saturday, April 8, 1893.

[24] Archibald Lampman, MS Group 29940, Vols. 3 and 4, Public Archives, Ottawa.

[25] Archibald Lampman, "At the Mermaid Inn", the Toronto *Globe*, Saturday, July 2, 1892.

[26] Letters from Lampman to E. W. Thomson, MS Group 29940, March 5, 1894, Public Archives, Ottawa.

[27] Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature", *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Stephen Whicher, Riverside Editions, Houghton Mifflin Co., (Boston, 1960), p. 50.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

PERILS OF COMPASSION

Peter Stevens

IN ALL THE HOOPLA of publicity and promotion afforded novels over recent years in Canada, Mavis Gallant's third novel, *A Fairly Good Time* (1970), went virtually unnoticed in the review columns. Some nodding acceptance of her as one of our better writers of prose is made by anthologists, for her short stories are chosen to appear in most Canadian collections, a half-hearted recognition of her skill as a short-story writer. But surely it is time to look more closely at the work of Mavis Gallant and in particular at her novels, which are more thoroughly ignored than most recent Canadian writing.

Those who know Mavis Gallant's stories will remember that many of them revolve around one dominant theme: the stress of relationships within families, particularly the relation between parents and children, although she herself claims that this is not a conscious choice on her part.[1] This recurrence seems to arise from her interest in people "trying to get out of a situation", because the family situation can be so inhibiting and confining and because people constantly want to break from the family while finding comfort within it as well. A family can paralyse and give false security; it can protect but shelter a person from the too insistent demands of an outside reality. It can lead to both domination and betrayal, withdrawal and smugness. All of these factors occur to a greater or lesser degree in Mavis Gallant's characters and their situations.

One of the most interesting ways Mavis Gallant develops the consequences of family relationship is to suggest that within a family people know too much about each other. A phrase she uses to describe the source of present-day problems in *A Fairly Good Time* is "complete comprehension". Within a family this comprehension acts in ambivalent ways. In this same book, talking of a mother's relation to her son, she says:

> She had the complete knowledge that puts parents at a loss finally: she knew all about him except his opinion of her.... He didn't know all about her. How could he? She was a grown person with the habit of secrets before he was even conscious

> of her. He only knew what he could expect of her. . . . How can you be someone's friend when you have had twenty years' authority over him and he has never had one second's authority over you?

THIS DOUBLE-EDGED THEME of closeness and domination, together with the will to escape from the role imposed by a relationship, is the primary theme of Mavis Gallant's first novel *Green Water, Green Sky* (1959). The theme is sounded fairly early in the book: "Once you were in a family, you were in to stay: death, divorce, scandal — nothing operated, nothing cut you away."

The novel centres around a middle-aged mother, Bonnie, a divorcee who has been pottering around Europe with her attractive daughter, Flor. They have been together for years, becoming intolerably close to each other until Flor tries to break from this stifling situation by marrying, but this does not work for her, as her husband is too amenable and is sucked into the tight relationship of mother and daughter. Eventually Flor withdraws from the world, keeping to herself in her shuttered room until at the end of novel we learn that she is in some kind of institution for the mentally sick.

The novel is told in four segments. The opening one covers the span of events from the time when Flor is fourteen to the time of her marriage. But it is told rather obliquely and spasmodically, seeming to focus on George, a cousin of Flor's. George, at the age of seven, is left by his parents for a day in Bonnie's care. He feels this as a kind of desertion, and it sets it up in an ironic way the struggle Flor will go through to escape the grip of her mother.

There is a strange interdependence between mother and daughter: Bonnie needs to protect her fatherless daughter; Flor needs to stay with her mother to prevent her from ruining her life in solitariness. At one point Flor says pathetically:

> I can't leave my mother, and she won't go. Maybe I don't dare. She used to need me. Maybe now I need her. What would I do at home? My grandmother is dead. I haven't got a home. I know I sound as if I feel sorry for myself, but I haven't got anything.

Yet behind her statements of protection and love for her mother lurks an unconscious rejection of her. When Flor says, "I'll always keep her with me", the novelist adds this comment: "It was a solemn promise, a cry of despair, love and resentment so woven together that even Flor couldn't tell them apart." This

phrase, "love and resentment" is related to the title, almost as if they are undistinguishable, or, at least, strong polarities of the relationship pulling with equal force: "the twin pictures, love and resentment, were always there, one reflecting the other, water under sky".

There is a simple incident very early in the story which illustrates what Mavis Gallant herself can do within a very small compass. Flor weighs herself on a scale that releases a card with her fortune; this trivial act takes on a meaning within the context of the Bonnie-Flor relation when Flor suddenly says, " 'Mama's waiting' . . . throwing her fortune away."

The second section is the longest and most direct in the novel. We are given a much clearer insight into Bonnie. She lacks a real identity because she cannot face her own situation in the present. She sees herself as she was in the past, a fresh and unspoiled child or as she would like to be, a sophisticated provocative temptress. Bonnie has lived an untidy life: she was divorced when her husband discovered she was having an affair — an affair she was taking very casually. Since that time Bonnie has wavered between her child-image and her temptress-image, whereas the truth is that she is really "a lost, sallow, frightened Bonnie wandering from city to city in Europe, clutching her daughter by the hand".

Because she leans heavily on her daughter (note the ambiguity of the word "clutching" in that last quotation — the reader wonders just which one needs the support), Flor has been robbed of any sense of her own identity. She is forced into being possessed by her mother, as well as feeling possessive about her. She is constantly looking in windows to see if she is really there. The world around her is collapsing, and holding on to Bonnie is no help, for her mother's world is an untidy chaos. An immense feeling of dislocation overtakes her. She senses Paris collapsing around her and experiences a terrifying moment when the sidewalk moves in front of her in "a soundless upheaval". (This is perhaps reminiscent of a similar incident experienced by another dislocated youngster, Holden Caulfield, towards the end of *The Catcher In The Rye.*) The outside world is no longer secure; Bonnie has uprooted her from her home, so she complains to an imagined Bonnie, "I might have been a person, but you made me a foreigner". She retreats into her own cloistered room when she is left alone in Paris. The section closes with Flor's dream or hallucination of herself riding her boisterous pony, perfectly in control and triumphant in a smiling world, sliding from the saddle into the arms of her father, a man Bonnie has taught her daughter to hate.

The third segment shifts to the oblique view again, and at this point it seems a weakness. It is a kind of comic interlude to begin with, as a new character is

introduced: Wishart. As his name suggests, he is a man who lives out a fantasy. He has created a character for himself, as he did not like his own identity and past. He lives off European women as a kind of middle-aged gigolo. Bonnie misunderstands him so much that she sees him as a solid husband for Flor, someone who would also be a father-figure for her; the reader can see that Wishart would be a total disaster as a husband for Flor. He is living out a performance and sees the reality around him simply as material for the invention of clever anecdotes to amuse his audience.

Wishart appears and disappears too suddenly, and he seems merely another example of those drifting parasites trying to live at ease at the expense of others. But it is a hollow life, since Wishart finds that his hosts themselves are sometimes unreliable. Such a character allows us another oblique view of the life Bonnie and Flor live, revealing Bonnie's pathetic attempt to provide some kind of support for Flor without any real understanding of either her daughter or Wishart. But the shift of emphasis to Wishart, though it provides some comedy, disturbs the balance of the story. Apart from this third segment, *Green Water, Green Sky* is a story admirably controlled within narrow limits: a deliberate study of a few characters. Bonnie and Flor work well within such limits; one of the interesting technical devices is the way in which Flor fades from the story, as if the sense of her own individuality slipping is emphasized by her retreat from the story. It is also suggested that her madness has allowed her to slip from the grasp of her husband and particularly from her mother's life, so that the reader has a strangely ambiguous feeling about Flor's insanity: she is insane, yes, but she has escaped.

MAVIS GALLANT's next novel, *Its Image in the Mirror*, which appears in *My Heart is Broken* (1964) is a study of two sisters; Jean, the narrator, has lived in the shadow of Isobel, who is younger, more attractive and more lively. Jean has always regarded Isobel as living a bohemian life, full of romance and glamour; Isobel is the one who breaks away by an early marriage, who has an affair with a married man when her husband is away during the war.

But the usual Gallant irony operates; we discover that Isobel's life is not in fact at all glamorous. The married man is no dashing lover; he becomes an

assistant headmaster with a "failed poet's face concave with discontent". Isobel herself marries a second time and is living in what sounds like a romantic ambiance — married to an Italian doctor in Venezuela. But when Isobel visits Jean with her family, the children are no different from Jean's, and Alfredo, her husband, turns out to be a finicky snob. Isobel, seen by Jean as the one who escaped from the narrow confines of the family, seems to have trapped herself within other situations just as confining.

The bulk of the novel concerns Isobel during the war. Jean has been influenced by her, has married a man first interested in Isobel, and goes to live in Montreal while her husband has gone off to the war, trying to find there the imaginary life of romance. During the novel all the images of romantic life are broken down to a flat reality. Jean takes an apartment, "a bohemian, almost glamorous thing to do", but shares it with another girl and their life is the close, closeted life of two women living closely together:

> We had nothing in common except that we were women, and we had to make that do.
>
> From this Sargasso of scarves, stockings, lipsticks, damp towels, pins, uncapped toothpaste tubes, we emerged every morning side by side, clean, smooth, impeccable as eggs. . . . Home again, we became like our rooms. We assumed the shapelessness, the deliberate sloppiness of rooms shared by women whose hopes are somewhere else.

Jean meets no romance, but only a furtive, fumbling Lesbian approach. The war produces no hero; only an epileptic veteran. Frank, her brother, goes to war and is killed, not in glorious action but in a freak accident. There are parties the sisters go to, peopled with what might be thought of as exotic foreigners; they turn out to be layabouts or pretentious artists without talent.

In all this ironic mélange, Jean still sees Isobel's affair with Alec Campbell as possessing the possibilities of a truly romantic world. In a kind of epiphany at the centre of the novel Jean sees Isobel and Alec walking out of the dark on a Montreal street. Before they see her, they are enclosed in a world in which romance and reality seem to meld, and for once Jean senses a romantic love existing, the love her mother has always rejected as being undesirable and "too fantastic to exist".

> They leaned inward as they walked, as if both had received an injury and were helping each other stand up. Isobel's face was a flower. Everything wary and closed, removed and mistrustful had disappeared. . . . He was an ordinary looking man, but that made their love affair seem all the more extraordinary.

This picture of ideal love is broken when the lovers see Jean but the tableau of their union remains in Jean's mind. It presses upon her that all that she has thought about her sister's bohemian life was true, even though she herself has not experienced it, even though she is constantly though unconsciously resenting Isobel's illicit love-life, an attitude not unlike the confusion of love and resentment that Flor feels in *Green Water, Green Sky.*

At the end of the novel Jean is let into Isobel's life. Isobel calls on Jean to tell her she is pregnant and wants Jean to help her through the pregnancy. After Isobel's confession and her plea for complete attention, Jean reaches to Isobel, feeling sisterly, trying to take her hand. But Isobel sees this as too intimate or too sentimental a gesture and withdraws her hand from Jean's. There follows a very revealing paragraph which includes this comment by Jean: "She wanted my attention, and would pay for it." And so Jean seizes her opportunity. After being in Isobel's shadow for most of her life, she now is prepared to get the most out of her hold over Isobel.

But even this revelation of Jean's use of her sister's situation has already been undercut. Jean's power over her sister does not last and does not allow her to escape from her own position. Earlier in the novel there is an episode in which Isobel visits the family summer cottage with her children and her second husband. It is a disaster as a family gathering, and Jean narrates it with a kind of caustic humour. But, in spite of Jean's critical view of Isobel's later marriage, her distaste for Isobel's undisciplined life, her belief that her own married life has been more successful, there lingers the idea that in her own way Isobel has succeeded. Thus, in the end the power Isobel seemed to place in Jean's hands is empty, for when Isobel returns to the cottage several years later, Jean realizes that she has never had any control over Isobel. Isobel has retained her own individuality and broken through the barriers of the family relationship for good: "I was part of a wall of cordial family faces, and Isobel was not hurt by her failure, or impressed by my success, but thankful she had escaped". So the reversal at the end of the novel is doubly ironic.

Another way of looking at this novel is to see it, as Mavis Gallant herself sees it, as a study in domination. Isobel has dominated Jean for most of her life, and in a way Jean's telling of the story is a kind of exorcism of the dominance of her sister's spirit, though we have seen that, ironically, this has not really existed. There is also the domination of the mother over her two daughters, something that Isobel recognizes and breaks away from and Jean herself eventually comes to see.

Yet the author herself seems dissatisfied with it as a novel. She has complained that what is wrong with the novel is that Jean, as narrator, is "too lucid". Yet, for all Jean's lucidity, does she really know what is happening and, most particularly, does she know what is happening to herself? Her voice gives the impression of order and control, but scattered through the narrative are stray phrases which indicate that she is not as sure of events as the lucid tone suggests, so that one of the deepest ironies of the book may be the discrepancy between Jean's apparent comprehension of these events and her failure to see the reality as it exists. It is possible to see the story as a distortion: phrases such as "I suppose", "I must have dreamed", "I think", "I expect" occur at times. Jean even admits at the beginning (thus establishing that she is a deluded narrator) that the opening tableau of the empty house may be an invention on her part: "My mother says I saw nothing of the kind."

If there is this ambivalence in Jean's narrative voice, then the final paragraphs take on a more sinister tone. At the end Jean thinks she will write a letter to her husband Tom about Isobel's pregnancy in order to destroy any lingering idealism Tom may have about Isobel. But apparently she does not send the letter. In one sense it seems an act of kindness because "it would be Isobel delivered, Isobel destroyed." But there is something malicious about Jean's subsequent remarks: "The story could wait. It would always be there to tell." This implies that she will have it ready to use, even though she says "I might never tell it." Early in the story she has revealed the power she possesses. "It has often been in my power to destroy my sister — to destroy, that is, an idea people might have about her — but something has held back my hand. I think it is the instinct that tells me Isobel will betray herself." But the irony goes deeper still, because we have seen the later Isobel early in the story and she has not betrayed herself. She seems totally unaffected by the earlier experience and in fact by living in Caracas with her family she has removed herself from the sphere of influence of Jean's threatening knowledge.

One further thing should be mentioned about Jean. Although she holds up to herself as an idea Isobel's golden bohemian life, though she suggests she herself married in order to escape from the grip of her family, throughout the story she admits that she is really a re-incarnation of her mother. She sees that their gestures are alike, even their voices are similar. She remarks, "I am pleased to be like her. There is no one I admire more." Her lucidity, what she considers her real apprehension, is an inheritance from her mother: "I sounded like our

mother: flat and calm and certain I was right." She repeats the notion a little later: "I am the only person who can tell the truth about anything now."

The structure of *Its Image in the Mirror* is a very important element in the development of our perception of the characters and their relationships. This is true of all Mavis Gallant's novels. Not one of them is told in a strict chronological unfolding, but each one seesaws between past and present with glimpses offered here and there, a full revelation not being possible until all the pieces can be placed together when the reader reaches the last page. Such a method leaves a lot of play for irony, perhaps the most important technical element in any Gallant novel but it places a strain on the reader, making him try to hold these disparate bits together through the course of the novel. *A Fairly Good Time*, her longest and most ambitious novel, causes special problems because the point of view varies, and even though there is a kind of chronological framework of the span of a few days in the life of the heroine, there are some dizzying recollections from the past as well as quick changes of place. A first reading of this last novel tends to leave the reader dissatisfied, but on close examination it reveals itself as a very carefully wrought book, full of incisive characterizations and penetrating ironies, with perhaps a more sympathetic attitude towards the main character than we find in the other novels.

The narrative framework of *A Fairly Good Time* concerns a few days in the life of Shirley, whose second husband has just left her. The last two chapters are a kind of epilogue, taking place about nine months later, as she returns to Paris, now divorced, to sort out the effects left in her apartment.

Shirley has not had a very happy life. Her first husband, Peter, was killed in a freak accident. She married Philippe Perrigny, but does not fit into his scheme of life. The people who surround her are people who cling to her for help; even her own personal crisis starts with her spending the night with Renata, who has tried to commit suicide. She is taken up by a strange French girl, Claudie Maurel, and through her she meets the rest of the Maurel family, all perverse and neurotic. She seeks comfort from her Greek neighbour, James, who had been her lover previously and who is now living an enigmatic life surrounded by young nubile girls.

Shirley is looking for some solution to her life, some salvation, and she is cut adrift by her husband's desertion of her. She comes to terms with herself and her life at the end of the book by realizing that she cannot live by trying to counsel others. Her advice does not work, especially for Claudie, and so there a feeling emerges within her that she should accept the flow of life, not try and live within

some schematic moral code, and should refuse to think about the future as an ordered existence. Shirley is an illustration of the epigraph of the novel: "there's only one way of being comfortable, and that is to stop running around after happiness". Through the novel Shirley keeps trying to arrange the events in her life to make sense of them; the longest chapter in the book is her own written explanations of "How It Happened", but they are very eccentric explanations. She seems trapped in a marriage in which her husband expects her to be rational and logical, but lives by her own system, which appears absurd to him: "this system, which worked successfully and required only an occasional effort, seemed irrational to Philippe."

Shirley admits she is "comfortable in chaos", whereas an "unwashed cup left by Philippe seems like a moral slip". Routine and repetition seem to her lunatic gestures; "the mystery of behaviour seemed . . . the only riddle worth a mention." Whereas her husband wants order, lists, sequence, Shirley suggests that a relationship will falter if too much is known. "Everything between two people is equivocal", she maintains, and at one point she feels "how much easier it was to talk to one's friends or someone in transit." This looseness of attitude explains why she has no compunction in returning to James's bed once her husband has left her, or in accepting James's invitation to go to Greece, even though she knows it will have no real consequences for her future.

Her outlook is essentially a comic one; to take what one can from life and cut one's losses. She seems to approve the behaviour of her former father-in-law who remarried late in life after his wife's death:

> Mr. Higgins had drawn up a new way of life, like a clean will with everyone he loved cut out. I was trying to draw up a will too, but I was patient, waiting, waiting for someone to tell me what to write.

It takes some time to discover this for herself. In a sense the novel records the process within her of that discovery. She has no philosophic or religious scheme of life: "sane people live their whole lives like stones on a beach, rolling a little this way and that." She tries to find significant reasons for life, why, for instance, Renata should be brought back to life but she concludes, "I refused all belief in the value of suffering and I always will. I despise it."

At the end Shirley has cast off everyone. She is leaving her apartment, she dismisses once and for all the intellectual milieu of her husband, her mother has died, James she has left in Greece, Renata and Claudie seem to have faded out of her life. Myopic and naive, irrational and imaginative, she sees life awaken-

ing to spring in the final paragraph of the novel. She has emerged as herself, even though she recognizes that her individuality draws some strength from her past: "Tall as her grandmother, unshakeable as her mother, she spoke . . . out of a future."

A Fairly Good Time is Mavis Gallant's most complexly-textured novel. What is different about it, apart from the sympathetic portrayal of Shirley, is the use of dialogue. Mrs. Gallant has said that the sound of a character's voice is very important to her, for it reveals so much. In her other novels, although there is dialogue, it does not generally loom large. The author says that she has heard the dialogue herself and has transferred it into the texture of the writing.

Particularly memorable in *A Fairly Good Time* are the conversations. They are superbly handled, on occasions approaching a Pinter-like accuracy in their obliquity, as if each character were pursuing his own idea without reference to the other persons in the conversations. They cross and meet only at certain points. These dialogues in their shifts and illogicality are accurate and witty renderings, formalized within the convention of the novel, of real speech patterns.

