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editorial

VICTORIES AND FAREWELLS

THE RECENT TRIAL in Vancouver, in which a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation official brought a libel suit (expenses paid by the CBC) against a *Vancouver Sun* columnist, Lisa Hobbs, has implications that go beyond the world of newspapers and broadcasting and affect the literary world as well. For the issue was in fact the freedom of criticism; we were faced by the astonishing spectacle of a public corporation, part of whose duty is to foster and promote free criticism, not only condoning but actually paying for an attempt to prevent that very activity.

The trial itself was, in detail, less impressive than the principle involved, though it revealed more defects in the internal functioning of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation than its bureaucratic heads had perhaps expected when they rashly decided to start on the path of litigation (a procedure which incidentally was condemned by every CBC producer with whom we discussed it). But the verdict was of crucial importance, since it showed that the jury of ordinary citizens, presumably not critics themselves, respected the right of the critic to make scathingly condemnatory statements where they appeared to be necessary. More than that, the verdict showed strong misgivings among these jurymen and jurywomen, not themselves involved in the worlds of newspapers or broadcasting or literature, about the libel law as it stands in Canada. For they found that Lisa Hobbs was in fact technically culpable, but assessed damages at $1. The implication is that what she said was justified and only the malformation of the law made her statements actionable.

One hopes that the heads of the CBC will take note, and henceforward regard criticism as a reason for keeping their own operations in trim rather than as an excuse for trying to muzzle the critics; in this way they may save from embarrass-

ment not only themselves but also those of us who, as friends of the CBC and advocates of its revitalization as a cultural service unhampered by commercial considerations, found our loyalty roughly shaken by this case and its revelations. One hopes that the politicians will also take note and radically revise the law of libel so that criticism, as distinct from false accusation, shall henceforward be fully and specifically protected. One hopes finally that people involved with literature—and especially such professional organizations as the Writers' Union—will become active in seeking changes in the law to protect writers from unjustified litigation. In recent years the generally permissive atmosphere of our society has meant that the libel laws have been less ferociously invoked than in past generations; the decision of Robert McGall to bring his case against Lisa Hobbs and that of the CBC to support it were quite out of character with the temper of the times — these early 1970's. But the law remains such that in a more restrictive era — such as the signs tell us we shall probably be facing even before 1984 — it can be interpreted so as narrowly to restrict criticism without any strengthening of the wording of the statutes being necessary.

So far as we are concerned, it is the action of writers that is important. They should not only work for the radical amendment of the laws of libel to give specific protection to critics; they should also, while the law remains unliberalized, show their concern for the freedom of writing by declining to sue, and by boycotting lawyers who conduct libel actions. This is why the present writer protested in *Quill & Quire* when there was talk of a libel action in connection with an admittedly despicable piece referring to Margaret Atwood that appeared in *Northern Journey*, and found it disturbing that an organization set up to protect the interests of writers, the Writers' Union of Canada, appeared to condone such a suit when it should obviously have been using its energy in demanding a reconsideration and revision of the libel law to protect its members and others in the literary community. If we use a bad law, we strengthen it; the case is as simple as that. The potential dangers to writers, editors and publishers involved in the libel law as it now stands seem so important that one can only regret the narrow scope of the newly founded Book and Periodical Development Council, the one organization that unites all the bodies representing the various factors in the literary world. For our common interests go beyond matters of marketing and financing; they include also guarantees of the freedom and security of the writer, the editor and the publisher in a legal way as well, and this means a review of all the laws affecting them, with libel and copyright taking first and most urgent place.

ONE DOES NOT HAVE to be a fanatical mouth-frothing nationalist to bid a joyful farewell to the special privileges granted under Canadian tax laws to those inveterately American magazines, *Time* and *Reader's Digest*, and a farewell also, apparently, to the Canadian edition of *Time* at least. The circumstances under which those privileges were granted have always offered a distasteful and humiliating witness to the subservience of successive Canadian governments to American pressures, and one hopes that their revocation will be a sign that such subservience is drawing to an end.

So far as *Time* is concerned — I cannot speak of *Reader's Digest* since I have found it too dull to have followed its progress — one is also relieved by the ending of an insulting and patronizing pretence. *Time* has offered what it claimed was a Canadian edition; it has had an editorial staff consisting partly of tame Canadians, and offices in Canada; it has had Canadian printers working for it. But what gave a fragile appearance of being Canadian to the actual journal, as it came into one's hands, was an insert of 4 or 5 pages of items on Canada at the beginning of the journal, out of a total length of between 64 and 80 pages. Thus what passed itself off as a magazine slanted towards Canadians in fact contained between 5% and 7% of material devoted to Canada, selected in such a way as to be unrepresentative of current Canadian preoccupations and written with a pronouncedly American slant, so that the true Canadian viewpoint was more often than not ridiculed by implication. *Time Canada*, as it described itself, has been an imposition on our patience and credulity one is glad to see coming to an end. As an American magazine and nothing more, informing us from its own point of view of happenings and attitudes south of the border, *Time* will always be welcome in Canada, entering without privileges and taking its equal place beside other American journals which present a different view of the Union, such as the *Nation* and the *New Republic*.

Indeed, one of the advantages of putting *Time* in its place is that rival American journals may benefit and we may have readier access to a more varied spectrum of American opinion. The other advantage, of course, apart from the boost to our self-esteem of Canadians, is that some if not all of the advertisement revenue diverted from *Time* and *Reader's Digest* will certainly flow to Canadian publications. *Maclean's* appears set on a course to become the first Canadian news magazine, a resolution of inner contradictions that may be all to the good, since recently it has been floating in a Sargasso of indecision, having virtually given up pretensions to being a journal of opinion, having cut connections (to all appearances) with the team of "real" writers which it announced so proudly

when Peter Newman took over the editorship, and having marked time for months as a neither-fish-nor-fowl-nor-good-red-herring features magazines. Much more encouraging is the reappearance of *Saturday Night*, the only large circulation journal in Canada that has consistently sustained itself both as a forum of opinion and as a vehicle for discussing the arts. So, bidding farewell to the old *Time*, let us welcome the new *Saturday Night*.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

DESMOND PACEY

While this issue of *Canadian Literature* has been going through the press, we have received with great sadness the news of Desmond Pacey's death, after a long though intermittent illness. For thirty years Desmond Pacey has been intimately associated with the movement for the serious study of Canadian writers and writing, and his contribution over that period, as literary historian and critic and editor, was invaluable. In our next issue we shall devote more adequate space to his achievements; now we record our regret, personally and on behalf of all who have known Desmond Pacey and his work.

COMING HOME TO THE WORLD

George Bowering

THE TYPICAL SETTING for a poem by D. G. Jones, in 1953 or 1973, is some rural place in the Canadian Shield at that time of year when it is still winter but perhaps beginning to be spring. The difference between the 1953 poem and the 1973 poem lies in where the poet is situated. In the earlier poems Jones is the interpreter of the landscape. In the later ones he is part of the landscape. It is as difficult as that. To put it another way: during his early career he seemed faced with a dispute — shall he be "realistic" or "mythic"? Later he succeeded in discarding both poses, in favour of being actual. He learned to listen to his own body, the music it was (forced) to make in its environment, and there is the body of his later work, as beautifully trim as any we have heard in this country.

Jones has a reputation as an "intellectual" poet, though I have never seen that any critic has delineated that notion. Certainly he has always distinguished himself from the majority of Canadian lyric poets writing in English, they who are satisfied to tell you how they are feeling right now about some occasional perception. Jones has always wanted to know that, plus: what does it mean? In that he is more like our major poet, Margaret Avison, save that he does not have the Christian faith to go with the fine ear and curious mind. In fact a consecutive reading of his work reveals that he has always been looking for a world-view that would seem sensible given his perceptions and emotions. In this paper I hope to find the features of his work that will show his progress from intelligence noetic to intelligence heuristic.

We move backward, through our carried-over European mind, that male slayer and conqueror, to the actual New World, found behind transparent eyes. Peculiarly, for a man with a Welsh name, or not so peculiarly, Jones embodies the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon poet in a strange wintery land, the first morning

outside Eden. For that was the European Eden, not so much a garden as a garrison, where the animals were paraded in front of you and you were allowed to name them and subject them to your use. The consistent development and improvement of Jones' writing has come about as the words seeped through the walls, as the man became resolved to living the rest of his life in his own wilderness, himself as explorer, with memories, maybe, of "home". He has come through the struggle to free his mind's eye from his mind, to the job of minding the poem, which has its own life, no matter what you name it.

Much of the struggle had to do with the methods of learning. Jones decided courageously to acknowledge his traditions, both as Wasp and as Canadian poet. (Many of us didn't even know that there was such a thing as a tradition of Canadian poetry.) Jones read the past, and one can find traces of loyalty to those other men who signed their initials to their poems — D. C. Scott, F. R. Scott, A. J. M. Smith, E. J. Pratt. In his first book, *Frost on the Sun* (1957), you may find this echo of (Charles) G. D. Roberts:

> Of sluttish waves that sidle and lick
> With insolent ease the indolent rock

which is meant to copy the sound of the water, but more obviously resembles Roberts' humanizing and abstracting of nature.

That first book, collecting the work of a poet who was also a university literature student, exhibits the early lines of the conflict in Jones' poetics. In the introductory poem, "John Marin" (which must have been written later than most of the book), the poet announces that he wants to make poems as particular and interdependent as the rest of nature; that is, not poems *about* nature, but poems to take their place *in* nature — as William Carlos Williams said, not to copy nature but to imitate nature. So the poem begins with a smart identification of strophe with plant and bird, themselves difficult to separate:

> Do poems too have backbones:
> stalks of syntax on which sway
> the dark
> red
> or blue images —
> a flock of red-wings
> swaying in the alders —

(though he subsequently messes this up a little by retreating into a simile that undoes that natural knitting, "their common passion".) Compare some lines

written in 1970, where the urgency to fabricate metaphor has been overcome, and the poet simply submits to his own functioning in the place and poem:

> I am led into the winter air
> by certain nameless twigs, as bare
> as we are. I would find
>
> them also in our mouths.
>
> (*Canadian Forum*, June 1972)

You see there the twigs *are* certain, they do not have to be broken down to nature to advantage undressed.

But in the first book we are met by the Popery (pot-pourri) of syllabics, iambics, prescribed stanza-structures, etc. They are competent as those things go as late as the fifties, but the things said are often the directors of the things observed there, the latter becoming *exempla*, or the fibre of an extended metaphor. Sonnets, rondels, the plungings of a student poet trying to say something serious — you must give him that. He gets observably more interesting as the forms assert themselves over the structures — in that way Jones became a most serious and worthwhile demonstration of the great leap forward in postwar Canadian literature.

There is a great deal of energy being exercised in that first book, so much being tried out, so much desire on the young poet's part to meet, perhaps, the cosmos, especially the portents in its immediate manifestations, birds, the sun, snow. Hoping to be equal to the real itself, Jones brings to the poetry-making act all the tricks of poem-writing. He is performing them — lay a Greek name on the landscape here, a simile there, a couplet beside that. But the poem, not the poet, is made to live in that scene. We can see him equally walking away from it. But I remember reading *Frost on the Sun* in the late fifties and saying that Jones had opened up the fist of the prescriptive poets. The book itself was an *agon*. He knew what he wanted to do, to speak of nature without words. Even in the trussed-up poems he spoke of principles he was only later to enact:

> the bones of animals are luminous and dry —
> perceived as clearly as the sharpest stone

— just like the later poems, where the heaps of chosen adjectives were left behind.

It is a curious (subjective?) thing that you can *feel* Jones' mind moving more than you can most poets', and thus you can feel the difference between the tangled lines that try to feed rime-schemes, and the others that attempt to re-enact

perceptions. In a poem such as "The Phoebe" you are made to feel the poem trying to trace mind-perceptions in verse prosody, as the subject bird is said to have its body and area wed to "configuration of the mind." In "Northern Water Thrush" the birds trace "the old/ calligraphy of living things," destroyed every human year.

The sun, too, is an image for human intelligence, and it appears over and over, usually a winter sun (the one found in Ontario and Quebec), appearing in a haze, muted, falling, a lighter grey than the surrounding grey. It is an intelligence that clearly has sufficient power, but that is fuzzed by local weather conditions. If there is frost on the sun, and we are under its nutrient, what are we to make of that picture? Are we at the stage where the sun is beginning to melt the frost, or where the sun is being cooled? The centre of Jones' work tries to resolve the dialectic between that pessimism and that hope. The influence of Robert Frost can be guessed at here, and the worlds of the two poets are not all that far apart, vestiges of Puritan New England and U.E.L. Canada. The reader can't help noticing that in these early poems Jones views nature from and in his solitude:

> It is not love reveals the world
> Or lays one naked with the earth,
> It is aloneness when all loves are laid to bed
> And in the uncompanioned darkness every star
> Submits her abstract maidenhead.

That poem refers to Paul Klee, but also to *Frost on the Sun*. Other people are not found in this book. But in the later poems they are, and Jones then calls on love to reveal the world:

> I would have you smile, and see the sun
> arrested, rest among your bones
>
> ("The Birdhouse," 1972)

The early loneliness outside of Eden is met by an earth, nature that endures, and Jones consistently shows it enduring despite men's depredations. It is certainly not the monster nature of Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, but an observable reminder that the power is there, that it does not need to assert itself at men's expense, that the rock doesn't change simply because a man sees Hermes in the rock. The city may be a monument or graveyard of stones but the snow falls on it as on the pre-cambrian rock.

In his best moments during the early period, Jones approaches that power with the modesty he learned from the Imagists, a decision he brings to great grace in *Phrases from Orpheus*. "The Lilypad" is a poem as lovely as its subject, that rides with the water and never cleaves it. Sometimes one thinks of Souster's keen eyes in the middle of the gritty metropolis:

> . . . a table and a kitchen chair,
> zinc tubs
> a broken basket filled with snow
> make of this half-lot a
> disreputable paradise within
> the machined residential row

This can be Eden nor is it out of us.

And maybe the late-winter, early-spring poem, "Thaw", is the most important poem in the book, not for the poet (it is of pretty conservative art) but for the man/poet. The image is lovely, little, tentative, the small sign of large unseen (e)motion, the Wasp condition, its problem and beautiful strength:

> When the snow melts to the ground
> leaving between hillocks of snow
> many little pools where
> green grass and dead leaves grow,
> the currents which run from pool down to pool
> are too slight to be seen,
> yet they ripple the pools as though
> all earth were trembling in its frame.

IF IT MAY BE SAID that *Frost on the Sun* was the book of a student, it may be said that *The Sun is Axeman* (1961) is the book of a teacher. It contains some of the best poems from the first book, and some of its problems in poetics. But importantly, it shows a desire on Jones' part to compose longer poems, to get beyond the lyric, and beyond the stasis imposed by presentation of a mind willing only to reflect upon a universe. By this time, 1961, Jones sounded to these western ears as if balanced between British and American influences, the former somehow connected with his loyalty to Smith, Scott, etc., the latter revealed in his (mis)quotation of William Carlos Williams.

The English connection, with the voice of Auden somehow heard along the line, seems to have produced two essentially "academic" features: the fact that

so many poems work upon extended metaphors, and the pose of the detached sensibility. The former might be found in the contorted conceits that the description and complicated rime scheming manufacture in "Blue Jay in Haliburton" ("Everywhere some small design/ Erupts, and the profusion foals/ Chaos on the mind"). The latter is obvious in these Audenish lines about a small Ontario village:

> Yet houses and the bridge
> Are well kept up: the boys and girls
> Are not too lonely, I suppose . . .

The result is that despite the place names the places often do not appear Canadian, or more importantly, do not sound as if they had contributed to the composition of the poet's blood and bones. "The Return" is a neat 1780 poem about the Gaspé. "The River: North of Guelph" (inviting comparison, naturally, with Purdy's "Country North of Belleville") is an exercise in syllabics, wherein gentle Wordsworth is found, so odd in the Canadian landscape. Perhaps the best example of the detached and academic poem is "Antibes: Variations on a Theme", wherein abstract noun-phrases lie dead where one wants to find verbs or where the lyric with its unlikely verbs sags into reflection, a reflex of the cortex wanting to respect itself. Often the abundant similes are used to connect the natural scene with the Hellenic one in the teacher-poet's head, leaving in our museum a picture of the academic back home on the family farm.

The problem, of course, is Jones' decision to appear as observer, to keep himself hidden from any eyes looking back. It is an unhappy mode invented by critics and poets in the period 1918-1945, when it became horribly easy to be hurt on exposure. It unfortunately met the Anglo mind like an epipsyche, and gave us the neo-neo-augustans in Britain and the New Criticism in the U.S.A. In Canada a little later we heard and rewarded the genteel mystified despair of poets such as Wilfred Watson and Douglas Le Pan. I think that Jones instinctively distrusted the mode but found that he had to punch his way out of its bag with its gloves on his hands. Moments of clarity and actuality are shared when he is not concerned with sustaining a metaphor or structure.

In referring to nature at this time his favourite abstract noun is "candour." It is the quality of nature most worth imitating. Referentially, the implications are radical — they lead to acceptance of a fatherless universe, to what Jones calls "a friendly/ Nothingness", and they lead to agreement that one's death will be nothing new under that axeman, the "old, redundant sun".

But what of candour in the making of a poem? The word means glowing pure white, like the sun, and would seem to ask in a poem for virginal incandescence. Al Purdy noticed in a review that Jones' sensibility seemed innocent. Then what is he doing presenting the persona of a man who may reflect on the cosmos with a mirror of codified antiquity? He is a poem, unseen inside a "poet," and the latter writes a "realistic" piece called "Teenagers", tamping it with the mythic tombstone line, "Dragon's teeth across the land". The piece succinctly illustrates the agon I mentioned earlier, the false alternatives of "realism" and "myth-making". The poem inside appears as the everpresent sun reflects from an undeniably authentic and happenstance mirror (also appearing as a final image) in the aforementioned "The River: North of Guelph". For two pages Jones has related his mind with the very small river, but we remain suspicious because of certain British-anthology language. However, the brilliance of Jones' later breakthrough is foreshone in the found image at the end of the poem:

> A tin
> funnel,
> pitched into the middle of the stream,
> catches the light
> and sends it back

Say what you like about the metaphorical opportunism of the object found in the water — I am convinced that the poet did not throw it in.

In the notes on Jones in *15 Canadian Poets* (1970) Gary Geddes and Phyllis Bruce say that in *Axeman* the poet found metaphors that are "organic, drawing the reader toward, rather than away from, the subject". Except for the word "organic" I would agree, though I would say that our attention is more rewarded here by observing the discoveries than the results. "For Françoise Adnet" is a justly well-received poem, a lovely study that looks forward to the sculptural confidence found in *Phrases from Orpheus*. In it the poet has found the form that gives that desired candour to the formality of presence he always felt he must have. The poem is not simply still-life, not simply domestic — the actuality of the images of vegetables, daughter, kitchen, opens the universe to the reader's senses, and thus to his imagination. "For once things are what they are. . . . "

Two pages later a "Poem for Good Friday" asserts the natural winter/spring landscape against Christian metaphor, that theft of the senses that can be so easily allowed. An irony lurks around the poem, but the poem does announce a primacy of perception over interpretive myth-counting. It is significant that in

these poems Jones lets it be known that he would like to avail himself of the painter's aptitude. I am reminded of what Henri Michaux wrote on seeing his first Carribbean port:

> Only painters can get much out of that first moment of contact with a strange place. Drawing, colour is everything, and this suggests itself then and there. This pâté of God-knows-what, well, that's nature — but objects, no, not a one! It is only after mature, detailed inspection from different points of view that you come up with a name. A name is an object which you have detached.
>
> (*Ecuador*, 1970)

Of course one cannot detach anything from nature without detaching oneself from most of the rest. That is the lesson that Jones was learning as well. In *Butterfly on Rock* he mentions more than once Robert Frost's statement that we must give ourselves to the land in order to receive its gifts. I think that Jones goes further on that implication, believing that one *becomes* the land and *vice-versa*. In an eight-section poem called "Snow Buntings" the birds become confused with earth, snow, stones, flowers, wood, grain, grass and seeds. The poet is addressing a sculptor, in whose participatory mind the confusion should take action. The message, finally, is to imitate, not to copy, nature:

> You must lie down in the dark
> In the naked fields.
> You must think of the birds
>
> And make them as you will.

Such imitation calls not for surrender but for integrity of the person within integration with the rest of nature.

Just so the earth is seen to respond to a wintery April sun in "Standing in the April Noon". And, significantly, actual people appear in this letter-poem. In fact, that is how Jones finds a way to break out of the frozen ground, to compose poems addressed to people, those world's actors who never showed up in the first book. A tentative opening to them is made in another important poem, "Soliloquy to Absent Friends". (To conjure personal history again, I remember remarking that it seemed the most important poem in the startling anthology, *Poetry 62*.) It begins with an admission of the drear winter soul, and resolves that, as Margaret Avison puts it, "Nobody stuffs the world in at your eyes./ The optic heart must venture: a jail-break/ And re-creation."

Geddes and Bruce say that in *Axeman* "a hostile nature is presented, one that is stunted and barren, mute and unsympathetic." But I think that they are

extrapolating from their experiences of other Canadian poets (see Atwood's "position two" in *Survival*). I would prefer to accept Jones' term, the "friendly/ Nothingness". In the poem at hand, addressed to "Micheline" and "Quixote", there are five sections arranged as an ode. In section I we have an image of the (mind as) leafless fall, the farmland grown meaner, consumed for this year. In section II the poet calls for a dropping of large vain campaigns, for patience of one's perceptions, quoting Williams' red wheelbarrow and agreeing that so much depends upon it. Section III speaks of love for small hopeless things, the root retails that hold us from drifting in the abyss. Section IV is a Wordsworth imitation, a homely pastorale about humans who join for warmth in a (temporarily) frozen land. Section V ends:

> Let us be bare,
> Let us be poor,
> such poverty makes honest souls,
> and solitude is capital for love.
> Out of that silent contemplation of the trees,
> amid the vast candour of the snows,
> rich in loneliness, will come
> drenched in sunlight, as from empty seas,
> myriad wings and leaves — as though our tongues
> grew green with language and informed a world.

That synthesis and re-creation thus called for make the theme demonstrated in the art of Jones' most recent poems. So the poet's imitation of nature then will call for winter patience, the promise of an uttered spring, faith and works totally depending on the primacy of perception, the world and language as Merleau-Ponty describes them, not as the tool-makers would use them.

BUT IT IS NOT EASY to make that jail-break, to step out of the mind-forged garrison. In fact the way out is no door or gate — it is a tunnel, deep underground, through the permafrost, through the alienated Anglo psyche, oh yes, through the museum he and his ancestors have gathered down there. That's the voyage Jones makes painfully in *Phrases from Orpheus*. It is a hole once dug for Lazarus, Odysseus, and Jesus, part of whose sufferings had to be the stories that must be told, the dark dreams that must be turned into song.

The story was hinted at in a spooky poem in *Axeman*, "Little Night Journey", in which the soul meets and becomes the Hadean boatman-fisherman in moody

cloud night. While the vocabulary is detached, the rhythm and rimes give power to the "statement" that real (underworld) life begins when the day's commerce and reason lie down to die awhile. One is finally not convinced, because the poet stays awake, using the simile, he is *like* Lazarus, at this point describing, finding literary parallels to the psychic underworld experience, the mind still maintaining that it is only a resemblance observable through conscious thought *about* its shadow self. But Jones does speak of having the experience prior to the poem, through which "the fisherman glides, my soul in his eyes." The subconscious may be alive in the landscape. The soul vampirically becomes one with the soul-fisher. It is such a scary dream that the poet insists on the conscious mind's control of the poem. Later he dares go back to sleep, to give himself even to that strange new land outside Eden.

And inside Adam. I mean for God's sake, Adam's sojourn outside paradise is Odysseus' trip or Orphic chase through Hades. The main thing that makes it possible to survive, to find any surcease, is connection with other people, the old Hemingway theme. *Phrases from Orpheus* is blessed with an unusually good dust jacket note, where we are prepared for poems evoking "affection for particular people and things and for the creative power of life that demands the death and passing of those things." We are prepared to meet the theme of "one's isolation, or imprisonment within the self, when confronted with the difficulties of communication and communion and with death." And there is a hint of Jones' jailbreak, the assertion that "time and change are the essence not the enemy of life." It is for the thought and work on these matters, as well as for the very fine craftsmanship of the verse, that I find this to be one of the best books of poetry yet made in this country.

One can't help feeling gratified to find that once again here the clear attention to voice as the base for form opens for the reader a clear vision of the materials and thought presented. A naked strophe takes its place in the field beside a sunlit rock. The particulars of the verse imitate human speech, and speech *is* nature, to advantage undressed if you like. I am suggesting that Jones' welcoming of life (his argument, what it *means*, etc.) depends upon the bright (candid) sharp profile of his line and stanza in these poems — I don't think that anyone could read them aloud and be confounded by the voice that is articulated. It is the clarity of Yeats, Pound, and Williams, the music of the human voice that makes the sun rise in the morning.

Part of the advance is made by the class of the language. Academic inversions and circumlocutions are dropped in favour of highly vocal exclamations that

remind one of Williams — "What a ruckus!" Authentic personal slang finds its way in now, and brings the poems home, so that after the poet refers to a "two-bit creek," one feels with him "a new respect for/ Metals, rare-earth, salt." But most of the advance is in the integrity of the syllable, line and stanza, particulars that respond to the rhythms of a voice, part feeling, and once into print, part ideogrammatic.

Jones demonstrates the advance in his craft early in the book, in an exercise-poem called "Animals" — are they animals or poets? — and the reader is hereby instructed to read it aloud, to learn to read the rest of the book, to hear in his ear the great purchase and leverage on natural metaphor that the poet holds with his punctuation, for instance, including the cadences.

> So slight a thing as
> a new poem can
> move mountains.

There is a faith that is so much more poetry's province than any old description of a mountain.

Yes, he finds, you can still take the cosmos as your subject, but not as your equal or counterpart, as the earlier poems tried to do — rather as your place of action, of actuality, or yourself as its place of action:

> And so
> all things
> Deliquesce, arrange, and rearange in field.

So he says in "Mr Wilson, the World," another "poetics" poem addressed to an artist. One may enter the act of re-arranging and thus enter the process of world and the role of artist, such a thing more engaging for the reader than the cool detachment seen earlier. Look how Mr. Wilson's music is made from mineral, vegetable and animal (all moved by spirit breath):

> Enough if Mr. Wilson's pleased, if brass, if reeds,
> If skins of animals and steel
> Strings
>
> Translate his birdtracks into sound . . .

Birdtracks, indeed. That is so much more the real, making or finding of metaphor in the world, than bipolar similes that *use* the world. "To *imitate* the *process* and to *apprehend*/ The ephemeral substantiality of things. Enough," says one artist

to the other. (Italics mine.) He is the Orphic artist, in his loneliness singing to enact his attachment to all the mutable world:

> Have a sense of the void through which pours,
> Molecular, vertebrate, cellular, on wind or in wave,
> The host whom the lovers inherit — of that solitude
>
> In which there cohere
>
> All things.

It is a beautifully crowded solitude.

It is Adam's acceptance of the void that has become, with love, world. In "The Perishing Bird," another of the poet's more familiar lyrics, we find a refutation of Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium." Jones says that Yeats' timeless natureless refuge is a hell, a place where only the mind is alive, the senses and body emotions dead, a hell more dreadful than the dread of death. He chooses the wild bees over the golden bees, and though it is sad, places himself in death's kingdom, where one may have a place for feelings, so one may feel at least sad. Jones is a romantic all right, but not a Platonic yearner — who would want to get back into Eden when all your dying friends are out here? This earth is his certain death, and it calls up love. "To enjoy what we must suffer" is to make songs such as does the perishing bird, the mind in time, Orpheus' haunt.

So Jones does explore the earth of the exile in these poems, but we are all exiles, that is a portion of our friendships. He speaks of loss and isolation, but also of how to do something with them, not over them. If there is an Orpheus there must be a Eurydice, if an Adam an Eve. She appears now, as the poems attempt to find flowers growing among the pre-cambrian rocks. In fact, in "View from my Window"

> The hillside has been hidden
> And the stones
> Come up out of the snow
> Like flowers.

There is a lovely image, ambiguously optimistic and ironic (don't choose one) as in the resolution of the title poem, which we will come to.

So the items of nature are no longer pathetic, but joined and celebrated. That change, as it involves the poet and his poems, is the source or energy of hope, or at least hope of reconciliation. The poems are still set in winter and before hovering spring, but now "We shall survive/ And we shall walk/ Somehow into

summer." Somehow — there's resolution and qualification in that word. The earlier poet Jones was, with his detachment and brainy irony, an idealistic, and a stoic. Now he is a stoic, but he says "I thought there were limits to this falling away,/ This emptiness. I was wrong." His poetry is now a part of that process, not its opposite, not its dreamy redemption. Poems are not finite, but constantly metamorphose themselves. They are not signs of the poet's control over (his) nature; being inside nature, they are process:

> The spirit is thirsty, drinks
> When we least are aware

And the words beginning the following love poem to an Eve may speak for the poet or the poem:

> I have nothing to give you but a place to stand.
> I will be nature and uncritical.
> You may walk in me and be alone.

The songs of Orpheus are not sung against fate, but like those of Jones' admired birds, part of the cosmos' motion. It is good to recall that Orpheus may not look back, and that while Eden's Adam was given the animals to use or dominate, Orpheus was given the grace to call them to his circle, to be among them. It is by this grace that he stands for the coming of a man into adulthood, where death and the rest of life are realized, the new home. "For Robert Duncan" speaks of a circle of music makers, Duncan, Louis Zukofsky, Zukofsky's son the violinist, and Jones. The musicians are

> making private worlds public and
> digesting the public
> privately — making them real

— that is, not describing them.

Reviewing the book in *The Canadian Forum* (August 1968), Douglas Barbour wrote of Jones' "proper poetic objectivity". Proper the poems may be, if we go to the root of the word, but objective they are not, no more than is Orpheus' lyre-plucking simply a comment on the morning's beauty. Barbour also says (I am paying attention to his review because I think that it represents a wider mishearing of Orphic Jones) "His words are never chosen for their sound value alone: they are all there to serve the meaning as well." Just about every term of that sentence is off the mark. Barbour's positing of choice and the two channels of sound and meaning just don't apply to Orpheus. In him is the best example

of meaning as the action of sound. Here is the world of actuality, not simply reality, not only truth, not those observations of the rich tourist from Eden.

That safe garden is scorched in "To Eve in Bitterness". The poet says now he is not Adam but the Angel who must bitterly destroy Eden. But in his bitterness he is a poet, whose ghost is the memory of the garden, Orpheus' forbidden path which can't be retraced, and whose muse is the spirit, the breath of Eve, the garden's last creation, now mortal. She is an earthly, not a heavenly muse. The singer is Orpheus, not Apollo. Even the sun, Jones' old favourite, is now imaged as a moving woman. They are the motion of the world, not its equal. In speaking to his love in "En guise d'Orphée", the poet does not say he will make verses that try to equal her beauty, but that while she walks into the morning "like a girl/ From a long illness",

> There my song
> Shall burst upon you like the god.

In the title poem the Orpheus we see is largely the Orpheus in the underworld, but the story's tension holds the promise of the musician in his forest. The underworld is that adult winter-knowledge of his own life, the present and its future, face forward. The poem must be, then, large, not simply lyric. It is sixteen pages long, Jones' longest to this time. It is a strophic poem wherein all contiguous thought may be gathered to present sthenic ambiguities of hope and suffering that must be lived and projected, not "objectively" observed and reflected upon. The various margins of the strophes set two or four story lines in the same suite of rooms (stanzas), providing metaphor more authentic than your pushy similes. It is a shuffled ode, one might say. Read aloud, the poem does make Orphic music, the tones clearly leading all thought. It is rather arcane (and thus properly the subject of a separate essay), and one is led to believe it by the care of the musical notation, not to be bamboozled but to be, literally, charmed. Read, for instance, page 58:

> The distant
> sirens, crying in the street
> an accident?
>
> a wire
>
> bird whistles in the wood
> I hear
> Sirius calling, or
>
> beyond

I ask
a question of the dog

past Cerberus

beyond death's bark

(Such beautiful puns join with the music in making real metaphor.) The theme might be easily passed off as the adult admission and examination of solitude and mortality. The voyage of Orpheus takes place in the sub-sidereal underworld of lovers made mortal by their fervour, so "death . . . is but a door/ open/ to love, makes/ love dear." The ambiguity earlier spoken of is made inescapably active and present because it is not clever or described. At the end the use of two margins, through which we hear two voices mimetically dependent on one another, says that the poet's love is and is not alive in the afterdeath.

But that poem's depths cannot be walked in this quick critical journey. It is deep, and has song at its centre, as Carlyle said all deep things do. It is the depth, to shift a metaphor, of nakedness. When you want to speak of the surfaces of things, people or feelings, you exert detached rational control over your materials, like Pope dressing nature to (your) advantage, leading the very birds into your limed fitting room. As in his earlier poems, in this book Jones records many images of rural nature — seasons, weather, soil, growth. But now there are so many images of nature denuded, bare branch, stone, the great naked Canadian Shield that does not provide welcoming habitat for furze or figure of speech. Feelings, like signs of life, must be tenacious and carefully searched for, "deep in the silence/ Which is continuous sound."

