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BY JOSEPH PIVATO, LINDA ROGERS

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and many others . . .

editorial

VALEDICTIONS

Pacey and Crawley

IT IS A CURIOUS THING about living in Canada, in its literary world, that one can know a person, work with him, correspond with him, share some close thoughts with him, and yet, distances and our way of life being what they are, realize when it all comes to an end how rarely one has met him in the flesh. Recently two men have died who played great roles in the development of literature in Canada, mediational as well as creative roles, and I have felt the sadness one feels when friends depart. And yet, when I come to remember, I realize that I met Alan Crawley once only in the flesh, twenty-six years ago when I first came back to Canada from England, and that I can have sat and talked with Desmond Pacey no more than three times in the last decade. Nevertheless, there was so much in common, so much in shared thoughts and hopes that went beyond mere links of letters or of disembodied voices at the ends of wires, that I believe I knew them, and know I valued and understood what they sought to achieve and in such large measure did achieve.

Of Desmond Pacey, two men who in fact knew him more closely and directly than I did, Roy Daniells and Fred Cogswell, are writing in the pages of this issue. I myself have said what I feel I must of him in an article published recently in the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, in which I remarked on his importance as a literary historian, on his more limited but genuine virtues as a critic, on his role in encouraging younger scholars and fostering literary magazines, on the long unchallenged position of his *Creative Writing in Canada* as "the only up-to-date handbook of our literary history that we had available." I remarked that "Pacey's role in arousing interest in Canadian writers and writing has been enormous, and rivalled

in recent years, I think, only by that of A. J. M. Smith with his great anthologies which were acts of history and criticism as well as of discriminative selection."

I will be content to let the writers who follow say what else must be said of Desmond Pacey, though I feel impelled before giving place to them to add that only now he is dead and his work can be seen as a whole, within its context, does one realize fully what a presence he has been in our national cultural life over a whole generation, from the day his first book — on Frederick Philip Grove who remained an enduring interest — appeared in 1945. It would be false to say that he cannot be replaced, for it is a measure of his achievement that others have emerged to sustain the role he once upheld. But one can look back to times when his influence was crucial, and when he was irreplaceable, if by that one understands that without him our literature — or at least our image of it — might have been greatly different from what it became. He was an abiding influence, yet perhaps, though he died early and at the height of his intellectual energy, his role was in the major sense fulfilled.

The same could be said of Alan Crawley, whose active role was of much shorter duration than Desmond Pacey's, but equally crucial. When I came first to Canada there were, apart from *Canadian Forum* and the short-lived *Here and Now*, only two literary journals in English, both of them small in size and financially imperilled. One was John Sutherland's *Northern Review*, edited from Montreal, and the other was Alan Crawley's *Contemporary Verse*, edited from Victoria. Both of them vanished in the early 1950's, and there followed a hiatus of several years before their places were taken by *Tamarack Review* in 1956; after that the age of subsidized and surviving journals began to give writers a varied and assured field for publication such as had existed at no time before in Canada.

I remember with gratitude that Alan Crawley published the first of my verse to appear in Canada, but I am not sure whether he or John Sutherland published the first of my Canadian prose. Certainly it was one of them, for there was nowhere else but their journals to go, and much as one eventually regretted the varying necessities that forced these courageous editors to end publication, one appreciated the devotion with which they had kept their magazines operating in a milieu where few but writers themselves and a handful of their friends seemed to care about the existence of literature, and where even fewer were convinced of its importance in embodying whatever consciousness of themselves and the uniqueness of their land Canadians were developing.

For Alan Crawley his editing was a labour of love, but also part of an extraordinary drama of self-regeneration. He had always been interested in the arts,

and in literature especially; it was part of his upbringing, of the atmosphere he had breathed since his Ontario childhood. But the interest had remained unactivated during the years when he studied and built up his practice as a successful corporation lawyer. In mid-career, in his forties, an illness unexpectedly struck him incurably blind. He came west to British Columbia, learnt Braille, and in rediscovering poetry he found his vocation. Poetry, felt through his fingertips, listened to, learnt by heart, became his life, and, having the leisure and the will, he conceived the idea of the magazine, devoted entirely to poetry in a contemporary tone, which he felt was lacking. In 1941, when its first number appeared, *Contemporary Verse* was not yet the only poetry magazine in Canada, but places to print verse were so few that it could not help play a vital role, during the eleven years until its end in 1952, in encouraging both the already known poets like Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay and P. K. Page, and the younger poets like James Reaney and Jay Macpherson who were to carry the tradition forward into the 1950's.