A Fairly Good Time is an advance for Mavis Gallant. Those who think of her as a writer with a somewhat narrow range would do well to study this more thoroughly peopled novel with its variation of narrative voice and its concentration on a comic (but not pitilessly comic) heroine.

It augurs well for the future of her work. She has already created a body of fiction worthy of close critical consideration, and there is every sign that she will develop it into a canon of work of real significance.

NOTE

[1] All comments attributed to Mrs. Gallant in this article are taken from two CBC interviews, one with Earle Beattie for *Anthology* (May 24, 1969) and one with Fletcher Markle for *Telescope* (January 22 and 29, 1965). I am grateful to the CBC and in particular to Robert Weaver, who made tapes of these interviews available to me.

NEED FOR LAUGHTER

Warren Tallman

As he writes *St. Urbain's Horseman* Mordecai Richler is thinking both comedy and music, and he's thinking them on what used to be called the grand scale. At the outset a number of major themes are introduced and they unite, as they alternate and recur, into his larger comic theme, call it the fortunate pratfall of Jacob Hersh. As theme gives way to theme, a shuttling weave, Richler adjusts the tone and tempo, calling on all of the writing secrets he has mastered over some twenty years in order to orchestrate his comedy of a sad yet exuberant and spiky Jew.

Jake's spikiness derives from the same Montreal ghetto in which Duddy Kravitz served his apprenticeship in the 1959 work that made Richler's reputation as an important novelist. Duddy figures in *St. Urbain's Horseman* as a minor motif, a childhood pal of Jake's who is now negotiating his talent for swindling into a fortune. This latter-day Duddy closely resembles his earlier self — up to a point. As a first successful step toward millions he markets a remarkably effective diet pill, the secret ingredient of which is tapeworms. When a chemist cracks the formula, Duddy disappears into a maze of swindles within swindles, leaving the consequences to his partners and the complications to a large number of extremely thin customers. Same old Duddy. But not quite. For in diminishing him from a major to a minor figure Richler also diminishes his earlier potentialities. As apprentice, Duddy plunged so thoroughly into his attempts to out-con the world that he began to move beyond mere swindles to more interesting human possibilities. But in the *Horseman* the possibilities have vanished. He's all millionaire, and not much more. His fondest latter-day aspiration is to get his eyes and/or hands up those slopes which begin at the hem of

every passing London mini-skirt. And his rueful self-appraisal — "Who in the hell could love Duddy Kravitz" — cancels his earlier potential as a young man with a consuming appetite to gobble the whole world. It's, in little, as though Falstaff were to grow thin, honest, and genuinely contrite.

Yet Richler robs Duddy of his large hunger for the world deliberately, in order to hand it over to friend Jake in form of a somewhat different hunger. While minor figure Duddy is making his moves to where the money is, major figure Jake makes his to where imagination might be, as a television and film director of some distinction. Yet only some, for he is shown as good but not all that good, successful but in curiously compromised ways, and ambitious but given to fumbling his best chances away. At first glance this might seem the portrait of a man who can't quite make it up the ladder to where the sweet life begins, intense gratification of having reached the top. But looking again, it becomes evident that Richler is searching elsewhere through Jake's eyes, not the effort to get up, but a need to climb down. Jake positively doesn't want the sweetness, deliberately insults important persons, consciously consorts with film-world nobodies, and eventually cultivates the malevolent Harry Stein. To make friends with Harry is like holding hands with an unexploded stink bomb, sure to go off. When it does, a great stench settles in around the good name Jacob Hersh. Yet the steps by which Jake moves from respectability to disgrace are waystations of a deeper search, his dream of his older cousin, Joey Hersh, the Horseman.

Joey grows up in Montreal as still another of Richler's nothing boys, son of a disgraced father who deserts the family; of a mad and madcap mother who also disgraces him, every other day; and brother of Jenny, who early on establishes and then maintains a reputation as one of the more reliable town pumps. As her outspoken mother says, "she's a whore", but for free, come almost whomsoever. One miserable 1937 winter day her brother disappears and for six years, no Joey. Abruptly, one fine 1943 spring day, along shabby St. Urbain's Street, lo a fire-engine red MG. From which steps a transformed Joey, with an endless supply of cash in hand. And a dazzling procession begins, clothes from the most exclusive shops, mysterious, beautiful women from some posh, long-legged sexual heaven, brooding phone calls from faraway places — shades of Gatsby from over the way in New York. And the whispered legend starts. Did Joey fight against Franco in Spain, is he a communist, did he visit Trotsky in Mexico? Was he, in between times, a pro ball player, a licensed pilot, an actor in Hollywood, a man with underworld connections at the far end of those phone calls, in hiding, even being hunted down?

If adolescent Jake is fascinated by these intimations of an heroic life, he is even more fascinated by a transformation in Joey from the typically timorous St. Urbain's boy into an assertive, at times a dangerous Man. When Joey gets drunk, as he often does, he exudes hard-bodied, hard-eyed menace. When some French-Canadian toughs beat up a young Jew, Joey organizes a counter-attack which lands a local dignitary's son in the hospital. Vengeance is ours, saith Joey. But the Jewish fathers, frightened, apologize. When some other French-Canadian boys intimidate Jake and Duddy at the local ball field, Joey comes along and intimidates the French-Canadian boys. Later he will fight the Arabs in the 1948 war. Most crucial of all, he will become, in Jake's imagination, The Horseman, and also the Golem, in Jewish tradition a body without a soul, searching through the world to revenge the loss. It is the infamous Doktor Mengele, one of the monsters at Auschwitz, that Jake believes Joey is pursuing. The dreadful image at the heart of Jake's nightmares is of women in the outhouses while other women crouch, drinking contaminated water from an adjacent stream. Enter the good Doktor to bring in sanitation by destroying not the outhouses but the women.

Over the years it's become clear that Richler is essentially iconoclastic, almost invariably asserting tough-minded scepticism in the face, under force, of the modern world — kid me NOT! Letting cousin Joey be Jake's hero, his vision of a redeeming manhood for Jewish men, Richler consciously selects a sleazy hero, made up of the sleazy kitch boys dream along St. Urbain's street. Seeking revenge for Mengele's monstrous treatment of Jewish women, Joey himself mistreats women, deserts a wife and child in Israel, swindles another woman in London, and plays the petty cheat to each next town he passes through. Beyond adolescence Jake never does catch up with Joey except in dreams, Nazi-haunted nightmares into which, fleetingly, his cousin rides, mounted in a magnificent Plevin stallion.

> Neighing, the stallion rears, obliging the Horseman to dig his stirrups in. Eventually he slows. Still in the highlands, emerging from the dense forest to scan the scrub below, he strains to find the unmarked road that winds into the jungle, between Puerto San Vincente and the border fortress of Carlos Antonio Lopez.

This is Paraguay where 40,000 escaped Nazis are thought to live, Mengele included. But vengeance is not Joey's, saith Mordecai Richler. Beyond his dream of his cousin as Horseman and Golem, Jake falls into step with a London body even more lacking in a soul, Harry Stein, the Jewish Iago, pure venom, gratuitous

hatred, malice incarnate. Ride along with Joey in your dreams and there will be a shift in which you tag along with Harry. All German girls beware.

To understand how Jake makes the transition from dreams of Joey to friendship with Harry, the reader needs to understand Harry's dim-witted mistress, Ruthy. And to understand Ruthy one needs to consider first, Joey's sister, Jenny. Every good writer is likely to have at least one well that is always coming in, from which words will flow almost easily into place. For Richler this natural resource has always been Jewish lowlifers: in *St. Urbain's Horseman*, the Hersh family. And how Richler loves it, and how he hates it, the intense, hot, heavy interest that fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, uncles, cousins and aunts all take in one another to the exclusion of every other interest. Jenny, the most intelligent of the Hershes, recognizes the almost incestuousness of such closeness when she tells Jake that brother Joey returned to Montreal that fabled spring of 1943 because "he wanted to fuck me," and that he left to avoid doing so. Jenny wants out of the hothouse, so she elects for self-education in art, literature and philosophy. As such, she becomes Jake's muse and he "her acolyte". Jake, grown up, remembers her solitary, back-bedroom study light gleaming through late St. Urbain's hours; remembers Modern Library books, a map of Paris, a drawing of Keats, Havelock Ellis, the *Saturday Review of Literature*; remembers how he "had revered her, how she had once excited him." Given the double pull, of reverence, as for a muse, and excitement, as for a mistress, it's all but inevitable that Jake will follow after when she makes her move to escape from Hershville.

But such an escape! Out of the family warming oven into the pale fires of the Toronto culture-establishment by way of a calculated marriage to Doug Fraser, whom Richler portrays as perhaps the most asinine playwright CBC Radio ever encouraged in all its long history of encouraging asinine playwrights. However, Jenny marries Doug, not for the imagination he doesn't possess, and not for a sexuality which he also doesn't possess, but as a way to become reigning hostess for Toronto writers, artists, directors and producers. Much of her success as hostess consists in her willingness to go to bed with whomsoever, except her husband (reluctantly) and Jake (not at all). That woman who discovers she has become the eternal feminine for a particular man — Jenny for Jake — will realize that in order to be his muse she had best not be also his mistress. Swallow my cousin, cousin swallow. When adolescent Jake wants her she lets him fool around but then tells him to go home and grow up. When he does grow up and still wants her, she declines and sleeps instead with Duddy, driving Jake dotty. But it will be at one of her parties that he gains entrée to his career as a film

director and meets his eventual best friend, the genuinely talented writer, Luke Scott. A career and a standard by which to judge that career. Fleet sweet swallow.

But enter Richler's scepticism, clipping her wings and pouring salt on her tail. Just as cousin Joey is a sleazy hero, cousin Jenny is a sleazy muse, the best that circumstances provide for St. Urbain's boys, but very much bargain basement, damaged goods. However, the scepticism is not to be understood as simply Doubting Mordecai with a moted eye for all the things that are under the sun. It's that he distrusts muses, at least the kind that Jake takes to be soul of his soul. There is a direct connection between Jenny in Montreal and Toronto, and Ruthy in London. For lame-brain Ruthy is the would-be-muse to end all muses, totally convinced as she takes on each next shabby lover that Goethe has re-occurred. And who is the first lover she takes on in these terms but cousin Joey, the Horseman. Who, having seduced and swindled her, rides off into the European sunset with her life-savings in his saddlebags. Enter her next lover — who else but Harry Stein, determined that Jake will make good for Joey, so that Ruthy will have savings *he* can swindle from her. Ruthy thinks that's super, since in her eyes Harry, who boasts a high I.Q., is at the level where "there's Gertrude, there's Ep and there's Ein." Moving from his pre-occupation with Joey and Jenny to his pre-occupation with Harry and Ruthy, Jake enters into some of the finest passages in the novel, in which he revels in their shoddiness as one might indulge a madness in order to be rid of it. Because muse Jenny still knocks at inner chambers of his being, Ruthy's atrocious capacity for adoration answers. Because hero Joe still rides his dreams, Horseman and Golem, Harry appears, vengeance incarnate. Before whom place a delectable dish, a statuesque German girl, Ingrid. Threaten her. Strip her naked. Rape her. Bugger her. Fellatio. Down on hands and knees. Put Joey's saddle on her back. Get out Joey's riding crop. Mount, whip, and ride to your revenge for Jewish women crouched by Auschwitz outhouses drinking their own shit-fouled water as prologue to the even more horrible gas chamber cantata, writhing and clawing their way to the very top of death's most vaulting ambition. Small wonder that Jake Hersh is a hypochondriac. Fears success. Marries a Goy.

But vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. Through the screen of lies Ingrid, Harry and Jake need to tell in court, it's clear that Jake is scarcely guilty as charged. His great mistake is to arrive home unexpectedly, get involved with the drunkenness of it all, and become understandably indiscreet. He does fondle her. He does pinch her, viciously, to his surprise. But when she goes suddenly onto her knees and fumbles at him, he pulls away. And when Harry begins the saddle

and riding crop routine, Jake quarrels, gets angry, and shoves Ingrid rather roughly out of the house. All of which the jury comprehends. Also the judge, who is hard on Harry, whom he despises and sentences to seven years, and on Jake too, whom he deplores but lets off with a suspended sentence. However, the real judge of the event is a sceptic named Mordecai. And as he's wincing with the pain of it all, he's smiling, a benevolent scepticism. He knows that in depths of himself where the invisible worms fly in the night Jake is guilty, his dream of Joey leading him into league with Harry to heap humiliation on the tender flesh of the German girl. So he winces. But he also knows that by letting his creature Jake act out the nightmare, he, Jake, will arrive at knowledge of how ridiculous a nightmare it all is, how little he is actually interested in such revenge: a grope, a pinch, and a push. So judge Mordecai aids and abets the crime in order to cure the criminal, lets Jake follow Joey toward revenge and meet Harry, the exact man for the job, Iago come round again to arrange the denouement.

But what a fraud of a vengeful fellow this Harry Stein proves out, an inept Iago who selects, among other things an entirely wrong victim. Judge Mordecai makes it clear that pretty Ingrid is a mostly compliant baggage who assumes that anal, oral and genital intercourse are simply what people do on sexual occasions — as, indeed, they do. Iago Harry went too far and did hurt and humiliate her — for a while. Otherwise she experienced it all as another one of those odd evenings in a long series. The greatest damage to her pride was probably when Jake pushed her out of the house, Gott in Himmel, all this and no screen test too! And though it did seem weird to be down on her hands and knees with Joey's saddle on her not-so-pure Aryan back, ready to be whipped and paraded past wherever it is the shades of the Auschwitz women huddle, it doesn't seem at all weird to judge Mordecai, the smiling sceptic who arranged it all. He sees it as the ludicrous end point of Jake's bad dream. Under a law of rueful laughter, the sentence he imposes would seem to read, in the vernacular, come off it Jake Hersh, dark is not the colour of your true love's hair. You are no inverted Jewish Mengele, twisting toward revenge. You are what you actually are, a spiky Jew up from St. Urbain's street, needing to be a spike since modern times have small room for sensitive plants, as I, judge Mordecai, also spiky, can testify. But be a golden spike. And at the end, the ridiculousness burned deeply in burning the bad dream out, lo, friend Lucas Scott drives up in his shiny fire-engine red reputation, the best writer in town, offers his best script to best friend Jake to direct. The sweet life. And Jake hesitates, weeps for the death of cousin Joey, the

Horseman, but accepts, for once malleable. And a golden thread takes over from the invisible worms now fled into some other night than the one from which Jake has awakened.

A comic world then, the spirit of which is not from dark to darker to darkest, but from dark to lighter to laughter, and release. Harry Stein is certainly the worst news Richler has given us to date, with his obscene phone calls, nasty put-downs and ugly feelings. But the passages that spell him out contain some of the most elated writing in the novel. If he were true Iago no one could laugh. But as a failed Iago he's a very funny nasty fellow. The portrait of Harry reveals the reality of Richler's scepticism, which has always been the main fact met in his novels. Just as it cuts against everybody's pretensions that they are better than they actually are, it cuts against fears that they are worse. A humane, a forgiving scepticism, then, the test of which is not in some officious pronouncement — I AM THE HUMANE SCEPTIC — but where it belongs, in the writing itself, the upbeat music that takes over when awful Harry and awful Ruthy make their appearances. They are unbearable — look the other way! — but the writing itself rescues them, allegro, so that, like Jake, the reader tags along. However, in other parts of the novel there are problems.

FOR AN OLDER GENERATION of writers in Canada, young Mordecai Richler must have seemed rather markedly a wild one in much the same way as the older Irving Layton and younger Leonard Cohen seemed also wild — then. And so he was — then. His brash, wrong-side-of-the-tracks writing rushes make the more considered styles of Hugh MacLennan and Morley Callahan seem almost elegiac. But time plays funny tricks, and in our speeded-up world doesn't wait around very long before playing them. To a newer generation of writers it's doubtless Richler's prose that seems elegiac, inviting comparison, not forward to the much more open, freely improvisational modes in which they work, but back to modes they have all but abandoned. This isn't enmity, a new wave of artists who would like to see Richler's ship sink. Surely, no serious writer or reader can fail to appreciate the magnitude of his attempt to create a symphonic novel, the four movements, the many themes that weave congruently through the entire work, the animated writing with which he attempts to achieve a comic triumph of spirit over some grim modern realities. But respect it as they may, it will doubtless be precisely the imposed superstructure from which a good

many younger artists will flinch as being an unnecessary burden for any writer to carry on his bent and straining back. *Heavy, heavy* often does hang over his typewriter.

Never more so than when the upbeat writing he needs in order to sustain the upbeat intention of the work becomes strained, particularly in the burlesque passages that recur intermittently throughout the novel. These passages are an old and puzzling story in Richler's writing — fragments of film scripts, newspaper items, letters to Jake from pathetic, backwoods TV aspirants, a do-it-yourself I.Q. test — you too can be a Harry Stein — and, most important, a number of zany episodes that mock the social, sexual, marital lives and times of Toronto and London establishment sophisticates. These burlesques do double duty in the novel. Musically they occur as a kind of running scherzo, sounds of life's whirly-birds crooning through crazy days. Thematically they explore and present the public level of Jake Hersh's life, just what kind of wacky modern wonderland it is to which he (and all the rest of us) are more or less Mad Hatters. The difficulty occurs when such passages strain in their reach towards laughter and become insistent, unfunny. For instance, the evening that Jake and his wife have dinner at the home of his attorney, Ormsby-Fletcher.

It begins with Jake's awareness that given the conflicting lies he, Ingrid and Harry will be telling in court, the logic of their testimony will count for rather less than the presence on his behalf of an "upright plodding WASP" lawyer. With dull propriety itself at your side how could you possibly be guilty of unspeakable carnalities? If you grew up along St. Urbain's Street you know how to con, and Jake did and Jake does, deftly manoeuvring Ormsby-Fletcher into accepting his case. Which of course makes Jake eminently respectable in the eyes of Ormsby-Fletcher, positively his favourite Jewish sex pervert. And his wife's favourite too. Hence the invitation. Everybody knows that the English have the most revolting food sense in the civilized world so the meal becomes a series of soggy lumps. Afterwards Mrs. Ormsby-Fletcher enthuses (with fluted voice) over examples of (it's her special interest) paintings by cripples, teeth paintings, toe paintings, maybe even armpit paintings. Given Richler's bawdiness it's a little surprising that she doesn't bring in work by some paraplegic Modernist who has given up brushes entirely to become the first penis painter, now nurse if you'll just . . . When Jake goes to the john (vetting the hamper for glimpses of the lady's lingerie), the toilet — ah England — plugs. And what to do with the contents? Scoop it all up in his shorts and throw it out the window? Or smuggle it to the downstairs john, one hopes in working order? Or smuggle himself

downstairs, establish his presence there, and let four-year old junior take the rap for the mess upstairs? Which latter, Jake does.

Few readers are likely to object to bathroom humour per se — shades of Swift, Rabelais, Henry Miller, the human race generally, half the jokes we tell. Or to a demolition job on English uppah claws ridiculousness. In art there are always rooms to spare, including those furnished with hostility à la Freud insights into wit and laughter. Burlesque, by which the enemy is turned into a caricature of himself, has always been a favourite style for such furnishings. Richler's characteristic enemies are establishment people, the mad hatters at the top of the social heap, the insufferable ways in which they lord it shabbily over the rest of us. With lowlife vulgarity he is very much at ease. The true vulgar leads after all to the vulgate, that common tongue which the artist can then subtilize, humanize, liberate, a natural stamping ground for the comic spirit. But the highlife vulgarity of establishment people — Mrs. Ormsby-Fletcher — destroys subtlety, humanity and freedom by revelling in the shoddy, the banal, the pretentious. So the hostility that Richler feels does him credit. Nor can there be any objection to the burlesque masks he assumes in order to project that hostility; vengeance is mine saith the artist, slyly. It's the writing itself that poses the difficulty, the ways in which it tightens into a forced hilarity and loses comic resonance. This is very much like those evening gatherings at which people, laughing hysterically, demolish some common enemy. Played back the next morning, with all the giggles gone, the exchanges are likely to be singularly unfunny. For this reader the Ormsby-Fletcher passage, and a number of others in the novel, are like that — the next morning.