The image of nakedness has special emotional meaning for someone writing out of the Anglo puritan and academic backgrounds. It bespeaks strong and once-infibulated desire. But it is the way to join rather than observe the earth: "This is the nakedness that I would share," says Jones of the late-winter rural scene. It calls for re-creation, bare earth, empty page. In "The Stream Exposed With all its Stones", one of his best-known poems, the main image is what the puritan secretly knows, that there is an "underworld" of dancing activity beneath the serene snow:

I tell you
Nakedness is a disguise: the white
Is dark below.

— but that realization comes only with disrobing. Eve's potential would never have been guessed at within the garden.

BUTTERFLY ON ROCK (1970) can tell us much of the place that Jones the poet has come to by the end of the sixties. At the same time as the book is the most convincing symbolic reading of our literature we have seen recently, it states in prose many of the principles the poet has come to as his own due to the Orphic voyage.

Paramount among these is the replacement of the ego. It once peered over the battlements of the stockade — now it is looking for an explorer's way across the uncharted continent. It must first work its way through the insecurity it feels when inherited lines are rubbed out. Jones speaks of that experience for the early Canadian poet (and often for the more recent one), of his "sense of exile, of being estranged from the land and divided within oneself." For American parallels see William Carlos Williams' *In the American Grain.*

Jones makes use of Frye's picture of the garrison of culture *vs.* the hostile land, and gives the sense that he has learnt to identify with the savages who were seen not as inhabitants but as representatives of that unwelcoming surround. One must, he says, learn to let the wilderness in — that is the only way that the mind-forged prison can be escaped. Such is the preoccupation of Eastern Canadian writers and critics in this age, and Jones is still writing within the tradition, though at its vanguard. That tradition includes the sentiment of Robert Frost suggested earlier, the desired realization "not only that the land is ours, but that we are the land's." Jones adds that the re-settled poet has to leave his garrison of Mediterranean words and listen in the seeming silence, where he will hear a voice he will discover to be that of his own poems, and that "the voice that demands to be heard is the voice of the land." For cross-reference read Earle Birney's poem, "Way to the West".

It is not surprising, then, to note that the word "courage" has become as important to Jones as the word "candour" once was. It is the courage of Adam, "not the courage to resist so much as the courage to accept, not the courage to defy but the courage to affirm, to love, and celebrate a world that sooner or later demands of them the sacrifice of their lives. Only within such an affirmation can man discover his identity and community with the rest of nature." The emphasis is on heart and discovery, thus mortality — and such realization calls for its representation in the form of the verse. Jones' verse becomes, around this time, open and vocal, responsible and vulnerable to changes in the weather, exterior or interior.

In *Butterfly on Rock* Jones says that Canadian literature has always been the

story of Adam and Eve because the land seemed such an outside-of-Eden experience. The U.S.A. may have been seen at one time as a new Eden for a lot of reborn Adams, but Virginia does not have the snowy Canadian Shield as its backbone. Whereas the early Canadian writers, such as Susanna Moodie, might look back upon England as lost Eden, the later generations had no such dreams to fog their landscapes, or they should not have. Proteus is awake. The Ark has landed. "The land is both condition and reflection, both mirror and fact." It is no use trying to make it into a New England (see James Reaney's "The Avon River above Stratford, Ontario") or to try to impose on it an ideal order. Jones decries "the impulse to impose upon nature, upon the life of the land as upon human life, an ideal order." The implications for a poetics are clear: no 18th century English verse forms for Northern Ontario, or — don't dress your loved one like Ariadne, for the frost will freeze her diaphanous gown to her blue body.

Adam had to accept both the world and his mortality. The necessary courage is the courage to live without "conquering" nature, knowing one's human limitations in a huge and maybe frightening, and finite, world. For Jones the courage seems to involve the necessity of fear and bitterness, the possibilities that were unsuccessfully avoided by the stance of detachment at one time. He admires, in the writings of other people, a sense of joy that has come *through* suffering connected with death and its message concerning our own. Acceptance of death and acceptance of Eve and the children, that is the "double hook" of birth. For man the "first days of Creation . . . of naming and discovering" come after the gates are closed behind him, for the poet as for the father of our line, a "jailbreak and re-creation."

THE POEMS written since *Phrases from Orpheus* are songs of a man who is once again above ground and now at home there. The lines and stanzas are more thoroughly integral, fully used, than ever before, and they are shaped by the poet's full physical faculties, as inevitably authentic as the interreactions of wind and tree-stand.

The scenes are still generally winter, or the last days of winter, but now winter rimes with the rest of the year and not allegorically with poet's gloom:

> The climate of the flesh
> is temperate here
> though we look out on a winter world

(*Canadian Forum*, June 1972)

I have already mentioned the ending of this poem ("Also"):

> I am led into the winter air
> by certain nameless twigs, as bare
> as we are. I would find
>
> them also in our mouths.

The synthetic connection of self with nature makes homely the ambiguity found in the Orpheus poems. The twigs are naked, yes, but at the same time they are the part of the tree that will do spring's job, announce the re-creation. The mouths, passages of sustenance and poetry, were mentioned in "A Brief to the People," written a year earlier:

> O let our mouths
> against the silence open
> into silence
> we can share and be
>
> (*Canadian Forum*, June 1972)

I believe that the poet means that last phrase, "share and be", to speak of process, of cause. "As a mouth I serve," said Layton, but in his poem he became the spokesman of nature. I think that Jones' position has appeared past that two-part image of the world. It is a placement of himself, his love, his poem, *in* nature, *as* nature.

This means that the poem cannot be ripped off like birch bark. "The Route Out" (in *Made in Canada*, 1969) is a good example of a poem whose rime grows rather than being laid on, as it was in the early poems. It is now the fabric rather than the cut of the fabric. The poet and/or the land is singing, neither explaining nor explained, that is never laid out flat for us, none of that position for rapine as dear to the dirty mind. I mean even in a poem such as "Fiat Lux" (*Arts Canada*), in which ancient Greek stone is the primary material, the unnamed mythic life is enate, it grows from the elements.

Jones' birds are still here too, but now they speak for themselves. In fact, in an unpublished poem called "Winter Walk," they teach language to the composer, who walks along a horizon

> perhaps to discover
> the language of a few birds, the shape
> of our breath, a relation
>
> uncentred

— that is, not the mute cosmos centred in the poet or his exhalation. The fragments of birdsong and smoke wraith are part of "one song/ an endless/ prothalamium" suggested in another poem, and Jones now clearly sees the poems as similar particles, not end-stopped observations on life.

There are lots of people in these new poems. They are addressed in title and poem; they are simply in the world. The snow now has signs of people in it, their tracks that mess up a perfect quatrain and let us follow — who is to say that their steps are not ours as we put our feet into them? Jones is no longer the idealist. He is at home now. In fact the house has become a very important image. He is living there, with other people, no longer a spectre on the rise of the landscape. In "To Tory" (*Made in Canada*), a poem addressed to his sleeping daughter, the world's terror is shut out as abstract, while spring makes itself known concretely to those inside:

> The world
> continues on its wobbly course
> and water drips
> in the fireplace — spring
> announcing itself

The house resembles personal lifetime (and poetry life) in a nice poem called "For this House" (*Canadian Forum*, June 1972). It is a neat presentation of Jones' double feeling — that the house will not endure through all weather's time, but that in it a person can make his own nature's season, grow green sprouts in February:

> I am relieved
> that no house lasts
>
> But I am glad
> that this house stands
> and in the snow
>
> preserves the order of green plants
> your hands sleeping now
> let go

The poem grows, it can not be broken into passages of argument. It grows and changes as time's seasons do. Jones has learned to love to live in his time as he has come similarly to his space.

The house is where one lives in the world. It is no garrison — spring is seen and heard inside, coming down the chimney into its hearth and heart. In "A

Garland of Milne" (*Quarry*, Summer 1967) Jones writes of the painter who is associated with the region of woods north of Peterborough where Jones grew up:

> He was at home, sitting
> with the small birds around him
> gathering seeds . . .

The poet says the painter gathered seeds and "let the trees stand," no garrison-builder, he. "Who flies with the whirlwind is at rest." Who seeks to defy it is a fool and a bad artist. Interestingly, Milne is shown as placing some wildflowers in a pickle jar, perhaps to sketch them. It is an image that shows this reader three things that Jones feels close to. The painter was at home with the joining of the natural and the homely. He did not pretend to leave nature as its "gods" demanded. He would have the flowers in that simple used jar whether he was going to draw them or not. It is an image of relaxed formality that is Jones' own province.

Jones' poetics are probably most overtly presented in an unpublished poem called "Dance for One Leg", which looks at a picture of a man with a cast on his leg. A broken leg is natural, and the mending is natural, and it can be not imposed but co-operated with by the plaster's imitation of bone. The poem begins:

> Not to be driven, above all
> by oneself
>
> to improvise
>
> as fields
> forget the glacier and the driven plough
> and move like milk.

Then the poem moves to children dancing, to a finding that

> a break is an occasion
> to discover love

(how often the word "discover," to make naked, appears in these poems) to this ending:

> They dance
>
> the tall man with a cast
> dances
>
> thus, together

as estranged bones knit, as fields
invested in the driven snow
forget themselves

become one flesh.

At home in the flesh, at home in the land, at home in the number one, after all the enumeration in Eden and on the Ark has become only rumoured history. D. G. Jones is proof that there is a tradition of English-Canadian poetry, and that the tradition is going to be here.

ESSENTIAL GLASSCO

Charles Murdoch

SEEKING TO PINPOINT the "essential Glassco" and attempting to systematize his work is a frustrating task. Over a writing career of forty years he appears in numerous different guises. At one moment he's "Nijinsky's faun, fresh from some sylvan adventure"[1] and the next he's the bearded old man on the mountain hurling down his tablets of doom. There's the profligate youth chronicling the escapades of the lost generation and the reclusive poet wrestling with death and consciousness in the Eastern Townships, the mischievous master of erotica and the elder statesman of Canadian letters. Clearly, in dealing with such a complex personality and versatile artist, it is safest to begin at the beginning.

John Glassco was born in 1909 into an establishment family that had been in Montreal since before the American Revolution. Education at Selwyn House School and Lower Canada College prepared him to take his place among the English-speaking power elite of Quebec but he lacked the temperament for this role. Glassco early decided to be a poet and he had the independence of spirit to rebel against his fate and the craftiness to manipulate parental dismay to his own ends. At seventeen he quit McGill. Amazingly well-read for his age and thoroughly acquainted with all the post-war avant-garde literature, he saw himself as a surrealist poet suffocating in Montreal. After extorting an allowance from his disapproving father he set off to live and work among the dazzling expatriate literati of Paris.

Shortly after arriving, he abandoned surrealist poetry and in a characteristically self-confident move decided to write his memoirs. Glassco was very sure of his untried abilities and as it turned out, rightly so, for as a record of his next four years we have that remarkable achievement, *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, a portrait of an age, a study of youth, and a very clear picture of the young John Glassco.

The *Memoirs* are outstanding because they manage successfully to be so many things at once. There are the people who came and went, Joyce and Hemingway,

Gertrude Stein and Robert McAlmon, making Paris in the 1920's the improbable centre of English writing. Glassco makes a historical contribution through the brilliantly recalled conversations about literature among the people who were forging its twentieth century form. But there is more in the *Memoirs* than just literary history. Primarily they are an account of hedonism on a heroic scale, the remembered joy of a total indulgence of appetite. The reader is dragged, to his own delight, through an exhausting and continuous course of parties and escapades of debauchery and excess. Finally, the centre of interest becomes the young man through whose eyes all this is seen, the not-yet-artist who is simply living and garnering experience.

The book was not written at the time of the action. It was put together from diaries when the author was considerably older — twenty-one — and awaiting an operation for tuberculosis with a slim chance of survival. The shadow of death hangs over the *Memoirs* and there is created an added piquancy of lost happiness as the scene from time to time shifts back to the silence and sterility of the hospital room.

This young man who assembled his memoirs in the Royal Victoria Hospital justifies the archness and arrogance he showed toward his elders and literary superiors by proving himself a prose writer of uncommon ability. Louis Dudek has called the work "the best book of prose by a Canadian writer I have ever read".[2] Ignoring for a moment the material, one must recognize the technical excellence of the writing itself, the power to entrance and entertain, and the ability to select and edit while still revealing the entire picture.

A couple of years are condensed into twenty-six chapters dealing with probably twice as many days. The narrative moves effortlessly along as adventures are interspersed with reflection, conversations, and portraits. The reader's attention is never allowed to flag. Both Glassco's prose and poetry are enhanced by his great power to recall totally a situation and reconstruct its mood. In the *Memoirs* this is accomplished by the use of a dramatization of dialogue which does not even pretend to be a verbatim account of the actual conversation. The author simply withdraws and lets the characters reveal themselves. It is Glassco's greatest ability and the one which gives his scenes such economy and freshness. It is also an invaluable technique in a memoir with a cast in the dozens. The problem of capturing the atmosphere of a party is handled in the same way. Like Evelyn Waugh, the greatest chronicler of revels, he achieves success by relying on the selective presentation of catches of conversation.

The first edition of *Memoirs of Montparnasse* was sold out within weeks of

its publication in 1970. The key to its great popular success lies in its engaging style. As an example, here is Glassco's impression of Gertrude Stein, at whose salon he had arrived uninvited.

> A rhomboidal woman dressed in a floor-length gown apparently made of some kind of burlap, she gave the impression of absolute irrefragability; her ankles, almost concealed by the hieratic folds of her dress, were like the pillars of a temple: it was impossible to conceive of her lying down. Her fine close-cropped head was in the style of the late Roman Empire, but unfortunately it merged into broad peasant shoulders without the aesthetic assistance of a neck; her eyes were large and much too piercing.

It is this combination of impudence and elegance that consistently charms the reader.

The *Memoirs* are valuable also for what they tell us about the man who, forty years later, won the Governor General's Award for Poetry. The book chronicles an important period in the development of Glassco's sensibility. He went to Paris to write poetry, to communicate, to instruct, but gave it up when he found he was the one who needed instruction.

> I had, moreover, no experience of anything but ecstasy. I had never known despair or anguish, which I looked on as literary expressions. I had not endured hunger, frustration, illness or chastity; these were the afflictions of others. I had nothing on my conscience and had never wept except from loneliness, fright, or boredom. How then was I qualified to write?

He then sets out conscientiously to acquire experience, and abandons himself to a life of self-indulgence which he considers the appropriate course for a man of his age. "Half of man's miseries," we are told, "result from an insufficiency of leisure, gormandise and sexual gratification during the years from seventeen to twenty." Glassco sees himself as the appropriate artist, the poet-not-quite-yet.

As well as lacking experience, he shuns commitment and dedication which he sees as "so many pairs of weighted diver's shoes — of no use to anyone who wanted to remain on the surface of life." But this existence on the surface of life could not last, and the commitment comes unlooked-for when Glassco falls in love with an American millionairess whom he himself recognizes as worthless and a "mangeuse d'hommes". Here the real learning experience begins with the ecstasy and suffering of unreturned love. Glassco links the experience directly to the breakdown of his health and the resulting tuberculosis.

It must be remembered that the *Memoirs*, as they are presented, are filtered not only through the consciousness of the young man of the boulevards but also

through the sensibility of the slightly older man, gravely ill and facing a very uncertain future. The younger man was "still engrossed by detail", while the hospitalized author is seeking to communicate, through the *Memoirs*, a "more extensive view of life". There is here a link between action and death. Glassco's surrender to romantic love had destroyed his youth, and nearly ended his life. Without this experience he would still have been young and healthy, yet he says if he had it to do over again, he would do nothing differently. This dilemma forms a theme which recurs constantly in the later work of Glassco. The poet, like the young memoirist, seeks the overview, and in the shadow of death grapples with the burden of consciousness and the value of commitment.

In the final chapter, the author says he is writing "to recapture a little of the brightness of those days when I had health and spirits; for that brightness even seems to gild these long, dreary days." At the same time, Glassco is spreading out his life before him, examining it, drawing conclusions, and passing them on. Working at the task single-mindedly every day, he has made a commitment to communication, and this marks the end of the apprenticeship of the artist.

With the operations for tuberculosis, the young man of the *Memoirs* disappeared completely. The energy, the arrogance, the self-confidence and the gregariousness were left behind, and Glassco moved to the country, adopting the secluded life of a semi-invalid that his slow recovery forced on him. He lived first at Baie d'Urfé and in 1936 moved to the Eastern Townships, getting by on a small private income supplemented by a few dairy cows and a rural mail route. These were empty years for Glassco the artist. Turning his back on the literary world, he was part of no movement, and had no contact with the Montreal poets of the 1930's and 40's. A novel was undertaken but never completed, and of the surviving poetry produced in this period, the earliest piece we know of was written in 1940.

Finally, Glassco the artist resurfaces in 1958 at the age of 49 with the publication of *The Deficit Made Flesh*, a book of twenty-seven poems. Since then, hardly a year has gone by without the appearance of some work written or edited by Glassco; three books of poetry, two novels, the memoirs, three books of translations. It is the beginning of a new career.

The John Glassco of the *Memoirs* was not a mature artist. He had an admirable style, complete technical command of the language, lots of anecdotes to relate, but could only speak with authority on youth. John Glassco the poet was

a long time in developing, and when he does emerge, he reveals a sensibility and a wisdom of age, a vision of life that no young man could have. It is a poetry of the end of life, inspired by the imminence of death. All his best poems are written from the vantage point of a hilltop, where the "future is abolished"[3] and where for a prolonged moment a man can turn and survey the past laid out before him. The experiences and the emotions, the goals and the motivations are sifted through in the light of the harsh, newly-realized truth of death.

The intolerable loss of consciousness must somehow be made tolerable. The place of the individual's ego must be rethought so that death can be seen as a culmination of life rather than a contradiction. It is this process of sifting and rethinking that is the inspiration and which provides the raw material for John Glassco's later career as a poet.

The poems which spring from this special sensibility are of two main types. There are the long meditative poems which deal with consciousness and the workings of the mind. They recreate and analyse at length a mood or emotion. The psyche is isolated and we see it again and again assaulted by love, ambition, sensuality, or the awareness of approaching death.

The other category consists of shorter, tightly-wrought poems built around symbols in the external world. Included here is most of the townships poetry. The images, concrete, familiar and prosaic, are brilliantly manipulated by the poet. Old houses, crumbling barns, and deserted homesteads are perceived through an eye which alternately sees in them horror and tranquility, corruption and beauty.

To date, there are three volumes of poetry. *The Deficit Made Flesh* was followed in 1964 by *A Point of Sky*, and in 1971 the *Selected Poems* appeared and won the Governor-General's Award for poetry in English.

The selection for this last volume was not in fact made by Glassco, but by A. J. M. Smith. Smith has chosen all the best poems from the earlier books and added a few new ones. His organization of the material into four sections is of great value in interpreting the poet. As in a piece of music, the reader is led through various moods and styles in the different sections, the themes developing and repeating, slowly revealing the Glassco sensibility from all angles.

The townships poetry is all contained in the first section. Though this group of sixteen poems alone would not reveal the entire Glassco, the important themes are immediately brought to light by these powerfully presented rural scenes. First is the "Rural Mail", a poem of the country which shifts in focus from a pastoral view of the green good valley to a grotesque close-up of the hard, embittered

existence of the farmer, "man on man's estate of nature, Farmer on farm, the savage civilized." In the last stanza the focus again expands; the eye pulls back to view the end result, the reward of this life.

> Where the bull, the buzz-saw, and the balky mare
> Are the chosen fingers of God for a farmer's sins,
> Like the axe for his woods, and his calves and chicks and children
> Destined for slaughter in the course of things.

Already in this first selection, written in 1940, we have the situation, the pointlessness of a life which is an enslaved existence, without consolation, and ending finally in an absurd and brutal death. Very frightening stuff, it illustrates the poet's view of the essentially tragic nature of the individual's life.

Success in Glasco's poems lies in finding a permanence, not in cheating death but in finding values which will make a whole life complete unto itself within the brackets of birth and death. The conventional, socially approved goals and dreams don't work. Many of the poems, like the first, are tragedies, but tragedies are the result of mistakes, and a mistake implies the failure to perceive and follow the correct course.

"The White Mansion" deals also with false goals mocked by death, and men made the fools of time. The mansion is the creation of the homesteader who made it his dream and the focal point of his life. But the master of the farm has been himself over-mastered and has become the slave of the vision. In the poem, this controlling obsession has become personified in the mansion itself as a mocking demon who captures the soul of a man and wrings him dry.

> Ere I was done the dying farmer cursed me,
> Crying within the strangling noose of hope.
> I am the grave of the husbandman's hope.
>
> I am a shining temple, a tall man's pride.

The house, a projection of the individual ego, must be supreme and its slave must have no other gods before it.

> Two hearts, two bodies clove, knew nothing more.
> Ere I was done I tore them asunder. Singly
> They fled my ruin and the ruin of love.
> I am she who is stronger than love.

This poem is the most powerful and direct in the section. Glassco's great ability has always been the creation of dramatic characters, as witnessed in the memoirs.

Some of the poetry tends to be a bit didactic, and the poet is always at his best when least visible. His themes are best revealed by his characters in other poems such as "The Death of Don Quixote" and "The Web" who can speak with more conviction and more freedom than the poet can permit himself.

Interspersed with these poems of negation and denial are others of a more tranquil mood and more positive tone which, in affirming life, lead the reader on to the next step, the consolation, and the transcendence of time.

In the poems already mentioned time was shown as the enemy of man by means of the decaying farmhouses and the fields grown back to weeds. The collapse of man's monuments to himself was the act of a malevolent nature. In "Luce's Notch", the same workings of time are presented in a different light, in a poem of a very different mood.

Once again the scene is the abandoned farm, Glassco's principal symbol of mutability. This time the poet's attention is fixed on the forces of nature that are reclaiming the homestead of Aaron Luce. He compares his feelings in these surroundings with the impressions he had fifteen years earlier in the same place. The result is a didactic exposition of the lessons learned in the meantime, the process of coming to terms with change, and time, and death.

The young man's feelings are

> Of that ecstatic suffering which is joy,
> That sense of being unable to possess
> A natural scene.

The ego is supreme, the one power in the world that must be fed. The frustration arises from the inability to dominate nature, and to bend it to the will. This attitude is the cause of the tragedies witnessed in the earlier poems. Building monuments to the ego and seeking immortality for the consciousness are endeavours that will be mocked by death.

In the second half of the poem we are granted entry into the higher state of consciousness which the poet has achieved with age.

> This madness I have no more. I only see
> Beauty continues, and so do not I.

Desire is the great danger, the indication of the ego in control. The poet must be content merely to see, to comprehend and to communicate the truth.

In nature has been found a permanence which transcends death. Far from mastering the natural world, the mortal human being must come to see himself as a small and transient part of unchanging but seasonal nature, completely sub-

servient to its rules. Success in the short span of life lies in realizing this and thus escaping the fate of time's fool.

All that makes man unique is his faculty of consciousness, his ability to see and to perceive. This is his only real possession, and it is an instrument which allows him to organize experience, apprehend beauty, and approach truth.

"Luce's Notch" celebrates and recreates a moment of awareness, the realization of man's place in the universe. It ends with an invocation of nature to reveal more.

> You natural scenes to whose eternity
> My transient vision and my life are bound,
> Teach me to see . . .
>
> . . . Keep me as I am now,
> Here on this solitary mountain-top,
> Purged of each last impulsion of desire
> To make you mine, to carry you along
> On the wings of possession.

Glassco's position is blocked out in the first section of the book. It differs from the other sections in that it is nature poetry, the medium being the contemplation of scenes in the Eastern Townships. In the second part, the subject matter is more human, but the same themes continue to develop. "Brummell at Calais" and "The Death of Don Quixote" are two tragedies of consciousness.

Glassco's eulogy of the notorious dandy of Regency England is distressing and ambiguous. Brummell, we are told, succeeded in life because he never did anything. He did not try to wrench anything from the world, so he had nothing that death could take from him. He is compared to a butterfly, a thing of beauty in nature which gives delight and exists for its allotted time without plan and without fear of mortality. Brummell managed to escape suffering and frustration and in this way perfected "an art of being".

> For see, even now in the long implacable twilight,
> The triumph of his veritable art,
>
> An art of being, nothing but being, the grace
> Of perfect self-assertion based on nothing,
> As in our vanity's cause against the void
> He strikes his elegant blow, the solemn report of those
> Who have done nothing and will never die.

However, we recognize something of the cop-out in this. Brummell's tranquility

is that of an idiot or an animal. In rejecting the unique human faculty of the conscious, the dandy has settled for a lower form of life. He has escaped despair in the same way as those who undergo a lobotomy and is consequently less than a complete man.

Much more affecting and noble is the character of Don Quixote, dying sane and disillusioned.

> The withdrawal of the vision,
> The removal of the madness,
> The supplanting of a world of beauty
> By God's sticks and stones and smells
> Are afflictions, I find, of something more absurd
> Than any book of chivalry.

Here is a man whose life was animated and committed. Was his mad vision just an illusion? And is the reality better than the illusion? Is the reality more true than the dream? We return to the problem of consciousness which is a gift, but also a responsibility and a burden. Brummell rejected its responsibilities and was less for it. Don Quixote's madness is merely a symbol of this consciousness that animates and seeks to give form to the brief space between birth and death. Impelling man to work toward some end, it is the force referred to earlier in "The Brill Road".

> . . . we follow the blinding years,
> Into the sweeping, swallowing wind,
> Into the gape of all and the loss of the person,
> Driving his birthright deathward in a trance
> Over the mountain's swollen Jovian brow,
>
> The road is a trick, like every form of life,
> A signal into the dark impartial storm

These lines echo the young Glassco of Montparnasse who was unwilling to make a commitment and to surrender control of his life to a purpose. "Literature," he reflected, "like any other form of gainful employment, was just another trap."

In the Don Quixote poem the force of the vision is represented symbolically and ironically as a form of madness, a mental aberration. Our sympathies are entirely with the old knight as he mourns the loss of his "world of beauty", but his dream must be wrong for it cannot accept death and will not prepare the dreamer for the loss of consciousness. Don Quixote, therefore, must be consigned

to the same category as that less romantic egotist, the builder of the White Mansion. The only difference is that the old don does not die alone. His one consolation is Sancho, "faithful unto death". Though the dream is gone, the love and devotion of the old companion still remain.

The last three lines of "The Death of Don Quixote" are an introduction to the love theme which works through the remainder of the *Selected Poems.* One gains nothing by "remaining on the surface of life"; that was Brummell's error. The commitment is necessary, but commitment to another person is more rewarding and lasting than devotion to an ego-centred idea.

The third section is composed of poems of love: carnal, unrequited and lost. The concentration is on human relationships, the meeting of two isolated egos. Love is the one viable dream that will fill the space of life with joy and beauty. Glassco's concern is always the problem of maximizing the quantity and quality of experience. He puts it this way in the love poem "One Last Word".

> The means are more important than the end,
> Ends begin only as excuse for action,
> For adventures sought for their own sake alone,
> Pictures along the way, feelings
> Released in love . . .

At the end of life, all that remains is memory, the recollection of the experiences and adventures encountered in the pursuit of the dream. Memory is the theme of "The Places Where the Dead Have Walked".

> . . . What piece of ground
> Impressed by a beloved foot
> But has not gathered up the sound
> to keep it captive underground
> And store its music underfoot?

The piece of ground is the consciousness which has the power to recreate and relive past experience. Though the lover is gone, the love is not lost. It can live on in the memory and continue to be a source of joy and beauty. As Glassco pointed out much earlier in the *Memoirs,* the consolation of consciousness is that time and place can be destroyed at will by closing the eyes.[4]

In the fourth section, the poetry is once more written from the moment before death. The individual is alone, without hope, though not in despair. In "The Day" the ends and the means, the actions and the motivations of the ending life are examined.

Here are all the themes brought together. First, there is presented the undeniable terror of the end of consciousness.

> On that day
> We shall rise on our elbows and glare around us, looking
> For the abolished future
> In that moment of supreme consciousness
> Of unmedicinable dismay
> Of absolute from time . . .

Next there is the betrayal of death, the cancelling of the vision, here named the "impossible city" which was the initiator of life's actions, Don Quixote's madness. The dying man is betrayed too by romantic love which has failed as a goal. He ascribes the motive of selfishness to his loved one, and, unwittingly, to himself.

This first part, in which the ego confronts death, is all bitterness and despair, but the second part shows how to make a good death. In the first stanza, dying is equated with giving.

> This poor man, this dying one . . .
> The mask of humanity
> Mock of consciousness
> Where is his city
> What is he doing?
> — All that he is
> His struggle and suffering
> In part of ourselves
> Exists for us only,
> This is the last gift
> Of his life's meaning
> All that he sought
> In the marvellous city
> Relinquished and offered
> To us the survivors
> As it will be
> Ours to pass on
> To those who have taken
> Our hearts in their keeping . . .
> The infinitesimal
> Glimpse of a beautiful blessed falsehood

Death is the last gift. If one lives for others the ego is transcended and death holds no terror because the important things are not dying. This idea is expressed again in an exhortation to love which follows.

Forget the stones and scents and sounds of the fabulous city
Here in the heart of another blooms a miraculous home
Hide your proud head, renounce your ridiculous freedom
Content you to be the singing prisoner of love.

With this poem, the problems of life, and of death, developed throughout the book, are finally resolved. This is attested to by the tranquil passing of the consciousness in the last stanza.

Removed from time
Dependent on nothing
When nothing will matter
You will escape
Like a mouse in the darkness . . .
The shadow will touch you
Engross you wholly,
And soon, soon
The day of others
Freed of your sickness, . . .
The day of their freedom
Dawn quietly without you.

This is a skeletal outline of some of the important themes of Glassco's poetry. The young man who write the memoirs could "see every hair and pimple on a face without seeing the face itself."[5] The older poet has attained the overview which was denied to the youth. The experience of living and dying is encircled, organized, and reduced to its essential facts.

First there is man's place in nature, where the race may survive, but each individual is doomed. Then there comes the problem of making a meaning between birth and death, that brief period of consciousness. And consciousness itself, that unique gift, is a two-edged sword which permits man to see and learn, but also creates the ego and gives birth to dreams and visions that are unattainable and doomed to frustration. The only commitment that is worthwhile is to another human being. Self-sufficiency is abandoned; the individual ceases to be isolated and becomes part of the chain which is immortal.

GLASSCO'S POETRY is intensely personal, and nowhere are there to be found the social themes of the contemporary urban poets. Yet, with the growing success of his second career as a man of letters Glassco recovered the gregariousness of the younger man who constantly sought the company of other

artists, and in the 1960's he once again became involved in the literary world. He was the principal organizer of the Foster Poetry Conference in 1963 and later edited *English Poetry in Quebec* containing the proceedings and main addresses of that gathering. In 1965 he was awarded a Senior Fellowship by the Canada Council, and still continues to be an important force in the advancement of poetry in Canada.

One of his major contributions in this field has been his work in presenting Québécois literature to English Canada. He edited *The Poetry of French Canada in Translation*, an anthology which appeared in 1970, containing the works of 48 poets from the 17th century to the present. Over 60 of the poems were translations by the editor himself.

As early as 1962 he translated into English the *Journal of Saint-Denys-Garneau*, a poet with whom he feels a special affinity. Both lived and wrote in the shadow of death. Each abandoned an affluent Montreal background for a secluded rural existence, seeking in isolation to organize experience and come to terms with mortality.

John Glassco's first book was *Contes en Crinoline*, written in French and published in Paris in 1929. He mentions it in the memoirs as "a series of historical sketches with a unifying transvestite theme". Since then Glassco has produced several volumes of commercial erotica for fun and profit. Many were published pseudonymously, and the author insists they are of no literary value. They are, however, a delight, because one finds that the older man has not at all lost the rascality of the youth in Paris.

Under the Hill, published by Olympia Press in 1959 is his completion of the unfinished manuscript by Aubrey Beardsley. In this retelling of the tale of Venus and Tannhauser, Glassco studiously cultivates the style of the decadents. The changeover point is impossible to detect, and Glassco's tableaux are as bizarre as Beardsley's. The effect is exotic, titillating, and a little frightening.

Harriet Marwood, Governess is an enormous joke. It deals with the relationship between the lady of the title and her adolescent ward. Over its 250 pages a great love develops, cemented by frequent applications of stern discipline. This is Glassco's revenge on Victorianism. Written in the style of a 19th century lady novelist, perhaps the literary wife of a country vicar, *Harriet Marwood* maintains a tone of impeccable respectability while describing the most corrupt acts of sado-masochism. The English are portrayed as the most depraved people in the world, with whom anything goes as long as proper appearances are kept up.

The prose works[6] do not reveal the complete Glassco, but then neither does the

poetry. It has been argued that the verse is the more serious, and so it is if by serious one means grave and humourless. Glassco's reverence for the form excludes all amusement and makes the poetry more earnest than the man. There is another side to Glassco which delights in the absurdities of life and has the will and the ability to make us laugh. The comic vision revealed in the simple, elegant prose of the Memoirs and Erotica is no less of an accomplishment and of no less artistic value than the very different vision presented in the poetry.