Contemporary Verse, whose whole achievement in physical shape can be held in the two hands, so slim were the issues compared with today's Canada-Council-fattened journals, is an extraordinary feat, even in retrospect, since Crawley's judgment — perhaps because it was inevitably a judgment of the ear, was so true that amazingly little that passed his editorial view seems even now discardable. The issues of the journal, read together, have the containment of an anthology, a selection by a brilliant connoisseur and critic of the best works in an art he did so much to foster and in his own way to shape. Crawley never wrote poetry himself, but his feeling for it was almost faultless.

As an editor, as a man, Crawley made an ineradicable impression on those he encountered. I remember over almost half a life the one afternoon we talked away at Floris McLaren's house so long ago in Victoria, and the extraordinary feeling of alertness and — strangely — of probing watchfulness this blind man projected. Losing his eyes, he seemed to have toned all other antennae to their maximum receptivity.

Six years ago, in *Canadian Literature*'s tenth anniversary issue, we published a documentary which George Robertson had compiled on Crawley's life and work. Let me end by quoting from it three passages spoken by P. K. Page, whom Crawley encouraged when she was a young poet and who remained his friend until death. Uttered by a poet who knew Crawley personally in a way I knew him mainly through his work, they give as close a feeling as anything I have heard or read of what Crawley was like to encounter as an editor, as a man.

I remember that he would write back and tell you that he just didn't think the poem was good enough. I have no idea how he went about doing what he did. He certainly communicated with you. I think probably the thing that one needed more than criticism was encouragement, because, in my own case any way, I wrote rather for myself, and when I suddenly found that you could write for somebody else as well, you could write for a response — it was a very curious experience. This may sound ridiculous, but it's true nevertheless. Alan as far as I was concerned had a facility to turn on the tap, but how he worked critically, I've no idea. If he didn't like what came out of the tap, he'd send it back quite ruthlessly, at least ruthlessly isn't the word, but quite directly. He was always very direct in all his dealings with you. If he liked the poem he told you; if he didn't he told you. But the main thing was some kind of a contact, some kind of a tension between two people, some kind of a polarity.

* * *

He was a very emotional man, Alan, a very undemonstrative emotional man. You saw very little of the emotion, but you felt a great deal of it, and you felt that he was very much in touch with you in some way. That he had a strong empathetic quality, is the feeling I had about him. As a result of this, one had no shyness with Alan and this was his great strength for me — I was a rather reticent person and to suddenly find somebody with whom one was not shy, someone in an editorial capacity, that is — because after all one did find one's own individuals with whom one wasn't shy of course — but to find somebody in an editorial capacity to whom you could show a poem that you thought maybe was simply awful, "but it doesn't matter, if it's really awful, Alan will tell me it is; and if it isn't awful, well, we can talk about it."

* * *

I remember this marvellously Spanish looking man. He looked as if he might have come out of — or he might almost have been an El Greco painting with this extraordinary alive quality about him, and a tremendous capacity to know where everybody was in the room and to be following and with you in your conversation. Periodically I used to stay with Alan and Jean in Caulfield where they were very generous to poets, I must say — long suffering and generous and we'd get mildly drunk in the evening and quite bawdy, and laugh a tremendous amount. I think it was the laughter I remember as much as anything. I don't know whether he was dominating the room he was in but he was on top of the room he was in; and seemed a good deal sharper than the rest of us, which indeed he was, I think.

P. K. Page on Alan Crawley. I can conceive no better or more truly felt and spoken tribute.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

DESMOND PACEY

1. by Fred Cogswell

DESMOND PACEY was born in Dunedin in New Zealand, but at an early age his mother, widowed in World War I, returned to England where he attended school at Nottingham. Before he could complete his studies, she emigrated to Canada and married a man who ran a small farm near Hamilton, Ontario. As a result of this unsettled upbringing and his days as a lonely farm boy, Desmond Pacey developed, I feel, one of the cardinal ambitions of his life, later to be splendidly realized, that of being a member of a large family and of sinking permanent roots in the life of a community.