The difficulty may be a double one. It takes a good hater to write successful burlesque, one able to revel in a happiness of malice made sweet. William Burroughs for instance — his savage joy. Richler never seems quite able to revel. Like his protagonist, Jake, he is perhaps too forgiving, gentle. Thus one of the funniest passages in *St. Urbain's Horseman*, the middle-aged film makers' softball game on Hampstead Heath, is no burlesque at all, but delicious roly-poly slapstick. Strictly speaking, these film folk are much more dangerous enemies of art than ridiculous Mrs. Ormsby-Fletcher. They are establishment vulgarians who have long since converted film-making, which they control, into a shoddy game of wheel and deal, no mystery, no beauty, no power, just wheel, just DEAL. However, Richler writes them into place as a collection of huffing, puffing, show-off teddy bears for whom he feels not hostility but an amused affection. Hostility need not enter because he is seeing them as lowlifers, clowns

to their own careers, whose wheeling and dealing takes on authentic comic resonance as they play ball in order to, like they say, play ball. My favourite is the one who can't decide whether to hit a single, a double or a triple because not sure whether it would be more politic to talk to the first, the second or the third baseman. So he strikes out. However, when hostility enters and the burlesque masks go on, Richler's writing tends to tighten into a more strained grimace. Which is to laugh — and write — the hard way.

But the more important difficulty must be traced to Richler's symphonic superstructure. Once he establishes burlesques of modern life as a major theme of the novel he must write a certain number of such passages, whether he feels like it or not. This is linear imagination at work, with a vengeance, since by page 10 he has committed himself to four such themes that he will need to sustain through what turns out to be a long 467 pages of writing. Or a short 467 pages if one considers the various economies he needs in order to keep any given theme in balance with the others. All writers know it is difficult enough to sustain the tone and tempo of even a single theme over a period of days, weeks or months. What happens when the feelings in which the theme is grounded just go away? Smoke writing. To sustain four themes, each with a somewhat different tone and tempo, and at the same time to shuttle back and forth in order to weave them into a larger, unified comic progression from movement to movement to movement to finale is a task for imagination that can be thought either heroic or over-burdened. A further difficulty in the writing, the frequent intrusion of expository asides in the midst of narrative passages, argues for the overburdening.

Novelists are supposed to kiss and tell, but they are usually expected to dramatize, visualize or sound the kissing and telling, not simply to explain that Jake is happily married, has grown weary of modern literature, or is a small "l" liberal who realizes that his very comfortable life style scarcely squares with his feelings about world misery. Goethe said it long ago, critics are dogs, yapping at artists' Achilles tendencies, and it seems all but certain that Richler will be faulted for the too-frequent intrusion of this expository bridging. Which is what it seems to be, a shorthand way to keep one or another theme moving and evolving those times he is out of patience with direct presentation. Or, more likely, is struggling to keep one theme in balance with the others, a problem in harmonics. Thus, by simply explaining that Jake is "immensely pleased" or "enormously amused" Richler confirms the comic nature of the place without having to pause and present the pleasure or amusement. Yet when he must explain, it's clear that he

realizes the reader might very well be concluding otherwise, say that Jake must be horribly depressed or not one bit pleased. However, the real issue is not the intrusion of the expository asides per se. There is no law that says a novelist cannot explain those times he isn't interested to present, just as there is no law that says a critic, or anyone else, cannot narrate, dramatize or sound his responses. All writing is art and all writers should have access to all of the possibilities that language affords. It's more apropos to ask, do the expository intrusions stay lively enough to sustain, even enhance, the general liveliness Richler is seeking in creating his comic vision of Jake Hersh. I think not. When they occur, it's a little like listening to upbeat music momentarily interrupted by someone talking, not from the audience, but from the midst of the music itself. Such intrusions mar that animation which is the soul of this novel. They occur least often in just those passages where Richler is at his lively best, the portraits of Harry Stein and Ruthy, and whenever Jake for old time's sake, or for need, goes on back home to Montreal.

When he is at home with the various Hershes (or they visit him) the tempo is held at a quick-handed fast, and the tone stays sceptical. But it all dips down — sweet chariot — to some undersurface where sad is singing to sad, laugh and chatter as they will. There is a beautifully modulated passage in which Jake, about to quit college, goes to a delicatessen with his father, divorced from his mother. The crass jokes — "fart smeller, I mean smart feller" — become muted sounds on some cracked harmonica that the father discovers he can no longer play for the son, try as he will. Similarly, when his mother comes to London the modulations are superb, the sweet chariot herself, patting her breasts, preening her body, seducing her grandchildren, cutting out the competition, effacing herself into the centre of attention, and my boy, my boy, my buoy. Who left his Maw long years ago, as her direct, accusing glance reminds him at the airport —the husband gone, the children gone, you Yankel too — what's left for hothouse eyes?

The passages that give us the mother and father open a way, perhaps, to where the comic genius that rules over this novel dwells. To follow Jake's feelings along lines that lead to inner chambers of their defeated but animated lives is to reach a place where there is no laughter at all but anguish instead that human existence needs be so grim an affair, *felt* as grim — the tawdriness of his father's life and reactions to life, the obsessive stupidity of his opposition to Jake's marriage, the ugly pathos of his illness and death, the even uglier travesty of his funeral. Nor is the father alone in this lower world, for shade comes to join

shade, the defeated mother, Joey, Duddy, Jenny, Ruthy, Harry Stein, all as well afflicted by tawdriness, ugliness, stupidity, defeat. And for silent chorus, hooded, the Auschwitz women, the excremental lilies, in life less than excrement. It is from this grim region that the resonance flows which moves into the best, most elated writing in the novel as the desolation is redeemed into a comic vision. If Richler sends Jake to melancholy places, it's in order to arrive at a genuine, a felt need for laughter. It is when he moves away from the need into contact with merely social ugliness, stupidity and defeat — the world of the establishment whirlybirds — that the writing turns non-resonant and strains for its effects. There can be no desolation at heart over the Ormsby-Fletchers' foolishness. They are merely foolish. As Jake might well say, who needs them! And because need doesn't enter in, because there will be no second dinner at their home, no necessary third to still the voices of desolation, there can be no deep resonance to underlie the reach for laughter. So the writing strains because the comic superstructure moves in with its relentless insistence — and there must have been times when Richler wondered why — that he be a funny fellow.

SWIFT, Yeats says,

> . . . has sailed into his rest;
> Savage indignation there
> Cannot lacerate his breast.
> Imitate him if you dare.

It will be to Richler's everlasting credit, since works of art endure, that he does dare to imitate Swift, in more than a few ways. *Gulliver's Travels* was the first English novel to take advantage of symphonic form, inadvertently since the form itself was only just coming into being. In *Gulliver* there are the four lively movements, liveliest of all being the third, a swirling prose scherzo, all over the geographical and thematic place. And the fourth movement, in Houyhnhnm-land, recapitulates and resolves the themes woven into the first three. Which is a way of saying that *St. Urbain's Horseman* is *Gulliver* come round again. Most of the writing devices Richler uses have sanction, in that Swift also used them. Just as Swift laces burlesque passages through *Gulliver*, Richler laces them through *Horseman*. Just as Richler intrudes expository asides into his narrative, Swift intrudes even more of them into his: passages concerning law, education,

family life, written in over Lemuel's shoulder. And both writers hold to the crucial rule that, as their scepticism cuts the ground from beneath their protagonists' feet, redemption will occur not in pronouncements but in the act, the art of writing. If the human spirit is to prevail over the grimness of things, it will prevail in the interstices of the words themselves: "there is a music at the heart of things."

And there is another decisive similarity, though it leads to an even more decisive difference. Both novelists choose as protagonist a fool whom they then trap into experiences which will reveal and, they hope, cure the foolishness. Gulliver doesn't seem exactly cured at the last, since he's mad enough to believe that he's almost a horse and likes it that way — farewell mankind! Yet he's an awfully human horse. If you met him trotting down the street, you'd be less likely to weep for mankind lost than to smile. Jake isn't exactly cured either, since he does leave the question of Joey's death open, implying that he might some day climb back on to the nightmare desire that vengeance shall be Joey's, Harry's and his. But the similarity that leads to difference is a deeper one. Both Lemuel and Jake are atheists; Jake by direct acknowledgement of the fact that throughout his ordeals he never once calls on God's help, as his creator did every evening of his adult life. Which means that both fools must call on their human resourcefulness to outface or outfox the surrounding grimness. But Swift takes Lemuel's atheism as the basic foolishness that branches out into all his other idiocies, driving him finally outside human boundaries, to Horseville. Richler takes Jake's atheism as a source for his tenacious humanity, the stubbornness with which he clings to fair play for such sorry specimens as Joey and Harry Stein. Swift, then, is on God's side, laughing, while Richler is on man's side, needing to laugh, trying.

Because this is so, Swift would see Richler playing the fool to his fool by imposing on him an untenable proposition that mankind can go it alone. Yet were he to sail on out of his rest and re-appear on a sudden London to tell Richler so — fool Mordecai! — it would surely be a double sign. Sign of his belief that God forgotten is man abandoned. But sign also that the Horseman from Canadhnhnmland has written his way into the kind of company he, Swift, always did prefer. Which is a long way for a spiky boy from St. Urbain's Street to have travelled. Even Duddy, swindled out of his role as major figure, would be impressed. And one see's Horse Lemuel trotting briskly along, but turning solicitously to Horseman Jake, flat on his back again: You see Jacob, we Houyhnhnms have been doing this longer than you Canadhnhnms.

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review articles

MIRIAM WADDINGTON'S NEW TALENT

Tom Wayman

MIRIAM WADDINGTON, *Driving Home*. Oxford University Press. $2.95.

I THINK MOST OF Miriam Waddington's poems in her recent collection of new and selected poems, *Driving Home*, are boring. But as this collection spans thirty years of work, boredom here is perhaps not entirely her fault: the worst poems reflect the fashions of times they were written in. It is difficult not to be bored with intricate little home-made myths and texts designed to fill up with sentiment the empty prairies or an empty life. And it is difficult now not to be bored with the careful encapsulating into *rhyme* of the passions and anguish of a social worker in the 40's and 50's, and of the lives of those she was in contact with.

But I wonder if Waddington doesn't share these views. The best of the poems in *Driving Home* are mostly in the section of new poems (since 1969). Here she is able sometimes to get inside her present life and show it to the reader in a convincing way. In "Eavesdropping" she imagines all the wonderful things she hopes for at the sound of the telephone: literary fame, academic recognition, and long-distance love. Yet the reality of her life reasserts itself:

> . . . the telephone
> keeps on ringing and
> I know if I answer it
> it will only be the
> insurance adjuster
> saying: your car is
> a total wreck madam
> but not a complete
> write-off so what
> do you want us to do
> about it?

In the same direct style, another poem shows a fence post in her back yard becoming a signpost in the passage of the seasons and the poet's life:

> . . . then
> autumn went south and
> all of a sudden the boys
> I used to go around with
> were sixty years old and
> telling me money
> isn't everything.

Not that wistfulness is the only tone Waddington uses in these newer poems. She satirizes effectively a lot of the silliness of recent Canadian poetry in "Sad winter in the land of Can. Lit."

There are many
things I must learn
in order to write
better in Canada.
I must learn . . .
to spell everything
my own swt way just
to prve my indep
endens of all thr
shtty authrty.

Waddington's appeal in this poem is to the world's standard of writing:

Dear Nelly Sachs,
dear Nathalie Sarraute,
isn't there anything
you can teach me
about how to write
better in Canada?

In "Polemics" she charts a course of affirmation for her writing and life. She wants monuments to the future that make it clear that

There were heroes, wars
were halted, men were
healed, children were
born, people sang,
worlds were changed . . .

And as a contribution towards these monuments, she offers two looks backward at where she has come from. In these poems, the reader duly sees the changes she mentions, and can feel something of Waddington's dissatisfaction at being what she is today. From "The nineteen thirties are over":

. . . I am not really
this middle-aged professor
but someone from
Winnipeg whose bones ache
with the broken revolutions
of Europe, and even now
I am standing on the heaving
ploughed-up field
of my father's old war.

Some hint of the powerful poems Waddington might have written out of her social work in clinics, jails and as a welfare official can be seen in "Investigator" (1942) where she captures for a moment something of the inside of the homes and lives of the poor:

I could tell you, and no exaggeration,
of the in and out of houses twenty times
a day
of the lace antimacassars, the pictures of
kings and queens
the pious mottoes, the printed blessings, the
dust piling up on bureaus,
the velour interiors, the Niagara souvenirs
the faded needlepoint, the hair pulled tight
and the blinds drawn against day and the
feel of sun.

But too often the emotion is lost in the prison of rhyme, as in her attempt to tell of her reaction to interviewing a thief (1957):

Armand Perault, petty thief
what do I know of your belief?

This poem clunks along to the stunning insight of:

I haven't heard much that was new to me
or brought any word that was new to you;
it seems our separate selves must curve
wide from the central pulsing nerve
which ought to unite us, you and me . . .

Waddington's poems such as this one fail to let any particular emotion break out, to transcend the confines of rhyme in any way so that the poem is more than reporting in verse. Or maybe there *was* no further emotion? In "The women's jail" (1956), an unrhymed poem, Waddington tells of how she secretly admires the beautiful young girls in jail for cheque-forging.

Being especially human
I am no judge of evil
but hear how it has
a singing life in them
how it speaks out
with an endowed voice.

She ends this poem by comparing herself unfavourably to the women prisoners.

my blood is free from alcohol

I am law-abiding, I am completely
resistible — is there anything
praiseworthy in that?

It is the tag of "evil" applied to these girls or their crime, plus the self-doubt expressed as the easy comparison of the social worker to the inmates, that bother me. As someone raised with the left-wing background that Waddington mentions, plus having experienced her work among the poor, could she really believe that cheque-forging is "evil"? I can't help feeling that there is something awfully genteel about this poem and its neat final comparison — as though the poem is a careful, conventional mask for a more jagged and powerful response to this situation. And so with a number of her other social poems.

My lack of complete belief in what Waddington is saying appears even in the new poems of this collection. Something is missing, for me, in a poem like "Transformations" when she says she wants to spend her life in Gimli listening to the silence and that

. . . I will compose
my songs of gold-eye tunes
send them across the land
in smoke-spaces, ice-signals
and concentrate all winter
on Henry Hudson adrift
in a boat . . .

Granted, this poem is doubtless meant to be a bit of *joie de vivre*, but even so I'm not convinced there is much *joie* in concentrating all winter on Henry Hudson adrift in a boat. Henry Hudson strains the credibility even in the midst of a willing suspension of disbelief. Similarly, in "Dead lakes":

I look down
in the dead waters
of Sudbury and
I think of Flaubert . . .

I lose the poem entirely when leaps like this are too large for me. Something else must be going on in the poet's mind, I keep thinking, to make these images mean more to her than she has conveyed to me.

And I find this strain throughout the older poems. In "Summer letters" (1965) Waddington is attempting to compare a young Canadian postman at work to various academic and artistic problems, specifically those having to do with Old English scholarship. The leap between the two subjects loses me: that there is no connection seems pretty obvious. The postman is also unrelated to the price of eggs, although there is no poem pointing this out.

And disconnectedness appears in more of the early poems. In some sort of try to give Canada a veneer of European mythical and traditional history, Waddington has lines like (from "Lullaby" (1945)):

> and night's sweet gypsy now
> fiddles you to sleep
> far from snows of winnipeg
> and seven sisters lakes.

Images of gypsies, or Elizabethan rhetoric in poems like "Thou didst say me" (1945), "Sea bells" (1964) or "The mile runner" (1958), appear slightly incongruous in the Canadian reality, to say the least — like the pseudo-gothic Houses of Parliament rising over the sawmills of Hull.

Just how Waddington herself fits into the Canadian reality is the question dealt with in some of the better poems of this collection. In "Fortunes" (1960), Waddington considers how luck and chance finally don't alter her own specific historical being:

> I went out into the autumn night
> to cry my anger to the stone-blind fields
> just as I was, untraditional, North American
> Jewish, Russian, and rootless in all four,
> religious, unaffiliated, and held
> in a larger-than-life seize of hate.

In a poem about her travels (1966) she describes how around the world she finds both beautiful things and hatred of Jews. Her response here is to suddenly feel that there is nowhere she can be at home. But in "Driving Home" (1968) she seems to find home where she *is*, under the huge signs of the corporations:

> the traffic roars
> in the mirror
> tells me
> I am on my way home;
> home?
> Fool
> you *are* home
> you were home
> in the first place
> and
> if you don't look out
> it's going to be
> now this minute
> classic ESSO
> bloodlit SHELL
> forever

The finest of the older poems in *Driving Home* to me are the poems about love. In "Interval" (1943) Waddington shows a man who has idealized women being forced at last to recognize their humanity.

> Then he knew there is no golden key
> no one has hidden it, there is no joyous room
> where man completes his marriage in a
> moment,
> there are no easy signposts, only a lonely
> road
> that each one travels with his suffering.

In "In the sun" (1958), Waddington tells of an incident where her reason knew

> The world was not more or less
> because we looked at it . . .

But when she is with the man she chooses, then: "in me the world was more". There are also poems that speak of the men that fail her, however: the poignant "Remembering you" (1965):

When you kissed you
kissed like a young man
filled with greeting and gaiety;

when you loved you
loved like an old man
filled with slowness and ceremony;

when you left you
left like a man of no age
filled with fear that ceremony

had given me something
to keep more lasting than ritual
richer and brighter than darkness.

Despite such betrayals, Waddington can celebrate another relationship in "The lonely love of middle age" (1966). And in "Icons" (1969), she says she carries with her the idea and memory of love, to hold out against the darkness of her age and our age.

. . . there is
no such thing
as love left in
the world but
there is still
the image of it
which doesn't let
me wither into
blindness which
doesn't let me
bury myself
underground which
doesn't let me
say yes to the
black leather police . . .

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

Celebrations like this of the dilemmas of Waddington's recent existence seem to me the best and most interesting work she has ever done. These poems speak more directly and openly of her predicament than her earlier work does, and thus the recent poems give me the impression of greater accuracy. I like Waddington's work of the last seven years or so so much better than her previous poems that I find it difficult in my mind not to think of her as a new talent: emerging strong and mature in middle age with a lot to say about that time of life in her social position in modern Canada.

A DASH FOR THE BORDER

Stephen Scobie

GARY GEDDES, *Rivers Inlet.* Talonbooks, $3.00.
BP NICHOL, *Monotones.* Talonbooks, $2.00.
DWIGHT GARDINER, *A Book of Occasional.* Talonbooks, $2.50.
DAVID ROSENBERG, *Paris & London.* Talonbooks, $3.50.
BILL BISSETT, *Drifting Into War.* Talonbooks, $2.50.