NOTES

[1] Leon Edel, Introduction to *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, 1970.

[2] Louis Dudek, the Montreal *Gazette*; quoted on back cover of the memoirs, Feb. 7, 1970.

[3] John Glassco, "the Day", in *Selected Poems* OUP, Toronto, 1971.

[4] *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, p. 106.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 70.

[6] This essay was written and accepted before the publication of *The Fatal Woman*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue. ED.

CANADIAN POETS AND THE GREAT TRADITION

Sandra Djwa

IN THE BEGINNING, as Francis Bacon observes, "God Almightie first Planted a Garden ... the Greatest Refreshment to the Spirits of Man."[1] It is this lost garden of Eden metamorphosed into the Promised Land, the Hesperides, the El Dorado and the Golden Fleece which dominates some of the sixteenth and seventeenth century accounts of the New World reported in Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1598-1600) and the subsequent *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625). References to what is now Canada are considerably more restrained than are the eulogies to Nova Spania and Virginia; nonetheless there is a faint Edenic strain in the early reports of the first British settlement in the New World.

John Guy implemented the first Royal Patent for settlement at Cupar's Cove, Newfoundland in 1610, a settlement inspired by Bacon and supported by King James, who observed that the plantation of this colony was "a matter and action well beseeming a Christian King, to make true use of that which God from the beginning created for mankind" (Purchas, XIX). Sir Richard Whitbourne's "A Relation of the New-found-land" (1618) continues in the same Edenic vein as he describes Newfoundland as "the fruitful wombe of the earth":

> Then have you there faire Strawberries red and white, and as faire Raspasse berrie, and Gooseberries, as there be in England; as also multitudes of Bilberries, which are called by some Whortes, and many other delicate Berries (which I cannot name) in great abundance. (*Purchas*, XIV.)

Many of the first Planters in Canada saw themselves, at least initially, as new Adams beginning again in the garden of the New World reserved by "God ... for us Britaines,"[2] which, if not Eden itself, was at least a Golden Fleece sufficient to show the "wayes to get wealth, and to restore Trading."[3] Yet, as the first poetry and the journals of exploration assert, the upper half of North America was not

a garden but a wilderness. Newfoundland was a rocky and unprofitable fishing station, no Eden even for the soaring flights of the seventeenth century imagination. Hayman in 1628 writes that the island is "wild, salvage ... rude, untowardly". As a remedy, he proposes "neat husbandry", that combination of physical and moral endeavour which will transform a "plain, swarth, sluttish Ione" into a virtuous matron, "pretty pert, and neat with good cloathes on."[4] Lacy, writing a century later in 1729, turns the satirical eye of Restoration comedy on the bleak land and inhabitants.

> Most that inhabit are a fearful Tribe,
> Whose Characters I cannot well describe;
> Who, like *Siberians*, lonely here reside,
> And, in a willing Banishment, abide.
> It is this sottish People's common use
> To warm their Veins with an Infernal Juice,
> Both Men and Women do this Liquor choose,
> And rarely keep the Bottle from their Nose.[5]

As Lacy's unpromising reports might indicate, the Adamic impulse which had led England to foster the plantation of settlers in Newfoundland was quickly diverted after the first quarter of the seventeenth century into settlement of the more promising colonies of Virginia and New England. The consequence for the Canadian section of British North America was a cultural silence which settled down for almost two hundred years.

As a framework to the literature which was slowly to emerge from these colonial beginnings, I would like to suggest the following points: first, English Canadian literature has been characterized by a literary dependence upon British models and by a distinctively moral tone; secondly the English great tradition, as reflected by Canadian poets, has been essentially Royalist rather than Puritan; and thirdly, the introduction of Darwinism into Canada coincided with the emergence of Romanticism. As a result of all these factors, that vision of nature and of society reflected in English Canadian poetry differs sharply from that written in the United States or Great Britain.

Historically, Canadian poetry has been both imitative and didactic. The first original poetry written in English in the new world, R[obert] H[ayman]'s *Quodlibets, Lately Come Over From New Britaniola, Old Newfound-Land* (1628), consisted of "Epigrams and other small parcels, both Morall and Divine." The

first four books of this volume were Hayman's, the others were translated from the Latin of the English epigrammatist, John Owen, and others, concluding with "two Epistles of that excellently wittie Doctor Francis Rablais." *Quodlibets* is, of course, written from within the seventeenth century literary tradition which sanctions both imitation and the moral function of literature. Consequently, it is questionable whether we can accept Hayman as the progenitor of a distinctively Canadian poetry rather than a minor figure in the British tradition, versifying abroad.

However, this distinction cannot be applied two hundred years later when the Canadian Oliver Goldsmith (grandnephew of the celebrated Oliver Goldsmith) writes a lengthy narrative poem, *The Rising Village*, to show the fate of those suffering English countrymen who left the "sweet Auburn" of his uncle's *The Deserted Village* for North America where "Wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,/And Niagara stuns with thundering sound."[6] This poem focuses upon the conquering of the wilderness and the rising of the Canadian village but has an apparently disjointed middle section, a tale of sweet Flora and her faithless lover Albert. Goldsmith's reasons for including this moral tale of "Vice as a warning to Virtue" are not at all clear until we recognize that "sweet Flora" is analogous to Wordsworth's "Ruth" and her faithless lover to the impetuous, but amoral, young man from Georgia's shore. It then becomes apparent that the purpose of the interlude is to express Goldsmith's Deistic belief that there is a necessary connection between the ordered laws of nature and the laws which must control human passion; without such moral dictates the rising village of Acadia cannot hope to progress in emulation of Britain's "laws and liberty". As this summary might suggest, the political, moral and literary aspirations of the young settlement are described by Goldsmith as immediately directed towards a following of the colonial vision of the British tradition.

Quodlibets and *The Rising Village* may be taken as representative specimens of early Canadian verse until approximately 1890. The emphasis on moral teaching in relation to the development of community and the ascriptions of these values to Great Britain is characteristic of later epics such as Thomas Cary's *Abram's Plains* (1789) and of William Kirby's *The U.E.: A Tale of Upper Canada* (1859), while the whole question of the social compact of people, King and God is particularly explored in the heroic dramas of Charles Heavysege, especially in *Saul* (1857) and *Jephthah's Daughter* (1865). In addition, much verse written in Canada in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century can be characterized as a response to the picturesque landscape of Canada filtered through the prevailing

British model. Hayman borrowed from Owen, Goldsmith from his English grand-uncle, Heavysege from Shakespeare and, on the basis of internal evidence, from Charles Lloyd's 1815 translations of the Italian dramatist, Alfieri. Isabella Valancy Crawford and Sir Charles G. D. Roberts, often hailed as Canadian originals, were actually highly indebted to their contemporaries and predecessors. Crawford borrowed from Tennyson, Longfellow and Dante; Roberts' *Orion* (1880) is modelled on the *Orion* (1843) of Richard Henry (later Hengist) Horne, an English Victorian. It is not until E. J. Pratt's parody, *The Witches' Brew* (1925), a farcical inversion of *Paradise Lost*, which manages, incredibly, to combine an Adamic sea-cat, an alcoholic apple and a satire on Temperance, that Canadian poetry begins to move away from the English stream; significantly, this movement is initiated by parody. Ironically, the book was first published in Great Britain as Pratt's Canadian publisher, Lorne Pierce of Ryerson Press, regretfully refused the manuscript, explaining that this "sparkling" brew was a little too strong for an United Church publishing house.[7]

The most attractive rationale for the general practice of literary imitation is given by Thomas Cary in the preface to his *Abram's Plains*:

> Before I began this Poem I read Pope's Windsor-Forrest and Dr. Goldsmith's Deserted Village, with the view of endeavouring, in some degree, to catch their manner of writing; as singers in country-churches in England, to use a simple musical comparison, modulate their tones by the prelusive sound of a pitch-pipe.

The most dogmatic assertion of the Canadian allegiance to the English tradition is given nearly one hundred years later in 1883 by Charles G. D. Roberts, then a rising young poet, in an Alumni Oration at Fredericton entitled "The Beginnings of a Canadian Literature":

> Now it must be remembered that the whole heritage of English Song is ours and that it is *not* ours to found *new* literature. The Americans have not done so nor will they. They have simply joined in raising the splendid structure, English literature, to the building of which may come workmen from every region of earth where speaks the British tongue.

Implicit here is the assumption that the Canadian poet is addressing himself to an English audience, a pervasive view of the poet's function which would not encourage the development of an indigenous Canadian tradition.

Not only was eighteenth and nineteenth century Canadian verse a colonial reflection of the English tradition but it was directed towards one aspect of this tradition which we might provisionally describe as the Royalist strain. Unlike

the first poetry of the United States in which the Puritan insistence upon the supremacy of the individual spirit culminated in political and cultural independence, Canadian poetry, which originated in a brief Royalist period and then began again under eighteenth century Deism, is essentially hierarchical, positing a social compact of subject, King and God, reflecting the monarchical vision of the moral and social order. The first Planters of Newfoundland were prominent Royalists — Lord Baltimore, Lord Calvert, the learned Lord Falkland — and as there was no leavening influx of Puritan immigration, there is no seventeenth century English Canadian literary heritage of Puritan verse. French Acadia did not become British Nova Scotia until the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) and Quebec did not fall to the English until 1759. Consequently, those English poems produced in the newly conquered Quebec after 1770 are primarily an exposition of eighteenth century Deism with handy political encomiums to the surpassing virtues of the British monarch, the British moral order and the British God. Furthermore, after 1776 this view of society was substantially re-inforced by the wholesale emigration to Nova Scotia and Quebec of some 40,000 United Empire Loyalists who shared the same belief in the essential interdependence of subject, king and state as did their seventeenth century Royalist forebears. The Loyalist code was, in turn, interpreted by their nineteenth century descendants (in particular, by William Kirby in *The U.E.: A Tale of Upper Canada*, 1859) as a legacy of moral and social behaviour:

> Religion was with them more deed than word;
> To love their neighbour and to fear the Lord;
> Honour their King and yield his high degree.

As Kirby's epic demonstrates, the Loyalist emigration was to provide the intellectual matrix for the nineteenth century flurry of Confederation verse which developed between 1860 and 1890 around the political vision of Canada as the "New Nationality" within the "Vaster Britain" or so-called "Imperialist" movement. Because the dominant literary vision of Canadian nature developed during the same period which saw the emergence of the new nationalism, several of the literary nationalists, in particular Charles Mair, Charles Sangster and Charles G. D. Roberts, tended to view Canada's struggle to maintain her political sovereignty against the United States from the perspective of the Darwinian struggle for survival. The encompassing political myth, as Carl Berger has pointed out, proclaimed that Canadians were the "Northmen of the New World," associating freedom, law and moral rectitude with Northern nations (as distinguished from

the effete, degenerate South), and maintaining that Canadian freedom and moral order lay in the continued connection with Great Britain.[8] In verse, Mair's drama *Tecumseh* (1886), the Canadian national anthem "O Canada" with its lines "the true north, strong and free", Roberts' meretricious poem "Canada" ("O Child of Nations, giant-limbed") and W. D. Lighthall's anthology, *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889) are all reflections of this prevailing Darwinist myth.

THE FRAMEWORK, then, for the evolution of an English Canadian tradition has been political and cultural; it may be described as "Royalist" in the seventeenth century, "Loyalist" in the late eighteenth century and "Imperialist" in the latter part of the nineteenth century. After 1870, the dominant thematic concern of the poetry, that vision of moral and social progress which transforms the rude wilderness into the cultivated garden, is to be contained within a modification of Romanticism as dictated by Darwin.

Darwinism had a profound effect on English Canadian Romanticism because *The Origin of Species* (1859) appeared just as the first "native" poetic group, that of the Confederation of 1860 poets, was emerging. Because the Canadian mythos was the product of a hard, sparsely populated country and because the literary vision of Canadian nature developed after Darwin and after the loss of Sir John Franklin at the North Pole, it was already too late in time to gloss successfully the struggle for survival with the Edenic vision of an Emersonian transcendentalism as had been done in the United States some thirty years earlier. As a result, Canadian Romanticism was infused from its inception with overtones of Darwin's nature, an accident of literary history which strongly distinguishes the Canadian view of nature from those of the United States and Great Britain.

Consequently, although the poets of the Confederation do attempt to write in the old Romantic mode — in fact, the transcendental dream is the dominant metaphor of the period — such poetry often breaks from within because it is attempting to hold in reconciliation two opposing views of nature. As we read through the poetry of the 1880's and 1890's we can see the Roberts' uneasy reconciliation between the Romantic world spirit and the Darwinian germ of life must ultimately break down, as it later does, into glimpses of a fearful and amoral nature in the poetry of Archibald Lampman and Duncan Scott. By the mid-1890's, especially in the poetry of Lampman and Scott, the dream as metaphor has become an indicator of a schism in Romantic sensibility because it functions

in a failed attempt to transcend a Darwinian world. Still later, in Duncan Campbell Scott's poem "The Height of Land" (1916), the transcendent vision becomes a "Something [that] comes by flashes" and the poet's eye is directed out towards the Northern landscape:

> Upon one hand
> The lonely north enlaced with lakes and streams,
> And the enormous targe of Hudson Bay,
> Glimmering all night
> In the cold arctic light . . .

The earlier, Darwinist-inspired, political vision of Canada as a Northern land is to continue into the 1920's and 1930's with the efforts of the *Canadian Forum* to promote a new and virile art worthy of the young and powerful Canadian nationality. This new art had already been signalled by the strong Northern landscapes of the Group of Seven and was soon to be paralleled in poetry by E. J. Pratt's "Newfoundland", by A. J. M. Smith's "The Lonely Land" and by F. R. Scott's "North Stream". This new Canadian nature described by Smith as "The beauty of strength/ broken by strength/ and still strong" first appears in Pratt's *Newfoundland Verse* (1923). The title lyric asserts the powerful crash of sea on rock and presents a people as strong as the nature they resist. The tides of Newfoundland flow

> with a lusty stroke of life
> Pounding at stubborn gates,
> That they might run
> Within the sluices of men's hearts.

In Pratt's view, man, evolving from the sea, still carries part of the sea with him; this primitive inheritance can lead him to fall backward into atavism, or, guided by Christian ethics, he may move forward along the evolutionary road. In his post-Darwinian view of nature and in his stress upon an ethical interpretation of Darwinism, Pratt is characteristic of the Canadian tradition.

That the Darwinian debate in Canada was largely ethical is evident from a survey of articles published in the relatively popular *Canadian Monthly and National Review* for the decade 1872-1882.[9] Articles such as "Darwinism and Morality", "The Evolution of Morality", "The Ethical Aspects of Darwinism: A Rejoinder", "Evolution and Immortality", indicate that the Canadian attempt to adapt evolutionary theory of existing religious and social structures is far closer to the English debate between Darwinism and religion which culminated in T. H.

Huxley's "Evolution and Ethnics" (1893), than it is to the popular reception given to Herbert Spencer's "survival of the fittest" in the United States during the same period. For example, Goldwin Smith's essay, "The Prospect of a Moral Interregnum," which developed one aspect of Spencer's *The Data of Ethnics* was largely accepted when published in the United States in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1879; in Canada, it was greeted with a storm of protest when re-published in the same year in *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review.*

The poetry of the period manifests a similar yoking of evolution and ethics. Isabella Valancy Crawford's poem, *Malcolm's Katie* (1883) may be read as a rejoinder to Goldwin Smith's essay "Pessimism" of 1880, also reprinted in *Canadian Monthly.* Smith had introduced Hume's speculations on a malignant Deity and eloquently described "fatherless" man as "the sport of a blind but irresistible force."[10] Crawford's poem, a Victorian love triangle set against the clearing of the soil and the rising of the Canadian settlement, assigns similarly compelling but ultimately discredited statements to the villain, Alfred,[11] gives the voice of evolutionary progress to the hero Max, and places the whole struggle for survival in the human and natural world within God's hand:

> In trance of stillness Nature heard her God
> Rebuilding her spent fires, and veil'd her face
> While the Great Worker brooded o'er His work.

Equally, in Roberts' poetry and prose we find a consistent attempt to bring the Darwinian struggle under divine plan, as is explicit in the title of his first animal story, "Do Seek Their Meat from God".

E. J. Pratt's relation to the English stream was even closer than that of the poets of the Confederation yet, ultimately, he was to move out of it entirely. Born in 1882 in Newfoundland, then still a British colony for reasons best expressed by that popular Newfoundland ballad, "The Anti-Confederation Song," ("Our hearts turned to Britain, our backs to the gulf/ Come near at your peril, Canadian wolf,") Pratt was the son of an English Methodist minister. His early reading included Shakespeare, Carlyle's *French Revolution* and Milton's *Paradise Lost.*[12] But his integral relation to the English stream is best indicated in a cursory survey of his first verse: *Rachel* (1917), narrative, is a Newfoundland version of Wordsworth's "Michael"; *Clay* (1917), a badly written verse drama, contrasts evolutionary pessimism derivative of Hardy's *The Dynasts* with Christian evolutionary ethics suggestive of "The Paradox" by Alfred Noyes. However, with the parody of *The Witches' Brew* (1925) and the realism of *The Roosevelt and the*

Antinoe (1930), Pratt began to move away from the English stream. The latter poem, a moving account of an actual 1926 rescue at sea, seems to have led Pratt away from literary imitation into the documentation of life.

Strongly influenced by his Newfoundland experiences of continued struggle against an implacable nature, a struggle which he characterizes in his "Memories of Newfoundland" (1937) as "the ironic enigma of Nature in relation to the Christian view of the world", and by his early training in theology, much of Pratt's poetry can be seen as the attempt to equip man with an evolutionary ethic to counter Darwin's nature. In an address given at Cornell University during the 1940's he remarked that he could not reconcile the Romantic vision of nature with the Victorian need "to put man in his evolutionary setting." At that time he stated: "We look upon life with the eyes of a Thomas Huxley who saw the ethical and the cosmic in perpetual struggle."

As his acceptance of Thomas Huxley's evolutionary ethics implies, Pratt felt a strong moral revulsion to some of the implications of social Darwinism; in particular, he could not agree with the ethical sanction given by Herbert Spencer to "the survival of the fittest". The early poem, *The Great Feud* (1926), described by him as a "fantastic picture of some stage in the evolutionary struggle for existence," was written "to show how near to extinction a race might come, if the instinct to attack and to retaliate upon attack were given absolute rein without any moral considerations." The poem, an uneasy mixture of jocular beast fable and satiric allegory (of World War I) nonetheless firmly asserts that a perversion of morality and reason, resulting in the destruction of community, must inevitably accompany the survival of the fittest individual. The protagonist of this poem, a female ape, "the cleverest of her time", distorts both truth and a newly evolved moral law as she takes upon herself "the strain/ Of descent". This punning conclusion to *The Great Feud* implies not only the ape's descent to a neighbouring valley where her brood lies hidden, but also the perverted "reason" of the descent of evolutionary man.

In his Romanes lecture, "Evolution and Ethics," T. H. Huxley had argued "the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, ... but in combating it ... by the substitution of what may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest, ... but of those who are ethically the best." It is essentially this view of evolution that E. J. Pratt adopts. The whole struggle on the *Titanic* (of the 1935 poem of the same name) is summarized in the conflicting impulses of the passengers just before the ship goes down; "self-preservation fought/ Its red primor-

dial battle with the 'ought.' " Red and primordial, this battle is an internalization of the struggle of the survival instinct against the ethical sense. Similarly, the significance of Brébeuf's magnificent endurance under torture in the 1940 epic, *Brébeuf and his Brethren*, is the triumph of moral man in moral community against amoral nature; in the largest sense it is an allegory of western man at the outset of World War II.

Huxley had also suggested in the Romances lecture: "It may seem an audacious proposal thus to pit the microcosm against the macrocosm; and to set man to subdue nature to his higher ends." In "The Truant" (1943), Pratt's most characteristic poem, this ethical paradigm is explored. Here, the microcosm, truant man, is pitted against the macrocosm of the natural order (or cosmic process) jocularly described by Pratt as "a grand Panjandrum" (a false God or pretender to power). Opposing the natural process of mere survival, the truant affirms the grandeur and spiritual dignity of man's heroism in the service of the Christian ideal. In the last epic, *Towards the Last Spike* (1952), a narrative of the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Pratt turns back to the concerns of the earliest pioneer poetry, the conquering of the land. With this poem, Pratt's evolutionary thought moves full-circle: from Huxley's dominantly pessimistic view of natural process (as expressed in the first narratives) to a dominantly optimistic view of the relation between man and nature in *Towards the Last Spike*. This optimistic view of evolution is highly suggestive of Jan Christian Smuts' *Holism and Evolution* (1926). Smuts had argued that all parts of the evolutionary process work for the good of the whole, whether the organism is rock, cell, man, or the nation state. By adapting Smuts' holism in *Towards the Last Spike* (especially as revealed in the metaphors of metamorphosis which transform Scots labourers to Laurentian rock), Pratt is able to integrate man with nature. Man, composed of the same elements as the rest of nature, is also equipped with "Mind" which, in Smut's view, has the capacity for directing ethically the whole. As in the earlier poem *The Roosevelt and The Antinoe*, the ethical triumph is the result of human co-operation as opposed to Darwinistic competitive individualism. It is characteristic of Pratt's poetry that there are no individuals as such; even Brébeuf is generic man, and representative of group idealism. Pratt's insistence on man's capacity to make an ethical choice and so shape his own evolutionary development, is as representative of the Canadian interpretation of Darwinism as Robinson Jeffers' pessimism regarding human progress and his insistence on man's depravity is characteristic of the American.

In his presentation of a moral and hierarchical society, Pratt reflects the histori-

cal development of English Canadian poetry. His poetry, from *Newfoundland Verse* (1923) to *Towards the Last Spike* (1952) spans, both topographically and aesthetically, Canada's development from colony to nation, from the New-found-Land origins of Hayman's *Quodlibets* (1628), still firmly rooted in the English tradition, to the entry of British Columbia into Confederation in 1871 and the beginnings of a distinctively Canadian view of nature. Darwin's nature and T. H. Huxley's cosmology may have provided the intellectual outlines of Pratt's poetic world, but Canadian history, Canadian geography and Canadian cultural experience, as well as Pratt's good heart and his moral vision, give substance to this world. The major narratives, *Brébeuf and His Brethren*, *Behind the Log*, *Dunkirk* and *Towards the Last Spike*, all recapitulate Canadian experience — the struggle against the wilderness, the building of the railroad which united the country, Canadian participation in the Second World War — in terms which Canadians have understood and with which they have identified. It may be that the evolutionary myth is particularly suited for adoption by a developing country where the vision of progress still remains a powerful one and where the struggle against nature has always been a constant feature of life.

NOTES

[1] Francis Bacon, "Of Gardens," *Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall.*

[2] William Vaughan, *The Golden Fleece*, 1626.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] R[obert] H[ayman], *Quodlibets, Lately Come Over from New Britaniola, Old Newfound-Land*, 1628.

[5] B. Lacy, "A Description of Newfoundland," *Miscellaneous Poems*, 1729.

[6] Goldsmith quotes these lines from his uncle's "The Traveller," in his introduction to *The Rising Village and Other Poems*, 1834.

[7] Letter from Lorne Pierce to E. J. Pratt, Lorne Pierce Collection, Douglas Library, Queen's University.

[8] Carl Berger, "The True North Strong and Free," *Nationalism in Canada*, ed. Peter Russell, 1966.

[9] Index to the *Canadian Monthly and National Review* and *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review*, Marilyn G. Flitton, "The Canadian Monthly, 1872-1882," unpublished M.A. thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1973.

[10] Goldwin Smith, "Pessimism," *Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly and National Review*, IV (March 1880).

[11] Isabella Valancy Crawford, "Malcolm's Katie," *Old Spookses' Pass, Malcolm's Katie and Other Poems*, 1884. Alfred's assertions regarding human mutability and the existence of earlier worlds, now destroyed, are directly suggestive of the arguments of Lucifer in Byron's *Cain* (1821). In effect, Crawford merges Lucifer's Manicheanism with Darwinian pessimism.

[12] Henry W. Wells and Carl F. Klinck, *Edwin J. Pratt, the Man and his Poetry*, 1947.

BY THE SEA

For A. M. Klein

Miriam Waddington

His grief it fell and fell;
he mourned that his brain
could never be like new —
a seamless whole again.

He polished it with spit
and sealed the cracks with glue,
he pinned it to the air —
yet away it flew.

He caught it in a net
of silken words and wit,
but his broken brain
was fragmented and split.

He quilted it with grass
and anchored it with ships,
he sailed tilting words,
they foundered on his lips.

He dropped a silver line
into the tides of verse,
and found his broken brain
had hooked it to a curse.

He called the angels down
from balconies of sky,
they emptied out his life
but would not let him die.

Someone drained the ponds
of his unlettered land,
a stranger hid the road
beneath a mile of sand.

And Apollo's golden ear
was sealed against his cries,
his lonely broken brain
was barred from paradise.

His grief it falls and falls
on green fields and on white,
he rocks his broken brain
that never mended right

And sings his silent song
to earth and tree and stone,
we hear it when we hear
the rain beat on the stone.

The rain beats on the stone:
but how many recognize
his broken brain, his fear,
are nothing but our own?

MALCOLM'S KATIE

Images and Songs

Kenneth J. Hughes and
Birk Sproxton

ISABELLA VALANCY CRAWFORD'S "Malcolm's Katie", as we learn from the sub-title, is a love story. But even the most cursory reading reveals that this is not simply the story of love between a man and a woman. "Malcolm's Katie" in fact consists of a series of interrelated love stories. In addition to the story of the love of Max and Katie, we have the story of Malcolm's love for his daughter, the story of Katie's love for her father, the story of Alfred's perverse love for Malcolm's gold, and the story of Max's patriotic love of his wilderness community and the nation of which it is a part. These stories culminate in the triumph of love in all its manifestations, the creation of a new Edenic society, and the transformation of Malcolm and Alfred from alienated beings, whose first love is wealth, to total human beings capable of love in the widest and narrowest senses of that term. On all levels there is conflict, and on all levels love triumphs in the end.

The main image of the poem is the ring of the opening lines, and it provides a key to an understanding of the many love stories:

> Max plac'd a ring on little Katie's hand,
> A silver ring that he had beaten out
> From that same sacred coin — first well-priz'd wage
> For boyish labour, kept thro' many years.

The image of Max's reworking of the prize of his labour introduces the two antithetical value systems that are to dominate "Malcolm's Katie" and generate the power that will vitalize the dramatic structure. Money, the symbol of exchange, is transformed into ring, the symbol of love. But values are embodied in persons, and thus we have in this poem two kinds of persons: the ring or love people, Max and Katie, on the one hand, and the money people, Malcolm and Alfred, on the other. This broad conflict is carefully dramatized, and the tranquility of

the conclusion tells us that the money people have been transformed into ring people.

The subtlety and richness of the dramatic structure in "Malcolm's Katie" can be suggested by a consideration of the recurring garden images which support it. These images function in a number of ways: they indicate the relationship between Max and Katie (Part I), the relationship between Katie and Malcolm (Part III), the quality of life at Malcolm's domain (Part III), and the quality of life in the new Eden (Part VII). The garden, in short, functions as an image of a society in which love and harmony are the ruling principles. It can be thought of, therefore, as both the microcosmic and macrocosmic correlative to the ring image.

In Part I Katie says to Max, "I have made/Your heart my garden."[1] The garden in this instance stands as an image of love and fertility at the individual level. Part III opens with a picture of the "great farmhouse," which is a projection of Malcolm's utilitarian impulses: "The great farmhouse of Malcolm Graem stood,/Square-shoulder'd and peak'd-roof, upon a hill,/With many windows looking everywhere . . ."[2] The house, like Malcolm, stands isolated and looks out at the wheat (wealth) fields. But this somewhat stark structure has been partially transformed by Katie's garden: "Katie's gay garden foam'd about the walls,/ Leagur'd the prim-cut modern sills, and rush'd/Up the stone walls — and broke on the peak'd roof." The garden dominates the farmhouse precisely to the degree that Katie has influence over Malcolm at this point, and thus we see that it is an objective representation of Katie's love in the process of converting Malcolm from an acquisitive, isolated individual into a "social-soul'd" person like Max; for the climbing vines will grow as they are wont to do and soon cover the house entirely.[3] At the end Malcolm leaves his isolated house when he leaves his isolated individualism and becomes a member of the new Edenic community.

In the conclusion Malcolm is in a new world, a new culture. Katie affirms that she would not change her "wild and rocking woods,/Dotted by little homes of unbark's trees/ . . . For the smooth sward of selfish Eden bowers . . .". The new Eden, then, is quite the opposite of the grim and grey utilitarian world typified by Malcolm and his farmhouse. In this new world both Malcolm and Alfred are fully human, which means that they have rejected their former individually centred values and come to accept the socially centred values of the new community. They have found love in its social form and escaped their alienation. The garden, therefore, functions as the symbol of a civilization based on love rather than power.

Like the garden, Nature performs an important dramatic function in "Malcolm's Katie," and this can be seen in the correlation between nature and the psychological drama. The poem begins with Max and Katie in harmony with external nature: "Nay, Kate, look down amid the globes/Of those large lilies that our light canoe/Divides, and see within the polish'd pool/That small, rose face of yours — so dear, so fair . . ." The time is summer and the hills are "Rich with hill flow'rs and musical with rills." External nature becomes a reflection of the lovers' internal states, for they have pledged an undying love — an eternal love existing in an eternal summer — which the poem will soon put to the test.

Part II opens with a glorious passage: "The South Wind laid his moccasins aside,/Broke his gay calumet of flow'rs, and cast/His useless wampum, beaded with cool dews,/Far from him, northward . . ." The time is Indian summer when "At morn the sharp breath of night arose . . ." Bound together by the chain of necessity, the opposites, summer and winter, are anthropomorphized and the Indian summer playfully mocks the symbol of winter, the moon: "Esa! esa! shame upon you, Pale Face!/Shame upon you, Moon of Evil Witches!/Have you kill'd the happy, laughing Summer?" This parallels the ways in which Max playfully mocks Katie in Part I where Kate answers: " 'Oh, words!' said Katie, blushing, 'only words!/You build them up that I may push them down'." The sun (summer on one level, Max on another) is absent from the moon (winter on one level, Katie on another) and the movement from summer to Indian summer with its cool mornings is made to mark the degree of separation of Max from Katie; the further movement to the end of Indian summer in Part II, with the bare trees where the "pale, sharp fingers crept", prepares us for his trial in Part IV. External nature thus is made to represent Max's psychological state. For if Max labours safe in the knowledge that he is loved, and if nothing eventful happens in Part II, the images of a changed external nature prepare us emotionally for what will happen in Part IV. The extended opening in Part IV, therefore, where we meet the North wind and an external nature in which "High grew the snow beneath the low-hung sky," tells us that something is about to happen to Max, for it objectively represents Max's inner state. We are in this way prepared for his depression and madness when we meet him in this Part. Again, the North wind tells his "white squaw," "Spread thy white blanket on the twice-slain dead,/And hide them, ere the waking of the sun!" The sun, of course, will be the new summer sun and the "twice-slain dead" prepares us for Max's double defeat at the hands of Alfred. His subsequent "death" underneath the fallen tree makes him like all the other dead things beneath the snow. He dies

but he will rise again like the sun, a principle of natural regeneration and simultaneously a Christ-like figure who will save Katie in Part VI.

Katie is tested in Part VI; the season is autumn: "The Land has put his ruddy gauntlet on,/Of harvest gold, to dash in Famine's face . . .". But this will be an autumn from which no winter will ever follows, for here, too, external nature reflects an inner state. There is the fear of winter in the external world and there is the internal fear that Max may no longer love her, but good overcomes evil and true love triumphs.

THE SUN-MOON IMAGE sequence serves a dramatic function and supports a number of themes in "Malcolm's Katie." This imagery operates both on the human and external nature level. Asked by Katie, "Are you content?" Max replies, "Yes, crescent-wise, but not to [sic] round, full moon." Literally the image is one of the young crescent moon with which we can see also the shape of the full moon since it is outlined by light from the other side of the earth. In folklore this is known as the new moon in the old moon's arms, and on the thematic level we can see Katie and her father, the new Canada in the arms of the old. Clearly, "crescent-wise" also refers to her tender years and the outlined full moon may serve a double function by suggesting the fulness of her womanhood which is already discernable. Above all, the moon is a symbol of Katie's spiritual chastity and constancy. This is Katie as Diana. Yet again, the moon symbolizes the feminine principle and Katie is nothing is she is not feminine. Max, for his part, as we saw in the discussion of nature and the psychological drama, is connected with the sun, the masculine principle. Obviously there are cross-references to be made here with the garden imagery also, because Max is the garden in which she grows and the resurrected sun who brings life to her in her despair in Part VI. The fertility of love connects the two images.