Desmond Pacey was a bright boy, fond of reading, and his mother determined and distilled into him the idea that there was a better life than farming, that this life was to be achieved by academic prowess, and that to support it financially, scholarships and prizes had to be won. Scholarships and prizes were won, and Desmond Pacey attended the Universities of Toronto and Cambridge and on concluding his courses found himself a professor, first at Brandon College, Manitoba, and, after 1944, at the University of New Brunswick, the institution with which his name is principally connected.

By that time, the goals of his life and the road to them had become habits that were to stand him in good stead for a life-time. The first impression Desmond Pacey always gave both students and colleagues was one of energy and enthusiasm. He went through the corridors of the University of New Brunswick whistling.

His sustained energy and good spirits were often a marvel to us less buoyant colleagues, but we strongly suspected that they were rooted in the security and peace of a happy marriage and a rich family life which to his credit he worked as hard to preserve as he did at anything else.

Nor were his non-academic interests confined to the family. He participated wholeheartedly in community ventures, and his strenuous dancing and singing enlivened the social gatherings of which he was fond. Until the last few years of his life, he found time for soccer, cricket, and tennis, and was always to be found in attendance at the University's athletic events. Sometimes he could be found, too, although he was always modest and reticent about it, in the pulpit of a local church, for, like Northrop Frye, he was an ordained minister of the United Church of Canada.

As a teacher, Desmond Pacey never apologized or tried to explain the importance of literature; it was as self-evident to him as the beat of a heart or the pound of a pulse. And in a very short time he had the best of his students thinking as he did. His own life had been enriched by his perception of a growing and developing tradition, and he took it for granted that the teaching of literature ought to stress a broad humanity based upon sincere expression rather than upon intricacies of form. He took a personal interest in his students, was proud of their achievements, sustained them in their failures, and corresponded with many of them until the time of his death.

Nowhere did his respect for literature and his intrinsic modesty and shyness appear more patent than in his attitude towards his own writing. He wrote a novel, which in my opinion contains much honest and attractive realism derived from the circumstances of his life on an Ontario farm, but he never tried so hard to have this book published as he did to forward the work of other writers whom he admired. His short stories were of a high standard, and his children's verse was charming in the manner of Dennis Lee's more advertised *Nicholas Knock* and *Alligator Pie*, but he spoke seldom, if at all, about these accomplishments.

As a department head, Desmond Pacey functioned in two eras — the era of the absolute head and the era of the departmental servant, the chairman of committees. I have always felt that his actual intentions and achievements in both roles have to some degree been misunderstood in some quarters of the University of New Brunswick and the Canadian academic community as a whole. I think two traits in his character occasioned these misunderstandings. The first is that he so identified himself with his work that any attack on it seemed to him to be a personal attack upon himself and he sometimes responded in kind. Further-

more, the very identification of himself with the immediate institution he served, whether it was the English Department, the School of Graduate Studies, or the whole academic side of the University of New Brunswick, led others outside those institutions to conclude that he was being an "empire builder" when it seemed perfectly clear to him that he was merely performing meritorious service. Often, too, at Learned Societies and other meetings, when he forced himself to talk — as shy men sometimes do — he overstated his case and appeared brash to those who did not understand the emotional pressure and difficulty underlying the very fact of speaking. The cardinal test of an administrator is in his ability to pick able men and to keep them happily and fruitfully employed. For this, Desmond Pacey deserves as high a rating as any one I knew. The U.N.B. English Department over the past quarter century has lost few professors who joined it. It is a happy place to work and has few, if any, equals in Canada in the degree of freedom, harmony, and mutual respect that exists among its members.

Desmond Pacey as a department head will always be noted for at least two solid and far-seeing achievements. The first is the degree to which he pioneered and enlarged the scope of the study of Canadian literature at U.N.B. The second is his decision, in conjunction with the University of British Columbia, to embark upon the Ph.D. programme in English, thereby breaking the monopoly on that degree in Canada held previously by the University of Toronto, an institution which at that time did not look very favourably upon Canadian studies. In both these actions, he helped to prepare the way for the spate of interest in Canadian literature that has now overtaken nearly every university in this country.