B P NICHOL'S *Monotones* opens with a quotation from *The Writings of Saint And,* one of the saints on whom Nichol has built the personal mythic structure of *The Martyrology,* in which the saint dreams that he "foresaw the imminent end of all speech." This quotation reflects a kind of doubt or obsession

about the limits of language, which runs through much contemporary poetry. Consider also this short piece, from David Rosenberg's *Paris & London*:

> WHITE CURTAINS
> It's all a matter of getting past words to the language outside our head, either visually like art or orally like poetry. Because words are inadequate, in this programmed space, to get through the machines, you have to come out from behind them and make a dash for the border just as they stop at the first security check. This is what is commonly known as "Checkpoint Charlie".

This kind of doubt is one of several possible approaches to concrete poetry, and to the kind of annihilation of language which we find in much of the work of Bill Bissett, such as *Drifting Into War*. But the poet's feelings that "words are inadequate" do not always extend so far; often the doubt resolves itself into being, not so much about language itself, as about a particular kind of discursive language, a language which talks *about* experience rather than attempting to reproduce or reenact it directly. At another point in *Monotones*, Nichol rejects "all this cold fucking dispassionate 'discourse' " in favour of "just to be able to open the mouth and scream." This view, however, has its limitations. Rosenberg's statement is oddly reminiscent of Eliot's "words, after speech, reach / into the silence"; these words come from *Four Quartets*, which is a supremely logical and discursive poem, yielding as little as possible to any supposed "inadequacy" of words. Not only is "discourse" not necessarily "dispassionate"; it is also, as Eliot shows, a fully viable technique for making that "dash for the border" and across, into the silence.

Gary Geddes' book, *Rivers Inlet*, stands out from the other books under review, mainly because it uses a much more conventional, traditional mode of "discourse". In their varying degrees, Nichol, Rosenberg, Gardiner and Bissett are attempting a different kind of poetry, a poetry which presents the process of perception in a very direct and (apparently) undiluted manner. One reads them for the qualities of grace, precision, wit, and energy in the movements of their perception and its structuring, rather than for any great interest in the substantive experiences they are talking *about*. Geddes, on the other hand, is conventional enough to present us with a communicable subject-matter, and with thoughts, emotions, and perceptions which clearly relate to it. His is a much more public voice: he has things he wants to tell us, and writing the poems is as much a way of discovering what these things are as it is the way of telling.

Rivers Inlet concerns the poet's return to scenes of his childhood, and memories of his parents — a common enough theme, and one which holds our interest only in so far as its *particular* realisation, in terms of its images, rhythms, and perceptions, can come alive for the reader. Geddes succeeds admirably in giving his ideas a location, a place and a habitation in a real and convincing world; he is able to present Rivers Inlet both in its physical appearance and in its emotional ambience:

> No fooling around with beaches
> and pleasant meadows, the only
> way to go was up.

(As an east coast Scot myself, I also appreciate the exactitude of "a dozen / grey stone houses holding back / the North Sea.") Geddes is also able to extend this particular experience into more generalized statements, though some of his lines on such occasions come dangerously close to cliché:

> This birth is an end
> and a beginning, a place
> we all come back to,
> are never far from.

Particularly strong are the images of water, "an element / that, having none, distorts / the shape of things," an awareness which, together with the setting, reminded me at times of Margaret Atwood; I am sure that this book would find its place in her schema of Canadian literature. *Rivers Inlet* is modest in scope and intention, traditional in approach and form; not a book to praise extravagantly, but a book to enjoy quietly.

In contrast to the way in which the subject-matter of *Rivers Inlet* is fully realised and made available, the substantive experience of *Monotones, A Book of Occasion,* and *Paris & London* is always kept at a remove, distant and slightly elusive. The poets are writing of the movements of their own minds and the connections they make, without worrying too much if these connections remain absolutely private and inaccessible to the reader. Gardiner's self-deprecatory aside —

> God you guys talk abt weird
> boring things. Yourselves.
> And your friends.

— does not completely answer the objections which a frustrated reader may raise. There is always a potential emptiness, or sterility, in this type of writing, a point where the reader tires of even the most graceful movements of perception and demands to share something of the substance of what is being perceived.

Of the three books, by far the best is Nichol's *Monotones*; and this is due mainly to the poet's absolute command of sound and rhythm. Contrary to whatever Peter Stevens may think, bp has lost

nothing of his ear, and *Monotones*, like all his work, is a joy to read. At times the rhythm is indeed so authoritative that it creates in the reader a profoundly emotional response, even if we are not always absolutely clear just what it is we are feeling emotional about. For all that, *Monotones* still seems to me a minor work, and interesting chiefly as a prelude to the much more massive and satisfying achievement of *The Martyrology*.

Dwight Gardiner's *A Book of Occasional* has its moments too, though these are mostly moments of intellectual appreciation of the cleverness with which the poems are being turned, as line crates line and images from one poem link up with others. The poems are entertaining to read, but there is a certain tenuousness about them: the structure and the connections keep the emotion at bay. In the same way as Nichol needed the imagery and mythic structure of the saints to make his work cohere, so I suspect that Gardiner needs something more than just the idea of the serial poem form to focus his talents.

Rosenberg's *Paris & London* is the least satisfactory of these works. He sets up connections and references so allusive and personal that they continually exclude the reader from his poems, and Rosenberg's rhythms, the movements of his language, are simply not interesting enough, over a large body of poems, to compensate.

In Bill Bissett, we continue to find a tremendous energy of form, directed almost against itself. Bissett reaches to the edges of language and destroys it, yet keeps returning. The visual forms on the page (and how curious to see the determined untidiness of Bissett's gestetnered productions faithfully reproduced in the normally immaculate Talon format) always tend towards the destruction of any form they set up, while in sound Bissett returns to the strict and revivifying form of the chant. One tends to think of Bissett as a romantic artist, with a strong innate capacity for self-destruction, but he is also (at what I think is his best) capable of the strong control of his chants, or of the almost classical understatement of poems like "Killer Whale" and "Th Emergency Ward." Thus, for me the best things in *Drifting Into War* are the simple, controlled typestracts, produced by overtyping certain spaces within squares and rectangles of letters, which present clean, abstract visual designs. At other times, as in "A warm place to shit," Bissett proves that he is better than anybody else at parodying the worst of Bill Bissett.

Drifting Into War is not a book which will produce any converts to Bissett, nor is it really a good introduction to his work: both these functions are best served by Anansi's *Nobody Owns Th Earth*. It ranges widely in quality, some of it being rather awful, some of it splendid; as always, Bissett needs a good editor, though it has to be admitted that a good editor might take away from the total impact of his work, which perhaps depends as much on the bad as the good.

Whatever "inadequacies" language may have, it is still the material of poetry: there is no other. For a poet working clearly and gracefully in the centre of a tradition, like Geddes, the resources of the word are still amply sufficient; for those like Nichol and Bissett, working at the limits, there are always new discoveries, new routes leading simultaneously back into language and on into silence.

JOURNEY IN A MYTHIC LANDSCAPE

Douglas Barbour

bp NICHOL, *The Martyrology*. Coach House Press, 2 vols. $6.00.

bp NICHOL'S *The Martyrology* is a work of major dimensions. Nichol has found a way to make the many private and personal visions that go into his poetry available to his readers. He has, as a friend said, "created a personal mythology out of language itself"; a mythology that partakes of basic mythic geography yet remains singularly his own. Moreover, he has also clearly revealed the ways in which this mythology, the hagiography of saints about which the work turns, touches the various myths of our world, from the ancient myths of the heavens in almost every culture to the various popcult myths of our own time.

Before *The Martyrology* proper begins, there appears a short sequence titled "from: *The Chronicles of Knarn*," which has an intergalactic and futuristic setting. It is a kind of sf tale, setting up a specifically literary sf dimension for all that follows, effectively distancing the whole work by making all of it, including the facts of the author's life, fall within the 'fictional' parameters of *The Chronicles*. Although it is never referred to even indirectly throughout the rest of the two books it has done its job, and the whole poem continues to make effective use of the imagery, metaphors, and symbols of sf and fantasy, as well as many other kinds.

The work proper begins with a section titled "The Martyrology of Saint And" (I am going to assume that the basic etymology of the saints' names, as in St. And, is clear, and treat them with the same seriousness Nichol does throughout). Among other things, this is a straight story (further suggesting relations with sf: those books in which a series of stories are linked to form a 'future history') concerning Saint And's life in a circus. The lines "moving towards the hills/ the major notes are lost in minor movements" could serve as a warning of the difficulties to be faced in this long poem (unfinished as yet). "Scenes from the Lives of the Saints" follows. Here 'fiction' and 'fact' meet in a variety of ways, as the writer speaks of and to the saints, and begins to enter the poem himself. But all this is controlled by the original 'fiction' set up by *The Chronicles*: within its terms, everything is 'past history,' merely a writing out of some deep past, and thus it is all mere 'fiction,' something to be read and enjoyed on its own terms. Thus the 'writer' within the work, ('bp', for convenience's sake) says, "this is the real world you saints could never exist in" as he counterpoints scenes from his own life to scenes from their lives, yet later he will come to see them as very 'real' indeed, and, within the work as a whole, it all exists together, is

all of equal importance and value. In this section specific reference to such contemporary myth figures as Dick Tracy and Sam, and Emma Peel, is made, and again counterpointed to the saints' lives.

But bp Nichol is after more than a mere story in this huge poem, and thus further perspectives are opened up, within the total fiction but reaching out from it to engage our imaginations on other levels:

> suddenly it makes sense. is it the poem
> makes us dense?
> or simply writing, the act of ordering
> the *other* mind
> blinding us
> to the greater vision
> what's a
> poem like you doing in a
> poem like this? [my italics]

This excerpt, referring to Saint Reat's great love Saint Agness, provides one of the first insights into the Saints' functions in Nichol's vision: they are language itself, part of the grand poem, to be consulted, prayed to, learned from, loved. And to be written about. But at the same time they are the way of mythologizing his own total experience, giving narrative/fictional meaning to his sense of language and poetry. And they mean almost too much, such is his devotion to/ knowledge of/ them: "all these myths confuse me".

The next section of the poem, "The Sorrows of Saint Orm," brings in a new level of personal history on the poet's part, and yet clearly refers back to earlier sections through its imagery and narrative. Thus a context *within the poem* has been created for all the personal revelations to follow, and a counterpoint between 'bp's' personal life and the personal lives of the saints is inaugurated. Nichol's brilliant use of short prose excerpts from the various 'books' of the saints is very important structurally throughout. Within the fictional context of the counterpointed stories a number of other kinds of statement are possible as well, and Nichol fully exploits the freedom he has discovered in this form. Thus he warns us against too full an acceptance of the poem's "facts" as truth: "except we write in terms of passed moments/ instances of unperceived truth/ ruthless working in the mind's ignorance/ against us." But such warnings work within the whole to testify to the deeper truth of the myth, and the belief in language that the poem by its very existence celebrates. Every line of these two volumes complicates, makes more multiplex, the whole, thus enlarging the total experience of the poem. (Although one can point to some sections as obviously weaker poetically than others, the general level of craftsmanship is very high, and, on the whole, Nichol's control of rhythm and rime has never been better: these poems sing, almost continuously.)

"Saint Reat and the Four Winds of the World" follows, with a number of insights into love and sex, and their relation to creativity. This is mostly done through St. Reat, but information concerning all the saints follows. One aspect of the original 'fiction' that is very useful to the writer emerges in the numerous poems which are addressed *to* the saints. There are also poems in which various saints speak, and numerous 'songs' by both saints and 'bp'. The poem allows for so many possible voices, so many different kinds of 'documentation'. At the end of this section, for example, 'bp' tells of his first encounter with the saints as a child, indicating why he has become a poet.

The second volume opens with "The Book of Common Prayer" in which the possible disappearance of the saints is first suggested. Book II, as a whole, is a darker work than Book I; it is a test of the poet's faith (in the saints, in poetry), and parallels the dark night of the soul that is mandatory in so many mystic writings: "held in this room i'm sitting writing to you // prayers // as if you were there & heard me."

"Clouds," which follows, documents the ancient history of the saints, and their original migration from "cloud town" to earth: "surely when they fell/ it was into grace". The various glimpses of the saints' careers, the selections from different 'documents' are revelations of a large and complex "sub-creation" on Nichol's part. In some ways, the very fragmentedness of the documentation tends to create for it a powerful 'reality'. The migrations of all the saints are a first loss, despite the various gains going to earth represents. But 'bp' also expresses 'loss' here: "began this poem in sureness/ now the truth's obscure behind the body's veil// it is that sense impossible becomes the poetry/ shields me from the i within the lie."

"Augeries" represents a partial return to hope: "these are those other mysteries/ not the false veils i chose to hide behind". The sense of mystery attached to the numinous in these poems is of major importance: poetry (or its language) *is* the numinous to Nichol: thus the saints. In "Augeries" the counterpoint between 'bp's' life and the lives of the saints is greatly extended: statements to them that are also statements about them, questions, searches for meaning, and a theology of saints based partly on their disappearance, all appear; "there is a dream in which the quests intertwine": it is the poem in which both histories participate. If there is any flaccid verse in *The Martyrology* it is in "Augeries" and perhaps a few of the paragraphs of the next section, "Sons & Divinations," in both of which the need to explain, and the 'form' such 'explanations' must take, might have dictated deliberately 'unpoetic' lines.

In "Sons & Divinations" 'bp' speaks of art and artists, Blake's Canada, Joyce and Stein, the "magic" of their artistry, and then proceeds to proclaim the saints' ultimate reality in terms which fully participate in the poem's existence before us:

> back then perhaps yes that was the time
> i know the saints were real & lived on earth
> as i saw in a flash
> the entire work as i have written it
> illuminated
> given from the dream world half
> remembered

'bp' knows the saints are 'real,' yet sees them so within the poem; thus we can go as far with him as we wish, need to go no farther, yet still will be able to accept the 'truth' of "the poem become the life work/ a hymn". A hymn in the midst of despair, too, for we are all lost in the language lost in this time; which is why poets now (as always) fulfill such a profound function in our lives.

The next part of this section is a study of history: the fathers we fail, and destroy. In a beautiful "fasting sequence" a certain serenity is achieved beneath the stars whose patterns have remained the same throughout history even as they have shifted together across the skies. And a wider world takes over 'bp's' 'world', the saints enter the true heavens (not cloud town), the star systems, the

fabric of the universe itself, that great poem. "saint rand stranded in that strange place/ how would you call it/ 'a problem of resolution'?/ as tho the 'i' the writer of these poems/ controlled your destiny": but it isn't so, not within the larger fiction of the work as a whole: there the saints are as real as 'bp': "i know only your story comes to me in sections/ i have no control".

Finally this section moves to a confrontation with basic human fears, especially those of the other and of death, and then it moves beyond: "it is not the mystery that deepens/ it is the sense of awe". With the burial that begins "Friends as Footnotes," and the last fear, the fear of death, faced, all the "lies seem useless time-wasting". Yet the saints remain: "we meet death/ it is unexpected // you saints these poems are prayers/ i don't give a fuck for your history".

"always you are conscious the world is not encompassed / only the words you trust to take you thru to what place you don't know" can be turned to, and the saints, the words ("speech // eech to / each") are necessary, desperately needed, and yet not always there, though you love them, love them like you love your women/men:

> today the words flow
> links form no awareness of the letters
> move as blocks piling up
> the poem compared to everything it isn't
> being always what it is saint and
> a conversation
>
> is that love?

Finally 'bp' dreams they are dead and wakes up "not knowing what to do". Yet he moves, and the poem moves with him, to the recognition that "language 'is' now 'was' ": the poem must create the now in which it happens. And this recognition arrives even as the saints depart. So the final poems of the final section of Book II are passionate affirmations of speech in the face of the negation of language their deaths (disappearance) represent to 'bp' in "the fantasy that is north america", a place in the total fiction of *The Martyrology* as much as a place we live in. These final poems are exquisite expressions of suffering and loss, finishing with the powerful chant of "they are dead dead dead/ & i'm lonely father/ father i am lonely/ lonely father/ i am". And yet a short postscript suggests the poem will go on, thus holding out, within the work itself, the possibility of further poems.

Since I have heard parts of Book III, and know that bp is now at work on Book IV, I can say that the implications of that postscript are true, but they are important without this extra-literary knowledge. For *The Martyrology*, Books I and II, may appear to be a pathetic acknowledgement of the loss of poetic inspiration to a superficial reading only, for the very density of the poetry, the multiplexity of meaning emerging from it definitely render a celebration, even in the teeth of despair, of the ultimate power of poetry/ of language/ to sustain us humans in all ages. "To the poet," says David Aylward, "every word in the language is a saint who continually intervenes between him and the world of sense" and he must wrestle with them, track them down, and finally get them to enter the landscape of his poems, where a continual exploration is always occurring. bp Nichol has done this, creating an incredibly rich mythic landscape for his explorations of experience in which we can join him on a journey which just

might take us out of, and thus newly into, our selves.

I haven't even begun to do justice to the multiplex profundity of this poem, nor have I been able to do more than barely indicate its purely poetic depths. Nichol is already a master of poetic effect, and for the most part in *The Martyrology* he handles rhythm and rime with consummate craft. I have heard him read the whole work and it truly sings. That there is much more of it to come is one of the greatest gifts it contains. *The Martyrology* will, I am sure, take its place one day as a major work in our literature.

CYCLES OF CREATION

George Woodcock

GEORGE SWINTON, *Sculpture of the Eskimo*. McClelland & Stewart. $18.50.
R. H. HUBBARD, *Thomas Davies in Early Canada*. Oberon Press. $9.95.
EDWARD S. CURTIS, *In a Sacred Manner we Live*. Longman. $16.95.
EDWARD S. CURTIS, *Portraits from North American Life*. new press. $20.
ERIC ARTHUR and DUDLEY WITNEY. *The Barn: A Vanishing Landmark in North America*. McClelland and Stewart. $25.00.

I AM NOT SURE we can accept from cyclic historians like Spengler and Toynbee the idea that, given a minimal set of similar circumstances, cultures will follow similar courses. I only know that there is a remarkable parallel between the impetus given to the Indian cultures of the Pacific coast through the coming of the white man with new techniques in the later 19th century, and the similar impetus which has become evident in the Eskimo cultures in response to external stimuli almost a century later, in the mid-twentieth century; there are, however, equally remarkable differences.

In each case the development of the culture after the impact of external influences was assymetrical. Some ancestral techniques, like those connected with hunting and food gathering in general, became atrophied; others, and especially those related to the production of non-utilitarian artifacts, were extraordinarily stimulated by the introduction of more efficient techniques and by the emergence of a market outside the traditional magico-religious background. In the case of the Coast Indians, the sudden availability of metal tools, which made wood carving a simpler and more rapid process, led to an enormously increased production of artifacts varying from immense heraldic poles sixty feet high down to exquisitely carved face-sized masks and hand-held rattles, while the presence of a cash market for furs and fish enabled commoners to amass fortunes which they could dissipate in potlatch ceremonials and hence, in a changing culture, gain a prestige which further eroded the ancestral social pattern. In the case of the Coast Indians the stimulus provided by contact with the whites operated almost entirely within the culture, since it was not

until the artistic revival was over that non-Indian connoisseurs began to take a genuine interest in the magnificent products of this society in its dying phase.

In the case of the Eskimos the situation has been somewhat different. Artifacts that deserve the name of art were produced in the Arctic at least since the early days of the Dorset culture, long before the birth of Christ. But the circumstances of a nomadic hunting life precluded the possibility of evolving a monumental kind of art like that which the prosperous Coast Indian fishermen were able to develop in their winter villages. Artifacts had to be portable, and so they were, from the tiny ivory figurines of the Dorsets down to the little soapstone seals and walruses, just large enough to be held and caressed in the hand and to take on a patina of perspiration, which some of us still treasure from the very end of the forties when, thanks to James Houston, Eskimo art at last became a reality for those who had not been fortunate enough to travel in the Arctic.