In the external nature of the poem the sun and moon are mutually dependent contraries which divide between them day and night and summer and winter; they represent respectively life and death.[4] In Part II we find Max separated from Katie and "In this shrill moon the scouts of Winter ran." Indian summer gives way to winter:

> . . . too late the Sun
> Pour'd his last vigour to the deep, dark cells
> Of the dim wood. The keen two-bladed Moon
> Of Falling Leaves roll'd up on crested mists,

> And where the lush, rank boughs had foil'd the Sun
> In his red prime, her pale, sharp fingers crept
> After the wind and felt about the moss. . . .

The same moon threatens Katie in Part V: "Katie on the moonlit window lean'd,/And in the airy silver of her voice/Sang of the tender blue Forget-me-not . . . " As with Max, so with Katie; the threatening moon is an objective representation of her own state for she is going to fall victim to the fear that Max no longer loves her. Indeed, the "Forget-Me-Not Song" reminds us of this.

The moon is made to represent not only death in external nature, however, but also the death and decay of civilizations. For when Alfred argues that nations are not immortal he says:

> . . . The lean, lank lion peals
> His midnight thunders over lone, red plains,
> Long-ridg'd and crested on their dusty waves
> With fires from moons red-hearted as the sun,
> . . .
> Below the roots of palms, and under stones
> Of younger ruins, thrones, tow'rs and cities
> Honeycomb the earth.

The solution offered to the problem of change in its many forms is love in its many forms. On the individual level of the lovers we find that

> . . . Love, once set within a lover's breast,
> Has its own sun — its own peculiar sky,
> All one great daffodil — on which do lie
> The sun, the moon, the stars — all seen at once,
> And never setting, but all shining straight
> Into the faces of the trinity —
> The one belov'd, the lover, and sweet Love!

On the social and political plane we see the refugees from a world without love in "the quick rush of panting human waves/Upheav'd by throbs of angry poverty,/And driven by keen blasts of hunger from/Their native strands" moving into a new world of harmony and love as they "Throb down to peace in kindly valley beds,/Their turbid bosoms clearing in the calm/Of sun-ey'd Plenty, till the stars, and moon,/The blessed sun himself, have leave to shine/And laugh in their dark hearts!" The steam engine images of "panting", "rush", "throbs", and "blasts" serve simultaneously as nature images and suggest the state of the immigrants; they have been ejected by the industrial machine of the old world

and they will become closer to nature in the new. As with the lovers, so for all others in the new Edenic community are "The sun, the moon, the stars — all seen at once", for the problem of change has been transcended. And so it is with the new Eden of the conclusion; there is no mention there of seasons or seasonal change because they would have no function. They could not reflect change in a stable society which, as the vision has it, is without change. The new civilization will give the lie to Alfred's claim that no nation is immortal!

We do not have to read too far into "Malcolm's Katie" before we note that there is a constant anthropomorphization of nature and that a goodly portion of the work presents us with a picture of nature as Indian. There seems to be a good reason why Crawford specifically singles out Indian culture and continually collapses it into nature so that the two become as one. The function of this anthropomorphization of nature as Indian seems to be to provide a background onto which other images of society can be superimposed in much the same way as succeeding forms of an evolving western culture were superimposed on a land that formerly belonged to the Indian.

So far as nature as Indian is concerned it is but a short leap from the metaphorical "From his far wigwam sprang the strong North Wind/And rush'd with war-cry down the steep ravines,/And wrestl'd with the giants of the woods" to the literal

> The warrior stags, with does and tripping fawns
> . . .
> [had never] Seen, limn'd against the farthest rim of light
> Of the low-dipping sky, the plume or bow
> Of the red hunter; nor, when stoop'd to drink,
> Had from the rustling rice-bed heard the shaft
> Of the still hunter hidden in its spears;
> His bark canoe close-knotted in its bronze,
> His form as stirless as the brooding air. . . .

The Indian here blends completely into the nature of which he and the culture which he represents are part. For his is a culture which did not (generally) seek to transform nature and it is precisely for this reason that the anthropomorphic images of nature as Indian prove such a useful background for the cultures of the white men who did.

Malcolm is one of the figures who has been busy in the process of transforming nature, both external nature and his own. In terms of his own nature we see him described by Max in images of rock and we learn that for him grains of

wheat are "ingots!" A good image of the transformation of both internal and external nature we see in the long passage where Malcolm's "noisy mills" and the "goods" mark the extent to which Malcolm and all that he represents is separated from the untransformed world of the Indian. And it is between the extremes of Malcolm (not to mention Alfred) and the world of the Indian that Max's vision of a "lowly roof," "Kine," and "A man and woman" falls.[5] Max will have his new civilization tied neither to the necessities of an untransformed nature which is the way of the Indian nor to the alienating necessities of wealth as Malcolm is. Moreover, Max is constantly connected with the axe and we see that three "technologies" are contrasted in this work: that of the bow and arrow, that of the axe, and that of busy mills.

Obviously Alfred can have no positive image of society attached to him in the poem because he is a nihilist, but we do get an impression of his vision indirectly in terms of a reference to the love theme. And this has social implications. He is part of nature red in tooth and claw as we shall see from the following passage. The hill speaks:

> On my slim, loftiest peak, an eagle with
> His angry eyes set sunward, while his cry
> Falls fiercely back from all my ruddy heights,
> And his bald eaglets, in their bare, broad nest
> Shrill pipe their angry echoes: 'Sun, arise,
> And show me that pale dove beside her nest,
> Which I shall strike with piercing beak and tear
> With iron talons for my hungry young.'
>
> And that mild dove, secure for yet a space,
> Half waken'd, turns her ring'd and glossy neck
> To watch dawn's ruby pulsing on her breast,
> And see the first bright golden motes slip down
> The gnarl'd trunks about her leaf-deep nest,
> Nor sees nor fears the eagle on the peak.

At this point the scene shifts to Malcolm's house and we hear the words " 'Yes, sing, sweet Kate,' said Alfred in her ear . . . " Alfred is the eagle and the eaglets are the many cries of his unrestrained will: "If all man's days are three-score years and ten,/He needs must waste them not, but nimbly seize/The bright, consummate blossom that his will/Calls for most loudly". His will makes many cries and he simply follows the loudest. The dove is Katie through whom he will seek to increase his riches for "my pangs of love for gold must needs be fed . . . " Katie

happens to be the present object of his attentions, but he defines himself as a type who would not act differently with others. Indeed, he goes further, and believes that others should share his views, hence his proselytizing speeches to Max (Part IV). His vision of society is that of ruthlessly competitive struggle marked by the survival of the fittest, a superb exemplum of social Darwinism. No wonder then that he is the only character in the poem to use the word "Chance" (five times) and to insist that the world is ruled by Chance.

SONGS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE in "Malcolm's Katie". Dorothy Livesay has observed that we should not take the songs out of their context in the poem as mere anthology pieces, and she is surely correct; they are essential components of the thematic and dramatic structures. Unfortunately space limitations will allow only a summary treatment of them here.

There are seven songs in "Malcolm's Katie" spread throughout the first six Parts. There are none in the conclusion. Of these seven songs two are for solo voice, four for chorus, and one for solo voice and chorus. The two solo songs are sung by Katie. These are the "Lily Song" in Part III and the "Forget-Me-Not Song" in Part V. The four songs for chorus are, "O light canoe, where dost thou glide?" (Part I), "O Love builds on the azure sea" (Part II), "Doth true Love lonely grow?" (Part V), and "Who curseth Sorrow knows her not at all" at the beginning of Part VI. The latter is definitely not a song but a choral chant in which the verse form follows that of the work as a whole. The work song of Max's in Part IV, "Bite deep and wide, O Axe, the tree!" is a song for solo voice and chorus. Certainly it would seem reasonable to argue that the axe's responses to Max should be sung by a chorus, for the axe speaks for a society, even if that society does not yet exist. However this may be, we see Crawford's skill in the way in which she has placed the songs. For Max's song is at the centre of the poem and it is surrounded by Katie's lyrics which in turn are surrounded by the four choral songs in a neat geometrical pattern. Moreover, the pattern recapitulates the main themes. Max is enclosed by Katie's love and both are enclosed by the new society they are building. If we look at this surrounding process as a series of concentric circles we have a geometrical and symbolic representation of the many forms of love.

The songs in "Malcolm's Katie" also serve a dramatic function. In essence they do one of two things: they either reflect personal states and suggest the direction that the action will take, as the songs of Max and Katie, or they comment on

particular situations from outside, as in the choral songs. Thus the choral song, "O light canoe, where dost thou glide?" at the end of Part I shows the unity of the lovers, the canoe, the heavens and earth, reflecting a universal harmony resulting from the pledge of eternal love. It also suggests, however, that there may be rough waters ahead for this true love. The second song, "O Love builds on the azure sea," hints that Max is safe even as the threatening nature imagery suggests his coming trial. For even though Max is busy in the wilderness attempting to create a community in which love can flourish, the song says that love does not finally need buildings because "Love's solid land is everywhere!" Katie's lyric in Part III, the "Lily Song," is one that was written for her by Max in which the lilies turn out to be an objective representation of Katie. The song with Max and the axe in Part IV shows the love Max has for his nation-building labour and sets the scene for the arrival of his tempter Alfred. Katie's "Forget-Me-Not Song" in Part V implies her growing fears that Max has indeed forgotten her. The choral song at the end of Part V, "Doth true Love lonely grow?" assures us that true love will triumph even as all the cards seem to be stacked against it. The choral chant at the beginning of Part VI, "Who curseth Sorrow knows her not at all," prepares us for the darkness of Part VI which will be followed by the light of the Edenic Part VII.

As inadequate as this summary is it offers some sense of the dramatic and thematic functions of the songs. Since the songs are so carefully placed in a neat geometrical pattern we must assume that Crawford knew exactly what she was doing. This assumption being granted, the question arises as to why there are no songs in the conclusion. In view of the theme we might well have expected something at the end in the manner of Schiller and the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth. We can only speculate but it seems possible that Crawford tells us by the absence of song in Part VII that song, art, has disappeared into the fissures of the new Edenic society itself, for society has now become one large undifferentiated work of art. This view is in keeping with the vision of "Malcolm's Katie", for Max is a poet. We see in him the balance of labour, love, and art.

The songs and main image patterns of "Malcolm's Katie" all work to support the dramatic structure and the result is a complete, coherent, and perfectly consistent work of art.

NOTES

[1] Connected with the image of Katie as flower is the image of her as lily, for she surely is the lily of Max's "Lily Song".

[2] Note also the careful juxtaposition of Malcolm's "great farm-house" at the beginning of Part III with 'the black slope all bristling with burn'd stumps/ ... known ... as 'Max's House' " at the end of Part II.

[3] This process is supported by another image. Max describes Katie as "A seed of love to cleave into a rock/And burgeon thence until the granite splits/Before its subtle strength". The rock will be Malcolm which the seed (Katie's love) will gradually break up and help to convert to fertile earth. Since Max is the garden in which Katie grows, Malcolm also will become a garden. And they will all live in the better than Edenic garden at the end.

[4] Note also the connection between some moon and axe images: "the bright axe cleav'd moon-like thro' the air"; "The keen two-bladed Moon". If the moon symbolizes death in external nature, it is still only one phase of a dialectical process because we are assured that the sun and regeneration will necessarily follow. Just so Max's axe destroys like the moon, but out of that destruction will arise a regenerated society.

[5] Max and Malcolm are contrasted by socio-political images. Malcolm is described as "lordly" and as the "king" of "silent courtiers". This suggests the hierarchical view of society and the sense of his own position in such a society that has prompted Malcolm to reject the lowly Max. Max on the other hand takes an egalitarian view. He will have no slaves to build his civilization (his house). Indeed such a civilization will bury kings: "And have I slain a King?/Above his ashes will I build my house—/No slave beneath its pillars, but — a King!" While Max is speaking about kings of the forest the image obviously goes much further than this and connects with the nationalist and anti-imperialist theme.

ON CARL F. KLINCK

Brandon Conron

MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS AGO, when he published *Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism* (1942), Carl Frederick Klinck emerged from what was then an unfashionable area of scholarship into what has since become the mainstream of Canadian criticism.

Though *Wilfred Campbell* (originally written as a Columbia Ph.D. thesis) concerns a writer whose work spans the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Klinck's particular interest over a long career as critic and scholar has been the writing done in the English language during the period before Confederation in what are now Ontario and Quebec. His contributions in this area, through the discovery of unnoticed material and the establishment of its authorship, have been invaluable; he has brought long inaccessible texts to light, and, providing illuminating critical introductions that place them soundly in their North American context, has presented them to a wide reading public. Yet Klinck has never accepted the arbitrary boundaries of period or genre. As a pioneer biographer of E. J. Pratt and William "Tiger" Dunlop; as co-editor of *Canadian Anthology*, one of the first comprehensive collections of our country's prose and poetry; as co-creator of the pioneer reference work in biography and criticism, *Canadian Writers/ Ecrivains canadiens*; as the careful investigator in volumes like *Tecumseh* and *The Journal of Major James Norton* of the Indian element in our historical literature, and as initiator, general editor and contributor to *Literary History of Canada*, he has manifested not only an impressively wide scope of interest, but also a flexibility of response that has made him sensitive to virtually every aspect of Canadian literary life.

A graduate at nineteen of Waterloo College (then affiliated with the University of Western Ontario), Klinck completed his M.A. two years later at Columbia University, which was a fortunate choice in view of the later development of his interest in Canadian writers and writing. As early as 1924 V. L. O. Chittick's monograph on Thomas Chandler Haliburton and Carl Y. Connor's brief study of

Archibald Lampman's letters were published as Columbia doctoral theses. Henry W. Wells, a critic of broad interests who later collaborated with Klinck in writing *Edwin J. Pratt: The Man and his Poetry* (1947), offered him enthusiastic encouragement at Columbia from the beginning, as did Pelham Edgar who, during a summer of lecturing at Columbia as a change from his duties at the University of Toronto, gave Klinck useful advice in connection with his M.A. thesis, which was entitled "Influences on the Poetry of the Canadian Group of the Sixties". "The Sixties" of course were the 1860's, and during the period of his research Klinck gathered valuable personal reminiscences on Archibald Lampman from Charles D. G. Roberts and Duncan Campbell Scott; he also reached the conclusion that Wilfred Campbell (who, with Lampman and D. C. Scott, had expressed individual and highly independent critical views in the Toronto *Globe* column "At the Mermaid Tavern") was a central figure in the Confederation Group of poets.

Lorne Pierce of the Ryerson Press, who was always alertly watchful for promising critics, arranged for Klinck to meet Wilfred Campbell's son, Lieutenant-Colonel Basil B. Campbell, who, with his sister, Mrs. E. S. Malloch, gave Klinck free access to their father's letters and supplied copious biographical details. The result was *Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism*. One of the first systematic studies of an Ontario writer, it examined the entire body of Campbell's work and explored his Emersonian attitude to nature and natural objects, his interest in myth — including Indian legend — as a way of explaining human responses (as well as of partly cushioning the impact of the Darwinian concept of evolution), and the kind of "true British idealism" which he espoused. Klinck's personal travels in Scotland enabled him to identify the Scottish influences on Campbell, and especially that of John Douglas Sutherland Campbell, ninth Duke of Argyll and Chief of the poet's clan. In this exhaustive investigation Wilfred Campbell was interpreted in the light not only of the personal influences he absorbed but also of his historical time and his literary contemporaries. Unfortunately the Ryerson Press published *Wilfred Campbell* without the full bibliography of Campbell's writing and of secondary source materials relating to him which Klinck had prepared; this was issued later as a typed and bound supplement and supplied to a number of Canadian libraries.

In 1928, after finishing his initial graduate work at Columbia, Klinck was appointed Instructor of English at Waterloo College, and during the next four years — with a rapidity that would stagger a contemporary Promotions and Tenure Committee — he had hurdled the intervening ranks to full professor. In this

early academic period he displayed an extraordinary combination of industry, competence and versatility. While carrying a full teaching load, he found time to act as college librarian from 1936 to 1942, and when he served as Dean of Waterloo College between 1942 and 1947, the year he went to the University of Western Ontario, he maintained a substantial lecturing commitment that ranged into virtually every major period of English and American literature.

Klinck's second important contribution to Canadian literary history was the biographical section of *Edwin J. Pratt: The Man and his Poetry*, published at the time when he was leaving Waterloo for London, where he has lived ever since. This was the book in which he collaborated with his former Columbia mentor, Henry W. Wells, who had successfully sponsored the American publication by Knopf of Pratt's collected works. In his part of the book, which John Bartlett Brebner in his Foreword appropriately described as "an intimate, imaginative and affectionate enquiry", Klinck worked very closely with Pratt, who made manuscripts, lectures and other relevant material freely available. Because it was derived so largely from first-hand contact with the poet's own autobiographical account, read in manuscript and heard in conversation, *Edwin J. Pratt* will continue to serve as an invaluable authentic basis for subsequent studies of Pratt, especially in relation to his early life.

The University of Western Ontario had pioneered in giving courses in Canadian Literature ever since the early 1920's, and while Head of the English Department there from 1948 to 1956, and subsequently Senior Professor of Canadian Literature, Klinck increasingly devoted his teaching and scholarship to the writings of our country. At this time one of the most urgent needs for those who taught and followed courses in Canadian Literature was a suitable anthology. A. J. M. Smith's excellent critical and historical verse anthology, *The Book of Canadian Poetry*, had appeared in 1943, and Earle Birney's *Twentieth Century Canadian Poetry* followed in 1953, but there was no volume available for undergraduate study which embraced both poetry and prose and supported the selections with relevant and accurate biographical and bibliographical information. In collaboration with R. E. Watters, who was then working on the first edition of his *Check List of Canadian Literature and Background Materials, 1628-1950* (1959), Klinck developed the kind of book that seemed best fitted for the purpose. The result of these joint efforts was *Canadian Anthology*; published in 1955, revised and expanded in 1966 and in 1974, it has, with its judicious selection of writers, its excellent biographical introductions and its bibliographical aids,

played a considerable part in making courses in English-Canadian literature possible and even — ultimately — respectable.

KLINCK HAD LONG BEEN FASCINATED, in a more special field, by the exploits of William "Tiger" Dunlop, which were related admiringly by Robina and Kathleen Lizars in their late nineteenth century book, *In the Days of the Canada Company, 1825-1850*, and in the late 1950's he became curious about references to Dunlop in *Fraser's Magazine* and in *Blackwood's*, to the latter of which Dunlop had actually contributed. Obviously in England Dunlop was regarded as a distinguished literary figure, and Klinck set out to find what in the previous connections of this agent for the Canada Company in Goderich had given him this reputation. Dunlop had in fact published little in Canada, but from researches in Edinburgh, in the British Museum and the Colonial Office in London, in the newspapers which Dunlop had once edited in Calcutta, and in a variety of other locations, Klinck established that Dunlop had been closely associated with Christopher North, John Gibson Lockhart and James Hogg, the founders of *Blackwood's*. As intimate friends and convivial drinking companions they had met in Ambrose's Tavern, from which their column, "Noctes Ambrosianae", acquired its name.

Out of these discoveries emerged *William "Tiger" Dunlop: Blackwoodian Backwoodsman* (1962), a careful biographical and critical study which not only provided an understanding of Dunlop's early career and of his international reputation, but also revealed his hitherto unsuspected influence on the development of literature in Canada. Dunlop presented *Blackwood's* as a model for aspiring Upper Canadian writers. His *Statistical Sketches of Upper Canada* was an important book in its time, very popular in England and well reviewed in *Blackwood's*, *Fraser's* and elsewhere. Its tone was ironic and satirical, and its whimsical descriptions of real conditions in Upper Canada poked fun at the flattering misrepresentations of current travel and immigration literature. Dunlop's career showed that, if Upper Canada did not acquire a humourist on the scale of Haliburton, it did possess the makings of a vigorous satirical tradition. William Maginn, one of the contributors to *Blackwood's*, was also the editor of a series of sketches of famous writers that appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*, and he considered Dunlop important enough to include him among his distinguished English colleagues, in an article illustrated with drawings by the once famous artist Daniel Maclise.

Another of Klinck's persistent interests was first aroused by the Columbia lec-

tures on the Indian in American literature which were delivered by Hoxie Fairchild, later the author of *The Noble Savage*. Klinck's desire to know more about the part played by the Indians in the early history of Ontario was sustained by reading A. C. Casselman's edition of Major John Richardson's *War of 1812* (1902) and Mabel Dunham's regional history, *Grand River* (1945), and he began in particular to search out contemporary writings on the great Indian leader Tecumseh. He found in the British Museum Richardson's poem, *Tecumseh or The Warrior of the West* (1828), and other references to Tecumseh in Richardson's prose. Later, when he was working on the Lower Canadian writer Levi Adams in the National Library of Scotland, Klinck discovered an anonymously published book entitled *Tales of Chivalry and Romance* (1826). At that period, moved by a feeling that the literary contribution of early Ontario had been grossly underestimated in comparison with that of the Maritimes, he had been digging into early journals in the hope of finding vital information about Upper Canada between 1800 and 1850, and even earlier. In the process he found that a poem entitled "Tecumthé", which appeared anonymously in the *Canadian Review* of December 1826, was identical with an item in *Tales of Chivalry and Romance*. By analyzing various shreds of evidence, he was able to establish that Levi Adams, the author of other poems in the *Canadian Review* and in *Tales of Chivalry and Romance*, had also written "Tecumthé". In *Tecumseh: Fact and Fiction* (1961), Klinck performs a notable synthesis of English, Canadian and American records of the Indian leader. Originally designed as a text book of primary source material for undergraduate term papers, the book in fact illuminates not only the career of the Shawnee chief, but his entire period as well.

Even more extensive researches into early Canadian Indian history than those involved in *Tecumseh* went into Klinck's preparation, with the historian James J. Talman, of the fine Champlain Society edition of *The Journal of Major John Norton* (1970). Led by his search for the writings of the Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, Klinck discovered Norton's hitherto unpublished journal in the library of an English nobleman, and immediately recognized the value of this account of North American Indian life during the early nineteenth century. Norton's journal, written in 1816, includes both the narrative of a thousand mile journey down the Ohio from the Grand River in Upper Canada and through the states of Kentucky and Tennessee with a visit to the Cherokee country, and accounts of the Five Nations from an early period until the end of the war of 1812-14. It is a remarkable historical document, presented in an objective and realistic manner, and evidently designed to interest potential future readers in what Norton

did, saw, thought and was told on his journey in 1809-10 and his campaigns between 1812 and 1814.

Born of a Scottish mother and a Cherokee father, and adopted as a Mohawk, Norton also left many letters in which he relates intimate details of his correspondence with Wilberforce and various Quakers, and of his own adoption of a Christian humanistic attitude. In these letters and in the Journal to which they form a background, he portrays Indian ways and aims unsentimentally, and he notes that the relationship between whites and Indians in early Canada was quite different from, and generally more humane than, that which existed in the United States. The background information copiously and carefully assembled in Klinck's Biographical Introduction and in Talman's Historical Introduction combines with the actual substance of the *Journal* to make this a publication of considerable importance in terms of Canadian cultural and political history. In many ways it offers fresh evidence to substantiate a concept long nurtured by Carl Klinck: namely, that Canadian and American literatures are both North American continental in their orientation, but in different ways. They have many parallels because they are often inspired by similar or even the same material, but their developments have been different because political and social attitudes, especially in such directions as law and order and immigration, have been different.

Of the many critical articles which Carl Klinck has written it is impossible to discuss every one, but among those that should be mentioned are his excellent introductory essays to the New Canadian Library editions of Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1961), Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1962), *"Tiger" Dunlop's Upper Canada* (1967), Major John Richardson's *Wacousta* (1967) and Rosanna Eleanor Leprohon's *Antoinette de Mirecourt* (1973). These imaginative essays are models of the process by which critical perception and broad scholarship combine to reinterpret and revitalize an earlier age. Also notable is Klinck's introduction to the Alcuin Society's 1970 reprint of Abraham S. Holmes' spicy early Victorian tale of seduction in Chatham, Canada West, *Belinda: or, The Rivals: A Tale of Real Life* (1843).

Yet perhaps Carl Klinck's most important work has lain in the synthesizing of Canadian literary history. His first work in this field was a development of Lorne Pierce's *An Outline of Canadian Literature* (1927), which for years had been the standard reference work on Canadian writers in English and French. During the early fifties, Pierce urged Klinck to undertake a revision and updating of that book, and, although it was not until after Pierce's death that the project was completed, *Canadian Writers/Ecrivains canadiens* (1964, rev. 1966) was dedi-

cated to his memory and fulfilled his aims. In this work I collaborated with Klinck and with Guy Sylvestre, author of *Anthologie de la poésie canadienne française, Panorama des lettres canadiennes-francaises* and numerous literary essays, and a critic well qualified to treat the French Canadian writers in their own language.

Though it included a Chronological Table of literary and historical events from 1606 to 1965 and a selective Bibliography of basic reference texts, *Canadian Writers/Ecrivains canadiens* was mainly an alphabetically arranged handbook of information concerning more than 350 authors and their work. It did not attempt to be all-inclusive but only to treat for the most part writers who have "produced a notable first or second book and have thereafter embarked upon a literary career with repeated publications of generally acknowledged merit." This reference volume, which owed a great deal to Klinck's encyclopaedic knowledge of English-Canadian literature, provided biographical and bibliographical information that at the time of its publication was not otherwise readily available.

DOUBTLESS THE MOST IMPRESSIVE of all Carl Klinck's contributions to Canadian literature has been the initiation and co-ordination of *Literary History of Canada* (1965), and his personal contributions to that volume. Originally conceived in a conversation with Northrop Frye, the *Literary History* was actually initiated in 1957 when the University of Toronto Press accepted Klinck's proposal that it should be a work of various hands. He then gathered together Alfred G. Bailey, Claude Bissell, Roy Daniells, Northrop Frye and Desmond Pacey, all of them leading authorities on diverse phases of Canadian literature, to assist as contributing editors, and twenty-nine other scholars as contributors. This huge task of survey and assessment, reaching almost 1,000 pages in length, "had two principal aims: to publish a comprehensive reference book on the (English) literary history of this country, and to encourage established and younger scholars to engage in a critical study of that history both before and after the appearance of the work." Its translation by Maurice Lebel, *L'Histoire littéraire du Canada* (1970), made this valuable compendium equally available to French Canadian readers.

Despite the obvious difficulties presented by multiple authorship and differing individual approaches to a vast amount of material, the book is a fascinating account of how our writers over the centuries have responded to their natural environment and to their society against the background of other literary tradi-

tions in English. The story unfolds in four parts: "New Found Lands", "The Transplanting of Traditions", "The Emergence of Tradition", and "The Realization of a Tradition". It treats not only such central genres as poetry, fiction, drama and criticism, but "other works which have influenced literature or have been significantly related to literature in expressing the cultural life of the country": folk tales, Canadian publishing, the growth of Canadian English, the writings of historians, social scientists, philosophers and theologians, travel and nature books, children's literature, essays and biography.

The Introduction and two large chapters on literary activity in the Canadas (1812-1841) and in Canada East and West (1841-1880) were written by Klinck himself. These chapters, which reflect the result of his life-long gleanings from libraries in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States, bring to light much fresh material, clarify influences and relationships between English, American and Canadian literatures, and give in vivid and lively prose the first systematic and connected story of this early period. They provide, moreover, an invaluable guide to what significant books of the time merit study or reprinting.

The *Literary History*, a revised and updated edition of which is scheduled for publication in 1975, establishes that there is plenty of good writing in this country for which neither boosterism nor apology is needed. As Northrop Frye points out in his brilliant concluding chapter, "The writers featured in this book have identified the habits and attitudes of the country, as Fraser and Mackenzie have identified its rivers. They have also left an imaginative legacy of dignity and of high courage." Without Carl Klinck's inspiration, patience and industry the extent of this legacy could not have been recognized so soon in such clear perspective.

Carl Klinck started publishing creative evaluations of Canadian writings in an age when few of his fellow academics took their own country's literature seriously and there was little encouragement for any kind of scholarship at all. Despite a number of surveys by some distinguished "zealous amateurs", the only historically oriented treatment of the early Canadian period was Ray Palmer Baker's *A History of English-Canadian Literature to the Confederation* (1920). Special studies had been published, such as Casselman's valuable notes in his edition of *Richardson's War of 1812* (1902), Chittick's *Haliburton* (1924), Pierce's *William Kirby* (1929) and James Cappon's *Bliss Carman and the Literary Currents and Influences of his Time* (1930). In 1936 the *University of Toronto Quarterly* introduced its annual review of "Letters in Canada", and W. E. Collin brought out his *White Savannahs*. In 1943, the year after *Wilfred Campbell*, influential works like E. K. Brown's *On Canadian Poetry* and A. J. M. Smith's *The Book of*

Canadian Poetry appeared. That year, too, although J. B. Brebner described the meetings of the Royal Society of Canada as "drowsy gatherings . . . the transactions slumber undisturbed", the Humanities Research Council was formed. Within a decade one of the recommendations of the "Massey Report" (1951) led to the establishment of the Canada Council. Both these bodies not only promoted literary scholarship by various grants and aids to publication, but they also created an atmosphere in which careful investigation and considered judgment of our own writings slowly replaced the characteristic dilettante approach and parochial hyperbole of earlier literary comment.

As this new era of critical appreciation began, Professor Klinck was already an experienced journeyman. Familiar with both English and American traditions, he was well qualified to study Canadian writing within the context of universally accepted literary criteria. From the first his critical attitude was both historical and comparative. His interpretations reflect meticulous research of a work's entire background and period, and invariably clarify influences and relationships which would have been missed in the old *belles lettres* cavalier treatment. A pathfinder in the application of this systematic approach to Canadian history and culture, Klinck with his perennial enthusiasm and sensitive scholarship has encouraged an increasing number of followers to explore and chart the various regions of our country's imaginative landscape.

Since retirement from Western in 1973 Carl's productivity has continued unabated (in addition to supervising the revision of the *Literary History* and turning out scholarly articles, he is currently writing a book on Robert Service). His patient and informed sleuthing of obscure source material, his shrewd sifting and thoughtful analysis of various clues to identity or meaning in their proper context, and his ability because of his breadth of view and range of interests to synthesize our literary heritage have made Carl Klinck the many-sided historian-scholar-critic appropriate to our Canadian situation and needs.

THE PAST RECAPTURED

J. M. Kertzer

The texture of youth was still intact in him. No blow or unhappiness is ever accepted as truth, so long as time can always be made to begin at the beginning again.

ERNEST BUCKLER excels in conveying the texture of youth, and in *The Mountain and the Valley* presents a young man who suffers a series of blows and gradually loses, but finally, if ambiguously, recaptures the power to "begin again." Unlike novels about boys growing to maturity (*Who Has Seen the Wind, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, Sons and Lovers*) which conclude by looking ahead to the expanding future of adulthood, *The Mountain and the Valley* concludes by looking back at youth, but at a youth which, on re-examination, expands in significance. From Prologue to Epilogue the novel circles the thirty years of David Canaan's life until his final walk up the mountain, which proves to be a means of rediscovering his own past. This experience is matched by the patchwork rug stitched together by Grandmother Ellen. As she works, each rag evokes memories of the clothing it came from, the person who wore it, the time it entered the family wardrobe. Thus she stitches together a family tapestry and brings the past into a pattern: "The years were like a ribbon she was in the act of pleating." David does the same as he climbs the mountain, and Buckler does the same in his novel: as Ellen fits a last scrap of white lace into the centre of her rug, David's "vision" turns white, he dies in the snow, and the novel comes to an end.

Throughout the novel, David's maturing is studied in terms of time. His growing self-awareness entails a growing sensitivity to time and its role in his life. He discovers that his life — or lifetime — is essentially temporal, that his sense of himself and his relation to others and to the Annapolis Valley depends on his relation to his own past, present and future. Consequently, when his awareness grows so intense that he is "nothing but one great white naked eye of self-

consciousness", he becomes obsessed with the "tick, tick, tick, of emptiness" within him; this in contrast to his unreflecting friend, Steve, who "had lived as many years as David, but time itself was a thing he would never hear or see." The importance to Buckler of time, particularly past time, has been noted, especially by D. O. Spettigue,[1] but it has not received the close attention it requires. *The Mountain and the Valley* is a study of what Georges Poulet calls "human time", time as the forum of human growth and emotion and thought. In it, as in Buckler's second book, *The Cruelest Month*, characters tally up their lives through "the arithmetic of time"; they measure their condition "by clock's time . . . by joy's time . . . by dread's time"; they are people "whose mainspring has snapped," balanced uneasily between "memory and desire," between past and future. In such a study, time is not just a source of metaphor to express their experiences. It is a felt constituent of experience, or the very condition of experiencing. Joseph Conrad, in one of his ironic moods, noted that all man has to make him human is his mortality, which is a "scurvy, mangy, little bit of time." David finds that his life is composed of such rags of memory, and his last act is to stitch these together and reassemble his past.

David's intelligence allows for direct discussion of time, but more often his condition is registered by illustrative incidents. His life is lived, not just discussed. We find that there are two modes of time conditioning his life: the time of the valley and the time of the mountain. The first is chronological time, carrying David from childhood to adulthood. The second is a timeless transcendence which surmounts and encompasses linear time, just as Ellen's rug gathers into a unity the disparate times of her life, making them all co-present. These two times are in counterpoint through the novel, and a source of tension in David's life. The story traces the tightening and final resolution of that tension.