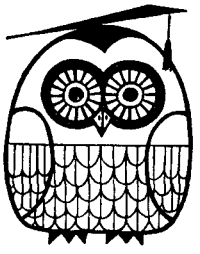
As an administrator, Desmond Pacey served the University of New Brunswick as Dean of Graduate Studies, Acting President, and Vice President Administration. He did his work ably and unstintingly. However disappointed he may have been when he was not made full-time president, he gave his successor unstinting loyalty and resisted attractive opportunities to go elsewhere. He died, at it were, "in harness".

As a scholar, Desmond Pacey was not, I felt, a great seminal mind with a deep intuitive grasp of pattern in the midst of complexity, but he did have more than a usual degree of foresight. He, before any one else, was beating the drums for the greatness of Frederick Philip Grove, hailed Grove as a major novelist. Before any one else, too, he acclaimed Irving Layton as a major poet. His work on Leonard Cohen's *The Beautiful Losers* shows an acumen and insight in dealing with complex material that are at odds with the opinions of those who are inclined to dismiss him as a mere "literary historian". Throughout the past thirty years his

has been a voice of sanity in Canadian criticism, and he has resisted such "bandwagon" attempts to make one aspect of literature the whole of literature as the cult of mythopoeic poetry, Northrop Frye's "garrison mentality", the Canadian followers of the Black Mountain school of poetry, and the work of such thesis-makers as Margaret Atwood and D. G. Jones. Before any one else, although he now has plenty of company, he turned his attention backward to an important second look at the unjustly neglected major poets of nineteenth century Canada.

Always Desmond Pacey kept in his mind the vision of a great good place, a kind of repository for tradition and all the grace and beauty embodied by it, a place to which he turned for restoration when summer holidays and sabbatical leaves permitted, and to which, I suspect, he planned to go when he had retired. That place to him was Cambridge University, seen through the halo of pre-War graduate school memories, and reburnished by the unstinting courtesy and hospitality he received there while a visitor in more recent years.

It is difficult to be objective about a friend, about a man who in so many ways moulded me into the man I am. I did not always agree with Desmond Pacey, and the effect of his excessive personality upon me was at times abrasive, but these things seem as nothing now compared to the many kindnesses, often unsolicited, I received from him. Thinking back through the years of our long relationship, a trivial, almost ludicrous incident comes to mind. I am glad now that I did not drop the ball but made the catch at the boundary in a cricket match against a pick-up side from Mount Allison University. This enabled Desmond, a rather poor bowler, to dismiss the opposing team's most dreaded batsman. Had I dropped that ball, would I still have been in a position to write this memoir? I think so — but our friendship for a spell would have been severely



tested. Desmond was a keen competitor. He did not go easily to his grave, and I for one hope that all the traditional beauty of Cambridge University is but a shadow to the glory of where he is now. I hope, too, that it will give him scope for activity, for an idle Desmond Pacey would be absolutely unthinkable.

2. *by Roy Daniells*

WE WERE RETURNING from Switzerland and, stopping in Florence, walked through the cypress-shaded Swiss Protestant cemetery where names familiar to literature are carved with loving care as memorials. That afternoon, arriving in Rome, we found a cable with the news of Desmond Pacey's death.

It was characteristic of him that, a few weeks earlier, he had written to us, not concealing the seriousness of his diagnosis but putting the best possible construction on it and hoping to continue his work during the next months and years. The news was therefore an unexpected shock; it did not seem possible that so continuous a line of effort and achievement could thus come to a close.

Only later did one realize that his customary courage and confidence had never failed, even in the presence of the last enemy, had been strong enough to comfort the very friends from whom he had the most right and need to expect sympathy and support.

In this he was acting true to form. I had first met him when he was an English student and I was a very junior instructor in Victoria College, Toronto. We soon had friends in common, and ties among members of that group have endured for over forty years. They were ties of common interest in common subjects — English, History, the Canadian past and the future of Canada — and they were predominantly intellectual interests, without the bias of partisan politics, religious dogmatism or personal ambition.