The resurgence of Eskimo art, in response to modern techniques, has come — like that of the Coast Indians — at the dying end of a traditional society, but it has emerged not in response to a demand from within the Inuit culture, but to one from outside. Eskimo carvers, unlike the great carvers of the Haida and Kwakiutl Götterdämmerungen, have in recent years produced their artifacts for the ultimate satisfaction of the Kablunait, the heavy-browed people who are outside their traditions, even though they may have gained in the process the creative satisfaction that comes to every artist. Ironically, by liberating them from the bounds of a traditional iconography, this satisfaction seems to have created a new tradition that may endure in a dramatically changing world.

This is why any book on Coast Indians — or on any American Indian culture — is likely to have a melancholic tone, while any book on Eskimo art is equally likely to have a triumphant tone. For there is now no Indian tradition in the visual arts that goes beyond mere imitation of the past, while at present the Eskimos, at least in Canada, are still in a stage of constant origination.

Perhaps the greatest visual recorder of the Coast Indian culture at the point when it had just passed its zenith and was near final dissolution was the American photographer Edward S. Curtis. Curtis travelled for decades among the Indians of the North American West, as well as among the Eskimos of Alaska, and the twenty volumes of text accompanied by corresponding photographic albums which he published between 1907 and 1930 under the title of *North American Indians* form a splendid visual threnody on the traditional Indian world. Even the technique which his old-fashioned plate cameras forced upon him as he gathered his photographs contributed to the elegiac tone; the subjects are posed and static, waiting in an ominous stillness as if the first movement would break the spell and for ever destroy the vision.

Another particularly appealing feature of the Curtis photographs is the way in which the eye of focus brings the texture of old skin and the lines of character in faces into an extraordinary sharpness, while all else drifts into a strange mistiness, so that corporeality itself falls into doubt, and one realizes as deeply as words could tell the fragility of the culture Curtis portrays (though Curtis was too good an impresario to give one even a

hint that it was in fact so moribund that to gain many of his great photographs he had to deck his Indian subjects out in native dress he had brought from his personal museum and in wigs he had commissioned for the occasion).

Twenty years ago, when Curtis died, his name and work were known only to scholars. Now, in the seventies, his work is revived, and two rival collections of reproductions have just been published. Comparisons may indeed be odious, as Donne had it (or *odorous* as Shakespeare had it). But it is hard not sometimes to make them. The first selection is presented with a scanty commentary by Don D. Fowler under the curious title of *In a Sacred Manner We Live*. The second is published under the title of *Portraits from North American Indian Life*; it has introductions by A. D. Coleman and T. C. McLuhan, the latter of which is very informative on the details of Curtis's life and the reasons why he devoted so much of it to his vast documentary task; it also includes, for the 176 plates which it reproduces, Curtis's own original comments.

There are certain limitations which — being selections — these books share. Since each tries to give us a little from every one of the many regions where Curtis found his Indians, neither gives in depth a sense of the richness of his experiences and perceptions. Especially, in both cases, the few pages devoted to the Indian cultures of the British Columbian and Alaskan coasts are quite inadequate, for in this region Indian art in the sense of monumental sculpture and painting reached — among the Tlingit and the Tsimshian, the Haida and the Kwakiutl, whom Curtis especially studied — its apogee north of the stone culture of the Valley of Mexico. Many of Curtis's prints recorded Coast Indian artifacts of the highest quality that have since been destroyed or lost, and it is high time a Western Canadian publisher reprinted as a separate book, with an appropriate up-to-date introduction and apparatus of notes, all the photographs which were made in Curtis's seasons among the Kwakiutl.

Given that the two volumes under review are selections, ridden by the difficulties that face any editor confronted by the mass of Curtis's opus, the choice between them must rest on (a) general amplitude and (b) quality of reproduction.

In both cases *Portraits from North American Life* is the better book. There are more prints, and they are reproduced with care and fidelity. Looking through *In A Sacred Manner We Live*, one is constantly aware, because the printing is just a little too blurred and dingy, that neither the close-in focus details nor the nostalgic mistiness of the backgrounds to the photographs can be quite fully appreciated. In *Portraits from North American Life* the reproductions are clearer and also, because of their size, give a more faithful idea of Curtis's original portfolios. The result is a book which will fit into very few shelves, for it is 14½″ high and 18″ wide. But there is no reason of course why so splendid a volume should be kept on a shelf!

Sculpture of the Eskimo, by George Swinton, is also a fine piece of book production, with excellently clear plates — the kind of book that even ten years ago would have been printed in Holland or Britain in default of adequate Canadian facilities. Altogether, the book projects an extraordinary sense of vigour and triumphal process. George Swinton is

among the few knowledgeable experts on Eskimo art, and he is probably the most imaginative in his approach to it. He is himself a considerable painter, who has consistently avoided fashion in obeying his personal vision, and this gives him an intuitive sympathy with Eskimo artists closer than that of anyone else I have met, with the possible exception of the anthropologist Robert Williamson.

Wisely, unlike many art critics and aestheticians, Swinton has decided that if an artist or an artistic tradition is to be understood, the process of exposition must at some level be visual. If we cannot offer the works themselves to the reader, in all their visual-tactile complexity, at least we can offer him a good visual image and from that point proceed with our explanation. In *Sculpture of the Eskimo* the illustrations — in keeping with their primary importance — are shrewdly chosen and copious — more than eight hundred in all. They are used to make points about iconography and style, to support Swinton's persuasive historical conjectures and aesthetic judgments, to chart regional variations in mode and to illustrate the styles of individual artists, and most of all to suggest the subtle relationship between general culture and personal feelings of fulfilment among a people newly emerging to a sense of art as an occupation different from other processes of living and perhaps more satisfying. *Sculpture of the Eskimo* is not the kind of book to borrow from the library, at least if you have any feeling for living art. It is a book to possess and slowly absorb and to use as a guide in assessing the Eskimo work you happen to encounter.

Much less ambitious, because the field is far more minute, but just as satisfying in its special way is R. H. Hubbard's *Thomas Davies in Early Canada.* Davies was perhaps the first significant European artist to work in Canada; he was here in the 1750s and 1760s and again in the 1780s, while, between these visits and also after the 1780s he produced water colours based on his Canadian experience. He was an army officer trained in topographic drawing, but he had a talent that went beyond his training, and he became a painter whom we can describe as minor in the same complimentary way as we talk of Herrick as a minor poet, in the sense that his forms were fragile and his vision was intimate. But within these limitations Davies displays a high originality, as the excellent colour plates in Dr. Hubbard's volume show, and there is something quite unique in his statuesque and brilliant Canadian landscapes in which the flowing water is caught in a sudden solidity, like luxuriant flows of iridescent snow. The vibrant vision, the ecstatic sense of light trembling on the edge of eternity, which most of us enjoy only rarely after youth, Davies retained to the end, and no painter recorded more sensitively the feeling of a pristine land that the generations of war before the conquest of Quebec had not marred as the generations of peace have done since his day.

Davies rendered the land as an observer saw it. But there is another kind of art that comes in the process of actually transforming and humanizing the land itself, and this is exemplified admirably in a very fascinating book, *The Barn,* by Eric Arthur and Dudley Witney. Farming knows no nation; it is one of those basic functions in which techniques and the styles that derive from them move inexorably over frontiers, as

migrant animals do. And for this reason it is impossible to consider so anonymous and yet so intensely personal a domain of vernacular art as the barn, and the crafts that are attendant on its construction, in any purely local way. The Loyalists, and other Americans in their train, brought to Upper Canada the styles they had developed in Pennsylvania and New England, and which in turn were based on English and German models; the people of Quebec adapted the styles of Norman and Breton farm buildings. It was not so much the origins of the styles as their adaptations to local settings and to local materials that were important, and that produced the rich variety of genuinely popular art which the authors have recorded, and none too soon. Every year a few more fine old barns disappear, for local and national authorities are still little aware of the importance of these irreplaceable monuments, with their treasures of fine carpentry and folk sculpture and primitive painting, that decay in distant lanes or are endangered by the immoderate spread of cities. *The Barn* is at once a splendid visual record and a splendid narrational portrait of a rural Canada now past; the sadness is that much of what is recorded therein will not be preserved.

CULTURE UNDER PRESSURE

Fraser Sutherland

MALCOLM REID, *The Shouting Signpainters: A Literary and Political Account of Quebec Revolutionary Nationalism.* McClelland & Stewart, $8.95.

IN AN EXCITING account of Québec life, Malcolm Reid has portrayed a culture under pressure. The pressure comes from a number of sources: the Anglophonic sea of North America, which daily floods Québec with its language, money and technology; the decline of the Catholic Church, with the need for a compensating force in society; and the living political myths, notably that of the Conquest. As the barometer rises, the culture finds varied forms: the linguistic bastard known as *joual*, the *chansons* of Gilles Vigneault — and the activities of young men associated with *parti pris*, the magazine and the publishing house — of whom Reid most specifically writes.

Parti pris, as Reid says, implies a "cocky pride in one's basic prejudgments." The magazine, which appeared in October 1963 — was founded by cocky young men determined to forge a movement out of Sartrean vocabulary, Marxist history, and the revolutionary politics of Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre*. The *partipristes* were soon engaged in a sort of intellectual guerilla warfare with the *citélibristes*, that circle around the journal *Cité libre*, founded earlier by Pierre Trudeau and his friends. They were contemptuous of liberal half-measures, and *Cité libre*'s links with *humanisme*, which Fanon defined as, "This Europe which never stops talking about Man and shoots him down on every street corner where it meets him."

Among the steps *parti pris* took was to publish the novel that Reid credits as the

first written in the language of the Québecois themselves: Jacques Renaud's *Le Cassé*. The title means both "broke", in the sense of penniless, and "broken." It is thus both an economic and cultural comment. The language, too, is broken. The novel's anti-hero Ti-Jean takes possession of the girl Philomène by chasing a rival from her bed, shouting, "*Ma plote pour tout l'temps astheure!*" This translates, more or less, as, "She's my piece all the time now!" The novel ends with Ti-Jean stabbing another rival and then, in a tavern, finding himself flat broke. Like Orwell, Reid finds in language symptoms of oppression, and this is why he lays such stress on *parti pris*' "*défence et illustration de la langue joual*". He regards it both as a symptom — "the English words and forms that enter their language are no graceful cultural borrowings, but the imprints of an English-language-using industrial system" — and as "the authentic way out of the rupture with the motherland."

Besides its explication of *joual*, the book's most interesting passages develop the contexts and characters of the *partipristes*: Gerald Godin, Laurent Girouard, Renaud, Paul Chamberland, Pierre Maheu, André Garand, André Major. Each reacted to pressure in a different way. Some, like Chamberland and Garand, chose exile in Paris — modern *canadiens errants* indeed. Others, like Major, seemed to have, in their own lives, opted for art over ideology. And some, notably Pierre Maheu, accommodated themselves with society; "played by other people's rules." One of the funniest things in the book is to hear Maheu frantically rationalize why he works for an English

ad agency. He is learning techniques to aid the revolution, it seems. . . .

Reid's book, with its density of detail and energy of prose, makes most other journalistic commentaries on Québec seem shallow and shoddy. Reid is a man, to use a perhaps-dated word, *engagé*. He has lived cheek by *joual* with the people he writes about, and like them he straddles two camps. In his case, the ambivalence lies between his socialist bias (his book was published in Britain and the United States by the leftist Monthly Review Press) and the wire service ethic — to report facts unadorned. That does not topple accounts for the book's success. Not that the work is without flaws. The prose is sometimes cluttered; there are barbarisms ("literarization"); and, more rarely, chronological confusion. The *parti pris* period Reid writes about, for instance, is 1963-68, but the lines are a little blurred, especially when he discusses men like Pierre Vallières. As a result, the reader is disappointed that the events of October 1970, and their effect on *parti pris*, are not related. Yet over all, the important thing is that Reid is no poseur: his convictions ring in the words with which he closes the book, "The young men I am speaking of will not stop shouting until the walls come down."

All the same, *parti pris*' direct political action — supporting strikes, etc. — seems to have been ineffectual. But the political fuel fed the cultural flame and as a courageous and fruitful cultural force *parti pris* was, and is, of the first importance to Québec. It produced one great long poem, Chamberland's *l'afficheur hurle* (the signpainter screams) which makes Ginsberg's *Howl* seem like adolescent ranting. But my impression — whether or not Reid meant to give me it — is that if there is a revolution it will be made not by Mayakovskys and Yesenins, but by sooty little mechanics, the Lenins of our generation.

FOUR CRITICAL PROBLEMS

Clara Thomas

RONALD BATES, *Northrop Frye*. WILLIAM H. NEW, *Malcolm Lowry*. RICHARD ROBILLARD, *Earle Birney*. ROSS G. WOODMAN, *James Reaney*. Canadian Writers' Series, McClelland and Stewart. 95¢ ea.

WHEN, IN THE FALL of 1967, Dave Godfrey asked me to write a book on Margaret Laurence, he hoped that the future Canadian Writers' Series would be similar in format to *Ecrivains de Toujours* (Editions du Seuil). All of the volumes in that series are well-printed, on fine paper, with superb illustrations and photographs; the volumes on Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner, for instance, are little classics of elegance. The exigencies of English Canadian publishing speedily eroded Dave Godfrey's dream. Five years later we have twelve titles in the Canadian Writers' rigidly-limited sixty-four pages, one of the most useful critical projects in the history of Canadian publishing and at the same time one of the least attractive. (I hasten to add that the present cover-

design is a marked improvement over the first one.) Over the years I have mourned the dwindling of the early dream, while at the same time comprehending to some degree the pressures of printing costs and certainly, at all times, applauding the determination of McClelland and Stewart to sell these books for ninety-five cents.

Faced with the present four, all of them excellent, I regret all over again the meagreness of their setting, the poor quality of their paper, the narrowness of their margins — and above all the total inelasticity of their paging and word allowance. In 1967 when I wrote, to the requirements of the contract, 20,000 words and not one jot or tittle more on the works of Margaret Laurence, I felt that I could just give an adequate commentary on her work up to that time. Since then she has published four books; I would not like to try the assignment now. How then did any one of the authors under review feel about the responsibility of "covering" in any satisfactory way Northrop Frye, Earle Birney, Malcolm Lowry, or James Reaney? The discipline of writing to a rigid word-limit is a useful one, as we are constantly telling our students, but surely any series which has done well enough to be continued to its twelfth volume (the *Margaret Laurence* has sold over 5,000 copies, for instance), might have added an optional five to ten thousand words for the satisfaction of its authors and in justice to their subject.

Mr. Robillard has come to terms with the problem by selection. His volume on Earle Birney is prefaced by a note from the General Editor of the series:

> This series was not designed to be definitive; what is eventually needed is at least 30 full-length studies of major Canadian writers in English, but the task of even a preliminary survey is especially difficult with writers as prolific and complex as Earle Birney, working in different forms and constantly moving onward, before the critics have had time to properly analyze and assess the previous work. In his case, then, it was decided to concentrate upon the earlier, more traditional poems, subjecting them to that meticulous *explication de texte* which they have long deserved.

The book proceeds chronologically through Earle Birney's career, from an explication of "David" in its first section to its final "World Travels", commentaries on some poems which appeared in *Ice Cod Bell or Stone* (1962) and others which have been written in the last ten years. Superficial reading and teaching can easily obscure the complexities of "David". In a fine and measured explication, Mr. Robillard demonstrates its progression, "an initiation to the ironies of reality". In a very real sense this is a creative piece of criticism for it refreshes and re-establishes one's approach to a poem which is certainly widely read but is seldom, perhaps, well read.

Mr. Robillard's book avoids the static, patchy quality of many explicatory works because its author is convinced of Birney's continuing growth, both in techniques and in perceptions. The image of the seeker is central, he finds, to the very latest poems:

> For all their flexibilities, many of the earlier poems suggested fixed perspectives; . . . this kind of poetry still persists, but rather than move within the frames of metaphor, many of the travel-poems lead outward; in them, 'nature' (with the rather fixed attributes earlier implied in that term) becomes 'experience.' The speakers in the travel-poems come to accept their personalities; and yet they seek myth in their present circumstances. They are content to be human.

Mr. Robillard has achieved what he and every author in the series contracted

to do: to write for the information of "the student and general reader". By beginning with "David", where most students' knowledge of Birney begins, he has guided and explicated our way through a variety of poems and finally he has given his readers both a feeling of progress and a feeling for the whole. His book is both refreshment and instruction, a valuable addition to Canadian critical literature.

The design of Mr. New's work on Malcolm Lowry is, likewise, well-chosen to offer the greatest possible illumination to his readers in the space at his disposal. His comprehension of the intricate involvements of Lowry, the man and his writings, is the starting-point for his study:

> His omnivorous mind rendered his life vigorously into books, and then a turnabout made his books into life. From Aiken and Ortega comes the idea of the writer being written by his work, and the complex of relationships makes it difficult for us now to separate fact from fiction with absolute confidence. But one thing is clear: even when his own memory distorted events, he believed what he wrote, and his fiction came to represent the truth of his experience as well as distill his artistic experience of truth.

It is particularly enlightening for the student-reader of Lowry to begin where Mr. New begins, with a consideration of *Hear Us O Lord From Heaven Thy Dwelling Place*. The movement of its sections towards wholeness and a cyclic completion climaxes in "A Forest Path To The Spring", in Mr. New's words "a kind of glorious coda, recapitulating many of the themes and elevating them into a moving structure of personal faith." In this work, Lowry's central vision of man as creator and destroyer, God and devil, Tragic Hero and Comic Buffoon, is presented and finally resolved with optimistic grace: "Laughing we stooped down to the stream and drank." From this vantage ground, the whole body of work, and particularly *Under the Volcano*, the "Master Work" and the central portion of Mr. New's study, can best be approached and comprehended as the achievement of Lowry, the artist-pilgrim of the world:

> Every man is also the Fool, constantly on the brink of a precipice, yet also (in order to effect his translation) the Magician, with all the symbols of the Tarot within his power. He is creator, God and Man together, with the happiness and the danger of *Hubris* this implies. He is comic, but also potentially tragic. All Malcolm Lowry's works explore this proposition; like the stories within *Hear Us O Lord*, all fit together like interlocking circles in a still larger design. But where *Hear Us O Lord* resolves the problem in an optimistic way, the earlier works show a much darker vision, and the characters in them encounter substantially more difficulty being rescued from their personal hells.

Neither Ron Bates nor Ross Woodman has, I think, taken the road of easiest access for the "student and general reader". They have written excellent studies for academic readers—in fact for their peers and the best of their students. The person who, for instance, listened to Professor Frye deliver "The Educated Imagination" lectures on the CBC, the person who sat in the Stratford audience watching *Colours in the Dark* and now wishes to know more about our greatest scholar-critic or our most original and many-faceted poet, playwright and teacher, has still to wait for other volumes. For such readers, and I think there would be many of them, reprints of *The Educated Imagination* and *Twelve Letters to a Small Town*, each with expository and explanatory introductions in a "plain style" would be of the greatest service.