Time and tension are established at once in the Prologue where David's condition is shown through temporal contradictions. He has a boy's face which somehow seems old: "The longer you looked, the less you could be sure whether the face was young or old." His expression of patience, which waits calmly for the future, is "disputed" by one of quickness, which anticipates it. Similarly, he is restless, yet "any impulse to movement receded before the compulsion of the emptiness: to suspend the moment and prolong it, exactly as it was, in a kind of spell." The novel consists of one great flashback tracing the development of this tense state of affairs. Through it, Buckler explores the temporal "arithmetic" of David's life and death.

In Part One, David is eleven years old and immersed in a childhood world

dominated by a present continually fresh. He knows nothing of time because the present is always sufficient to him.

> There was nothing repetitive about the mornings then. Each one was brand new, with a gift's private shine. Until the voices of late evening began to sound like voices over water. Then, quite suddenly, sleep discarded it entirely. You woke again, all at once. The instant thought that another day had something ready for you made a really physical tickling in your heart.

This is the innocent age of the "Baptism Pool," the rainbow and Christmas. It is the magic time Buckler celebrates in *Ox Bells and Fireflies*: the "instantaneity of youth" when "Time was neither before you nor behind you: you were exactly opposite the present moment." The present moment is everything, and so David has little sense of change. In his eagerness to set off for the mountain, he cannot eat, yet cannot conceive of growing hungry later: "If he could only make them see how meaningless the possibility of being hungry later on was." At times of great enjoyment, such as Christmas, the moment "brims", "spills over" and becomes magical. These are "moments out of time altogether". "It was as if the cable of time had been broken and they were all magically marooned until its strands were sliced together again." David is too young to have a past or to conceive of the future except in the vaguest of terms. He always feels that it is a day of "promise", a feeling which may look to the future, but is rooted firmly in the present. When he declares that he will be the greatest general in the world or climb the mountain every day or marry Effie, he is forming convictions to fill the present and give it intensity. The idea of death, which interrupts the joyful fishing trip, means nothing to him. At the funeral, he can appreciate the grief of the moment and promising to marry Effie, but he cannot conceive of death as a future possibility for himself or, more abstractly, as the end of time ("human time") entirely. Anna listens in excitement to the stories of her Grandmother, the traditional means by which age entices youth out into life and experience. But again, death is a contradiction: "It isn't sound or silence. It isn't here or there; now or then." Even more puzzling is an idea which will recur, the idea of dying while still young. This is the fate of Effie, Toby, David and the sailor in Ellen's story. Children associate death with the aged, but death is neither "now or then"; it is "over the rim of Never", as he says in *Ox Bells and Fireflies*, and beyond time.

In Parts Two and Three, when David is between thirteen and sixteen years old, he enters the world of adolescence. Here he discovers the past. To a child, life is all of a piece and all in the present; but now past time begins to differentiate itself in a process of fragmentation — of the self, of the family, of the community —

which builds through the novel. Awareness of change in himself prompts David to compare the way he is now with the way he was before. Consequently, his gaze tends to be directed back to the past which is more accessible to him than the still undefined future. In a contrary view, D. O. Spettigue describes the first half of *The Mountain and the Valley* as looking forward in time and the second half as looking back.[1] While David's mood often does modulate from hope to regret, it is really his attitude to change that alters and defines his position. Here we find an interesting reversal that will contribute to the tension in his life. As a youth, he notices how much things have changed: he is oriented to the past. Later in life, the very unlikelihood of any further change makes him painfully aware of the future which will offer no relief. Thus Part Two opens amid signs of the past. As they drive to the graveyard, David recalls local stories and legends: the tale of Effie's great-great-grandmother, murdered by a drunken Indian; the tale of Lord Rothesay's visit to his grandparents. He considers the history of the valley, his neighbours, and his own ancestry. His sense of the past is strongest at the graveyard. Once again, death does not make him look to the future or beyond time. It makes him look back at all that is "unchangeably ended": "all the stain of the word 'ago' was suddenly in that spot." And again, as he looks at the grave of Barney Starratt who died at age seventeen, David ponders the contradiction of dying while young.

WHEN TIME IS HUMANIZED, it manifests itself first as emotion. The feelings attendant on David's new awareness of the past are a sense of privacy, of loss and of betrayal. The present joy or pain of childhood can be shared, especially within a family, but the world of memory is personal and private. Memory is allied to solitude. As Ellen looks at her family, she finds that each face contains something of the others, and David, who in different moods resembles different members of the family, "seemed to have no face of his own." He has been inseparable from his family. Now he must detach himself as a private individual and assume his own face. At first he enjoys doing so, and in the new house has his own room where "there was the exciting feeling of being unreachably alone. It wasn't the isolation of real severance (that was intolerable), but a cosy isolation of his own making." Privacy is comfortable, but more and more, time and change bring pain. David's new individuality also prompts a sense of loss. He feels there is something gone which cannot be recovered. As he leaves the graveyard:

> it seemed as if . . . the whole place had drawn all its life back within itself. It was like a house you've always lived in, at the moment of leaving. It would never bring its life out for them again, just for them alone.

What are lost are simplicity, family unity and, to the adolescent Chris and David, sexual innocence. David's sexual experiences with Effie destroy the childish friendship they shared and replace it with a new, but as yet unformed, love. But David's sensitivity to the past is stronger than any awareness of future development, and so his strongest feeling is "a kind of loss. She was like a part of himself that had slipped away." Furthermore, he realizes he has betrayed her in order to prove his new virility to his boyfriends. Later, his new allegiance to Toby forces another betrayal: "Suddenly he had to do what he did. He had to show Toby he went all the way with girls." David finds himself both the betrayer and the betrayed. He feels betrayed by Chris when he learns of his brother's relation with Charlotte. He feels that he is betraying himself by taking advantage of Effie. And he feels betrayed by time, by a course of events in which he has participated, but which he cannot control. For David, the tension between past and present is measured by guilt. When Effie dies (although, in fact, through no fault of his), all the feelings which have grown out of his sense of the past — privacy, loss, betrayal, guilt — converge on him:

> The guilt soon passed from voice to echo. But it was the first thing he could tell *no* one. It taught him that secrecy about anything (even a hateful thing like this) made it a possession of curious inviolability, and tempted him to collect more. The essence of childhood is that the past is never thought of as something that might have been different. He was never, even for a moment, all child again.

This is David's first realization that one cannot always "begin again" because the past is irrevocable. It is his first realization that death is final. When he seeks comfort by imagining the same events turning out happily, the "gust of fact" exposes his pretence and "the crush of 'never' got in behind everything."

Time continues to bring pain into David's life in Parts Four and Five when, as a young man in his twenties, his gaze finally turns to the future. It is a sign of immaturity that this should happen so late in his life. His ties to childhood, to family and to the past have been too strong and inhibited his development. Childhood "promise" has not led to adult "fulfilment". Anna leaves for school and Toby goes off to sea while David remains in the valley. His love for Effie never has a chance to develop and is replaced by a meaningless affair with her mother, Bess, an older woman who forms, in effect, another bond with the past, holding him back. When he does turn to the future, it is already too late, as the

episodes of the rock and the scar indicate. Where before his position in time was gauged by feelings of loss and guilt, now it is gauged by reference to the future through an uneasy suspense which gives way to a desolate suspension.

One path to the future that David might take follows his father's foot-steps. This is the only course offered by the life of the valley, but David cannot take it. To Joseph, the great rock which he and his son succeed in moving suggests permanence and stability, a continuity through time binding him to the land, binding father to son to grandson:

> My land fits me loose and easy, like my old clothes. That rock there is one my father rolled out, and my son's sons will look at these rocks I am rolling out today. Someone of my own name will always live in my house.

But to David, the land is no longer "home." To him, the rock suggests inertia, a life of exhausting routine advancing at "the pace of an ox" into a future which is a tedious repetition of the present:

> He looked toward home. He felt as if he were in a no man's land. He felt as if time had turned into space, and was crushing against him. He felt as if he must leap somewhere out of the now, but everywhere it was now.

This is the crisis in which Buckler's characters find themselves: in a no man's land between youth and age, memory and desire, regret and hope, past and future. David tries to run off to Halifax, but finds "he could neither leave nor stay." However, the suspense he feels also suggests waiting or anticipation. It still hints at the possibility of change:

> Each year marks the tree with another ring, the cow's horn with another wrinkle. But until you were twenty, you were not marked. If one day was lost, the others closed over it so quickly that, looking back, there was a continuous surface. Everything was this side of the future.

David still has a future; but then he is painfully "marked," and the scar on his face indicates a deeper, inner wound.

An air of suspense pervades the pig slaughtering episode. Buckler delays the accident — which is inevitable; the reader has been forewarned — while assembling references to blood, knives, cutting and razor edges. David feels a "tension" in the "horrible lull" before the slaughter; it is not the killing but the uncertainty of waiting that bothers him: "Did the pig have ten minutes left, or fifteen?" The suspense in his own life is broken too when he awakens after a period of unconsciousness, a break in time, to a constant pain which becomes "the climate of

his mind." Gradually he realizes the significance of this pain, and moves into a deathly state of complete suspension. Time begins to lose its meaning:

> It didn't seem like five years that he's been alone here.
> It didn't seem like any time at all. These years were like a kind of suspension, before time became really, movingly now again.

There is still a future, but time is described as flowing "parallel" to rather than through him: he is not part of any change. Once, his watch stops as he works in the field, and he works on unaware. This is a sign of what is to come. A visit from Toby and Anna prompts the final realization that there will be no further changes in his life. He is cut off from his past, as he sees in "a stricken glimpse of the years gone by as of an utter emptiness." He cannot even take refuge in memory because "Even the ghosts of whatever things had happened here seemed to have fled." And the future is now closed to him as well: "He realized for the first time that his feet must go on in their present path . . . My own life brimmed and emptied so soon, and I could never fill it again." His life is over and he cannot begin again. The clock has stopped; time is suspended: "There was no beat in the day. Time was not a movement, but a *feature* of the frozen fields."

RUNNING AS A COUNTERCURRENT to the chronological development of David's life and self-awareness is another kind of time which he periodically encounters, rejects, but finally embraces. In the valley, he has become frozen in a static present; but when he completes his long deferred trip up the mountain, he rises above his own life, views it whole and turns, characteristically, to the past. In *The Cruelest Month*, Kate Fennison realizes that life is not

> a quantitative thing. It was not stretched out parallel to the railway tracks of time, so that any part of it you failed to seize as the train came opposite was forever lost. It was a qualitative thing. It repeated its eternal entity opposite each moment. It was available whenever you chose.

This is David's discovery on the mountain. He had been living quantitatively, linearly, until his time ran out. Now he enjoys a privileged moment of timeless vision, which is also the moment of his death.

This new dimension of experience is expressed by the sea, by literature and by the mountain. The sea is a timeless realm of adventure, glamour, romance. According to Ellen, who carries a locket with a picture of the young sailor she once helped to hide, at sea "it seems as if everything is somewhere else." The

locket contains the subject of one's secret concern or the focus of one's dreams. Ellen sees in it a picture of her sailor; Anna sees a picture of Toby; the self-regarding David sees a picture of himself. David dreams of being the sailor who lives the fullest life imaginable: "he'd be the only man who ever went every single place in the world and did everything in the whole world there was to do." Toby is reminded of the sea by the peace he feels at the mountain top, but Anna, who is standing beside him, associates the sea with death. Earlier in David's short story, he saluted the spirit of adventure by proclaiming: "The sea was in us." Now, the phrase means something more sinister to Anna: "The sea would be in Toby's mouth, when he could swim no longer. She hated the sea." Several characters in the novel drown: Barney Starratt, Spurge Gorman and Effie's father, Toby, Bess (who drowns herself in the "Baptising Pool"). The adventurous escape of the sea is allied to the ultimate escape of death.

In literature, David discovers the world of the imagination and its expression through language. At first, it is merely a timeless world of illusion which can supplant reality, as he finds when he ecstatically reads *Robinson Crusoe* (a tale of the sea). But later he finds that this illusion can illuminate reality because "things stated exactly" reveal "the thing itself", the basic truth of the world. Truth is exposed through fiction. Literature resolves such contradictions because it fuses opposites: the imaginative and the ordinary, the subjective and the objective, the self and others. Thus in the words of the school play David finds a "refuge", an intensely private world, which nevertheless links him to others in a shared experience. In performance, the play takes on a life of its own, in a transcendent time of its own:

> the total plan sprang up instantly.... Oh, it was perfect now. He was creating something out of nothing.... None of all this was consecutive and time-taking like thought. It was glimpsed instantaneously, like the figures of space. And orchestrated in the subliminal key of memory.

But the beautiful illusion seems "treacherous", "foolish", "shameful", when it collides with coarse reality in the form of a crude jest after the delighted David kisses Effie. The exalted moment is suddenly "shorn of all its dimensions". The words lose their magic. In a characteristic manner, David then punishes himself, rushes off into solitude and derides what he once valued. The experience is repeated when he takes up writing. It seems to him the "key to freedom" which eases his pain, allows him to "surmount everything", and yet to accept everything, to "possess ... things by describing them exactly." More important, it

offers a means of coming to terms with his own life, of resolving its tensions and contradictions. His short story is autobiographical, confessional, a "cleansing cathartic" that shows "How a man could be trapped by his own Nature." But again, harsh reality — Charlotte's pregnancy, the intrusion of others — dispels the illusion. Instead of soothing David by allowing him to work out the conflicts within him, his writing has just been another source of tension in his life.

LIKE THE SEA, the mountain is associated with beauty, peace, clarity of vision, and with death. Its time is "the shut-in time of a dream" in which Anna reaches "the peak of her whole life" just before realizing that Toby will soon die. The mountain is the site of Joseph's death and of David's. As David begins his ascent, time, which seemed frozen, begins to thaw and flow. Vitality returns to the world: "A little pulse crept back into the road and the trees." The ghosts of memory are released and swarm about so rapidly that time seems spatialized, flattened on a single plane with all moments equally accessible:

> It was as if time were not a movement now, but flat. Like space. Things past or future were not downstream or upstream on a one-way river, but in rooms. They were all on the same level. You could walk from room to room and look at them, without ascent or descent.

David loses himself in memory so fully that recollection gives way to "translation" to another time. The past is not just recalled, but recaptured. Change is no longer irrevocable since one can always go back to begin again:

> It is not a *memory* of that time: there is no echo quality to it.... It is not a returning: you are there for the first time, immediately. No one has been away, nothing has changed — the time or the place or the faces. The years between have been shed. There is an original glow on the faces like on the objects of home. It is like a flash of immortality: nothing behind you is sealed, you can live it again. You can begin again ...

In this exalted state, David is transported from moment to moment. He repossesses his life as he gazes down on and through everything. Buckler frequently relates time to vision: how one sees depends on how time focuses the objects of perception. One might experience the blindness of a dull present, the "shine" of a glowing moment, the sudden clarity of prevision, the "cross-eye of anachronism", as he says in *The Cruelest Month*. As David transcends time, he attains total clarity of vision. Each pine needle, each snowflake is distinct; yet all are interrelated. He differentiates every object, every person, every thought, until he is

overwhelmed by their multiplicity. As in the case of the Borges character ("Funes the Memorious") whose memory is perfect, the past expands infinitely and maddeningly with each past moment an eternity in itself. Because the past is no longer irrevocable, it is no longer permanent. There are always further alternatives, further possibilities stretching out infinitely. The magic of memory has become diabolic.

But just as, in performance, the disorderly school play took shape, just as the scrambled short story suddenly fell into a controlling pattern, so a further "translation" unifies David's chaotic vision. It gains a harmony that resolves all the tensions and temporal contraditions of his life. The desolation of solitude fades before a feeling of communion with everyone in the valley. Isolation gives way to friendship and love. Guilt is relieved by "acquittal," betrayal soothed by "an absolving voice." Suspense and suspension are broken by an unquestioned certainty of the future: he will be "the greatest writer in the whole world" even if this means he must work for "a hundred years". Time offers no more obstacles. Writing provides the final, most complete "translation", for by "telling" things exactly, "you *become* the thing you told." David finally masters and unites himself with the world which has brought him so much pain. The budding artist finally achieves a timeless, aesthetic vision. He must work, not sequentially through time, documenting things "one by one", but by abstracting "their single core of meaning". This is the same harmony, the same focussing of essentials, the same triumph over time, which has calmed the chaotic vision and sorted out his entire life.

The significance of this last scene and of David's death is ambiguous. Because it is presented from within, as experienced, there is no objective comment on it. Is it a triumph or a failure? Can the past be recaptured only through death? One romantic possibility is that through his final agony David dies in a blaze of glory: in a sort of *liebestod* with literature, time and the mountain he attains what in *Ox Bells and Fireflies* Buckler calls the "saving instant that brimmed him whole." While he is filled to overflowing with memory through which he repossesses his whole life, it is less likely that this is his salvation. The partridge soaring over the far side of the mountain suggests the flight of David's spirit, released through a still purer "translation"; but it is countered by the image of the log which is indistinguishable from his snow-covered body. This is the lower order of physical valley-reality which he has sought to escape, but which now lays claim on him. He must combine mountain and valley, spirit and flesh, and the two orders of time each inhabits if he is to be "saved". This is the synthesis of art which fuses

fiction and fact, illusion and reality. The artist has the ability "to make a story out of a fact," that is, to create aesthetic order, beauty and meaning out of the disorder of ordinary experience. Buckler insists (and demonstrates) that the latter cannot be ignored. It can be "translated", but not escaped, which is why a spiritualized interpretation of the Epilogue would not do justice to the tone of the novel. The lyricism of *The Mountain and the Valley* is grounded in the natural world of potato harvesting and hog butchering, of dirt, blood and toil. The spirit is felt through the flesh, divinity through the soil, through a reality too concrete and compelling to be disregarded. It is so compelling that when it intrudes on David's imaginative experiences — at the play, while composing his short story — it proves too coarse and dispels his grand but fragile illusions.

The reverse occurs at the end of the novel when David claims to discover his vocation in literature. Now, illusion dispels reality: from the mountain, the valley becomes insubstantial and resembles "the intactile landscape of a dream". Contrasts with similar experiences in Proust and Joyce are clear. In *Le Temps Retrouvé*, Marcel recaptures his past by weaving it into the immense novel which the reader has just completed. Similarly, at the end of Buckler's second book, Morse Halliday regains the inspiration to write what is, presumably, *The Cruelest Month*. But David Canaan does not write *The Mountain and the Valley* or any other novel. Marcel does not use his past as a refuge. He turns to it because he discovers aesthetic perception is essentially retrospection: only by reconsidering one's past can the truth be found and re-created. Indeed, the discovery of his literary vocation reawakens in him a desire to live. He feels revived; he has found a future for himself and a way of making up for the time he has lost. He finds a timeless world of essences — time in its pure state — in art, not in death. But David turns to death and embraces his past at the expense of any future. He regresses to the world of promise where one can always begin again, but where, therefore, there can be no fulfilment and no finish. He speaks again with the voice of childhood, saying that he will be the greatest writer in the same tone as he said he would be the greatest general or the greatest actor. He will never become anything because the chronological world of becoming is the valley. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus' decision to become an artist is marked by a similar "epiphany" associated with timelessness and the soaring spirit; but Stephen then returns (perhaps despite himself) to the tea leaves, lice and mud of Dublin, his equivalent of the valley. David does not return. He abstracts himself still further until, in his eyes, "the valley was completely gone." He can forgive, feel forgiven and achieve communion with others only when he

is high on the mountain and furthest removed from them. He resolves to be the literary voice of the valley-folk only when he is out of earshot.

The Mountain and the Valley explores a vision of childhood which gradually grows insidious. In his essay on Buckler, D. O. Spettigue reminds us of the prominence in English-Canadian fiction of reminiscence, especially of rural, childhood scenes. Buckler brings this theme into critical focus by showing how the past can become a trap. In *Survival*, Margaret Atwood observes that Canadian literature is full of such traps: traps of environment, marriage, family, solitude; the snares which trap wild animals. For Buckler, the snare is memory.

David seeks to escape from a world which has lost all vitality. This world is the Annapolis Valley, but it is also his own state of tedium and his own adulthood. Increasingly, escape means a voyage of the imagination into literature, up the mountain, out to sea. His retreat from the world turns inward and becomes a retreat into memory. Throughout his life, time has been an enemy bringing change, pain and mounting tension. To return to the past is to cancel these and recapture the "instantaneity" of youth. But it is also a regression that dooms David to immaturity: he has chosen not to develop, not to go forward. This is ultimately life-denying, which is why the novel concludes with his death. For Proust, a comparable experience proves life-affirming. Georges Poulet notes that Proustian memory plays the same supernatural role as grace in Christian thought; it is a miraculous phenomenon offering Marcel's fallen and divided nature "the highway of its salvation".[2] David's memory is not his salvation, but his undoing. In his last moments, he is childlike again. His writing too has been immature, and now will never improve. While he always engages our sympathy and often our admiration, our judgment of David becomes increasingly critical. To some extent he may appear heroic, as Warren Tallman contends, because of the intensity of his suffering.[3] Without such dignity, he would be unworthy of such prolonged attention. But our admiration for him decreases, especially on second and subsequent readings of the novel, as his shortcomings become evident, as he proves incapable of developing his obvious talents. In our final view of him, he joins the ranks of those who venture out to sea only to drown. If he has resolved the tensions in his life, it is only by entering into another paradox, that of dying while young.

NOTES

[1] D. O. Spettigue, "The Way It Was," *Canadian Literature* 32, 1967.
[2] Georges Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, trans. Elliott Coleman, 1956.
[3] Warren Tallman, "Wolf in the Snow", *Canadian Literature* 5-6, 1960.

review articles

THE SITE OF BLOOD

George Bowering

AUDREY THOMAS, *Blown Figures*. Talonbooks. Cloth $12.95, Paper $5.95.

WHAT ARE FIGURES, and what is blown? There are fly-blown corpses, and corpses were once figures. Craftsmen blow figures in glass. If you don't have a good figure you'd better turn the light off if you want to be blown. Bad counters blow their figures. Poets who reach for effects blow their figures up fat. Some flute-players blow outlandish figures. Add your own, and you'll be ready to read Audrey Thomas' new novel. It is what you are asked to do — note how often the narrator drops citations from Skeat into her text.

Audrey Thomas' first book, a collection of stories called *Ten Green Bottles*, was nearly altogether conventional. Since that time her writing has moved through transformations that have given less due to the narrative necessity, and more to the con-frontation of reader with text. *Blown Figures* is, finally, an explosion. When you open the boards, the pages should tumble out and blow about your shape.

There are 547 pages, it is true, but fewer than half of them are filled with lines. The rest are nearly white pages, with some black marks on them, words and pictures. These may be single sentences uttered by the main figure, Isobel Carpenter, or African comic strips, or African letters from the lovelorn, or misremembered nursery rimes, or items of etymology, or none of the above.

Let me perhaps mislead you, or put this out of reach of perspective, by summarizing some of the story. In *Mrs. Blood* the unnamed Isobel had experienced a painful miscarriage in a West African hospital. In *Blown Figures*, she leaves husband and two children in Vancouver, and travels back to West Africa, ostensibly to find out what had happened to the foetus; if she were African the purpose might be religious or superstitious, but as she is North American it is more likely to be neurotic, compulsive, fixated. Or it might be a dream, you never can tell.

If you can't tell, show. That is, if you are not writing a novel, make a poem. This book is not a novel, Thomas once said, it is a book (though the title page says a novel). It is a lot like a big concrete poem, or better, a found poem. It is perhaps a found novel, at least half so, and that's interesting. Not always totally accomplishing, but interesting, and that's what you want.

How is it interesting? It begins as an enjoyable read, sort of the way *Heart of*

Darkness starts, as a catchy yarn, with the flotsam of symbols knocking gently against the hull. It is a narrative, and we settle down like passengers in a B-747, to have it appear before us. At least a little before us. The first chapter gathers up Thomas' previous books, so that readers of *Mrs. Blood, Songs my Mother Taught Me*, etc., feel themselves sinking into the womb of the delivering voice. The first chapter details the character of Isobel, dramatizing her phobias very deftly: "Sometimes it was necessary to leave everything and get out. Walk home along the tilting sidewalks weeping, 'Why me, why me?'," yes, "(You had to be in a room with a window which could be opened. You had to know where all the exits were.)."

Isobel is on the boat that will carry her from England to Africa. Riding in a symbolic vessel that is still necessary, not climbing the struts of a fabricated symbolic structure; very good. At the beginning of this whole trip there is nearby, down the rail, a screaming baby. Naturally — Thomas is always a symbolist writer, but one is happy to see that here she has dropped her earlier habit of literary stuff from the English anthology. This will be a journey into Isobel's personal past. The narrative zips back and forth through time, into the African experience of five years ago, back further to sexual experiences in England, forward to three days ago. It is not at all annoying, and we know that in some books it is annoying. What else would you expect to pass through the mind of somebody who is thousands of miles from domesti-city, and half-way to the puzzle in her own past? Neat story-telling.

But we who have been carried thus far remember that the front cover of the book displays the hideous figures of "Lovers in a Landscape," (the convention is "Figures in a Landscape") painted by Claude Breeze. Also that the second page of dedication says: "to Isobel/because you are fond of fairy-tales, and have been ill,/I have made you a story all for yourself — /a new one that nobody has read before." (That in itself a paradox.) We have to be a little uneasy, then. This might be a fairy-tale; it is at least doubtful. Over the page we read:

> We have all Africa and her prodigies
> Within us.
>
> Sir Thomas Browne
> *Religio Medici*, 1642

(yes, Thomas) so we think of the Prodigal Son, thinking of Isobel's child, it, and here we go. The book is full of puns, poetry's principal antagonist to the serial narrative.

The book is a veritable mine-field of such puns and jokes, often with the kind of external reference that will bring the reader in, hollering aha! In Isobel's delusionary penitence scene near the end, for instance, we are told that African tree-lurking "red snakes hung down and hissed at her as she passed," and then when the next thing she sees it "a man nailed through the head to a chair," we remember that we saw that latter image in a segment of the "Monty *Python*" show. Okay, a pun on Breeze, a pun on Python. What about Isobel Carpenter? Well, a carpenter this crazy lady could never be, no joiner she. "Iso-" means equal, and "bel" means beauty. We'll see. But Thomas always invites us to recall our childhood songs and jokes. Is a bell necessary on a bicycle, remember, and ask, is this trip necessary? For there is Isobel, fretful traveller, she who dislikes her fellow voyagers, going by plane, ship,

train, bus, taxi, ferry, truck, on foot finally, for what reason?

What reason. If we were in the business of reason we wouldn't be travelling through a book threatened so often by the snips of madness thrown at us by the newspapers and the Bros. Grimm. "Cripples, one-eyed people, pregnant women," the first phrase of the book, suggests an alignment strange at first sight, but yes, they are all perhaps publicly avoided, or looked away from through embarrassment. They are outside the main body of life. Going through French Africa, on the way to finding her abandoned "baby", Mrs. Blood sees that "at every stop cripples and beggars and one-eyed people swept through the train demanding alms". The Thomas landscape is usually populated by figures grotesque and maimed. Isobel pines for a clear objective world, all the time living in one haunted and transformed by her fears.

She is filled with fears, fear of flying, fear of queues, fear of dreams and fear of their loss. She feels victimized ("why me?" she asks over and over) by all her meetings with the world, and demands the role of victim as the last justification of her egoistic scorn for the folks around her in the story, all of them doing their jobs seemingly without second thoughts. Isobel the victim realizes her nightmare in the end, and there she goes, the totalized Canadian, if Anansi has his way.

People who seek to become victims are not christlike, they are guilty, guilty-feeling. Isobel Blood remembers: "She had killed the child and then ignored its corpse — blasphemed the ghost-mother by her actions, her sacrilege." Isobel's doubtful mind seizes on the African superstitions to lay shadows on the reality of her near-child's death and disappearance. What is inside her now, where the life had been — a ghost. She is a haunted house. How do you fix a haunted house. You burn it down. You blow it up. You commit (psychic) suicide.

You psychology majors will say that Isobel is neurotic, neurotically travelling to the place of action (psychosis). She lives all the time at the outer edge of madness discovered by the Edible Woman. References to *Alice in Wonderland* buzz throughout her story. She is unusually drawn to ritual and exorcism. She sees herself often as a mannequin behind glass, visible but iso(bel)lated from the passerby, Mrs. Thing. She is journeying in solitude, that dangerous state.

There are no other main characters in the book, only the others-there. She doesn't like any of them, not even the "Dutch boy" she has sex with, finger against the deluge, on the boat. The natives of the African countries don't understand what a solitary white woman is doing there. Neither does the reader. Neither, probably, does Isobel. The customs men are always asking her where are the children listed in her passport. At home with their father, the painter who (see *Munchmeyer*) paints the torsoes of women, framed without heads.

The book abounds with images, found and otherwise, of headless bodies and severed heads, including meals of chicken heads and animal heads. Headlessness suggests craziness, one guesses, and bears an acute relationship with the image of the abandoned womb.

But the heads, and the headless bodies make only one line of images. The book, one learns, is organized more around images than along lines of narrative. The question is, are they telling images? Sometimes they appear to be superfluous and

gratuitous. I was suspecting that Thomas laid in so many isolated snippets because she wanted to use as much disparate material from her notebook as possible. But there is no doubt that a week after reading the book, I remember it as a *story*, I have digested it as I do any novel, no matter how presented. I remember the effect of the many images of eggs, of blindness and one-eye, of blood, menstrual and other. Generally, I admire the refusal by Thomas to allow narrative flow, that attempt at capturing illusion. But the non-conventional keeps shifting its approach, desperately, one guesses, and that is a bother.

I feel intruded upon, for instance, when I get this supposition for the first time, on page 151: "The three people who concern us are sitting in padded vinyl armchairs and underneath the stars." One doesn't, I guess, like a jarring note among the welcome inconsistencies. That sort of thing, the one I just cited, argues a coolness of an unattached narrator. The excitement I'd been feeling was a result of the contest between the author and her "narrator". Isobel the egoist trying to control her defence against the world, and the rain of found material augmenting the discovery that the wobbly story can't be controlled by an expressive ego. Thomas isn't fooling or fooling around. She has entered where lots of Canadian "experimental" fiction writers have not had the nerve to go lately, into the life-or-madness care of real risk. I have the feeling that if this book had not been taken over by the imagery and the non-linear, the pen might have been taken away from her for ever.

So perhaps (one hopes so) it was not only Isobel, but also Thomas, who surrendered to the outside, who starts by trying to tell the story of her trip, and in the strange heat of Africa becomes a collector. The composition becomes the process of exploded shapes falling into place, side-by-side. Isobel herself, then, becomes one or some of them. The sane say, or hint at saying, get yourself together, compose yourself.

"The past, ever the perfect host, gives way to the present." That was true in the past too, Isobel. I draw two meanings from the statement: that one feels comfortable in the home of the past, settles down in the best chair with good company and a generous drink, but it all fades as inferior host present takes over; and the past steps backward quietly as the present, a boorish guest, becomes the death of the party.

In one of the found scraps, the West African newspaper astrology advisor Elmohr says, "Scorpio people often seek refuge in the past and fear the present and the future. It is a feeling that can lead Scorpios to fear travel and new faces and places," so I assume that Isobel and Audrey are Scorpios, though as always with that starry nonsense, I don't know what that has to do with the story. Well, what of Isobel's past? We re-encounter the lover, Richard, who betrayed her love, the husband, Jason, who ignored her sex, and the fear that both hurtings were her own fault. That the victim invites the victimizer. Hence the guilt about the tiny mangled corpse her body rejected, or *vice versa*. To enlarge that possibility, a found list on page 311 offers ten possible causes (African) for miscarriage, at least half of which (1. adultery on the part of the wife . . . 9. the sight of blood) pertain in Isobel's case. It was, to her mind, a miscarriage with justice. And this is the whole text of page

318: "Sexual intercourse with a ghost results in death." If Isobel dies at the end of the book, it is because she spent too much time screwing around with the past.

If she dies. If she goes crazy. As before in Thomas' work, we are entertained by the Is It Real problem. I always assume for the reader's part that it will always be real. So the problem remains for Isobel, and when the end arrives there is a greater problem that serves to amortize the first. "She never doubted they were real," we hear of the cockroaches that disgust Isobel, and doubt sidles in. The determined victim seizes on the "reality" of all vague (non) threats, rather than become less to everyone than the abandoned, the mannequin. The greatest fear of all is suggested by the ambiguous one line of page 51: "There is nothing to be afraid of." Isobel is.

Somehow or another all this story is being addressed to one "Miss Miller". It is not that Isobel is the narrator, at least not all of Isobel, or the Isobel you know; nor that she is telling this whole story to "Miss Miller". Nor that someone else is telling "Miss Miller" the story about one red-headed woman gone Kurtzy in Africa. Nor that there is a Miss Miller there. But she is interesting. One does want to know. And it doesn't really settle things to hear this, half-way through: "You're only a sort of thing in my dream, Miss Miller; you're only a sort of something in my dream". The suggestions make themselves known. Mrs. Blood split into halves, sharing Isobel with Mrs. Thing, so perhaps this "thing" in Isobel's "dream" is the sacrificial penitent's altar ego. More simply, she may be Isobel's attendant at the loony bin. At the end of the book, the hysterical speaker is making outrageous accusations against her, and screaming at her: "NO MORE TWIST." Presumably Miss Miller knows what that means. It's beyond my rational mind, grist, perhaps, for someone else's mill. (One thought momentarily of Daisy Miller, the innocent abroad across the Atlantic. Henry James shows up often in Thomas' earlier works.)

Some people coming to this book, especially because it is published by a partly avant-garde house, are going to read it as self-indulgent. It may be. But I would caution that they wonder, as Thomas has in ceding "control" to the environments, about the parameters of the self.

MORE UTILE THAN DULCE

Ann P. Messenger

HERSCHEL HARDIN, *Esker Mike & His Wife Agiluk*. Talonbooks. $2.50.
SHARON POLLOCK, *Walsh*. Talonbooks (revised edition). $3.00.
DAVID FREEMAN, *Battering Ram*. Talonbooks. $3.00.
DAVID FREEMAN, *You're Gonna Be Alright Jamie Boy*. Talonbooks. $3.50.

A PLAY IS a slice of life — any slice, whether it be the thick wedge carved for himself by the historian, the neatly trimmed piece of the sociologist, the oblique cut of the psychologist, or any of the variously shaped chunks chiselled

off by other students of human experience. What matters is how well the dramatist transforms his chosen slice into something that reaches out from the stage to the minds and hearts of the audience in order to raise their consciousness (or conscience) or to tickle their fancy — in the classic formula, to instruct or delight. The four recent Canadian plays reviewed here are designed almost exclusively to do the former. There is precious little to delight in the clashes of white culture with the cultures of Eskimos and Indians, in the sexual conflict of a physically crippled man and an emotionally crippled woman, or in the agony of an intelligent young man dominated by a brutal, TV-zombie of a father. But there is instruction aplenty, and, in varying degrees, the dramatists succeed in reaching us.

Herschel Hardin's *Esker Mike & His Wife Agiluk*, the oldest of these four plays, has been performed in Canada and in London with only moderate success. In an interview published in the *Canadian Theatre Review* No. 1, Ken Gass, director of the Factory Festival of Canadian Plays in London, offers his explanation of the play's lukewarm reception: "People tended to look at *Esker Mike* as just a social tragedy about Eskimos, despite the play's diffuse action and oblique, Buchner-like structure." Though it is difficult to pin down exactly why the sociology of the play does not quite jell into drama, the diffuseness that Gass mentioned may be one source of the trouble. The husband and wife are given equal billing in the title, the relationship between them is part of the drama, but Agiluk gradually emerges as the major figure, a sort of mysterious northern earth mother whose tragedy dominates the last

scenes of the play. One member of the audience at the Vancouver production reports that the play seemed to draw most of its power from the character of the witch Toomik, but when the play is read in the study she appears quite peripheral. One also asks if the play is about Eskimo culture *per se* — and it does indeed convey much that is fascinating about that culture — or if it is about the destructive influence of white culture on the Eskimo way of life. One must conclude that "Buchner-like" diffuseness is not necessarily a virtue.

The language of *Esker Mike* is another possible source of the trouble. Discarding, for the most part, conventional "realistic" dialogue, Hardin has written a kind of poetry that cries out for metre to support the differentness of the diction. Here is Sgt. Green, restraining his Constable who wants to hurry and put the handcuffs on Agiluk:

> Cuffs? Let's rest awhile, Mac. Things go slow in the North. The ice breaks slow on the River of Disappointment. Fish grow slow. Our justice is slow, though it locks fast, like the grip of frozen brass on a bare hand. This is a funeral. Sit down here on the moss and rest awhile.

The otherness of the North is mirrored in the otherness of the language, but Hardin has not quite gone far enough. The formality of metre, even the kind of loose metre of Christopher Fry's plays, might have worked its subliminal magic on the pulses of the audience and thus sustained the atmosphere better.

Perhaps the real reason why *Esker Mike* remains sociology instead of drama has to do with the cultural mores involved. The play presents the different Eskimo attitude to human life and hence to human relationships, which may explain the relative thinness of the characters. They are representative figures rather than individuals, and such figures seldom engage an audience. At the crisis of the play, the Constable exclaims, "Brutal! Life here is brutal!" and we are ready to agree with him. But Sgt. Green, who knows the North, will not allow that kind of emotional reaction. "Not brutal, Mac," he says; "Difficult. Life here is difficult." Is the southern audience permitted to feel for the characters in their plight or is it being instructed that these characters, especially Esker Mike, are without sympathy for each other, are "as simple as cold" and as off-putting? Perhaps the very success of *Esker Mike* in displaying Eskimo mores has "alienated" the audience more completely than Brecht ever did and left us admiring a piece of dramatized sociology rather than reacting fully to a play.

No such problems bedevil Sharon Pollock's *Walsh*. The focus is clear, the language rings true, and the gap between two cultures is firmly bridged by a common humanity. Pollock has taken on the difficult job of writing a history play and has solved the immense problems that that thick slice of life involves, particularly problems of exposition and compression. The story of Sitting Bull's search for refuge in Canada after he defeated Custer and his Longknives at Little Big Horn is one of many tragic chapters in the annals of the North American Indians. For some years, Sitting Bull and his Sioux camped near Fort Walsh, negotiating with the North West Mounted Police and through them with Parliament for a permanent home, a reservation like that given to the Santee Sioux in Manitoba. But it was decided that these Indians were the Red Children of the Great White Father, not of Queen Victoria, the

Great White Mother, and they were instructed to return across the line. To insure their compliance and to keep relations smooth between Ottawa and Washington, Sitting Bull and his people were given no food, clothing, or other supplies. For a while, they chose to starve and freeze. Finally, trusting American promises, they went back. Those promises were broken and Sitting Bull went to jail. Ten years later, Sitting Bull was killed.

The bare bones of the story are complex enough in themselves; a wealth of detail that can put flesh on the bones is available in such sources as Dee Brown's *Bury My Heat at Wounded Knee*, which Pollock occasionally echoes in her own dialogue. But the dramatist is the one who has to make the hard choices, selecting what a play can contain and still be a play, not just history on stage. Pollock has made the right choices. The play as printed, a revised text, deals successfully with the business of narration and exposition that can strangle an episodic history play. The original text as produced at Theatre Calgary raised the critical eyebrow of Jamie Portman, writing about these problems in *Canadian Theatre Review* No. 2, though he found the play "vibrant and exciting" despite the severely limited time and money that were expended on the production. Portman said that Sharon Pollock was working on the problems. She worked, and she solved them. The play is now alive from the very beginning, despite the weight of historical fact it must communicate. The device that accomplishes this is Harry, who moves easily between his roles as narrator and as wagon master, with the American flavour of his speech setting him off from the others and complementing both his roles. I have not seen the original version, but I suspect that Harry saved the day.

The focus of the play, however, is not Sitting Bull but Major James Walsh, North West Mounted Police, and the play centres on what the Sioux dilemma does to him. Here is the stuff and structure of classic tragedy: a man torn between genuine devotion to his duty and the principles and virtues it involves, and his human commitment to a suffering fellow-creature who trusts him. He must betray that trust to fulfill his duty. When Sitting Bull is killed, the circle of betrayal is complete. In a moment of the kind of wordless visual symbolism possible only on stage, Walsh strips off his gun and scarlet tunic. Like Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*, he is destroyed, not physically but morally, by the consequences of his impossible tragic choice. The play presents the scope of history, the sorrows of the Indians and the perfidy of governments, all focussed in the tragic conflict within Major Walsh. It is a fine piece of work.

David Freeman has taken psychology as his portion. In a sense, all dramatists do, but Freeman is particularly concerned with the psyches of extraordinary people facing the exigencies of ordinary life. In his widely-acclaimed first play, *Creeps*, the extraordinary people were victims of cerebral palsy, trapped in the destructive protection of a sheltered workshop. In *Battering Ram*, a young man in a wheelchair is brought home by a middle-aged hospital aide who wants to "help" him to find out what he can do with his life; after making an unsuccessful pass at her daughter, virginal Virgil ends up in bed with the mother. Later, the daughter too is about to succumb when Irene, her mother, interrupts them and, in a rage, drives Virgil out. Is the

rage outrage? Irene would say so. Or is it jealousy? The play indicates that it is, and that Irene would never face up to such an emotional truth about herself. Whether Virgil himself has planned the whole thing, from the threat of suicide that brought Irene to his rescue to the loss of his virginity on her hide-a-bed, is somewhat less clear. He makes suggestions early in the play that they go to bed, which she turns aside as nonsense, and at the end his exit lines indicate that he has achieved what he came for: "And thanks, I got what I wanted. And so did you." A great deal would depend on the degree of Machiavellian cunning that the actor managed to project. What is clear, however, is that Irene, long the exploiter of the handicapped for her own unacknowledged emotional purposes, has been in turn exploited by one of them. A satisfying play.

Jamie, in *You're Gonna Be Alright Jamie Boy*, is handicapped by being an intelligent and sensitive young man in a family of appalling vulgarity. Irene, in *Battering Ram*, was an uncultivated woman addicted to late movies on the TV; Jamie's family have lost what little humanity they ever had in their devotion to the Tube. Ernie, his father, is the most serious case; he sees life as illustrating the realities of "Adam 12" and "Gunsmoke". It would be funny if it weren't so awful — which is usually true of the situations in Freeman's plays. *Jamie Boy* begins with preparations for "family night", beer and potato chips, the arrival of the married daughter and her husband to spend the evening watching TV with the family and eating TV dinners. Freeman's ear for dialogue is unerring; the banal language of family in-fighting is exactly right. As the play unfolds, the seriousness of the family conflicts becomes apparent. We see the damage that has been done to Jamie and his sister, the violation of their beings by Ernie's desire to be "a patriarch like Will Geer on 'The Waltons'," and finally their violation of his being (what there is of it) as they make their break for freedom. Freeman draws these psyches with crystal clarity. And it is good to see him moving forward in his work. Neither of these plays has the gut-wrenching power, the sharp comedy and agony of *Creeps*, but they show the growing powers of an artist who has dared to break loose from autobiographical material to work on a canvas that is becoming steadily wider.

Peter Hay, the editor of Talonbooks, is doing Canadian drama a great service with these well-produced volumes of significant new plays. It is unfortunate to

see the local mispronunciation of "New Westminister" preserved for posterity as Sharon Pollock's address, but such misprints are few. Hay's introduction to *Esker Mike* is querulous about the status of Canadian drama in the theatres, but that status has improved in the years since he wrote and he has wisely refrained from further introductory comment. He allows the other slices of life to speak for themselves, which they do — vitally.

NEXT YEAR IN LETHBRIDGE

Andreas Schroeder

The Sound of Time, edited by John P. Miska, released by the Canadian-Hungarian Authors' Assn., Lethbridge, Alberta.

IN HIS FOREWORD to the anthology of Hungarian-Canadian authors entitled *The Sound of Time*, editor John Miska complains at some length of the severe "under-representation of creative writing of Hungarian origin in the multicultural world of Canada". He had, several years previously, picked up a copy of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration's publication *The Family Tree* and found it to contain very few references to Hungarian-speaking individuals. Both the cause and the effect of this, Miska decided, was that few literary works by Hungarian-Canadian authors are as yet available in English or French. The only exceptions are the works of George Faludy (*My Happy Days in Hell, Karoton*), George Jonas (*The Absolute Smile, The Happy Hungry Man, Cities*), John Marlyn (*Under The Ribs of Death, So Runs My Dream*), George Payerle (*The Afterpeople, Soft Projectiles, Words To No One*), György Porkolab (widely published in North American literary journals), Stephen Vizinczey (*In Praise of Older Women; Rules of Chaos*), Robert Zend (*From Zero To One*), Karl Sandor (many CBC-produced plays), and John Miska himself, who has been involved in countless literary projects.

(In view of the above, one might possibly be tempted to remark that such representation for a self-proclaimed "minority group" isn't exactly peanuts — but I suppress the temptation.)

The Sound of Time, then, was published to correct the aforementioned imbalance, and to that end it includes the work of some 18 new Hungarian-Canadian authors. They range from a scattering of university professors and journalists to librarians, doctors, civil servants and students. Most have been published previously in Hungary, and all have been writing for quite some time. Many are the authors of untranslated, or translated but not yet published novels or critical works.

Well and good. In fact, bravo; being editor of a regular journal of translation

myself, I'm always particularly glad to see the minor languages of Canada given a boost. They need it, and often rather badly too. But anthologies such as these also tend to pose a number of difficult problems for the critic, the most fundamental of which involves the question of merit.

Crudely generalized, and with the exception of non-fiction, most books are published not so much for the information they contain as for the succinctness with which they manage to describe for us what we already know. One may become briefly annoyed with a clumsily written piece of non-fiction, but as long as the content is reasonably discernible, one lets it pass. A piece of creative writing, needless to say, tends to be dealt with far more rigorously on this point. The critic's problem with "representative anthologies" is just how to deal with such books; i.e. as fiction or non-fiction. Is the main value of the collection to rest in the fact that it is a record of what thoughts/attitudes/beliefs/abilities exist(ed) among a certain people at a given time? And is the reader to place some sort of sociological or historical value on the reading experience, rather than an aesthetic one? Or is the editor taking thoughts/attitudes/etc. for granted, and publishing the book to demonstrate the *high quality* of these, to be enjoyed for their excellence rather than for the simple fact that they exist?

I make this point at such length because what we have here is actually an example of what is fast becoming a worldwide literary craze: the publishing of representative anthologies, as entire cultures the world over threaten to self-destruct or become eroded before adequate recording of their knowledge/history has occurred. Some, needless to say, are considerably more legitimate than others; collections of old Uji Shui tales and anthologies of Sinhalese literature can be found rubbing spines with "Mountain-Climber" anthologies and the collected ravings of all those who could be found to have made use of the same toilet in a given house in Vancouver during the year of 1970. (All four collections actually exist.) I suspect, in fact, that it all began with the newsletter movement some time during the late fifties, when minority or special-interest groups, especially those of international proportions, began to add a newsletter committee to their election slate as automatically as they did the president or the secretary. The step from the newsletter to the representative anthology was short; the former seemed virtually to imply the latter. And now they've grown to the point of being a self-contained category on the literary market, with literally hundreds being produced each year. Even *Quill & Quire* lists them separately.

Now it is not my intention to associate *The Sound of Time* with anything even remotely approximating the sillier regions of the anthology boom. This was a serious project and obviously handled that way. However, the book does share, to some extent, such anthologies' twilight status with respect to merit: as a survey of what is being written by Hungarian-Canadian authors in this country, as a sampler of the formerly untranslated/unavailable work of 18 new writers, it is undoubtedly a very useful, valuable document. As a repository of 64 pieces of supposedly fine literature, it is considerably less so. In fact, the explanation of Mr. Miska's "imbalance of representation" may very well lie, not in the fact

that these authors have been passed over due to the general laziness of Canadian publishers, but in the fact that most of them simply do not yet write well enough. Their work, *in translation at least*, is mostly marginal, some of it quite unpublishable.

And *there* may very well lie part of the explanation. A poor translation gives itself away very quickly when it hugs the original too closely, when it negotiates its meanings on a line-by-line basis without a constant overview of the whole piece, both in terms of content/style, and in terms of what the English-speaking ear will tolerate as opposed to what the original piece demands. Such translations show a marked tendency to stumble and drag, to be uncomfortable in their new English skin. In many of its weakest spots, *The Sound of Time* was poorly served by its translators; the reader can sense that. Of course there were cases in which the translators were given very little to begin with, and in such cases the blame must quite properly remain with the original author. But there were a few translators who consistently sinned, the worst offender being in my estimation a David Cunningham, whose knowledge of Hungarian may very well be flawless, but whose command of English literary writing is nothing of the sort. Unfortunately, his translations were used extensively. Example:

SONNET OF DENIAL (Sandor Kristof; transl. by Cunningham)

Not ever in desires I sway
My prayers are never said
Lightless lights I do portray
My vacant lovewords fall dead

In absent dreams I void dismay
No kisses burden my lips unfed
Toneless tones do toll upon my way
Hueless colours are my bread

Penitence for sinless sins I stay
Only for hopeless hopes I care
Songless are the songs I spread

Darkest nights I trembling fare
But truant tears I shed
— For me there is no future share!

Fortunately for *The Sound of Time*, it had the services of another translator whose abilities I would place at the very opposite end of the scale. Watson Kirkconnell, of whom the book tells us nothing,[1] probably should have been permitted to translate the whole book. He showed astonishing facility in jumping from style to style without mishap; he seemed able to translate free verse, rhymed verse or prose equally well, demonstrating an ear that rarely missed. I doubt very much, in fact, that it was simply coincidence that the work of all those authors who kept the book afloat (which were those previously listed as "available" plus two others: Marta Leszlei-Dosa and Janos Szanyi, both prose-writers) were either translated by Kirkconnell, themselves, or one of each other. The only exceptions were Robert Zend's poem "Ariamata" which was englished by John Robert Colombo (who, as everyone knows, translates from every language ever invented — and not badly either) and John Miska's own story "Homecoming", translated by Joseph Simon, who, unfortunately, translated nothing else in the book.

On the brighter side of the collection, those two new prose-writers just mentioned were really quite fine. Marta Leszlei-Dosa, a professor at the School of Librarianship at Syracuse U., is author of

[1] How long will it be before editors finally begin to give translators equal billing in books of translation? Surely they're every bit as crucial to the publication as the original authors!

two books of short stories and one novel, all published in Hungary. One of her stories in *The Sound of Time* (entitled "Bobo") describes a small black boy's first realization of his colour in an all-white Bavarian town. Most of the point of view is Bobo's, who sees the world from about two and a-half feet above the ground, through two huge, often very frightened young eyes. The story is merciless, charming, humorous, tight and alarming all at the same time; I have rarely seen a child's mind so convincingly portrayed. If Madame Leszlei-Dosa has more of such writing available, by all means let's have a bookful or two. The same goes for Mr. Janos Szanyi, a graduate of the University of Budapest, who only recently immigrated to Canada and who presently lives in Ottawa. His "When the Last Leaf Falls" manages a sense of paranoia reminiscent of the *Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*; the same erratic, almost raggedly sharp perception at work. Excellently translated, incidentally, by writers George Payerle and Karl Sandor. As the evidence piles up, one might well be led to suspect that the best translators are those who also write themselves.

I will say nothing of the work of those "available" authors mentioned before, since, as Mr. Miska acknowledges, their work is known, and since much of what appears in *The Sound of Time* has appeared elsewhere previously. I note from the blurb on the book's dustjacket, by the way, that more collections of this kind are in the wings: might I make a parting appeal to Mr. Miska to forego further anthologies for at least the present, in favour of a few solid collections of stories by the two or three best new talents in the Canadian-Hungarian Authors Association; it would benefit us all and undoubtedly bring more credit to the organization than such as *The Sound of Time*. Anthologies are the democratic gesture, certainly, but they rarely make consistently good reading, even at their best.

HONESTY AND ANARCHY

Peter Stevens

FRED COGSWELL, *Light Bird of Life: Selected Poems*. Fiddlehead Press.

IN THE SPRING of 1973 *Canadian Literature* published a letter from Fred Cogswell replying to a charge by Ralph Gustafson that too many poets were being published in Canada. Cogswell asserted that eclecticism was better than limited publication based on "some preconceived procrustean bed which exists in a critic's mind as the proper shape and size for poetry." Cogswell signed his letter, "Yours for literary anarchy."

Cogswell has operated with this kind of literary anarchy in the publications from his Fiddlehead Press, a press to which he has devoted his energy and money for a number of years. He has been threatening to close down over the

past two or three years but still the books roll off his press, though in decreasing numbers. Certainly one can complain about many of the books he has accepted for publication, but the roll call of Fiddlehead poets who achieved some recognition is quite astonishing: Purdy, Nowlan, Brewster, Livesay, Finnigan, Kogawa, Gutteridge, Colombo, Wiseman, McNeil, Fox, Barbour, Marriott among others — a very creditable record; how many other publishers of poetry have published in Fiddlehead quantity and in the process accepted books of the quality produced by these and other authors? (As an additional personal footnote that shows that Fred Cogswell has never been a simple Maritimes chauvinist, he published separate books under the Fiddlehead imprint by the Windsor group of poets.)

Though no chauvinist, he has always been interested in writing from the Maritimes — witness his work for *The Literary History of Canada* and his publishing of the newer poets gathered in the Maritimes. Yet he was also one of the first critics to question the greatness of E. J. Pratt. For the most part, Pratt criticism up to the publication of Cogswell's "E. J. Pratt's Literary Reputation" in 1964 had virtually taken for granted that Pratt was our major poet. Cogswell denied that claim in his essay, refuting the notion that Pratt was a modern poet, calling him "a mid-Victorian with eighteenth century practicality as a writer," finally suggesting that over the years Pratt would come to be considered as a poet with the same kind of reputation as Bliss Carman.

Such stalwart iconoclasm seems contrary to the notion perpetrated by some other small press editors that the editor of Fiddlehead Press is old-fashioned and slack in his literary judgments of the poetry he accepts.

Cogswell has also devoted some of his energies to the field of French-Canadian literature — he has published three volumes of translations of Quebec poetry, perhaps the only collections that challenge to some extent Glassco's volume in the same field.

Given all these considerations, his plea for literary anarchy does not strike one as strange, even though these anarchist feelings hide behind a gentleness of manner and a quietness of approach.

And what of his own poetry? Does this anarchic feeling penetrate his writing? These questions can perhaps be answered by a reading of *Light Bird of Life*, a selection of his poems made by Peter Thomas, taken from his work of the last twenty years.

The title of the volume comes from "Art", a poem that deals with the inadequacies of art in trying to capture reality. It is a simple eight-line poem, using the same image of bird flight that two other poems on the same subject use: Pratt's "Seagulls" and Ondaatje's "The Gate In His Head". Unlike these two poems, Cogswell's is in strict form and I wonder whether such strictness operates more ironically within this context than the freer structures of Pratt and Ondaatje, with Cogswell perhaps recognizing that "the brave flight" of art is killed by too rigorous a form. The traditional stanzas and the use of rhyme become a trap: they are "the static swords" that the poem insists deal the mortal blow to the flight. But perhaps this irony with regard to form is unconscious on Cogswell's part; he certainly uses irony in his poetry but perhaps it should be used more against some of the regular structures in his

poems, and in this way the more obvious flaws in the poetry would be presented in part as under the critical eye of the poet.

It is true that the critical claims against Cogswell's poetry by other critics can be substantiated by reference to some of the poems in this volume. The reader will find here the stilted and obvious language, the descent into cliché, the awkward rhythms and wording for the sake of rhyme, the too pat drawing of a moral. But it is too easy to dismiss the poetry, even though these flaws occur, for Cogswell can operate an ironic mode on occasion, he can use poetry for satiric purposes, and I suspect that he himself is aware of some of the inadequacies of his poems even as he commits them to paper, a position he makes clear in a poem not included in this selection, "A Defence Of Amateurism", a poem in which he states he has "never been a star". But in the same poem he suggests that even the amateur can reach "the joys the great stars have". In poetry, as in games, "every honest player" can pull off feats "that lay beyond [his] skill." Such feats may be rare but are the justification for the effort expended. That kind of modesty and humility is a pleasant change in a poetry world that too often evaluates the bumptious and the immodest, the poets and critics who have an imperturbable certainty about the true method of writing poetry. *Light Bird of Life* illustrates this kind of modesty, which is coupled in the book with some ironic twists, some epigrammatic thrusts and with some satiric jousts.

Cogswell in his philosophic lyrics (if that's not too heavy a description of them) plays off innocence against experience, at one time hoping innocence will not be destroyed, at another realizing that the human will often wants to break down innocence in order to enter what looks like the more enthralling world of experience. Arising from that teeter-totter of innocence and experience are the poems that acknowledge human pain and suffering; these seem conditions necessary to human life, yet ironically Cogswell at times implies that man accepts certain pains as naggingly delicious, like a tongue probing a decayed tooth.

In the poem already quoted, "In Praise Of Amateurism", Cogswell maintains the honest player can outreach himself and he sees this as a general possibility for man. Sometimes the stepping beyond limits comes through love, when a certain atmosphere is generated to enfold two people ("Inside The Room's Electric Air"). So in these poems the existence and persistence of idealism is possible. Man may recognize the possibilities for idealism in other people; a kind of freemasonry of idealism persists (I take this idea to be the burden of "Star People"), but that Cogswellian irony will not allow man to live in the rarefied air of idealism for long. Just as man falls into experience from innocence, so reality impinges on the ideal. Man has experienced his descent from Eden (the title of one of his poems which was used as the title for a previous selection of his poems in 1959) but even here the possibility for outreach remains: the ape is caught between "the golden waters of the sun" and "the night of blood."

Most of these philosophical lyrics are sensible and honest but rather ordinary, enlivened by an occasional succinct turn of phrase and a rightness of rhyme. But perhaps all of this philosophy is summarized in one short epigram:

It was the chains of Lilliput
Taught Gulliver he was a giant.

These ideas are also embodied in a series of poems about people, often in the mode of some early Nowlan poems, though Cogswell does not use his characters as specific examples of Maritimes life. His people are put in situations that illustrate lost opportunities which nag at the people involved, though again the irony operates: the opportunity missed may be viewed ambivalently as in "In These Fall Woods". Although Cogswell's characters are often failures, the poems show compassion for them: Helen Goodchild, George Ernst, Joe Angus, Paul, Deacon Johnson are some of these characters caught in a few lines.

But in other poems the compassion turns to anger and the satirist emerges. Cogswell can turn sharply against people and things he dislikes — the woman who takes such delight in recounting her own troubles, the racist mind of Fredericton, the ageing sexual athlete, the "poet friend" who can see no good in Cogswell's poetry.

Some poems report in admirable terseness a situation that exemplifies seriously or ironically the clash of innocence and experience or idealism and reality. These poems are much more successful than the lyrical meditations discussed earlier: two such poems, one using the traditional means of the ballad ("A Ballad Of Orchard Evening") and one using free verse ("The Cheat") are the best poems in the volume.

Light Bird Of Life will certainly not set the world of poetry on fire but for its amateurism that includes the occasional "leaping catch", its honesty in playing the game of poetry, it is a volume that embraces well the many-sided and gentle anarchy of Fred Cogswell.

PLAIN AND FANTASY

Eric Thompson

CAROL SHIELDS, *Intersect.* Borealis Press.
LINDA ROGERS, *Music for Moondance.* Fiddlehead Poetry Books.
CHRISTOPHER WISEMAN, *The Barbarian File.* Sesame Press. $2.50.
SUSAN MUSGRAVE, *Gullband: Thought Measles was a Happy Ending.* J. J. Douglas. $6.95.

TRYING TO DECIDE what, if anything, this quartet of books had in common, I at length played my first hunch: fantasy. Not that these poets fantasize in the same fashion, of course. If read in the above order, indeed, their work moves from a relatively uncomplicated vision of experience to a steadily more elliptical outlook. The language, and the skill employed in each case, also vary considerably. Still, if fantasy is the life-blood of poetry — the poet's image-making faculty which nurtures and sustains his imagined view of himself and his experience of the world — these poets are fantasists, in a minor key.

Carol Shields' *Intersect* is an attractive little book, her second (the first was

Others, 1972). Her poems are plain-spoken, deceptively so, like the disarming candour of her photograph which stares out from the back of the book's dust-jacket. Shields' observations of the world proceed from a remarkably sensible appraisal of the persons and things which matter to her: family, ancestry, friends, and life in southern Ontario. There is certainly nothing dazzling about her themes and imagery. Rather she displays a quiet acceptance of the life she knows, an acceptance which might be construed as complacent were it not for the nuances she highlights which make that life interesting.

"Mother" is an excellent poem and fairly typical of her craft. During the night children listen through "dull unfocused/dreams" to the hoarse scrape of furniture being moved about by their mother, and

> In the morning we found
> the amazing corners, startled by pure
> circuits of light we'd never
> seen before, pleasing
> elbows of space and new shapes
> to fit into bringing us
> closer to rebirth
> than we ever
> came in all those years.

Discovering the unsuspected, or, simply, the magic of ordinary experiences is Shields' forte. In "Rough Riders" her objective is satire; she achieves her goal by contrasting the players' obedient behaviour — "more like goodly country lads/than contract heroes" — to their murderous intent — "plotting death/by number". And "A Couple Takes a Sunday Drive" is a superb example of irony, again achieved by contrast, but more subtly. Always, this poet seems to say, the fantasies in life are delicate mysteries which passionately oppose "the killing clout/Of sanity".

Linda Rogers is a very different kind of poet than Shields, more introspective, more intense. *Music for Moondance* is a book of brief, imagistic poems, sometimes elusive in meaning, yet unified by themes of change — change within nature itself, and change from natural to social states. Rogers is fascinated by the secretive things of nature (moths), and the intricacies of human constructions (Chinese lacquer boxes and French clocks). Even more, she is awed — and not a little frightened — by the transience of life as, for example, when the naturalness of a flower is destroyed by being snipped to fit a vase.

These interests and themes are brought together in complex relationships in a number of poems which explore the gradual sense of loss and dislocation felt by a woman in sexual intercourse, pregnancy and childbirth. Notice, for instance, these lines from a fine poem, "I Like an Empty House":

> A tap drips in the kitchen,
> the lamp swings back and forth,
> ivy grows over the window.
> I never noticed.
>
> Slowly,
> my body opens like drawers,
> empty, waiting.

The poet is aware of silent, shaping forces within her, and without; as she says in "Tablet", nothing is empty for long:

> It is the blank spaces that interest me.
> Like skin,
> they wrinkle fade and fill with answers.

Joy is followed by pain, and the memory of pain brings anguish, or sorrow. Images of flesh being torn, bones cracking, and staring eyes, alternate with images of sun, moon and waves. Much of this imagery

seems private symbolism, and yet we can detect the indelible patterns of Rogers' fantasy: the imprisoned soul (or psyche) seeks release, and in finding freedom discovers new realities to test its will to endure.

The problem of survival, really — more than endurance — is the subject of Christopher Wiseman's *The Barbarian File*, a sequel to his earlier *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1971). In the former book Wiseman had begun to develop the persona of "B", his representative type of contemporary man; in the new collection he fills in and amplifies the portrait — with mixed results. B, we are given to understand, is a creature of the real world, befuddled by the quotidian, an Unknown Citizen. But whereas, in Auden's poem, it was the lack of any personal identity which made the protagonist so chillingly real, in Wiseman's version it is the diffuseness of the portrait which makes B ultimately unreal. The poet seems unable to decide whether his creation is a genuine hysteric or an anti-hero struggling for coherence; in effect, B is a plastic man of many identities — failed academic, suicide, middle-class slob, etc. Many of Wiseman's poems, too, are little more than unfunny jokes. In some poems, however, the comic pathos of B's life does emerge clearly, and Wiseman's verse sizzles with both "relevance" and insight. Good examples are "Report from the Ivory Tower" (a timely satire on decadence in academe) and "Barbarian in Calgary" (a marvellously accurate debunking of the "Mahler is Heavy ... Switched-On Bach" kitsch in urban culture).

Perhaps the funniest poem in the book, "His New Car", is a bewitching mixture of whimsy and macabre horror. B's pride reaches its zenith as he glides smoothly around town in his shining new model, with "all systems working perfectly". Then, one day, without warning, the capricious machine wrests control from the hapless B, and heads out with him beyond the town "towards dark roads/ unspeakably remote":

> helpless
> strapped in
> gas tank showing full
> he was carried away
> into the darkness
> in his cushions and music
>
> so perfect was the soundproofing
> that nobody heard his screams

This is the kind of dark fantasy Wiseman aims for, but seldom attains so well.

Susan Musgrave's fourth book of verse, *Gullband: Thought Measles was a Happy Ending*, ostensibly a work meant for children, is pervaded with a similar dark vision. Gullband is a cat, and his erstwhile friends, Grim, a toad, and Thrum, a lizard, inhabit a foreboding landscape. But Musgrave's book is hardly children's literature in the usual sense, despite her publisher's claim that it may be enjoyed by "adult children" (!) and that it has affinities with *Alice in Wonderland*! Actually, the poet receives more credit than she deserves, both for the quality of her verse and in terms of authorship. The book is, strictly speaking, a collaboration: the illustrator, 'Rikki' (Erica Ducornet, an American friend of the poet who now lives in France), has done more than her share with her excellent drawings to make the book visually attractive.

The main failure in Musgrave's story-poem is a lack of narrative continuity. What we are presented with is a series of vignettes and barely-connected incidents involving the three little beasts. Grim, who has a "mouth/Like a dry crust of/

Bread", is perpetually glum, lonely, and fearful of many calamities large and small. Thrum is besieged by constant sneezes and has a sore throat. And the much-travelled Gullband, who arrives on the scene suddenly in a fat brown envelope, is trying to forget certain Brazilian adventures he wishes he hadn't had. Clearly, the present is an unhappy time for these little creatures, and they all seem to be in retreat from their pasts as well. Thus each is, perforce, dreamily preoccupied by private dreams of wish-fulfilment: Gullband, for instance, climbs a tree, and as he sits in the top branches he pretends he is a bald-headed eagle "Scanning the sky/For fish".