That caveat aside, however, university students and teachers have needed just such a book as Bates on Frye for a long time. His analysis of *Fearful Symmetry* is both comprehensive and lucid; it leads into a description and discussion of the *Anatomy of Criticism* to which Mr. Bates' initial differentiation between the centripetal thinker (Frye) and the centrifugal one (McLuhan) is an illuminating beginning. He moves on to the other criticism, stressing *The Well-Tempered Critic* and finishing with a brief consideration of Professor Frye's Canadian criticism, in particular his very important "Conclusion" to the *Literary History of Canada*. Obviously Ron Bates knows, understands and values the works of Northrop Frye from multiple viewpoints: he was a former student; he is a poet himself and, like many Canadian poets he has found a releasing dynamic for his own work in the creative-critical works of Northrop Frye. Refreshingly, however, Mr. Bates maintains a valuable detachment: he is expositor rather than disciple and his greatest service to his subject is to provide an intelligent and respectful clarification of the works while, at the same time, insisting on his readers' awareness of Professor Frye's own cautionary statement at the beginning of *The Anatomy*:

> This book consists of 'essays,' in the word's original sense of a trial or incomplete attempt, on the possibility of a synoptic view of the scope, theory, principles, and techniques of literary criticism. The primary aim of the book is to give my reasons for believing in such a synoptic view; its secondary aim is to provide a tentative version of it which will make enough sense to convince my readers that a view, of the kind that I outlined, is attainable. The gaps in the subject as treated here are too enormous for the book ever to be regarded as presenting my system or even my theory. It is to be regarded rather as an interconnected group of suggestions which it is hoped will be of some practical use to critics and students of literature.

Ross Woodman on James Reaney is a felicitous pairing of minds and imaginations. There is no other writer in Canada who has cast his net so widely to find forms of containment for his creative energies as James Reaney has done in the past twenty years. Poetry, plays, masques, the journal *Alphabet*, his work with children at the Alpha Centre in London, Ontario, his uniquely original planning and success in a "Canadian Culture" course at the University of Western Ontario; all these areas have been exploratory paths for the function and the progress of Reaney's synthesizing imaginative vision of an Everyman whose roots are in rural Ontario but whose ultimate address, like Joyce's Stephen's, is "The World; The Universe". Ross Woodman is a spell-binding lecturer, a colleague of Reaney's at the University of Western Ontario and like Reaney. a man of constant, restless, imaginative reach. To read Woodman on Reaney is to catch a fine flavour of both these minds and imaginations. Ross Woodman is not detached from his subject-matter; he is not, I think, detached from any subject which engages him; but his very involvement communicates his enthusiasm for James Reaney's work and so enhances for us his very evident understanding of that work.

Alvin Lee's *James Reaney* in *Twayne's World Authors' Series* gave its central place of detailed interpretation to Reaney's poetry; Woodman's volume balance's somewhat towards the plays and masques (I consider *Colours in the Dark* a masque in its essential form). Germaine Warkentin has edited and introduced

a complete edition of James Reaney's poems, now published by New Press; earlier last year a long-needed, paperback edition of several of the plays was published, also by New Press. All of these works and commentaries are necessary to our teaching, our understanding and, finally, our appreciation of the quality of this constantly seeking and affirming writer / poet / playwright / teacher / editor. The energy of enthusiasm in "Woodman on Reaney" and the very personalizing of its viewpoint combine to make this book a valuable addition to the literature.

books in review

HOPEFULNESS ABOUNDING

Nineteenth Century Narrative Poems. Edited by David Sinclair. McClelland & Stewart. $2.95.

FOR THE CANADIAN who thinks he has some acquaintance with the literature of his country and who expects surprises from a volume of reprints, this collection of nineteenth-century narrative poems is a quite startling and revivifying experience. When he has recovered from the shock of non-recognition, he asks what has happened. Why the unexpectedness of the impact? What brought about an outpouring of long descriptive and narrative pieces at this moment in history? Why do they now receive so little critical recognition?

The six pieces chosen by Mr. Sinclair range over the half-century between 1834 and 1884, a period when exploration was still a vivid memory, the Indian a presence not to be ignored, the landscape an overwhelming challenge and the settlement of land an ever present preoccupation. With the exception of Goldsmith, born in 1794, the lives of the six authors fall wholly within the last century. Their birthplaces seem the result of prestidigitation, for Goldsmith, Howe, Sangster, Kirby, McLachlan and Isabella Crawford were born, respectively, in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, England, Scotland and Ireland. All is as one would wish it, in this marshalling of varying sensibilities within a common culture and a common experience of Canada as a new country.

Editors in this series of New Canadian Library Originals do not have much space to deploy their critical theories but in his very compact introduction Mr. Sinclair has provided a number of starting points from which any reader may explore the extensive texts that follow. Most of them are reached quite naturally from the inevitable first question, What prompted this abundance of versification? It becomes easier to answer when we recall that, in this same fifty years, Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum*, Tennyson's *Idylls*, Clough's *Bothie* and Browning's *The Ring and the Book* also saw the light.

The impulse of the Romantics persisted into Victorian sensibility and the conventions of the long, discursive poem composed of narrative, description and reflection admirably suited the needs of mid-century writers. A standard poetic vocabulary, simplified and enlivened by Scott and Wordsworth, provided the right phrase for every occasion. The inevitable subjects of nineteenth-century Canadian poets were themselves eminently suitable for Romantic treatment. Nature displayed her accustomed wealth and variety in new forms in the new land. The traditional noble savage entered, his savagery in the ascendant, but his pictorial and dramatic quality unimpaired. The past, though in Canada necessarily very recent, cast its spell over memory and sentiment.

Above all, the long discursive poem allowed a full expression of personal experience and of the history of communities, of hope and fear and fervent aspiration, of patriotic pride and loyalty mixed with sentiments of independence and incipient new nationhood. All this without straining the rather limited talent possessed by most of the writers repre-

sented: the available conventions of metre, of diction and of imagery were nicely suited to their needs. They did not have to strive, like Clough, to take one example, to perfect a highly personal metric and display a delicately calibrated personal sensibility.

The immigrant from Britain or the Loyalist refugee from New England moved, when he came to Canada, among landscapes and seascapes with which he was well equipped, both physically and mentally, to cope. Fredericton, New Brunswick, and London, England, are separated by some five degrees of latitude, for which potential difference of climate the Gulf Stream more than compensates. The Irish fisherman or Scottish crofter would not find a move across the Atlantic in any sense a shock to his conception of nature or to his daily round and common task. It follows that the poets were able to make use of that most fertile resource of the literary imagination — comparison and contrast in close association. They were also able to dream of creating anew what they had known at home in a form closer to their ideal, as *The Rising Village* of Goldsmith tells us in its title. And they saw this dream, at least in part, realized.

> Here England's sons, by fortune led to roam,
> Now find a peaceful and a happy home:
> The Scotchman rears his dwelling by some stream,
> So like to that which blends with boyhood's dream,
> That present joys with old world thoughts combined
> Repress the sigh for those he left behind:
> And here the wanderer from green Erin's shore
> Tastes of delights he seldom knew before.

More clearly than any other component of these poems, the impact of the Canadian landscape determines the nature of the total experience of the settler. At times it is reminiscent of his homeland; its challenge, nevertheless, can only be met by devising a new and more rigorous way of life; the intensity of its seasonal changes is a constant stimulus to action and to observation; the Indian, whether picturesque and immemorial or savage and barbarous, rises out of the landscape and retreats into it. The land provides a livelihood and hope of progress; its possession and retention have been a matter of collective and individual combat with enemies; no concept of court, or urban life, or church or academy have as yet taken a shape that will distract the mind from Nature, the ever present stern mistress and bountiful mother.

The charm of the antiquated verse styles resides not merely in the understanding we get of a colonial culture. There is also, in the stylized vocabulary and phrasing, an insistent reminder that the preoccupations of the settlers remain substantially our own problems, though altered in their emphasis. Wresting a livelihood from the earth; maintaining independence from the United States; achieving a comprehension of the native Indians (seen then as aggressors, now as sadly dispossessed); pondering the nature of the European connection and heritage: these, in forms however altered, remain still our preoccupations.

We sense, however, one profound change of sensibility, now that pioneer days are past and gone. It is the loss of confidence, of cheerfulness, of joy, of eagerness. Goldsmith's "Rising Village" ends with an invocation of hope and promise for "blest Acadia". Howe concludes that, though the native of Acadia may move to another clime, yet the memory of his homeland will "Crowd on

the mind with dreams of mighty power,
And cheer his heart in many a lonely hour." Sangster expands the theme of joy to universal relevance: "How utterably deep and strong is Human Love." Kirby concludes his poem with a charming picture of practical fellowship among the pioneers:

> A worthy stranger in our woodlands come
> To live among us and erect his home. . . .
> Today we come to take you by the hand,
> And make an opening on your timbered land:
> And raise a house wherein by fall of night,
> Your own free hearth may welcome you aright. . . .
> Some hewed the logs; some shaped with nicer eye;
> While some strong-handed raised them up on high,
> Notch fitting notch, till pleasant in the wood,
> An ample cabin in the clearing stood.

Isabella Crawford is in a somewhat different class, both in sensibility and in craftsmanship, from the others. Her evocations of the seasons have a mythic quality, clothed in images of Indian life. Her melodramatic plot is made to involve wrong, repentance and forgiveness. Yet her conclusion is on a par with the others: a resolution of doubts, an escape from dangers, a realization of deep happiness:

> I would not change these wild and rocking woods,
> Dotted by little homes of unbark'd trees,
> Where dwell the fleers from the waves of want,
> For the smooth sward of selfish Eden bowers.

As the editor claims, in his summary last sentence, "The refrains raised in lone Canadian woods, once the wilds are conquered and traditions rescued from the flow of events, are songs of joy."

It is this élan, this ineradicable optimism and abounding hopefulness, this chorus of testimony to the ultimate goodness of life, that after repeated readings most endear the whole group of writers to us. Their virtues are not to be lightly regarded. When we have recognized their cheerfulness and their capacity to impart cheer, when we have seen them not merely as inheritors but also as perpetuators of a high romantic tradition, when, comparing them with ourselves, we are driven to confess "It's a poor heart that never rejoices", we can read once more their often simple and sometimes awkward lines and see shining from between them a practicable way of life, a variant of those immemorial gifts "the means of grace and the hope of glory".

ROY DANIELLS

ST. FRANCIS AND THE BEAVERS

ANAHAREO, *Devil in Deerskins.* new press, $7.50.

IT HAS BEEN ALMOST thirty-five years since Grey Owl's death and the scandal which followed close upon it, when the press revealed that Canada's famous Indian writer, conservationist and lecturer was really a white Englishman named Archie Belaney. In a sense, journalism was only tearing asunder what it had joined together in the first place: Anahareo's new book makes it clear that Belaney himself was disturbed by publicity that had him a full-blooded red man, a "St. Francis of the Indians". Even so, he passed among his intimates as a half-breed, and to publicize his efforts for wildlife conservation appeared before audiences everywhere — including a royal

one at Buckingham Palace — done up in feathers and beaded buckskin, knocking them dead with Romantic oratory about the Canadian North. It was harmless enough, but finding that their St. Francis started life as a middle-class Briton left a bad taste in the public's mouth, already like the bottom of a birdcage from the Depression and the advent of Hitler. The controversy blew over, but sales of Grey Owl's works plummeted and he seemed well on the way to demi-obscurity as a minor national embarrassment.

Recently there have been signs of a renaissance. Macmillan have reissued five of the wilderness books in paperback; the CBC is planning a radio documentary; and articles have been cropping up in journals, from a severe re-examination of the life in *Ontario History* to a generous appraisal of the literary style in *The English Quarterly.* I have met several Grey Owl buffs in Toronto, including a teenage French student from Paris come to live among the Indians, and a history scholar with a roomful of precisely labelled photos, clippings and memorabilia. Of course, in a boom year for Canadian Studies, there's "renewed interest" in everybody, but perhaps the success of *Devil in Deerskins* may also be seen as evidence that the white man who became an Indian and saved the beaver is once again coming into his own.

When Anahareo met him, Belaney was in his late thirties, a tall, striking figure with a braid and a hawknosed profile. Wounded physically and spiritually in World War I, he was at that time earning a reputation as a guide, drunk and general hell-raiser in the Biscotasing area of northern Ontario. After a spot of trouble there, he fled to Quebec, building a trapper's cabin and inviting Anahareo, a pretty nineteen-year-old Indian girl, to join him. Eventually they were married in a native ceremony which Anahareo describes in detail — perhaps because so much fuss was made in 1938 about the four or five consecutive "wives" of the immoral "Bluebeard."

Anahareo thrived in the wilderness, but hated the brutality of fur-trapping, and influenced Archie to abandon it for good. Starting with two orphaned kits, the young couple tried to set up a beaver colony for conservation purposes, and, after poverty, doubt and every sort of setback, they succeeded in establishing a beaver sanctuary in Prince Albert National Park, Saskatchewan. By this time Grey Owl was a famous man, having publicized his "little people" through movies, recitations and writing; nevertheless, fame made him miserable: he separated from Anahareo and died an unhappy man. Who could resist this story? It has virtue rewarded, with success exposed as a hollow mockery; it has appealing animals, romance, northern adventure, show biz, and over 60% national content.

It has also been told before, by Grey Owl in *Pilgrims of the Wild,* by Lovat Dickson in his dated but still readable *Half-breed* (1939), and by Anahareo herself in *My Years with Grey Owl* (1940). The Grey Owl buff will want to read *Devil in Deerskins,* but there is nothing radically startling in its biographical information, and although we are given more than we knew before about Belaney's tastes and opinions, he remains a rather shadowy presence in the book. Anahareo is discreet about his reputed drinking and bad temper; she gives scant commentary on the breakdown of their relationship and offers no insight

into the despair which apparently destroyed Belaney after he became public property. A description of whatever made him tick is not attempted; but then, he was a close-mouthed man and Anahareo was as surprised as anybody to read that he had no Indian blood.

Definitive biography is not the aim of the book, and it is clear that the "devil" of the title is meant to be the author. By her account, she was restless and headstrong, continually tearing off on her own to prospect for gold, getting stranded in mining camps, paddling away on canoe trips, drinking herself into belligerence and repenting the next day. She tells it well and her adventures are perfect escapist reading: it must have been great fun being Anahareo, wheeling around a true North which was more strong and free than it looks to be today as we drive past the deserted shacks and those mournful "Gateways to the North" on our way to the cottage.

The genre is autobiography, and yet Anahareo is no more analytical about herself than she is about Belaney. She skates along agreeably on the surface of things past with a style that is sassy and pleasingly archaic: people tease each other as a "kid", "dope" or "greenhorn"; it is like tuning in Astaire and Rogers on the Late Show. *Devil in Deerskins* evokes the period and is well-made entertainment, but it also points the need for a larger, stronger book on Archie Belaney, one which would incorporate all the biographical data, cast some light on Belaney's psychology and interpret him against his cultural background. For he was a very curious phenomenon indeed.

Dickson long ago mentioned Belaney's resemblance to his near-contemporary, Lawrence of Arabia. Both were white men who hated WASP Britain and who fled into a primitive world they admired more. It seems to be that both remained boys in many respects, capable of unthinking cruelty and enjoying dress-up and games. They were also serious men who spoke for the rights of the people and the land they had adopted, and they wrote responsible prose. They seemed to wither upon exposure to the society they had rejected, and Grey Owl in particular got trapped by the image he created for himself. Both represent the sunset of Romanticism as failed make-believe noble savages gone astray in the trivial Twenties and drear Thirties. Why then is Lawrence a cult-hero and Belaney comparatively obscure?

It seems that Grey Owl is still an undiscovered treasure, a national legend *manqué* who should be, and perhaps will be, a Canadian byword. Why has there been no comic book, no television series? (Surely the material packs more clout than Radisson and Groseilliers, or the white folks of Jalna.) Belaney was originally rejected because he was not a sinless Ideal, but now we are not so finicky and his credentials seem impeccable: an immigrant who becomes a professional Canadian promoting the myth of the sacred North, the inventor of his own past (see Frederick Phillip Grove), a talent subject to the mercy of his public's expectations (see Leonard Cohen or Team Canada). *Devil in Deerskins* is all very well, but something more should be done with the property. A nation usually gets the St. Francis it deserves, and when the real thing comes along, he should be paid respectful attention.

JAMES POLK

NOBLE AND CONFUSED

ROBERTSON DAVIES, *The Manticore.* MacMillan, $7.95.

A MANTICORE is a strange and fabulous creature with the body of a lion, the face of a man, and a sting in its tail. It is therefore a noble, if somewhat confused and dangerous, creature. This is the symbol Robertson Davies employs in his latest novel to convey his considered opinions about the condition of man.

Readers of *Fifth Business*, Davies' fourth and highly successful novel which appeared in 1970, will find that, in his latest book, he sheds new light on the drama surrounding Boy Staunton, the romantic playboy-millionaire (to some; others saw him as an egotistical bully) who met his death under remarkable and peculiar circumstances. The narrator of *Fifth Business*, hagiographer and bachelor eccentric Dunstan Ramsay, makes a brief and climactic appearance in *The Manticore*, but this time the story is continued by David Staunton, Boy's brilliant, unhappy son.

Davies' singular talents as a writer make reading these two novels (and one must read them both, to appreciate them properly) an experience which I can only describe as like reading an Alexandria Quartet (Duet, in this case) as conceived by T. E. White, the scholarly humorist-historian author of *The Once And Future King*. The blend of masterly characterization, cunning plot, shifting point of view, and uncommon detail, all fixed in the clearest, most literate prose, is superbly achieved.

But back to the manticore. Although for obvious reasons it is impossible here to summarize the plot of Davies' new novel, it should be said that much of its length deals with David's discoveries about himself under Jungian psychoanalysis. The techniques and aims of this branch of psychiatry are illuminated for us during this process, and David is led, by degrees, to the realization that the disease of which his alcoholism is only the symptom is his inability to feel. His mind has been well nurtured — he is a successful criminal lawyer — but he is a failure as a man because his emotions have been stunted beginning in childhood, when his father once smashed a doll he had had the bad judgement to love.

David, like most human beings, says Davies, still has to learn to understand his own humanity; an underdeveloped ability to feel is like a manticore, and it is no accident that mythology has anticipated our modern condition.

According to this way of thinking, patterns of human behaviour "repeat themselves endlessly, but never in precisely the same way." And only a man who understands the importance of psychological truth can expect to know himself fully.

As a kind of parting shot, Davies insists that "Man is a noble animal." ("Not a good animal; a noble animal.") "... You needn't fall for the fashionable modern twaddle of the anti-hero and the mini-soul... [it is so] easy to be a spiritual runt and lean on all the other runts for support and applause in a splendid apotheosis of runtdom. Thinking runts, of course — oh yes, thinking away as hard as a runt can without getting into danger. But there are heroes, still. The modern hero is the man who conquers in the inner struggle."

David's "inner struggle" culminates in a strange kind of rebirth in an underground cave, where 75,000 years ago our ancestors worshipped the bear. He is heartened by his understanding, in that cave, of the "greatness and indomitability and spiritual splendour of man." The link with the ancestors helps give him the psychological strength he has lacked.

This brief description of what Davies has attempted in *The Manticore* is necessarily narrow and incomplete. Yet perhaps it should be added that this is the novel of a journalist-philosopher-scholar-professor who was once an actor with the Old Vic. If ever a man were qualified to entertain and enlighten his readers with a study of what "maketh the whole man", it is Robertson Davies.

PAT BARCLAY

ALMOST...

ROBERT HARLOW, *Scann*. Sono Nis Press, $9.95.

THE PUBLISHERS' BLURB proclaims this new work by Robert Harlow to be a "major work by a major novelist". Publishers have to say such things, of course, even if they are usually a little more subtle about it than J. Michael Yates. Yates does not explain what he means by either major novel or major novelist, but let us assume that this can be translated as follows: "Scann is a book of universal significance, an important book, touching upon a universally significant theme or themes and written by a man who has awesome command of both his material and the way the material is presented."