Well, all this seems harmless enough. So what if the animals are neurotic? we might say, they're not mad. But, lines such as "Gullband entered/The atoms of the dark" are nevertheless disturbing, even more so because the meaning is obscure. Readily felt, too, is the aimlessness of their lives. They always seem to be searching for the unattainable and are continuously misled by realities around them. Gullband, completely oblivious of the nature of Grim's affliction, thinks his "measles was a happy ending". Naiveté, finally, is only the least bewildering trait of these creatures, whose fantasy lives are a paradigm of the agonies of real people.

MUY HOMBRE

Fraser Sutherland

E. A. LACEY, *Path of Snow*. Ahasuerus. $9.95.

EDWARD LACEY's *Path of Snow* may not be the best book of poetry published this year but it is certain to be the most remarkable — one can confidently predict that no others shall include three pages of passport stamps, a page with snapshots of ex-boyfriends, and a glossary complete with travel notes.

I confess to reviewing this book from a special point of view: I read many of the poems in manuscript and was one of several the poet consulted on selection. I hope this bias is stated as forthrightly as Lacey presents his expatriatism and homosexuality, the principal themes in his work.

To any reviewer who happens to be heterosexual Lacey's explicitly autobiographical poems, written over a 22-year period, pose a problem: one is admitted into a world of which one knows little and hence must be led, so to speak, by the poet. Inevitably there must follow a certain qualification in the critic's unfavourable perception of a given poem. I may term as "slight" a poem like "Ramón", which simply *describes* a casual sexual encounter, and dismiss the poet as hopelessly romantic (Lacey, in his preface, calls himself a "decadent romantic traditionalist") in his plaintive recall of vanished ecstacy. Yet one is forced to consider that the poem may be stating a fact, perhaps even the ultimate fact, about homosexuality. "The gold of bodies does not melt;/ preserves itself in what was felt," Lacey says in "Poème des Amours Fugitifs", that funny, oddly-moving poem with its rocky metre and memorable refrain.

Again and again, but without seeming

monotonous, Lacey pounds away at this central homosexual sentiment, the pain of nostalgia and of lost good times. One of the three epigraphs (an attractive feature of the book is the charming streak of pedantry) comes from Antoine Gérin-Lajoie's "Un Canadien Errant":

Si tu vois mon pays,
Mon pays malheureux,
Va, dis à mes amis
Que je me souviens d'eux

Sometimes remembering "my friends" — the book is dedicated "for all my friends" — amounts to a mere joke, as in the admittedly well-told "Les Visites Interprovinciales". The poet at age 14 is on an interprovincial exchange with a slightly older Quebec boy. On their way to the latter's home at Lac St. Pierre they spend overnight in Montreal; while "pretending to sleep" their hands explore each other:

Still pretending to be asleep, but now
excited
beyond discretion, we accelerated
the rhythms of our inexperienced hands,
adept only at self-use,
up and down, back and forth, to and fro,
over and over,
until we broke, both at once, in waves of
silent pleasure
that covered our underwear, bedclothes and
hard teenage bellies
with the sperm of an Ontarian and a
Quebecois.

— I can still smell the sharp odour of the
gissom
on that first night, the first of all my nights.

Thus they make, the poet says, "notre vraie visite interprovinciale."

The skin of another man is communion, consolation, covering. In the second of "Two Poems for Leobardo" he says that "Far away now I sleep, my little one./ I do not have the smooth silk of your skin/ to wrap me in." In the first and best stanza of "Now" he says that "sex was just a brightly-coloured robe to wrap youth in". And like blankets on a cold night there is comfort in numbers, the Mexican and South American "amours fugitifs." At the end of his "City of 200,000" he says that "this is not an age/ for individual passions" and continues the theme in the comical "Stavros Remembers" in which a Greek recollects how he and three other boys would tumble four girls in the field near their village:

Sometimes there was a moon.
You do not know how good it is
to see the other bodies rise and fall
and know that what they feel is what you
feel.

But this communal joy has its dark side also. Promiscuity brings with it the crabbed awareness of increasing age, and of self-disgust. In "Night Thoughts" the poet has his own group fornication, outdoor-style:

Drank several beers,
roamed once more from one brightly lighted
door to another,
saw two teenage boys, strung up with lust,
staring
into one of the doorways,
wanting to crow, but obviously penniless,
approached them with an offer, was
gratefully accepted,
and we three cocks made it in a field of
grass
where people go to shit, before they crow.

He sourly concludes, "to paraphrase D. H. Lawrence,/ that if men were as much men as roosters are roosters,/ they still would not be worth listening to." In the magnificent long poem "101", he is left "naked/ except for my towel of excuses."

At the same time as he is beset with post-coitus tristesse, the commingling of sex and death, he is appalled by the number and senselessness of the world's deaths, and thus a personal sentiment becomes the political one running through "City

of 200,000", "Urubi Roi", "London Labour and the London Poor", "Salvador Allende", the ironically-entitled "Peaceful Deaths", and the blackly-humourous "Meknès I" and "Meknès II". The death and life emotions even come together — the pun is intended — in the curious "Carlos Eduardo Robledo Puch", concerning a 20-year old Buenos Aires hoodlum who murdered 15 people:

> I have begun to dream at nights of Robledo Puch,
> and I cannot
> cannot suppress the urge toward masturbation
> when his face from the tabloids stares out at me.

But though death resides in the hush that follows orgasm, or in the contemplation of the decay and violence around him, past or present, life for and in the moment — promiscuity — remains the answer, or at least a reconciliation to the course of the poet's own life. Where Matthew Arnold put faith in the one ("Ah, love, let us be true/ To one another!") his Canadian cum Latin American successor seeks absolution in the many, acts on lust that simultaneously is the expression of an instinct and the most rational of human emotions. Such is the ambivalent sadness of "C'est fini, le temps où l'on s'amusait" and the resigned, bittersweet cheerfulness of "Poème des Amours Fugitifs":

> and growing older, [I] only enthuse
> for money, to keep on buying youths
> to warm my age with their hot hands:
> the best loves are one-night stands!
>
> *The gold of bodies does not melt:*
> *preserves itself in what was felt.*

The "je me souviens" sentiment links with another phrase from the "Canadien Errant" epigraph: "mon pays malheureux." Canada is the unhappy country, half of the north/south dichotomy that is the other theme of the book. The poet plainly hates Canada, yet needs it to polarize his South American experience.

South America is warmth, light, sun, yet also the fecund darkness: cabbies and shoeshine boys; it is noise, uproar, vitality and sudden death, or death in the form of disintegration like a rotting mango. It is torrential rain and the cock crowing, the hum of lust and bodies shining with sweat, fishermen on the white sand and kite-boys, "young hawk boys of Copocabana." It is "Eggplant":

> Peel it, boil it, mash it, eat it now,
> soft cream- or green-coloured, laced with sesame seeds and oil,
> warm, almost liquid, melting in the mouth
> — what is it that it reminds you of?
> Food is sex is race is history.

Canada is cold winter night whose only sanctuary is a tavern full of "man-talk". Yet at closing-time each man must go along "his path of snow". ("Taverne") It is silence, or the merciless crashing materialism of the puritan ethic become the spirit of capitalism; it is ossification, a petrified forest impersonating the population of Lindsay, Ontario, the poet's birthplace; it is grim secrecy, constraint, frustration. Canada is like a stroke-victim trying to articulate; like the silent object of Dorothy Parker's famous remark, when informed that Calvin Coolidge was dead. "How can they tell?" she asked. It is "February: Ontario":

> The boys playing hockey are frozen
> in a tableau of green, gold and red;
> a dog's silvered breath rises skyward:
> and they are dead.

The son of puritanical Catholic parents, the poet recalls Lindsay "Where amid your undying snows/ My father flogged me with a rose." ("The Invocation: Lind-

say"). In Lindsay that father trapped a hummingbird inside a glass bottle, apt metaphor for the child's own predicament ("Upon the Growing Boy"); there the child is terrified by what a closet may hold, is told he is not a man; there he becomes aware of his lonely uniqueness ("Si Le Grain Ne Meurt") — he kneels in a cornfield and prays for rain. He heads south, encounters the oppressive forces of society, is given a five-years' suspended sentence for possession of marijuana by Judge Ben Connally of Houston, Texas (the same man, the poet tells us, who sentenced Dr. Timothy Leary on a similar charge). He goes to Mexico, Trinidad, Brazil, there's an explosion of joy, of being alive ("Under the Sun"): burning, turning toward death to be sure, but burning with that long-harboured, oh how much desired flame. Even thinking of Canada ("Saudade") makes him feel cold, though in Chile, "so far south that south becomes north", he finds a quasi-Canada — ("without Canadians, fortunately — "). His mother dies when he is away: her malady is archetypally Canadian — a stroke.

He recalls his ancestry ("Coins"):

> Years fell into the earth like cool, dark coins,
> heavy with births and deaths, matings and growings.
> And now my grandmother is dead, and now my mother,
> gone into the earth, and I remain,
> the one coin that she cast and my father minted
> — collector's item.

This collector's item of a book is no masterpiece. The poet is struggling, as Al Purdy did at one point in his poetic vocation, between old-fashioned verse forms and a more open structure. He has obviously opted for an *infrastructure*, as Purdy did, rather than the classical structural shell of smooth metre and balanced rhyme. Which is as well, since he is weakest when he attempts the latter: although I know him to have a superb knowledge of prosody his metrical sense is sometimes deficient. Rhyme, too, is occasionally inappropriate, as when it seriously mars a potentially brilliant poem like "Stroke." After a splendidly rhetorical, totally passionate volley of *vers libre* the poet resorts in the last stanza to repeating the end-word, "stroke" thrice and rhyming it five times, thus producing lines like "my aunts the nuns throwing holy water on her like Coke." The irony is a good idea but the heavy-handed rhyme is not and demolishes the tragic mood established earlier.

Influences are many. Lacey is an extraordinarily allusive poet and echoes abound. There are straightforward "imitations" of John Keats ("Bright Star") and Carlos Drummond de Andrade ("The Lindsayite") as well as translations of Francis Jammes' "*Il Va Neiger*", de Andrade's "*Ser*", and Antonio Machado's "*Caminante.*" Canadian echoes, too, chiefly of Robert Finch, Irving Layton, and Raymond Souster.

For all his linguistic facility (the poet speaks French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, several Indian languages — and English) and the extreme knowledgability that makes itself effortlessly felt in the poems' detail, Lacey is somewhat light on ideas. He is a responsive organism, not really a thinking one, and like E. J. Pratt has a keen interest in the "cruel, purposeless, meaningless life of the swamp", ("Mossbacks"). But what the poems convey most is the voice of an honest man speaking honestly, *muy hombre.* Despite the echoes there is no one writing like him. He is his own school.

books in review

GLASSCO'S MUSE

JOHN GLASSCO, *The Fatal Woman.* Anansi, $3.95 paper, $8.50 cloth.

ALONG WITH all his other gifts, John Glassco has a real flair for disclamatory prefaces. "This young man," he assures us before we set out on *Memoirs of Montparnasse*, "is no longer myself . . . in my memory he is less like someone I have been than a character in a novel I have read." One wonders if the writer of the prefaces is not also to some degree a fictional character, created as a pre-emptive defence against criticism.

The Preface to *The Fatal Woman*, a collection of three novellas written over a period of forty years, is characteristically modest. The novellas are referred to as "these three little books", and Glassco apologizes in advance for the fact that they do not show any "aesthetic or intellectual development". He admits that he is working, by temperament rather than by choice, in a limited form. "And here they are," he concludes: "three faded tributes to the Fatal Woman who has been and remains my constant Muse, three dried-up little sticks of incense lit on her altar for the inhalation of the judicious."

The impeccably controlled tone of that apology, deliciously balanced on the edge of mock-solemnity, is in itself a strong indication that we should refuse to take Glassco's disclaimers too seriously. No matter what Glassco is doing (even those "aphrodisiac works which exploited the Fatal Woman as an article of commerce"), he is a superb writer, probably the subtlest prose stylist in Canada today.

Nevertheless, it is true that the novellas in question operate in a limited or minor genre. This statement is intended to be descriptive, not opprobrious: the degree to which a culture can value its minor forms is one measure of its maturity. Only a desperately insecure writer tries to solve the problems of the universe every time he sets pen to paper.

The limitation of the genre is the limitation of the concept of the Fatal Woman itself. The Fatal Woman is a sexual fantasy of long, even of archetypal standing, but like all such fantasies it is limiting and ultimately dehumanizing. Glassco links its modern forms with the sensibility of Romanticism, which he describes — in the most fascinating piece of intellectual speculation in the book — as "a kind of disease," which results in a "sick" art. In this sense, the obsession with the Fatal Woman is a sickness, a deformity of normal human experience.

A limited form may also, however, produce at its best a kind of intensity which a broader, more humane view may be unable to account for, and which may thus be profoundly disturbing. Thus, much of the most interesting pornography, such as Samuel R. Delany's *The Tides of Lust*, Pauline Reage's *Story of O*, or Glassco's own "aphrodisiac work," the anonymously published *Harriet Marwood, Governess* (Grove Press, 1967), derives its power from its exploration of obsession, an obsession necessarily contained within very narrow and formalistic limits. The sado-masochistic apparatus of whips and lonely chateaux becomes in these works purely symbolic of the isolation of certain aspects of the human condition from the broader context which is the

true milieu of the "major" writer. The word "isolation" may here also be used in its clinical sense, as Glassco himself uses it when he suggests that the germ of the disease Romanticism was "first isolated and pampered by Rousseau".

But isolation, in the physical sense, seems to be a necessary convention for such stories. The least successful of the three novellas in *The Fatal Woman* is "Lust in Action", where Glassco attempts, in a satirical manner, to build up a whole speculative-fiction society based on the dominance of the Fatal Woman. He can't do it. The social structure he describes is paper-thin, and the story has to revolve on a couple of drearily repeated jokes. More important, the central situation lacks the tension found in the other two novellas, and this is partly because it cannot share their claustrophobic privateness, their oppressive feeling of closing off an obsessive world from which all else is excluded.

This is a pity, for "Lust in Action" starts off in a very sprightly manner with Glassco's splendid disquisition on "vestiary foibles". The first section, using long rambling sentences which often end on disconcertingly matter-of-fact phrases, sets a jaunty tone which the inadequate dramatic structure of the ensuing events cannot maintain.

The other two novellas, "The Fulfilled Destiny of Electra" and "The Black Helmet", are much more successful. Both set up a hermatic environment within which Glassco can explore the equally enclosed mental landscape of obsession. Even when the external world intrudes, at the end of "Electra", in the shape of two bewildered police officers, the intrusion is effortlessly assimilated into the myth, becoming the instrument by which the self-destructive destiny of the central male character is fulfilled.

The limits of the closed world set up a complete dramatic situation, which should be, in Glassco's view "static" or "motionless". The tension should then vibrate between the fixed points of the characters' hieratic roles, rather than derive from any forward thrust of narrative action. The preface tells us that Glassco considered he had come closest to achieving this in "The Black Helmet"; even so, "it was clearly a failure."

It is clearly nothing of the kind. It is a complex and subtle narrative structure, in which Glassco contrives to provide an ironic context for his presentation of obsession while at the same time preserving a sense of that obsession's intensity. This is achieved by alternating the narrative between the hero's diary, in which he both records and analyses his devotion, and the ironic overviews provided, at one remove, by the goddess Artemis and the structural myth of Endymion, and, at the second remove, by the implicit presence of the author himself, John Glassco, in all his superbly delicate indelicacy.

These different layers of awareness are continually producing subtle effects, of which only a couple of examples can here be given. At one point, the hero, Mairobert, pursues the fantasy of the Fatal Woman back through his brilliant speculations on the Romantic sensibility towards the level of pagan mythology, only to find his own delicate sensibilities revolted by Frazer's fertility-myth version of Artemis. Mairobert turns away from this vision, back to his memories of his English governess Miss Marwood, whose dominant image is being appropriated by the mysterious Miss Delarchet. But the reader is aware, firstly, that Miss Delar-

chet is in "fact" none other than Artemis herself, and the infatuated youth is the sleeping Endymion; secondly, that this rather unvirginal Virgin Goddess is planning a new "rite of spring" for the unknowing Mairobert; and thirdly (perhaps) that the highly suggestive name Marwood is also used by Glassco in the much more explicitly pornographic and sado-masochistic pastiche which he wrote for Grove Press.

Or again: Mairobert's diary at one point gives a brilliant analysis of a process of perception, in which a person's active desires project a complementary passive response, and both impulses may themselves be viewed in another detached perspective within the same consciousness. But this account is introduced by a self-consciously outrageous image of bizarre pornography — Mairobert is recalling a brothel in Paris where he had two whores dress him in female clothes while he watched the process in a mirror — and is immediately followed by a derogatory comment from Miss Marwood/Delarchet/Artemis: "Heavens . . . the young man is almost demented. Did you ever hear such nonsense?"

The climax of the story — the apotheosis of Endymion, the subjection of the "moonstruck" male — is accompanied by two of Glassco's most outrageous verbal flourishes; and it may not be inappropriate to end on this note, since the linguistic texture of Glassco's work remains one of its chief delights. As Artemis bestrides the youth, her hips are described as "crissating". The word is unknown to the *Oxford English Dictionary*: Glassco appears to have coined it directly from the Latin "crissare," which means "to wiggle the backside while having sexual intercourse." And a moment later, in the most bizarre image of which even Glassco is capable, "Her sex gripped him like the oiled fist of a wrestler."

Dried-up little sticks indeed, for the inhalation of the judicious.

STEPHEN SCOBIE

STICKING TO LASTS

ELIZABETH BREWSTER, *The Sisters.* Oberon, cloth $6.95; paper $3.50.

DOROTHY FARMILOE, *And Some in Fire.* Alive Press, $3.00.

ELIZABETH BREWSTER'S first novel is like much of her poetry — descriptive, preoccupied with people from the past, prone to literary allusions. So much of it appears to have been taken directly from diaries that inevitably one begins to view it as transparent autobiography, with only names and the occasional circumstance altered for the sake of privacy or convenience. The result is less a novel than a catalogue of details which are doubtless of prime importance to their chronicler, and which could conceivably interest some future student of small town New Brunswick life in the nineteen thirties and forties, but which are also enough to weary the persistent, madden the hasty, and discourage the rest.

Structurally, however, *The Sisters* shows a certain promise. Although there is no index of chapter headings to indicate what is to follow, we soon discover that more than one voice is speaking to us. There are three sisters in the Marchant family — Vickie, the pretty one, Lottie, the stolid one, and Jane, the youngest, bookish one. Ms. Brewster has attempted to apportion sections of her novel to all

three, but Jane (whom we soon come to identify with Ms. Brewster herself) easily outstrips the others in importance. Vickie and Lottie are left to scrabble along in her wake. This they do most unconvincingly, each sounding like an unlettered imitation of Jane.

Both the title of the book and its surface organization, then, promise more than they fulfill. The reader infers that Ms. Brewster would have liked to tell the same story from three varying points of view, but found the undertaking too much. She has not been able, apparently, to get inside anyone's skin but her own.

A further difficulty lies in her ability to dramatize. There is plenty of drama in the story of a good man broken by the Depression, the hard facts of poverty, and the awakening of a girl's first love, but to find it in *The Sisters* one must read between the lines.

Some of Ms. Brewster's descriptive passages are finely drawn ("The time was late August, verging toward September, that period when summer is still with us, but autumn can be felt in the bones, when the evenings begin to be cool and the chokecherries ripen"). More often she is merely plain-spoken and, for a poet, remarkably prosaic. Surely there could have been a better use for the material in all those faithful diaries (if diaries there were) than this novel.

Another first novel by a woman poet — *And Some in Fire* by Dorothy Farmiloe — does little to shake my gathering conviction that most poets, like all good shoemakers, should stick to their lasts. Farmiloe's "Spring Haiku":

> Spring returns again
> to bathe a tired Demeter —
> new virginity

is far from perfect, yet it is preferable to this ambitious novel on a similar theme. *And Some in Fire* tells the story of beautiful Venessa Norden, held in virtual captivity by her wicked husband Leo in Shuniah, Northern Ontario. Together they operate the Norden Hotel, a popular jumping-off point for hunters, fishermen, artists, prospectors and a handsome, hard-boiled American entrepreneur by the name of Ron Harding.

This setting gives author Farmiloe ample scope for colourful description, which she handles with ease. Some of her images continue to sound in the mind long after they have served their purpose ("I was nineteen, but I sank like squashed muskeg whenever he stepped on me"; "One full breast sagged in the crook of her elbow like a dead infant").

Yet language alone is not enough to save this book from its own built-in bathos; *And Some in Fire* reads like a parody of that siren will-o'-the-wisp, the great Canadian novel.

The presence of Harding and various other hotel guests from the U.S., for example, gives Farmiloe a wide-open opportunity to lambaste U.S. attitudes and policies, and this she does with more vigour than discernment. ("*None* of our tax money goes to support the Queen. We outgrew that jazz years ago, for chrissake. Don't you guys ever read any history except your own?")

In the figure of Harding, Farmiloe is able to merge her two principal themes. On the one hand he is the wicked foreign entrepreneur who sees the object of his lust as another exploitable natural resource; on the other, he is a recreation of Pluto, god of the underworld. (Harding wants to spirit Vanessa away, in his shiny pontooned Cessna, no less, to the smoking Hades of Pittsburgh!)

The political theme fares moderately well as the story progresses: Venessa is finally freed from her male imperialist bonds and is preparing to face life independently in Toronto, where she will bring up her unborn child. The myth-parallel, however, grinds to a somewhat sticky halt. Both Venessa and her young daughter Virginia (who drowns in a boating accident) are identified with Persephone, yet Venessa is also clearly intended to represent Demeter, goddess of the earth.

Which point brings to mind another aspect of the book which is perhaps better left unremarked. Still, it is the reviewer's solemn duty not to mince matters. I refer to Farmiloe's persistent references to Venessa's menstrual problems. Why these should assume the importance they do is mystifying, unless they are meant to reinforce the sufferer's earth-goddess *alter ego*.

At any rate, we read on page one that the "key" to Venessa's "pattern of life . . . was premenstrual tension". *And Some in Fire* may claim the distinction of being the first Canadian novel ever written about the consequences of this particular ailment; let us hope, however, that it is also the last. Certain disabilities, among them pre-menstrual tension, prostatitis, teenage acne and diaper rash, are as unwelcome in fiction as they are in life.

PAT BARCLAY

CLINTS & GRIKES

J. MICHAEL YATES, *Nothing Speaks for the Blue Moraines: New and Selected Poems.* Sono Nis, $13.50.

THIS IS unquestionably the key Yates book to date. As chrestomathy, the volume does all one could ask of it. It reprints entire the important *Canticle for Electronic Music*, which has been out of print for some years. It includes a number of new poems — good ones — and it contains the best possible selection of work from Yates' *Spiral of Mirrors*, *Hunt in an Unmapped Interior*, and *The Great Bear Lake Meditations*. The earlier books have not been disembowelled or butchered. In particular, the structure of the *Meditations* is intact. The internal divisions of that volume remain; and the system of internal echo, the machinery of tension and release, and the fundamentally important sequence of discovery are all very much in working order.

As a practical consideration, *Nothing Speaks for the Blue Moraines* is welcome because one can *find* things in it. (The *Meditations* have heretofore been inconvenient to study or rethumb because the Oberon edition had no page numbers, let alone a table of contents.)

And as regards humour, the Great Bear joke about the moon's halitosis has survived the process of selection, as doubtless it deserved to do.

At minimum, one praises in Yates' work precisely that virtue assigned by Johnson to verse of the Metaphysical School: "... if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. To write on their plan, it was at least necessary to read and think." And in reading them, "the mind is exercised ... something already learned is to be retrieved, or something new is to be examined." This formulation of Johnson's is very well-known, but it is not and it never has been very informative. (It doesn't, for instance, tell us why Donne makes better reading than Cowley, nor why Johnson considered the opposite to be the case.) But it will serve as a reminder that the intellectual subsoil and

superstructure of Yates' work, as of Donne's or Cavalcanti's, demands and repays precise attention.

Consider the title: *Nothing Speaks for the Blue Moraines.* The word "nothing" appears again on the book's last page, in a quotation from Octavio Paz' *Corriente Alterna*: "Nothing is meaningful because everything is language." There is no doubt that both this adscript and the title of the book are, within the orbit of Yates' writing, declarative sentences: positive, not negative sentences. Grammatical transformation or the pseudo-algebraical operations called *explication de texte* will go awry if performed under the assumption that *Nothing* = o.

A commentary on this aspect of the poems is contained in Martin Heidegger's essay *Was ist Metaphysik?*[1] — a key document just as Grosseteste's essay *De Luce* is a key to the poems of Cavalcanti. Heidegger's essay is not amenable to short quotation, but a few sentences may do to suggest its relevance:

> Wo suchen wir das Nichts? Wie finden wir das Nichts? . . . Da-sein heisst: Hineingehaltenheit in das Nichts. . . . das Nichts ist der Ursprung der Verneinung, nicht umgekehrt. Wenn so die Macht des Verstandes im Felde der Fragen nach dem Nichts und dem Sein gebrochen wird, dann entscheidet sich damit auch das Schicksal der Herrschaft der "Logik" innerhalb der Philosophie. Die Idee der "Logik" sebst löst sich auf im Wirbel eines ursprünglicheren Fragens. . . . Die Hineingehaltenheit des Daseins in das Nichts auf dem Grunde der verborgenen Angst macht den Menschen zum Platzhalter des Nichts.

Consider also the location of these moraines, for whom the signifying Nothing speaks. *Wo suchen wir?*

Yates is now rather widely known as a writer specializing in, or addicted to, "the North". This is undoubtedly accurate in its way, but it has bothered me somewhat as being subject to a particular misconstruction. Yates is not, of course, a writer of travel literature. That body of his work which is infused with the northern landscape — including in particular *The Great Bear Lake Meditations* — is not an addition to the "tourist poetry" which, in an age of government grants and ubiquitous ticket-counters, has become one of the fundamental genres of throwaway writing. The North is in Yates' work as Greece is in Seferis', or as London is in Eliot's or Dublin in Joyce's: as firing chamber and bolt, not as an Arden Forest full of trees to hang one's poems on.

The potencies, valences, angular momenta of the image "North" will bear considerable critical inspection. As direction, *North* is after all an allotropic form of *up*. And it is an *up* which, like a bright light or a very small object, must be looked at or looked for by looking a little off-centre, not righteously straight on. Pursued by the compass, it vanishes into the maw of the earth some 25° off what is usually meant by "the Pole". Pursued by celestial navigation, it dwindles into vertigo at a place where a stopped clock keeps perfect time. And pursued by the rigorous logic of meridians, it arcs relentlessly into its inverse until all thirty-two points are properly called South.

There is at least one other location which exhibits many of the properties of Yates' Pole. That place is the *axis nefandus*, Satan's crotch in Canto XXXIV of the *Inferno*:

> il punto
> al qual si traggon d'ogni parte i pesi,

also icebound, also a place where the language which guides us through time

[1] Yates assures me he has never read it.

and direction unravels. (And the one place in Dante where "Nothing" has meaning.)

Yates' Selected Poems are not, to be sure, a new *Commedia*. But there is nascent within them an archetectonic which may bear Dantescan voltage, if not Dantescan power. The "conceit" (Johnson's word) which they carry is a system with all the symmetry of Thomist cosmology, but a system which is "down to earth" (though not earthbound). Its components are not metaphysical constructions, but the sudden twists, interstices and dropoffs latticed into those constructions. It is a system, therefore, which is adumbrated not via the syllogism, but via something for which we may have no better word than riddle or enigma or conundrum. The prologue, for example, to the *Canticle*:

> This is for whatever, like it,
> Moves nowhere, saying to itself,
> Between one nothing and another.

One falls off the period at the end of that third line because it marks a genuine precipice, not because a practical joker has stuck it there, surrounded by verbal grease, to trip up the unwary. And the location of that precipice, according to another of Yates' titles, is "the unmapped interior."

To be sure, the North is also an exterior terrain. It is barren and forbidding, and its centre or amphidromic point is not unrelated to the core of hell. But it will not suffice to label it a landscape of damnation or purgation. The well-known line from the *Canticle*, Canto I, is:

> By and by the wilderness came over me.

The noun is "wilderness," not "wasteland," and the verb is "came over", not "overcame." Or, in a piece entitled "When Wolves":

> My mind turned
> As the moose turned,
> Fur, feathers,
> Weather,
> And the leaves.
>
> Beneath the pale-green
> Snake-fire that strikes and straightens
> Across the wide winter night,
> My eyes. . . .

Page after page the animals, and page after page the arctic catalogue. The permafrost and felsenmeer, the ground brines and the silt boils, the clints and grikes and thermokarst and pack-ice and polynya. They all transfer nicely into the wordscape, and they serve very well as analogues for a topography of the soul, but that is not the point either. The landscape is not in these poems to symbolize, but to teach. It breeds an attitude: a concern with elementals, with fundamentals, by drawing the mind into an environment in which there is little time for trivialities and seldom any survival of sizeable error. And in which, of course, there is neither compass nor pole-star to set course by when close to the mobile and invisible goal. The delineation of that uninhabitable landscape is a feat. These poems perform it. The relentless inquest into the nature of the human animal who nevertheless insists upon, or is forced into, inhabiting that landscape is a greater feat. These poems record the performance of it: signifying nothing, which is everything: that is to say the language, and the landscape rising out of it, and the man moving over it, alone.

ROBERT BRINGHURST

ADMIRABLE PURPOSE

JOHN REID, *The Faithless Mirror: An Historical Novel.* Darkwood Press. $24.00.

JOHN REID has written what is probably the weightiest novel in the history of Canadian fiction; it is over 600 pages long, with about a quarter of a million words, and tips the scales at over four pounds. This over-long and wordy book would have benefited greatly from an editorial pencil, wielded by someone less involved than the author in the intricacies of theological debate. *The Faithless Mirror* is a study of the struggle between good and evil in the heart of man, of the illusions with which he surrounds himself, of the temptations which impede his progress towards a true understanding of his relations to God and to other men. Described thus, the work must sound like an extended sermon, which in some respects it is; and like most sermons, it will draw respectful approbation, from those among the devout who have not succumbed to sleep.

The setting is Yorkville, the small hippy district of Toronto, in the years 1966 to 1968. A Catholic priest named Crawley arrives in search of a runaway from his parish, and is drawn to stay in the district by his sense of the spiritual needs of those who live there — drug-addicts, drop-outs, prostitutes, the detritus of a materialistic and success-oriented society. He opens a centre to help such people regain a grasp on reality, and tries to awaken a sense of God in them; in the process, he becomes something of a martyr and a hero-figure, a thorn in the side of the Church establishment, a threat to those who seek to exploit the idealism and aspirations of confused young people for the sake of profit. Father Crawley encounters every kind of vice and perversion, but refuses to give up his mission; at length, however, he is sucked into the world of illusions he had sought to destroy, and becomes an advocate of the kind of "free love" approach that confuses self-indulgence with spiritual freedom.

His antagonist, and ultimately the cause of his defeat, is a mysterious figure called Harringer, associated with black magic and Satanism. He recognizes the human potential for evil, and makes use of the "counter-culture" to give that evil greater expression. His motive is a lust for power; his aim is to create an anarchic society devoid of law or belief, in which man will have put his own image at the centre of the universe, in place of God's. Torn between this devil-figure and Father Crawley are a number of youthful denizens of Yorkville, in various stages of moral decay; most notable among them is Steyle, a would-be writer and draft-evader from Berkeley, whose intellect seems to be paralyzed by drugs or despair, or both. Steyle (presumably "style" plus "stale") finds a refuge from guilt and self-hatred behind a mask of cynicism and contempt for others. Under Father Crawley's influence, however, he regains a moral perspective which gives him, finally, the ability to resist Harringer and aid in his destruction, in the novel's gory and Gothic conclusion.

Had the author been content to present a study of character or a novel of straightforward action or social comment, his materials would have sustained the reader's interest; the plot has all the realism of a social worker's case-file. However, Mr. Reid was determined to

invest his work with deeper significance, to make it into an intellectual journey into the farthest reaches of the human spirit; and therefore he asks us to view his characters as latter-day inhabitants of a Dantean hell, exemplifying the various sins of incontinence, bestiality and fraud. The epigraph of the novel is from Canto III of the *Inferno*; Steyle is haunted by memories of a dead girl called Beatrice, whom he had once loved; even the name of the press under which the novel is published, Darkwood Press, echoes the opening lines of the *Inferno*. Seen in the light of such illustrious associations, the plight of Yorkville's damned should take on a symbolic aspect, and their fate should strike us as representative of the human condition.

That this does not happen is primarily because so much of the novel is occupied with analysis rather than action; characters and events are buried in a welter of words. The characters may have had real-life originals, as a prefatory note to the novel implies; but any resemblance to real life fades once they begin to speak. The pressures and frustrations which beset them are, doubtless, real enough; but would a group of teenage drop-outs spend their day discussing finer points of faith and philosophy like a gaggle of earnest novices in a nunnery? They explore their souls at great length, regaling each other, and the wilting reader, with their discoveries. "The way to get over a death hang-up is to die. Die and go to hell. That's where I am. It's a groove and you can't get there. Heaven and hell — it's really the same place. The fire only burns while you resist it. You got to *become* the fire". They speak of love and hate, God and the devil, in carefully formed contrasts and paradoxes that seem contrived and awkward in the context of informal conversation. "Like opposites depend on each other. . . . We need the straight world, man; the straight world needs us. There'd be no light if there wasn't darkness, no sound if there wasn't silence. Like these are all aspects of one thing — like the world isn't them or us, man, it's them-us, if you dig what I mean". This is how the characters speak to (or at) one another throughout the novel; the occasional overdose or suicide comes almost as a relief from the tedium of such dialogue.

It would be wrong to suggest that there is nothing realistic in the description of a group of "turned-off" young people posing as world-weary cynics, and spouting Camus or Rimbaud; but too often the scene takes on the air of an Honours seminar, and the characters sound as if they are re-hashing old lecture notes in an effort to impress the professor. In such a learned atmosphere one is not surprised by the choice of *Hamlet* as bedtime reading for a fifteen-year old runaway, or even by the allusions to St. Thomas Aquinas and Dante made by a small-time local racketeer, who quotes from the *Inferno*, in Italian of course. The roll-call of scholarly references is impressive, testifying to the author's wide reading, if nothing else; Newman, Teilhard de Chardin, Leibnitz, Nietzsche, Russell, Cocteau, Mallarmé, Milton, Poe, C. S. Lewis, Tolkien, Frost — these and other names grace the pages of *The Faithless Mirror* and lend the appearance of substance to some very insubstantial talk. The exchanges between Father Crawley and Steyle, liberal priest and would-be writer, are so academic that the reader half expects to find ex-

planatory footnotes. Steyle's study of *Beowulf*, for example, has taught him that society is less "civilized" now than it was at the time of the Anglo-Saxons: "Maybe I'm pissed off with a world where there are no more monsters — *or their mothers* — to fight. A dragon does you in and you get *lof* — fame, renown. And you earned it by death. For a thousand years that fucking manuscript was lost. Instead of *wyrd* we have weirdos, like me".

The use of swear-words in such passages is revealing; it is an unconvincing device to give the appearance of life to a character who is little more than a tissue of ill-assorted ideas and theories culled from a hundred different sources. If we could detect the author's presence behind all this, mocking the characters' pretentiousness or using it to reveal their emptiness, we might be the more ready to put up with the phoney philosophizing; but there is no sense of a detached, critical observer whose view of life may be more rational and balanced than that of his characters. Reid shows people struggling towards self-knowledge, but gives us no firm vantage point from which to judge their progress; even the sensible and humane priest is shown to be erratic, inconsistant and confused. There is no clear discrimination between different points of view, so that everything the characters say seems to be of equal weight and value, its significance or validity only measurable by what comes next. Perhaps it was John Reid's intention to deprive us of a fixed standard of value, to emphasize his point about the collapse of moral standards in our society; but to involve the reader in the consequent confusion can only run counter to his purpose. That purpose is wholly admirable: to warn of the dangerous forces of evil that may enslave us by blinding us to God; but high moral seriousness is not an antidote for an overdose of words and a blurring of narrative focus.

HERBERT ROSENGARTEN

VAPOUR FROM A JEWELLED CASKET

ANNE HEBERT, *The Silent Rooms*. General Publishing, $7.95.

IT IS A VERY DISCONCERTING experience to be forced to read a writer's works backwards. This was what happened with Marie-Claire Blais and now we are subjected to the same disorientation with Anne Hébert. Both the novel and the film *Kamouraska* were such enormous successes that her editors now seem confident that her first tentative novel, *Les Chambres de Bois* (1958) will receive rapturous attention in its English translation, *The Silent Rooms*.

I had difficulty with this novel from its first stagey sentence, "Catherine's home was in a town where blast furnaces flamed in the sky, day and night, like the dark palaces of the Apocalypse." It must be the translation, I thought. I remembered how a French friend had fumed over the translation in *Kamouraska* of "la galerie" as "balcony" and "porch". Obviously, she complained, the American translator simply didn't know Quebec or he would never have confused "galerie" with a "balcony"!

I began to look for the same sort of solecisms in Kathy Mezei's translation. "Sous l'abondance d'un pain aussi dur,

des femmes se palignaient doucement contre la face noire des hommes au désir avide" becomes "Bread was plentiful but hard-won, and women complained softly against the sooty faces of men quick with desire." Again, "Il parla de la solitude de la ville pierreuse, du vent sur la place, de l'homme qui est sans gite, ni recours, de la violence du sang chez les filles qui se damnent" has now become "He spoke of the loneliness of the stony town, of the wind on the square, of the man without home or friends, of the passionate blood of girls who are damned."

I feel uneasy about such renditions, but not irritated beyond endurance as I am by Hannah Josephson's embarrassing translation of *Bonheur d'Occasion*. Each year the New Canadian Library brings out the same edition of *The Tin Flute*, with such unbelievable phrases as "in a trice", "You look quite fetching, I assure you," "over yonder" . . . No wonder there is a credibility gap between the two solitudes. Surely there is some cultural group within this country who could ensure that the best possible translators were selected?

Miss Mezei has had a very difficult task and my sympathies are with her. How does one translate a book in which each sentence is a complex and allusive metaphor? In French unquestionably the heightened style *sounds* better; in English it is artificial, stilted, theatrical; what may be grand in French becomes grandiose in English. To describe it as a poetic book is not adequate — it is not good poetic prose. I am willing to admit that *Les Chambres de Bois* was apprentice-work for *Kamouraska* which I found effective in a gorgeously operatic way, a Madame Bovary with brio. By then Anne Hébert had learned to control narrative and to create characters who were more than sensibilities. *Les Chambres de Bois* is a transitional work belonging in that indulgent and rather murky region between poetry and prose.

She loves sensuous images, statements that suggest profound meanings, mood and atmosphere of frozen immobility. The "events" in the novel have only the vaguest associative connection with each other. The "characters" are histrionic voices. A hand is raised languidly, a cigarette is stubbed out, a chord is struck upon the piano. Some young sisters, whose mother has recently died, stay for a time with an uncle in the country. One day in the woods they encounter the local seigneur with his son and daughter. Some years later the oldest girl, Catherine, and the son, Michel a dilettante artist, meet. They have a few inconclusive encounters and when Michel's sister, Lia, takes a lover, he suddenly asks Catherine to marry him. They move to Paris to a small flat overflowing with expensive, useless things. Catherine, who is fundamentally an earthy peasant, is moulded by Michel into a beautiful, listless object. Lia, abandoned by her lover, moves into the flat. An indefinable turbulent relationship is re-established between brother and sister from which Catherine is excluded. Stifled and isolated, she becomes very ill and leaves her prison to convalesce in a sunny climate. Here she meets a vigorous man who gives her the strength to leave Michel forever. And that is all.

Presumably there are implications of themes which run through her poetry — dependency, solitude, death, the need for natural roots. But all is hint, vague echo, allusion, a vapour, evapourizing from a jewelled casket.

PHYLLIS GROSSKURTH

HANDFUL OF DUST

RONA MURRAY, *Ootischenie*. Fiddlehead Books.
SEYMOUR MAYNE, *For Stems of Light*. Valley Editions.
FRASER SUTHERLAND, *In The Wake of*. Northern Journey Press.
LEN GASPARINI, *One Bullet Left*. Alive Press.
PETER STEVENS, *Family Feelings and Other Poems*. Alive Press.

FROM THE little presses, a handful of poets fumble in earth, dusty pages and the forbidden corners of human flesh for words to colour maps. With varying intensity of light, the star-hand bursts in every direction, scattering pages of print.

Ootischenie, by Rona Murray, is the record of a mind bending into a new landscape. Murray, *l'etranger*, is the visitor absorbing the life of the village of Ootischenie, "Consolation", dominated by stark seasons, heaven (snow) and hell (fire), and the Doukhobor people who have struggled and died there, forcing new life out of the land.

Let me go
into the half frozen fields
and manure the bloody earth

In the natural dialectic of fathers and sons, the Doukhobor children are moving to the city or dying on highways, escaping into death. There is an urgency in Murray's word photographs. History is written in lyric gasps. Even as the shutter lets in the light, the subject changes.

How may
words
melting through fingers
retain all this?

As she mourns the passing landscape, the firing of love into violence, Murray becomes Doukhobor, "spirit wrestler", herself, ensuring the continuity of the land and the rough philosophers who civilized it once.

I celebrate
bulb beneath the sod
egg within the goose
sun burning

For Stems of Light, eleven poems by Seymour Mayne, is a travel book whose locus, lines of verse, is points of revelation illuminating the poet's quest after the parts that make up the human family. The stems of light are spokes in a wheel, the circle completing his relationship with the universe.

In most of the poems, it is the wandering Jew who searches the ancient landscape, "blood of Jerusalem's morning sun", for signs and voices to link the dead past with the living present. But beyond Jewishness, there is a family bond that is evidenced in Western art, antique and modern. In "Division" and "Only the Feet Remain", the sculpture of Henry Moore and Phaidros, the philosophical centre becomes real and human,

The arterial arms
of the spatial
heart

The wheel is ecumenical flesh of which the poems, the Biblical desert, the art galleries are only spokes.

Poems written by Fraser Sutherland "In the wake of looking at poems and paintings", impressions, imitations and translations, make up a phantom collection of verse reflected off the two dimensional surfaces of paper and canvas. *In The Wake Of* maps neither human nor geographical landscape, is simply a guided tour through the books and paintings of real artists like Verlaine, Rimbaud, Brecht, Munch, Vasarely, and, final insult, Auden, who according to Sutherland, "kept life in one pocket, work in another — like pencils."

There is no shape to the pale imitation

of art, no real or imaginary substance to the flat word on the page. The obituary for this experiment in vicarious poetry is contained in "Ars Poetica", after Vicente Huidobro.

> What we see we create,
> What we hear can never die.

In the epigraph to *One Bullet Left*, a patchwork collection of poems cut from urban and rural settings and sewn into a rather eclectic quilt, Len Gasparini quotes Kenneth Patchen;

> I have but one bullet left
> And there are so many things to kill.

The bullet, presumably, is the poet himself, the unity in a multiplicity of experiences described in the story poems.

The poet wears many disguises as he wanders through the city at night, "I pose as Melmoth the wanderer", tough guy, truckdriver, and husband helplessly watching painful childbirth. The realities of Melmoth are assumed from songs and celluloid.

> This was the theatre that projected
> our youth on to its screen;
> the temple that symbolized a certain truth
> we did not learn in school
> and certainly didn't know then.

The mask falls off in nature. Poems written in gardens and at Point Pelee are gentle and true, free from the forced humour of Melmoth the role player. "The rain ripens these perspectives for a still life."

Family Feelings and Other Poems, by Peter Stevens, is a series of photographs taken out of windows and in mirrors. Gradually the public exposures move closer and the poet turns the camera on himself.

Good documentary poetry is rare and Stevens traps himself in the rhetoric of the soapbox, in the celluloid snarl of newscasting. Poems like "State of the Nation" and "The Mahatma" really add nothing to the conventional notion of public figures and events.

Only in the landscape pictures like "The Tide Flats" and "Farm Girl Looks Out After the Long Winter" do we begin to approach the real artist in the photographer-poet.

It is in the houseful of people and mirrors that the chiaroscuro of real life is finally printed on paper. In the family poems, the dark and light sides of love and life are juxtaposed in words sometimes funny and often painful. Finally alone with himself, the poet records, while

> Others sleep
> where nursery rhymes
> are bleeding
> light down walls.

LINDA ROGERS

HEAVEN-BORN ANCESTORS

Visitors Who Never Left: The Origin of the People of Damelahamid, translated by Chief Kenneth B. Harris in collaboration with Frances M. P. Robinson, U.B.C. Press.

THIS LONG-AWAITED BOOK tells the myth of the people of Damelahamid (Temlaham), the heaven-born ancestors of the Gitksan of the Skeena. The story is told by Chief Kenneth Harris, *Hagbegwatku* ("first-born of the nation"), who claims direct descent from the founders of the great village or city of Damelahamid. Many of these stories have appeared in print in other forms, and Chief Kenneth Harris and his distinguished mother, Mrs. Irene Harris (now deceased), have told

them to me and to others; but this is the first time they have been published as a cycle. The great importance of this book is that it gathers the main myth-motives not only of the Gitksan, but of the Tsimshian, Haida and Tlingit, into a brief, unified mythical history. It is a magnificent story, comparable to the myth of Manco Capac and the founders of the Incaic dynasty of Peru.

The stories have been conscientiously introduced and annotated by Frances M. P. Robinson of the Department of Fine Arts, University of British Columbia. Perhaps I had better point out the shortcomings of the book first, since I wish to make it clear that it is a most valuable one.

First of all, we are not given any indication of the fascinating formal qualities of these stories, which are as close to being epic poems as an oral, non-metrical tradition will allow. Certainly much has been lost, since they are translations of translations — first told by Arthur McDames in an archaic language or dialect known as *Tsomalia* (no indication here that local linguists find the existence of this language interesting), then translated by Irene Harris into modern Gitksan, then in turn translated by Chief Kenneth Harris into English. However, there are two important facts about these stories: the first is that they are full of traditional verbal formulas (like North European sagas), the second is that there are songs at key points in the narrative. Some of these I have on tape, sung by Mrs. Harris: they possess a majestic and archaic beauty. The versions in this book have at times the quality of simple "Indian tales". This textural and formal loss really should have been pointed out in the introduction.

Secondly, one must regret Mrs. Robinson's avowed decision to eliminate Chief Kenneth Harris's statements of the "morals" of these stories. The Gitksan did not have our strange fear of "moralizing": the morals are ancient and intrinsic.

Thirdly, Mrs. Robinson gives an unsatisfactory account of the theory of Northwest Coast history which Kenneth Harris, and other keepers of the tradition, have derived from the myths. I know myself that this theory is far more than a matter of mere "folk-etymology", though it inevitably contains some such elements, the results of a modern degeneration of the ancient intellectual system and the intrusion of European habits of thought. They deserve to be presented in full, since they contain much of great value.

Perhaps, since Mrs. Robinson is a specialist in fine arts and (if I am correct) an anthropologist, she has suffered from bad "professional advice". It is clear that she recognizes the beauty and importance of these stories.

If we go back far enough, the stories of Damelahamid may be related to myths of immense age, existing all over the hemisphere and in the Old World as well. It is likely that, along with other sacred-city myths, they once embodied rich associations, among them symbolism relating to astronomy and the cardinal points. Nevertheless, this tradition is the only unified myth of a great cultural centre and the migrations of its people known to us from the Northwest Coast. Related Haida traditions are clearly derived from the mainland. Fragments of a similar cycle are found among the coastal Tsimshian, but since they are found among the Killer-Whale clan, to which Chief Kenneth Harris's Fireweed Clan is closely related, their existence is no argument against the centrality and priority of the tradition

represented in this book. There are several other cycles found on the Northwest Coast, but this is the only extant one which relates the beginnings of a civilization to a particular cultural group. The so-called "Raven" (Weeget) tradition, which also deals with the coming of material culture, is integrated into the Damelehamid cycle in this version, perhaps by main force: the reverse has never been the case. The very close relationship of the Raven cycle to paleoAsiatic Raven stories shows that it arrived late.

It would thus appear that the stories collected here are in some sense a key to the mythology of the Tsimshian (including Nishka and Gitksan), Haida and Tlingit areas.

I have indicated that the stories in this version show much "smoothing out", simplification, and a loss of the traditional literary style. Some of the latter, though, survives in Chief Kenneth Harris's translation of the story of the *Medeek*, or monster bear.

> The people had returned to Damelahamid and had reconstructed it. They started to flourish. They started to flourish in large numbers. They found that Damelahamid was no longer on the shores of the big ocean.
>
> They found that the ocean was no longer at the doorsteps of Damelahamid. Before the flood, the shores of the ocean were right up to Damelahamid and it wasn't until after the flood that the tidal waters receded down the river.
>
> They found that there were now several lakes. There were lakes all over. They found that water, running water, was plentiful. There was running water from all the little lakes and ponds that were created by the big flood. Any little hollow capable of containing water, retained the water and became a lake . . .

Here we have a kind of ritual repetition which not only has analogies with the visual design and musical construction of the area, but reminds one of a literary style which reached its peak in MesoAmerica and may be found (for example) in the Quiché Mayan play of *Rabinal Achi.* In this latter, verbal phrases are used like musical ones and repeated in a "House That Jack Built" fashion. One may also see stylistic relationships with the *Popol Vuh.* However, in the Northwest Coast stories the symbolic and arcane, which dominates MesoAmerican epic and drama, is subordinated (without being lost) to the narrative and human interest.

Books like this reveal the ancient roots of British Columbian traditional culture. Properly used, they show us the way to our cultural identity, and point up our deep relationship with the ancient cultures of the rest of the hemisphere.

NORMAN NEWTON

SAID OF CANADA

JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO, *Colombo's Canadian Quotations.* Hurtig. $15.00.

IF WE WERE BORN in this country long enough ago to feel the raw weight of its then sense of inferiority, or whether we became naturalized citizens while Canada still had only a vestigial belief in herself, the publication of a massive tome that stands in immediate comparison with both John Bartlett's *Familiar Quotations* and *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations,* must surely give us pause.

The Oxford volume claims over 40,000 quotations while Bartlett, (the first edition of which was 1891 with the edition in my possession being 1937) has some 1578 pages for over 2,400 contributors. *Our* book, *Colombo's Canadian Quota-*

tions, reputedly contains 6,000 quotations and runs to 735 pages. However, if the junior in genesis and statistical entry, with a weight of three and one half pounds, Colombo's effort might be said to be the peer of its British and U.S. counterparts for, in my inexpert judgment, they seem to be roughly comparable in avoirdupois.

"Might be said" — but really should not be. For in fact the Colombo tome stands only in the most superficial relationship to the other two works: a factor determined not by any reference to its editor's scholarship and industry, but arising from deliberate limitations of scope and historical fact. Colombo's own term of connection is "follow in the footsteps" of Bartlett and Oxford but what we have in the new work is a book whose boundaries are strictly Canadian — either by the quotation's reference or the origin of the quoted.

So we can straightway forget the pages of Holy Writ, Shakespeare, the Classics or the translations from many languages, which provide such a generous proportion of material for the other two works, neither of which is limited by national origin and, which both benefit, from the accumulation of many quotable remarks from many centuries.

John Robert Colombo's compilation, on the other hand, is not only derived from Canadian sources but is intended *for* Canadians. Outside of a few university contexts to the south and east of us, it is unlikely that the vast majority of entries in this book will be meaningful to the Briton or American who would turn quite naturally to Bartlett or the Oxford to refresh the memory or to ponder the change of popularity in those quoted in the various editions.

But the difference goes deeper than that. The majority of quotations in the two international reference works have a literary genesis: the most quoted are famous men of letters. Not so with Colombo's composition. To the contrary, one of the most striking characteristics of the work under review is the absence of several of our better-known novelists and short-story practitioners. (Though a proper Canadian flavour is conveyed here by the necessary qualification that in terms of the bookmen, the east is characteristically better represented than the west. You will search in vain amid these pages for such as Jane Rule, Audrey Thomas, or Rudy Wiebe.)

Colombo has not attempted, of course, to fashion a cultural parthenon from his six thousand entries, and should hardly be faulted for not doing so. The words he himself invokes in his preface as to what kind of dictionary he has come up with are "celebration", "mosaic", "living collage", "repository" and "inventory" — none of which suggest anything in the nature of an hierarchy. One certainly has the impression that Colombo wished to stress a democratic quality in this largest of all Canadian dictionaries, and this is surely indicated when he tells us: "All along I have thought it better to include than exclude."

However, such is the state of fallen human nature, that the most lofty intentions all too frequently materialize at a much baser level. And unless all twenty-odd million of us had been given an entry there is no way entirely to obviate reactions motivated by snobbery or chagrin as to who is "in" and who is "out". Indeed, one has it on good report that a gigantic parlour game has already been established across the country on the basis

of guessing who "made it into Colombo" and who did not.

This might be the first good cause that the publication of *Colombo's Canadian Quotations* might be held to serve. Anything that stirs up a little controversy in our somewhat soggy cultural climate and incidentally heightens our national self-awareness, is not to be dismissed out of hand.

Apart from such restricted goals, what is the true significance of the book? Does it, for example, tell us lively and intelligent things about ourselves and our past — as its editor patently hopes? And at another level altogether, does a perusal of its pages provide one with enjoyment if not edification?

My own answer to all these questions is affirmative. Though I must qualify by stating that it is ultimately more diverting than instructive.

At a general level — assuming a reality to the collective representation here — the entries are not particularly aphoristic. But that is not to say there are not occasional gleams of wisdom, as exemplified for example, by Chief Dan George with his entry:

> When the white man came we had the land and they had the bibles; now they have the land and we have the bibles.

And his lament:

> I was born in an age that loved the things of nature and gave them beautiful names like Tes-wall-u-wit instead of dried-up names like Stanley Park.

But such canny comments are the exception rather than the rule: more general is a wry, self-deprecating humour that does seem to have a distinctive Canadian contour to it. One would expect something along those lines from such established political humourists as John Diefenbaker, or from such darlings of the media as British Columbia's Ma Murray. More surprisingly it is the publisher of the *Vancouver Sun*, Stuart Keate, who most deftly catches the tone of many of the intrinsically Canadian contributions:

> The national bird of Canada is the grouse.

And rather more cleverly:

> In any world menu Canada must be considered the vichyssoise of nations — it's cold, half-French, and difficult to stir.

A problem with the included comments made by distinguished visitors to our shores is that too many of them were delivered before audiences at the Canadian Club of Toronto — a context where politeness tends to take precedence over percipience.

What might be strengthened in a subsequent edition is the proportion of entries by contemporary foreign commentators on Canadian life, letters, etc. One would assume, for example, that ex-President Nixon's terse description of our Prime Minister would find a place. And by the time such a new edition came into being we might hope that the world outside might have a little more awareness of what extraordinary things have happened culturally across this land since the annus mirabilis of Expo-Montreal. As it is, too many of the "foreign" entries to be found here, were responses to Canada's remoter past, when, comparatively speaking, this was rather a dull place. So that, not unnaturally, there is a sameness of response and even an echo of that dullness.

This category of contribution in the current version may well serve the cause of our historians, but in the light of both the excitement and dangers of the new nationalism and its transforming powers, more of us, I think, will respond to

descriptions of and reactions to the Canada in foment, which is after all, the salient characteristic of this, her second century.

DAVID WATMOUGH

THEORY & PRACTICE

JIM CHRISTY, *Beyond the Spectacle*. Alive Press.

ERLING FRIIS-BAASTAD, ed., *Outlaws*. Alive Press. $3.00.

SPECTACLES, according to Jim Christy, are the circuses that inexorably transform us into mindless followers of the system. Hypnotized by the mass media, "that most dangerous and effective arm of the Corporate Capitalist Ogre", we shuffle along en masse to the very events, demonstrations, and protests that link our chains. Canadians don't even have their own spectacles; we import them from the United States.

For Christy anarchism is the solution to the bankrupt ideologies of the sixties because "... a real street person is a natural born anarchist who creates situations and responds without preconceived notions." His slogan is simple: "Don't follow leaders."

Of course, Christy himself is a spectacle. Twenty-nine years old, he is described accurately by Doug Fetherling in the introduction to *Beyond the Spectacle*: "Like an Italian Indian, with high cheekbones, a Dick Tracy jaw and square shoulders that make you think he has forgotten to take the hanger out of his coat before putting it on." In his home town of South Philadelphia, Christy was a regular on *American Bandstand* (a spectacle if ever there were one), and later, among other things, a college drop-out, protest organizer, wanderer, and draft-dodging anarchist cum Canadian citizen. He provides his readers with an immediate touchstone to the counter culture and his writing exudes, at one and the same time, an air of suppressed violence and an all-encompassing empathy. He is often self-indulgent and occasionally naive and misinformed, but more important, he is sharply perceptive and totally lacking in artifice.

His publisher, the Marxist-Leninist Alive Press, seems devoid of any artistic sense, never mind artifice. The fuzzy brown ink ebbs and flows across each shoddy page in this poorly edited (no table of contents, "irregardless", "seperate", plus myriad typographical errors), atrociously designed and printed collection of some twenty reviews and articles. But these complaints are the stuff of pedantry beside the force, vitality and acuity of such stories as "On the Bum in Toronto", "Nashville Plus", "Beyond Fredericton", "April in America", "Looking Back", and "Toronto The ...". The last is a sensitive portrait of the Annex area of Toronto, a few streets in the heart of the city where at least five different nationalities live separately, but equally — rather like America before the pot melted.

Lining up with down-and-outers (in "On the Bum in Toronto") Christy comprehends the hierarchy of the jobless and sees how easily the poor fall prey to the image-makers — those reporters, sociologists and writers who transform them into "just another image in the continuous montage of images fed to viewers and readers". Whether sitting in a nightclub listening to an imported country and western singer, marching in a peace demonstration, or hanging out in a youth hostel in fusty Fredericton, Christy is the

fair witness and no detail escapes his scrutiny or passes without judgment.

Christy (in "Nashville Plus") decries the youth at the next table, "dressed in the finest suburban hip goin'-up-to-the-country splendour, belled, coiffed, body-shirted, cowboy-hatted. . . . " In 1968 during the October March on Washington (in "Looking Back"), Christy watched "poor Norman Mailer cavorting pathetically for the TV cameras while the rest of the cocktail party liberals looked on." When Mark Rudd and his followers besieged the administrative offices of Columbia University and forced the president to resign, Christy was there and saw "four students huddled in the doorway of a campus building busily cutting strips of gauze from a red cross roll, dousing them with mercurochrome, tieing them around their unscathed heads and rushing off down the ivy lane."

He does have heroes, and not surprisingly, they are activists, agitators, and anarchists. But the accounts of people like Emma Goldman, Blaise Cendrars and Jack Kerouac curiously fall flat. A minor exception is "Craven," but then Arthur Craven, Dadaist, friend of Blaise Cendrars, founder of *Maintenant* (a scandal sheet that he distributed from a wheelbarrow), was an apocryphal character who Christy claims was reincarnated as B. Traven, author of *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* and *The Death Ship.* Christy, the chronicler of the commonplace and not the recorder of the renowned, seems unable to vivify these sketches. And the same can be said of the several film, art, and book reviews included here. They are all competent enough, but they lack the spark that enlivens his descriptive prose.

Continuing the thesis established in *Beyond the Spectacle*, *Outlaws* comprises pieces by Jim Christy, Pat Lane, Marcel Horne and Charlie Leeds, selected and edited by fellow contributor Erling Friis-Baastad. (If possible the editing is worse and the typographical errors more prolific, but still the ink is a reassuringly consistent black.) Three of the contributors (Leeds, Horne, and Friis-Baastad) are Christy protegés who embody the spirit of his philosophy and so the book becomes more than a mere companion volume to *Beyond the Spectacle. Outlaws* is the practical application of the word as defined by Jim Christy. Frankly, I prefer the theory.

It may be true as Christy states in *Beyond the Spectacle* that Charlie Leeds, a jazz player, poet, painter, and junkie, is "a man without defences" whose "voice . . . has been nurtured in the thick of life" or that firebreather Marcel Horne is "a man who has cast away fear, who is involved totally — mentally and physically — in his art." But, that doesn't make them poets nor does it give their voices "awesome power".

Christy's story, the rambling, seemingly interminable "Bo", lacks the discipline of his earlier work although the reunion, in a sleezy small town dance hall, of an aging hobo with his matronly lush of a sweetheart is starkly powerful. Editor Friis-Baastad's verse is typified by such juvenilia as "Carl Jung's Theory":

> When I was younger, no one
> loved me
>
> Later, when everyone loved me
> it was too late
>
> I was already writing poems

The best by far are the pieces written by B.C. poet Pat Lane. His poetry penetrates with a painful clarity:

well you hafta dispel the myth
sooner of later bring all the sound
down to what you are without
filling everyone up with legends
they can't believe or
understand

It is Lane who articulates the theme of the collection and who gives cogent expression to the other contributors' lifestyles. In the essay "To the Outlaw" he writes of the nature of poetry, casting scorn on the academics in their creative writing departments "For they place boundaries around the poem with the laws they write as if creativity were the sum of one plus one." And, later he concludes: "... beyond all temporal boundaries of ethics and morality is a place called beauty where the outlaw resides. ... It is from here the poem comes. It is there the poet lives."

SANDRA MARTIN

PERFORMING LIFE

CONNIE BRISSENDEN, ed., *The Factory Lab Anthology*. Talonbooks. $3.95.

JAMES REANEY, *Apple Butter & Other Plays for Children*. Talonbooks. $4.00.

The Factory Lab Anthology is a collection of five of the plays produced at Toronto's Factory Lab Theatre since May 1970. They are short. They are plays for voices. And for the most part they are tonally unclassifiable, containing elements of absurd comedy and grotesque realism which sometimes enhance and sometimes conflict with each other. The most clearly comic of the five is Larry Kardish's "Brussels Sprouts", a contemporary bedroom-farce-on-the-Youth-Hostel-circuit in which the respectable masks and the orgiastic ambitions of two young travellers become confused. But even it dissolves into petty bickering, which neither the comic beginning nor the surreal allusions to magical transformation can dispel.

Perhaps the intent of the contrast is to make an audience contemplate the disparity between romantic dreams and the barrenness of so many people's actual lives, a disparity between the world their private imaginations glimpse and that which their public selves enact. Kardish certainly makes a distinction. In moments of imaginative seizure, his characters speak in verse and in long passages that reach toward but never achieve effective communication with the other characters; when they do exchange conversation, it is at another level and in another voice, in a kind of monotonous flat dimeter that gives evidence of the restraints under which they live their lives.

More direct at evoking those restraints — family pressures, public reputation, competitive sexual ambitions, self-centred friendship — George F. Walker's "Ambush at Tether's End" manages to render some of the most arresting scenes in Brissenden's anthology. The shallow exchanges here convey the solipsism of the friends and family who arrive in a young man's room and on discovering his corpse deny their involvement with him. The bizarre dialogue does not develop beyond individual scenes, however, and when the play dissolves in violence, one is left with more of a sense of impatience than a sense of horror. Michael Hollingsworth's "Strawberry Fields", using comparable techniques of dialogue, manages better to sustain for the whole play its concern for grotesquerie and mindless violence. Like Raymond Canale's "The Jingo Ring", it involves the presence of a stranger in a society and the alteration

which that stranger, knowingly or not, effects. Hollingsworth's stranger is a big homosexual rapist, whom two itinerant youths fight off and kill only to become sexual prey to each other. Their early passion for cleanliness is overcome by their recurrent encounter with garbage, excrement and a fascination with pimples. If the murder is an initiation, what does it lead them to? Lovelessness? power? contempt for life? Ken Gass, in an introduction to the anthology, reads the play as a parable of Canadian-American relations. If so, the Canadian identity that emerges by the end is as selfish and as void of values as any stereotypical "American" identity from which it divides itself. Perhaps that is the reason for the playwright's despair.

The most mordant piece of theatrical legerdemain in the anthology is Bill Greenland's "We Three, You and I", an exposé of the power- and ego-structure of professional charity groups and of the uses to which these organizations put their subjects/victims. The only hint to the audience of what is to happen is an item in the programme to the effect that a brief appeal by "Children's International" will be made prior to "We Three, You and I". In fact the appeal is the play; life becomes theatre, and the huckster matron hawking her wares — a crippled girl whom she reduces to inarticulate whimpering — either wins the audience into her world or enrages and alienates it. Perhaps both. Either way she wins; theatre becomes life. But only because Greenland has contrived a vigorous language with which to voice his observation of social malaise. His society is neither more nor less crippled than Hollingsworth's or Walker's, but his rendering of it makes it seem more chillingly sterile.

To move from these works to the four plays for and about children which James Reaney wrote in the 1960's — "Apple Butter", "Geography Match", "Names and Nicknames", and "Ignoramus" — is to move to a writer who has a consistently much richer sense of language, but not to escape the unpleasantnesses which preoccupy the Factory Lab experiments. Reaney's world is stuffed with fairytale violence: with orphanages, old maids, anger, and argument. Apple Butter must flee and learn to combat the restrictive authority of Spoilrod, Nipchopper and Pinch; the people of "Names and Nicknames" endure reductive taunts until they learn how to declare themselves. The overlong satire of educational systems (progressive *and* traditional) in "Ignoramus" and the animated exploration of Canadian cultural history in "Geography Match" offer other instances of thoughtless emotional cruelty. But people outlast their tormentors in Reaney's plays; their spirit prevails. While Greenland and Kardish show sardonically the games adults get confounded by, Reaney's humour establishes the tenor of the games children play: competitive, but ritualistic, hence invested with the power of release. The Factory Lab plays are tight-lipped and emotionally strained; Reaney's verbal aerobatics are reinvented with each performance. By their own method they reject imaginative restriction. And that, as Apple Butter says, "bears thinking on".

W. H. NEW