The themes are there: Birth, Death, Man, Woman, Eternity. And there is no reason why these themes should not remain major while given an exclusively Canadian setting (Canada as the north, that is, not Canada as Montreal or the Prairies or even the Pacific rim, not that anybody has done very much with the last) — Canada, maybe, as the Romancers think of it. I say "exclusively Canadian" because the wartime section, while it does take place in England, is chiefly limited to a Canadian air base — about as English as a "Senior Staff Club" in Africa is African. Against the modern-day backdrop of a small northern town to which "civilization" has come in the form of Chargex cards and Hare Krishna monks (have they really got that far?), junkie Indian girls, hippy daughters and runaway runaway sons, chambermaids who go to lectures on Women's Lib (and become converted to bralessness and selfhood, *bien entendu*), room service and modern dental techniques, Harlow creates a kind of fictional Notes of a Century Before. Trappers' berths on paddle boats, halfbreed sons, cougars, wolverines, influenza epidemics, violence, hatred, passion, porcupines and pack-ice. The go-between in this case is Amory Scann (a terrible name), editor of the local newspaper and wouldbe *serious* writer whose three-day pilgrimage into the past takes him to the Linden Hotel where he holes up over the Easter weekend and immerses himself in the history (? historical romance) of the town's namesake and the important people in his life. Scann's descent into the hell of Linden's past constitutes the frame of the novel and, unfortunately, its greatest weakness. As a person, Scann is just not interesting enough and some of his puns are so bad that one is tempted to put the book down, immediately, in despair.

First page: "All my Scanns," he notes, "are divided into three galls: genital, excellence and levity and each draws blood."

Later: "The God who never sleeps, who continues to create, is physical — not even able to be intellectual — and he lives in the gut. Gut bless us everyone . . ."

Scann talking. "She believed in the whole process from the snapping canine and the substitute knife to the horse of another dogma . . . "

"One expects better luck even from a system based on nothing more substantial than nearer-my-genitals-to-thee."

Scann (calling down to the farmers on Easter Saturday morning): "Do not spray for a miracle."

I can hear novelist Harlow objecting: "But you're not supposed to like or even admire the atrocious Scann — he is only the medium." In fact, he so much as tells us this in a lengthy aside to the audience.

"The whole story is in jeopardy (the War section) as is the novella form itself, the very form he is here trying to master . . . One gets the distinct impression that Scann read very little. He had a mania for chronicling and it is very easy to see where his main interests were: in himself."

That's all very true (and equally true, as regards self-interests, of a character like Raskolnikov?); but Scann *is* a character in Harlow's novel and if he is *too* stupid or *too* tedious then he will toss out the bathwater with the baby and the novel will never get read.

Which would be a great pity. The story of Linden, of Thrain, of Erica, David, Ro and Ole and of the north country which, if they didn't conquer, at least they came to terms with, is really worthy of all the "major" hyperbole. There are some amazing scenes in these sections:

Linden cutting off his own mutilated hand with an axe. No wasted words, just action, pain, shock and Thrain's disbelief.

Linden trying to outwit the wolverine who violates his traps, making frozen fishballs around sharp sticks or burying his dollar watch beneath a trap (a trap which eventually traps him.)

Thrain with the dead wolverine clinging to his arm while he drags the mutilated Linden across the snow to his cabin.

The cold, the shifts in light, the bodies strained to a point beyond endurance, the animals, the forest, the pride of these men — terrific stuff. Why did Harlow choose such a flimsy structure to hang it all on, I wonder? Never mind all the old saws about irony between past and present — the thing just doesn't hold up. Scann's descent into the other world (which may, after all, suggests Harlow, be his descent into the creative unconscious rather than a recreation of any "real" history or biography) is noteworthy for what is brings up. The cold and isolation of the North and its effect upon the men and women who chose or were chosen or were *driven* there is superbly told. "Author Scann" is a throwaway. Rewrite it without him and you may have a major novel on your hands.

AUDREY THOMAS

ANOMALIES

FRANK DAVEY, *Earle Birney*. Copp Clark, $1.95.

FRANK DAVEY's *Earle Birney* is one of Copp Clark's *Studies in Canadian Literature*. Each book in the series attempts to assess succinctly the work of a distin-

guished Canadian writer. Since Earle Birney is a very well-known figure in the Canadian literary landscape, he obviously deserves a place in a series which has studied writers like Sir Charles G. D. Roberts, Hugh MacLennan, Morley Callaghan and A. M. Klein. I doubt that he deserves *Earle Birney*, however.

In some ways, Davey's study is not bad. He sweeps away much of Birney's non-creative writing. Discussing Birney's years at the University of British Columbia, Davey comments:

> Birney appears to have squandered what little free time he did have during the academic year by writing popular-taste articles and radio talks in an effort to supplement his low salary. . . . Radio talks such as "On Being a Canadian Author" or the four talks which comprise *The Creative Writer* are no more than popular journalism. They are of transitory interest. . . . As in the thirties, Birney appears again to have lent his pen to a cause outside writing — here the popularization of literature and the few dollars it could earn him.

He mentions only briefly Birney's editorial work on anthologies of poetry and on Malcolm Lowry. But his big broom, however patronizing it sounds, clears away these endeavours and allows Davey to concentrate on Birney's creative writing. As a result, his novels *Turvey* and *Down The Long Table*, his short lyrics, and what Davey calls "The Major Poems" — "David", "The Damnation of Vancouver", "November Walk Near False Creek Mouth", and "The Mammoth Corridors" — receive fairly detailed attention.

Davey makes interesting, if sometimes dubious, points about both *Turvey* and *Down The Long Table*. His comments about the latter are particularly provocative; at least he moved me to read it. Although his criticism of the poetry would be more convincing if he had provided a close textual analysis of each poem he discussed, he presents a good case for his conclusion that Birney is a "talented, conscientious, and versatile" poet. In fact, *Earle Birney* might have been a more unified and satisfactory book if Davey had stuck to the themes and techniques of Birney's poetry. As it stands now, the study's stimulating parts do not add up to a scintillating whole.

There are several reasons why *Earle Birney* is not a satisfying study. One is Davey's pugnacious and exaggerated statements. In a discussion of Birney's concrete poems, for example, Davey announces that "Concrete techniques themselves are certainly legitimate artistic methods. To question them is to question the validity of all visual art." A battle is joined when up to that point in the discussion there has been little evidence that a war has been declared or that one is necessary.

Another weakness is that often without clearly explaining what they wrote or in what context they were writing, Davey lobs grenades at comments about Birney made by, among others, Milton Wilson and George Woodcock. Perhaps they have misread Birney's work. But Davey should present more carefully in the text of his book the material on which he judges other writers. This is particularly necessary when he talks about other Canadian poets in the paragraph immediately before the concluding one, weighs their work with that of Birney, and finds theirs wanting. Since in the final paragraph Davey states that "the specialized interests and talents of Canadian poets make grounds for comparison between them few and shaky", I wonder why he embarked on this "shaky" enterprise at all.

Certainly Davey's singling out of E. J. Pratt in a discussion of Birney's "humanism", and his characterizing of Pratt's humanism as "that which praises institutions and corporations", seem especially pointless. Ironically, in this case when Davey loses his critical game, he defeats himself. His description of Pratt's humanism can be understood only if one happens to have read his article on "E. J. Pratt, Apostle of Corporate Man" (*Canadian Literature* No. 43).

One other major problem with *Earle Birney* is its thesis that "It is the anomalies which give Earle Birney's career its shape and character". The word "anomaly" — irregularity or abnormality — is repeated many times. But repetition neither substantiates a thesis nor justifies the use of a word that is badly chosen in the first place. I can see nothing abnormal, for example, about the biographical details Davey lists in the first paragraph as anomalies. These include Birney's being born in a log cabin near Calgary in 1904, his teaching university even though his parents had not "completed even elementary school education", and his being a Marxist in the thirties. Nor can I see anything irregular in what Davey calls the dominant subject and theme of Birney's poetry: man and "the hope that some day he will mobilize his powers to save himself". Davey names these concerns "humanism" and links Birney with More, Jefferson, and Marx. All belong to a second school of humanism that holds that "man's glory" is "his ability to maintain the fragile and necessarily minimal state superstructure which permits his selfhood". Davey's definition seems anomalous; Birney's subject and theme are certainly not.

Indeed, much of Birney's appeal as a creative writer is due to the fact that he has consistently explored the "rag and bone shop" of his own experiences, made them available to his readers in words and in styles that they can understand, and thus helped each to see his own heart. This achievement is neither regular nor irregular, normal nor abnormal. It is an impressive sum of parts, however. And it deserves a thorough, balanced, and consistent study. *Earle Birney*, because of its anomalies, is unfortunately not it.

MARY JANE EDWARDS

HUXLEY OBSERVED

GEORGE WOODCOCK, *Dawn and the Darkest Hour, A Study of Aldous Huxley.* Oxford, $10.00.

GEORGE WOODCOCK never ceases to amaze me. His range of interests, his indefatigable capacity for exotic travel, and his astonishing productivity surely make him Canada's Polymath. As Robert Fulford has pointed out, the description he gives of Aldous Huxley in his latest book, *Dawn and the Darkest Hour,* could apply just as appropriately to Woodcock himself: "Indeed, it is in a continental tradition, that of the *homme de lettres* . . . that he really belongs. The writer who is proud first of all of his sheer ability to write, and is willing to apply that ability to any task which seems at the time important without feeling in any way demeaned if — instead of a novel or a poem — he happens to write a political tract or a newspaper article, provided always he is saying something that seems worth recording."

I have long felt indignant that Professor Woodcock has not received sufficient appreciation in this country; and I have

often speculated on this deplorable obtuseness. It may possibly have something to do with the fact that the majority of Canadian literati, situated in Toronto, tend to be totally indifferent to anything east or west of their circumscribed world. Among academics I suspect a snobbish scepticism that no one interested in so many things could possibly be more than a journalist. Moreover, Professor Woodcock spurns the arcane nit-picking all too characteristic of academic criticism written only to impress other academics. He writes lucid, straightforward prose, the kind of prose comprehensible to Dr. Johnson's Common Reader, the intelligent, literate layman. Moreover, instead of dwelling on image-clusters, time-sequences, or structure-patterns, Professor Woodcock quite clearly believes that works of writers such as Orwell and Huxley can be understood fully only within a biographical and historical framework.

To me the particular interest of *Dawn and the Darkest Hour* is the history of Professor Woodcock's own changing attitudes to Huxley. To read of his reaction to *Crome Yellow* in the Twenties as a "sense of delicious treason in the knowledge that Huxley was fascinated as well as repelled by the life of meretricious intellectuality and futile moneyed gaiety which he portrayed so sardonically" is to understand something of the excitement engendered by Huxley's iconoclasm during that period; otherwise, read in a vacuum, *Crome Yellow* appears as a tediously jejune contrivance. As Professor Woodcock proceeds to analyze the early novels, it becomes increasingly evident why Huxley personified for his contemporaries the critical spirit in the decades between the great wars. One begins to understand, too, why Woodcock and his friends read *Eyeless in Gaza* with "bewilderment and betrayal."

Time has modified that hurt reaction; and his sensitive critique of *Eyeless in Gaza* marks a mature comprehension of the centrality of this novel in Huxley's career. Woodcock believes — in my judgment, correctly — that it represents an apex which he never reached before or after. As the depiction of a profound spiritual experience apparently similar to Huxley's own, the novel transcends the fiction of ideas to which many of Huxley's detractors have consigned his work.

Woodcock's feelings about Huxley's subsequent development are somewhat ambivalent. In the reformed womanizer, Calamy, of *Those Barren Leaves* he finds the early seeds of Huxley's mystical stirrings; and through his later essays, fiction, and the dystopia of *Brave New World* he follows Huxley's experimental efforts to push back the frontiers of heightened consciousness. There is sympathetic understanding of the connection between Huxley's feeble eyesight and his yearning for expanded inner vision, but Woodcock evinces irritation at Huxley's claims for peyote as the key to transcendental experience. As a humanist, his commentator seems to find it difficult to forgive Huxley's abandonment of the human dimension. He seems to find most rapport with Huxley at the point of conversion, but for Huxley a still point of philosophic finality was totally impossible. Professor Woodcock leaves little doubt that he accepts Huxley's belief in the authenticity of his conversion, but at the same time implies that Huxley was self-deluded, his mysticism serving as a retreat from the unpalatable aspects of existence. "For Huxley the artist had died in the

prophet; the celestial light, that living emptiness, had repelled the strange and fascinating creatures of the human darkness." Yet, even in his most prolific period, did he create a single character that remains indelibly engraved on the memory?

Professor Woodcock subscribes to the general view that Huxley's novelistic powers declined with his mounting pessimism about man's satanic capacities for making this world a hell. His last novel, *Island* — which Woodcock describes as his happiest book — is for Woodcock, as for almost every reader, a lamentable failure. This may be in part due to psychological reasons external to the novel, and it may be that we are still too close to evaluate it perceptively. *Eyeless in Gaza* was rejected contemptuously by its first critics, only to be ressurected eventually as a near-masterpiece.

George Woodcock's attention throughout his book is centred on the development of an intricately structured mind played upon by a highly emotional temperament. The final impression is that of an extraordinarily lovable man in his vulnerability, courage, and genuine concern about man's fate. Professor Woodcock's own interests and attitudes are a fine filter through which to achieve a measure of understanding of one of the most interesting figures of this century. I felt slightly cheated when I came to the end of *Dawn and the Darkest Hour* because Professor Woodcock simply ends his book with the close of Huxley's career. I could have wished for a summation of his own views of Huxley's ultimate importance.

PHYLLIS GROSSKURTH

REFLECTING WINDOW PANE

AVI BOXER, *No Address*. DC Books. $5.00 (cloth), $3.00 (paper).

AVI BOXER of Montreal, who emerged in the early Fifties with Eli Mandel, Phyllis Webb, D. G. Jones and Marya Fiamengo, has been one of the most neglected members of that generation of poets. His poems first appeared in *CIV/n*, *Artisan* (the Canadian issue edited by Gael Turnbull), and Raymond Souster's *Poets 56: Ten Younger English Canadians*. In the early Sixties after an hiatus of a few years, his poems began to appear in the Montreal little magazines, *Cataract* and *Catapult*, Louis Dudek's *Delta*, and Irving Layton's anthology, *Love Where the Nights are Long*. Boxer's fitful publishing partially explains why he was overlooked. The book that was expected in the early Sixties in Montreal has now taken another decade to appear. Nevertheless, in the last ten years Boxer has continued to write and maintain his sense of the craft of poetry. That he was an exacting craftsman who emerged from the Montreal group of poets did not fare him well when many younger poets were content with publishing mere exercises. Boxer took his time, for his was a finer and rarer discipline.

Emerging in the early Fifties Boxer came into contact with a group around *CIV/n*. His real teachers in poetry, though, were the leading members of the first two generations of Montreal poets, especially Klein and Layton. Klein and Layton reinforced the strengths in Boxer's talent, particularly his gift for metaphor. In his nostalgia and need to return to his roots Boxer resembles Klein. Boxer's cen-

tral persona, like Layton's, is the poet, whose chief counterpart is woman. But Boxer's very strengths have their limitations. His penchant for the pastiche reminds one of A. J. M. Smith. And his love of exaggeration can reduce his imagination to the merely fanciful and an over reliance on the conceit, the bane of Louis Dudek's early lyrical poetry. I have underlined these literary debts and connections for Avi Boxer does spring from that community of poets which Montreal has been fortunate to have writing in her midst. He has learned from them, yet in the key poems his own voice emerges firmly.

No Address, the title of this collection culled from a score of years, suggests the poet's main preoccupations: the paralysis of action and the search for identity and location. And these are not incidental to a poet who strongly identifies himself with a poetic school that is now coming to an end. Themes such as paralysis, identity and location bring out fear and anxiety which can not be located or fixed, and so there is "no address." The poet attempts to direct himself to a point of return. But, in effect, Boxer's return to his roots is a return back upon himself in every possible way. In the title poem, the speaker seems to precede his own birth and finds himself arriving late at his parents' marriage. This juxtaposition of the past and the future displaces history and identity for the poet speaker. As a DP of the spirit, the persona of the poem suffers at the peripheries of family, love, and personal attachments. In "Yom Kippur", the poet persona appears in all the guises with which Boxer can endow him: the holy fool, the bewildered son, the false messiah, the sackcloth poet; and finally he becomes one with his "young wife," his Muse, whose pain he shares and whose pain makes the anguished cry which becomes his name and his poem at one and the same time:

> O pray
> for the stunned adulteress
> I carried naked upon my shoulders
> through the judicious marketplace,
> for the jubilate congregation
> that stoned her, judaized her
> against the synagogue wall
>
> and pray, pray
> for my helpless name
> rising from her torn throat
> like a cactus

The arena of the action in this poem is the Jewish world and the heritage of the central persona who does not lose his identity but is looking for a place to stand in the midst of conflict and anguish, a point from which to make or find an address.

"The Calligrapher" follows a similar story to "Yom Kippur", but in this case it is told in the voice of the third party. In this pastiche reminiscent of Japanese poetry, the retainer (perhaps the poet's other vigilant self) mourns how his Lord has fallen "into the embroidered web/ of this Spiderlady." Nostalgically he reminds him that:

> Once we were happy, my Lord,
> catching fish for your aviary,
> goldfish for your blossoming brook,
> Now they say you have taken to verse,
> and turn friends like unwanted letters
> from her windowless door.

The pun on Boxer's first name in "aviary" suggests how this poem is a key to his poetic household, so to speak. The entrance to the excellent and well-made house of his Muse is "windowless" — perhaps too self-contained and turned in on itself. *No Address*, the book itself, is framed by poems to women. In both

poems the speaker is looking out from behind a window. In the opening poem, "1:00 A.M.", the persona's "winter face" is pressed "against the windowpane." While he kisses the woman's "black hair" in the former poem, in the last of the "Haiku Triad" which complete the book, his action is even more ambiguous:

> Condensing in frost
> your face shakes my windowpane.
> I unkiss your tears

Though Boxer has found a reflecting windowpane in his poetic household, and though this collection is a small return for many years of writing, it is very accomplished. Boxer's finer poems should now take their place in the anthologies for the best of his work is enduring and memorable. And I hope that the publication of this collection will be the threshold to a growth and enlargement of his voice and craft.

SEYMOUR MAYNE

DRIFTING TO OBLIVION

JOHN NEWLOVE, *Lies*. McClelland & Stewart.
AL PURDY, *Hiroshima Poems*. The Crossing Press.

JOHN NEWLOVE writes as if he were the last human still alive in the City of the End of Things. The perceiving intelligence who confronts us in his poetry still possesses all the experience of his race, but no longer the capacity to bind the things he knows into something we can agree upon: truths, if you like. One of the poems in his earlier volume *The Cave* attempted such a truth:

> The places of our decisions
> will be found
> in pure places, the perfect moments
> endured, exalted the ordinances!

only to turn aside:

> — A memory
> or dreams only: the past does not exist.
> Truth is not something we are judged by
> but something by which we judge,
> a scaled gauge.

That particular poem ended, "It is enough", but Newlove's latest volume, by its very title, is a sardonic repudiation of even the scaled gauge. These poems are not truths, but lies. They renounce the integrating webs of memory or dream, and move fully into the exploration of a world without connection. By inverse logic, they thus fulfill the traditional obligation of the poet to tell us things more truly than we had thought possible; as Newlove's epigraph says, "Lies and perjury were so familiar to him that he often deceived himself and told the truth when he thought he was lying."

Like *Black Night Window* (1968) and *The Cave* (1970), *Lies* assembles a number of recent poems into a collection unified only by the formidable consistency of Newlove's own preoccupations. Newlove is one of those poets whose work it is to write himself again and again. Though we can make certain comparisons with other contemporary poets—Purdy at one extreme, Atwood at another—Newlove himself creates the only context in which he can usefully be assessed; he is—a mark of real distinction—*sui generis*. Solitude is the very mark of his poetic language, with its obsessive and artful dubiety. These intense lyrics never present us with the fulfilling recognition that comes with the translating art of metaphor. There are only those electric objects—frog, water, woman, bed, crow, blood, sweat—and the weaving voice

making liaisons between them, "a dance of mind and sound slipping around each other, sister and brother."

In earlier volumes, the cumulative effect of all this was, paradoxically, to free Newlove from voicelessness and dissolution. Like Atwood, he has had the capacity to turn isolation into knowledge of something beyond self. But the poetic language of *Lies* exists only to render "the noise the fish makes caught in the jaw." If he were to ask again here the question posed in "The Pride", "What completeness do you hope to have from these tales?" the answer would be a bleak one:

> We only come to dream,
> It is not true, it is not true —
> that we come to live upon the earth.

There are in fact no poems like "The Pride" in this collection at all, perhaps because, as one poem suggests in a revulsion of doubt, "Everything is history to us, even the future." But then of course all poems are lies.

Newlove and Al Purdy are closely linked by their shared concern for the drift of civilization into oblivion, and the deposit this drift leaves in our imaginations. Purdy's *Hiroshima Poems* is a collection of seven longer lyrics provoked by a visit to the monuments of a community that has experienced this oblivion and survived, and like the Jews of the Holocaust, lived its own death. The appalling conundrum of how to respond to Hiroshima fills these poems, as it does the literary responses to both tragedies. One is reminded irresistably of something Purdy wrote elsewhere: "What is great music and art but an alibi for murderers?" Purdy knows the risks; as he says at the beginning, "the people who write their reactions in . . . [the Foreign Visitors' Book] have become psychically disarmed; they have had no time to prepare considered thoughts or formal comments on what they have just seen. Therefore what they say is likely to be exactly what they feel."

Purdy's characteristic open poetic structure should be a fine vehicle for this intense, unguarded reaction, but in fact his response is uneven. At his worst, he can be unbearably prosy, and some of the poems, like "One Thousand Cranes", are just that, lyrics in which the verse labours on and on at a subject almost unutterable, searching for poetry and finding only sentiment. But the topic, "children and death and love gathered in an awkward bundle of words", haunts one with the obligation to master it. At his best, Purdy can command real sonority, and he rises to the challenge in the last and most accomplished of the *Hiroshima Poems*, "Remembering Hiroshima", where the poet's attempt to write about the unspeakable subject becomes one with the human being's assumption of the obligation to judge:

> And yet the I/we of ourselves must judge
> must say here is the road
> if it turns out wrong take another
> must say these are the murderers
> identify them and name their names
> must say there are the men of worth
> and publish belief like fact
> must say all this in the absence of any god
> having taken a gleam inside the mind
> having grown an opinion like rings on a tree
> having praised quietly the non-god of justice
> having known inside the non-god of love
> and make a new god from all these human
> things.

GERMAINE WARKENTIN

LACONIC TERRORS

ELI MANDEL, ed., *Poets of Contemporary Canada 1960-1970*. McClelland & Stewart. $2.95.

ELI MANDEL'S anthology *Poets of Contemporary Canada 1960-1970* presents a curious review problem. As a collection of works by ten writers — Al Purdy, Milton Acorn, Margaret Atwood, George Bowering, Gwendolyn MacEwen, John Newlove, Joe Rosenblatt, Michael Ondaatje, bill bissett, and Leonard Cohen — it provides what one might reasonably expect of it. It is clearly printed; the introduction is lucid and informative; the choice of poems demonstrates sensitivity to a range of literary techniques and attitudes; the ten poets (with the possible exception of Rosenblatt) even reflect most of the critical enthusiasms and appraisals of the period the anthology represents. It will be a useful textbook. But it will also prove a frustrating one.

One way of explaining why is to say that it suffers from its title and its series. Though like its New Canadian Library predecessor (Milton Wilson's *Poets of Mid-Century*), it is in itself a good book, any book that contends with living authors rapidly goes out of date. Wilson's selection, that is, represents *poems* of mid-century; Mandel's, because (except in the case of Cohen) it does not bring Wilson's up to date, effectively represents *some-of-the-poems* of Canada in the sixties. Mandel's introduction acknowledges these difficulties, but that does not resolve them. Because Leonard Cohen's lyrics, folksongs, and dour observations of society epitomized so much of the sixties consciousness, one can see why Mandel found it impossible not to include examples of them. But that decision throws into even sharper relief the fact that he decided not to represent, say, Margaret Avison and Alden Nowlan, two of the finest contemporary poets, who between 1960 and 1970 produced some of their most controlled and developed poems. They await, in effect, a revision of the Wilson book. In the meantime, some of the best poems by several major Canadian poets remain unavailable in anthologies that (for lack of books with wider coverage) are standard texts for courses in Canadian poetry.

The problem of NCL selectivity, moreover, compounds itself from volume to volume. Mandel's welcome inclusion of Purdy and Acorn acknowledges not just Purdy's extraordinary poetic growth during the sixties and the slow critical response awarded Milton Acorn's socialist lyrics, but also the simple fact that neither poet appeared in an earlier volume in the series. At the other end are Mandel's omissions. Any editor assembling a succeeding volume — weighing the respective merits of still more contemporary poets, a group that already includes David Helwig, David Solway, Dale Zieroth, Dennis Lee, Marilyn Bowering, bp nichol, Susan Musgrave, Andreas Schroeder, Tom Marshall, Joy Kogawa, Victor Borsa, Avi Boxer, Seymour Mayne, and David Cull — must first face up to the existing exclusion of Phyllis Webb and Daryl Hine. As accomplished poets of the sixties, they might have been expected here. In a subsequent book, they would not be out of place, but would make *overdue* appearance and occupy the space one wanted for less established voices.

Hine's laconic Classicism attaches him less immediately perhaps, though no less securely than do MacEwen's myths or

bissett's tantric chants (or Webb's spare evocations of the limits of personality, for that matter), to the "new directions" in poetry that Mandel claims for the writers of his book. He is a paramount craftsman among these "mobile, technologically sophisticated, contemporary writers" who equally surprise us

> with a determined regionalism, another version of traditional Canadian concerns with the land, wilderness, the pervasive notion that an ill-defined terror of space defines the authentic Canadian sense of things. This interplay of cultivated awareness and an almost primitive feeling for place seems to me both characteristic and revealing of contemporary writers. On the one hand, these writers move with exceptional confidence into new areas with new approaches to place, space, time, and personality; on the other hand, in their concern with land and history they look back to the traditional preoccupations of Canadian poetry.

In similar fashion one might point to the contemporaneity of Webb. The kind of testament that bp nichol accords her in his recent *The Martyrology* —

> early morning victoria's streets
> we are all linked
> all of us who use the language now tied
>
> talking with phyllis the kropotkin poems
> how she'd first realized the importance of
> questions reading joyce's "portrait"
>
> focus in language "is" not "was"
> words that particular form the sky is
> grey & restless

— underscores the respect she holds among readers (to borrow Mandel's words about Acorn) "for whom passionate language and dedication to craft are matters of great import".

One of the virtues of the anthology, however, derives from Mandel's own respect for language and craft. The sympathy he brings to each poet lets the writers speak individually, and in sufficient poems to demonstrate their separate voices and poetic character. Nor does his introduction generalize those voices out of hearing range. In attempting to show how the world of the sixties has variously "chosen" the ten writers who represent it, he focusses on the subtlety of the differences among them rather on any overriding (and therefore suspect) unifying mystique. Referring to Acorn's "radical humanism", to Rosenblatt's "modern bestiary" in which "gothic and romantic" models utter the history of the soul, to Newlove's "variations on [the] theme of myth as history, history as myth", and to the "presence of a manic persona" in "the coolness of Atwood's language", Mandel links the writers without forging their identities, and so provides discrete approaches to their work.

When he comes to Bowering ("the bright land is the measure of speech and breath") and more so to bissett ("lovely rhythms . . . [moving] toward elemental moments of pure sound"), he encounters a problem in communications which the Sixties lovingly embraced but which a traditional anthology can do little more than expose. To focus on the effect of concrete design is within its scope, but to render the actual sound of language and syllable is beyond it. The imagination can create a kind of internal sound system, of course. Atwood's deliberate monotones are carried by the verse itself; the mellow richness of MacEwen's poetry is somehow only reinforced by a recorded reading such as *Open Secret* (CBC Learning Systems); even the distinctive dialect of *Alden Nowlan's Maritimes* (CBC Learning Systems) is adumbrated by the language of the poems and stories off the record. But the hallucinative urgency of a bissett chant, or what Mandel calls the "ecstatic discovery . . . of uni-

versal recurrence", which takes its form in insistent repetition, can be appreciated only by listening.

The recent release of so many recordings of poetry in Canada testifies to an increasing commitment to the art of oral verse. But what happens when the oral poem turns into ritual incantation? *Canadada* (Griffin House; performed by the four horsemen: bp nichol, Steve McCaffery, Paul Dutton, and Rafael Barreto-Rivera) is an apposite example, full of sound and system, of that *entente* between technology and metaphysics. The result is perhaps inevitably a private affair, the performers themselves most involved in their performance and illuminated by it. One listens to a machine more aloofly than one listens in on the poet himself. And one effect is to take us appreciatively back to the book. It is a tribute to poets like Atwood and Newlove that, stark on the page, divorced from the emotional entanglements of human presence, their poems have the power to absorb readers into their world. That such absorption is still possible in what Mandel calls the "laconic, ironic, self-deprecating, tentative" personalities of contemporary verse, testifies further to the continuing power and potential of the printed word.

W. H. NEW

LEANNESS OF THOUGHT

J. MICHAEL YATES, *the abstract beast*. Sono Nis Press, $9.95.

Great Bear Lake Meditations had this: writing pared to the leanness of thought that yet showed forth emotional richness. Economy of gesture meant that many associations contracted into a single image. If the present collection of fiction and radio plays had preceded the *Meditations*, I would have applauded the ingenuity behind these literary and closet-dramatic speculations on the tensions between mind and matter. I would also have noted that cerebral distinction is no substitute for stylistic grace, and that often the works appeared laborious in concept and execution. But all would have been forgiven on the strength of the promise shown by the author.

Given, however, the prior appearance of *Meditations*, which carries the themes of silence, solitude, solipsism and schizophrenia to a haunting conclusion, there appears no very great reason for reprinting the majority of the items in this collection. Many of them are the sort of fugitive pieces that had best keep on running. The plays exceed the fiction both in quantity and quality; they possess the advantage of having been created for a medium where thinness is no drawback. McLuhan-and-Carpenter's dithyrambs on acoustic space to one side, radio drama is meagre fare indeed when contrasted with the real stuff. Thus, in the radio medium, Yates's bloodless, speculative dialogues between self and soul needn't be pressed into moving the full distance to fleshly reality; anyone reading them makes allowances for their origin. Still, they bring home — as if one needed it — the genius of Beckett in fleshing out his concepts for the stage. There is more to Symbolic Dialogue than the meeting of minds; reading a group of serious radio plays makes the most theoretical of sensibilities yearn for *I Love Lucy*.

This is not to deny the wit behind such

plays as the title piece, "Theatre of War", "The Panel" or "Smokestack in the Desert". They possess a sense of the built-in fooleries of radio that reminds me of the comic routines of George Carlin. But the pieces remain great ideas, excellent matter for Zen satori, rather than realized dramatic creations.

What more can I say? The stories in the collection are avant-garde, neo-Barthian, what have you, replete with the self-consciousness of Barth and the art-nouveau intellectual swirlings of a Borges — but they are not the sort of tales one interprets. They are little flashes; one either gets them, and finds them of interest and/or significance, or one doesn't. Mostly I didn't, except for "Pile", which adds a hint of Robinson Crusoe to the usual preoccupation with body/mind and sexuality. The collection will save future researchers from hunting around. The items in it show a mind at its strongest in the creation of fables, metaphors and meditative flashes attempting — and often failing — to extend them sufficiently to meet the demands of narrative and dramatic literary form.

DENNIS DUFFY

MEETING MIDWAY

ALDEN NOWLAN, *Between Tears and Laughter*. Clarke, Irwin and Co. Ltd. $4.50 cloth.

ALDEN NOWLAN has been leading readers to insights into themselves and the world they subtly cohabit with others through a half dozen volumes of poetry. He began with an abundance of the poetic necessities — wit, honesty, a profoundly empathetic sensibility, and an incisive feeling for language — and by 1970 he was able to assemble a memorable book of selected poems, *Playing the Jesus Game*. In a foreword, Robert Bly correctly grouped Nowlan with the "umbrella rippers" of literature, those who tear down the barriers to man's clear vision of the sky and of his place under it. "His clear direct language is not a transformative language," Bly observed: "it's not about one thing changing another — but a descriptive language, about the way things are." And the way things are, as Nowlan sees them, is frequently delightful, often terrifying, "skating out along the edges of fear", to use Bly's expression; they exist, as Nowlan's entirely appropriate new title suggests, in the psychic teeter-totter land *Between Tears and Laughter*. And in the execution of this vision in the present volume, Nowlan surpasses anything he has done before and transforms himself from a fine poet into a superb one of the first rank.

Nowlan's secret weapon, which he wields with unerring skill in *Between Tears and Laughter*, is his quietly controlled matter-of-fact tone, which operates in a sometimes devastating tension with the sudden impact of understanding he imparts. A case in point is his marvelously understated "Why he wanted to abolish capital punishment":

> When I was a boy I imagined
> I was motivated by my
> extraordinary compassion.
> As a youth I laughed and said:
> "I suppose the real reason is
> I'm scared they'll get *me*."
> Then I became a man and discovered
> I'd always been afraid
> if it didn't end
> there'd come a time
> when I wouldn't be able
> to stop myself:
> one day I'd have to go down and tell them
> to forget about the fee,
> I'd be hangman for nothing,
> just for the fun of it,
> if they'd let me.

O, the quietness of the self-recognition, and the horror as the reader recognizes the implications of the poem in himself. And poem after poem in the volume works in much the same way toward much the same effect: in "Sunday driver" the poet recounts the anger in the face of a driver of a black Chevrolet because he was delayed in getting away from a traffic light; "Everybody laughs" at the story, the poet says, but he saw the dreadful malevolence in the man's face and concludes: "He'd have killed me if there'd been a button/ marked 'Death' for him to press."

The capital punishment piece and "Sunday driver", like many of the poems of *Between Tears and Laughter*, are toward the "tears" end of the spectrum. But Nowlan's range is as broad as human experience, and in poems that vary in length from a few lines to a few pages he deals with love (usually love's arrows shot wide); death (especially his ironic sense of the inevitability of death); occasionally with particular people (D. H. Lawrence, for example, whose only monument at his birthplace, Nowlan points out in "The pilgrim's tale", is a sign in the window of a fish-and-chips shop advertising a rock group called The Sons and Lovers). A full list would be almost as inclusive as a list of all of the sad and funny attitudes and foibles a human being can discover in himself. In "A tiger in the Dublin zoo" Nowlan captures with equal amounts of joy and sorrow the human capacity for simultaneous dignity and self-deception, telling of the imperious, strutting tiger who convinces himself of his omnipotence by including the bars that limit him within the purview of his will: "Never once have I forgotten myself/ and been stopped by the bars," he boasts; "I am Napoleon, the great, the magnificent tiger." He answers anti-Catholic bigotry by having the local boys in "Sister Mary Cecilia" leave behind the warnings of their parents about the nuns who will eat them; the boys are won over by the simple, if spectacular, human act of

> little Sister Mary Cecilia,
> yoyo champion of St. John, New Brunswick,
> which means she's
> the best in the world.
>
> Little Sister Mary Cecilia,
> keep that ecumenical
> yoyo twirling.
> Go, girl, go!

The importance of the simple human act is precisely what Alden Nowlan demonstrates — continually, forcefully, delicately. In one of his poems on poetry ("The encounter, the recognition") he says that he enters a deserted path or corridor from both sides at once:

> I am wholly drunk.
> I am wholly sober.
> We meet midway
> and recognize one
> another.
> "Hello, Alden," I say.
> That's how my best poems are created.

He has met himself in almost all of the poems of this exquisitely human book, and, finally, because it is exquisitely human, it brings the reader to say hello to himself — sometimes to his amusement and often to his enlightening discomfort.

ALAN SHUCARD

opinions and notes

FOR LITERARY ANARCHY

Sir,

I don't very often write letters to the editor, but I feel that I must make some observations about Ralph Gustafson's review article in your latest issue.

I do not particularly mind Gustafson's adverse opinion of my most recent book of verse, for the same criticism — and the same sort of illustrative quotation — was often applied, in his own day, to the work of William Wordsworth, and Gustafson certainly is a much gentler critic than were either Jeffrey or Gifford.

I am, however, quite concerned over Gustafson's general contention that poets now have too easy a time in getting their work published in Canada and that this is not a good thing. It seems to me that after the dearth and difficulty of publication in the 1930's and 1940's, and the kind of literary straightjackets imposed on publishers and reviewers in the 1950's by the influence of Smith and Frye, Canadian poetry at last is emerging into the kind of eclecticism (for which *The Fiddlehead* was a pioneer and of which Fiddlehead Poetry Books are an exemplification) where "every bird/on every spray/can sing his own song/in his own way." Any new freedom must naturally lead to the kind of excesses which Ralph Gustafson rightfully deplores, but at the same time it holds more promise for the future than would any practice of limiting publication to only those poems which fit the dimensions of some preconceived procrustean bed which exists in a critic's mind as the proper shape and size for poetry.

I am reminded on reading Gustafson of the wealthy Englishman who was overheard to say in his club: "Money's such a jolly good thing, it's a pity so many people are allowed to have so much of it these days."

Yours for literary anarchy.

FRED COGSWELL

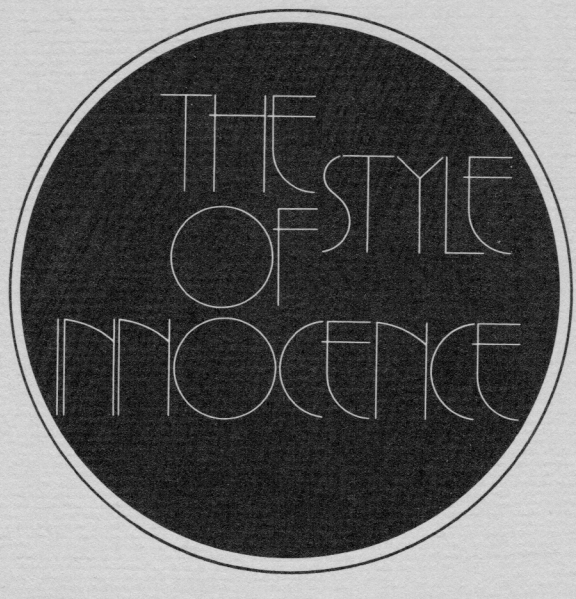
CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

Sir,

I am, with the consent of Lady Roberts, collecting the letters of her late husband, the distinguished Canadian poet Sir Charles G. D. Roberts (1860-1943), for eventual publication. I should be most grateful if any of your readers who have letters written by Roberts in their possession would get in touch with me. I should be glad to receive copies of these letters, or the letters themselves. Any letters entrusted to me would of course be treated with the greatest care and returned to their owners once copies have been made.

I should also be glad if your readers would supply me with the names of persons who, they believe, might be in possession of Roberts letters.

DESMOND PACEY,
University of New Brunswick.



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