In due course Desmond won an award that took him to Trinity College, Cambridge, and I moved on to the Department of English in the University of Manitoba. We kept up a correspondence and, to my great joy, he was appointed to fill a similar position at Brandon College. We had now a professional relation that flowed as smoothly as our old friendship. Desmond's pervasive saving grace,

that triumphed over all difficulties in those lean and academically desperate years of the early 1940's, was his inimitable combination of cheerfulness, courage and candour. Every difficulty — of climate, communication, curriculum, accommodation, conflicting views of colleagues — each was faced with the same imperturbability, the same energy, the same resource and the same confidence that the standards of Toronto or of Cambridge could be established and upheld on the Western Prairies. These were difficult years, happy years, years of accomplishment. In many of his students Desmond awakened a love of literature and a life-long gratitude.

He left us in 1944, when he became head of the English Department in the University of New Brunswick. There were, however, many opportunities of keeping in touch in addition to correspondence. The learned societies met every summer, in one major centre or another, and for days on end there was that kind of personal and academic interchange of news and views that acts as blood stream in the body of our widely dispersed Canadian community. One had often the double pleasure of seeing both Desmond and Mary and sensing the harmony and mutual stimulation of that most fortunate union.

During these years the work was being done that led to his *Creative Writing in in Canada* and his *Ten Canadian Poets*. Their critical significance has already been dealt with elsewhere. The tactics he used, in terms of objectives, of method and manner, were no less important. He drove at essentials. His first book was a milestone placed beside the road that led perforce to a comprehensive literary history of Canada. This enterprise early claimed him as an associate editor, a role he never ceased to fill. At the time of his death, a greatly expanded edition of the *Literary History of Canada* was going to press. To his soundness of judgment all those associated with it are eager to pay tribute.

His greatest influence, across the years, has been in the example he set. His choice of subjects was always close to central problems of the culture of this country and his patient investigation of such figures as Grove and Roberts was aimed at establishing the dominant characteristics of our diversified heritage. Consistency, reliability, integrity, centrality — one searches in vain for the adequate characterization of his life-long endeavour.

His great virtue as a friend and as a colleague was his utter dependability. One knew where to find him and one could count on his support in times of difficulty, his advice in perplexities, his sanity and common sense in scenes of confusion and the invariable warmth of his response to one's needs.

I shall never forget our last meeting, which extended over several days, on his

own ground of the University of New Brunswick. What shone out was the respect and affection felt for him by his colleagues and others associated with the campus. As a teacher, an administrator, a champion of academic values in the community, it was clear that his influence was widespread. The same qualities that had made him, forty years earlier, stand out among honours students were now fully apparent. Centrality without ostentation; warmth without sentimentality; heartiness without affectation; robustness of judgment without loss of fine distinctions; an instinct for essentials without any forcing of issues.

MAIDEN AUNT

Anne Corbett

Seems all right if the going down
to die happens at home where blood
and relatives can dandle the emptying
body safe from the alien click
and snapping shut of clinics.

The trappings of an event
bring in the family. I am an
event in passing, lying here not
wearing the proper colour for the time
of day, not stressed and strutted for
the occasion. Everything I was set out
to do is done: every possession accorded
my right to stay within the family. It's
knowing one's place that's important, from six
feet down to three stories up, the length
and width of the boundaries. This business of
dying is only a process, a sort of making room.

It's all right knowing where and with whom
I'll lie. I have my place, relinquish
nothing, but then I've reconnoitred for years.

CANADIAN LITERATURE AND COMMONWEALTH RESPONSES

William H. New

WE HAVE GROWN into a habit in Canada of thinking ourselves influenced rather than influential, and imitative rather than innovative. By diminishing creative effort before looking closely at works of art, such attitudes turn a lock on criticism. Nothing firmer than faint praise is possible. And if we wait constantly for the flowering of a recognizably distinctive Canadian culture, we risk ignoring that which exists already, that which has emerged and emerges from our way of living and looking at the world, is implicitly Canadian, and is alive. I am not denying the existence of influences upon Canadian literature, nor decrying the skills involved in technical imitation and creative parody; by trying to distinguish between influence and simple response, however, I am concerned with showing how the experience of the world can enter, without controlling, Canadian perspectives.

"Influence" suggests that an author surrenders his identity to a direction outside himself or his culture; "response" leaves the control in the author's own hand, and too often we confuse the two. At one extreme, if authors respond to phenomena outside Canada, critics merely wonder what was wrong with Canada that it didn't provide the same stimulus. Under these conditions, nationality becomes the significant criterion in making literary assessments rather than simply a description of cultural source. For example, the poems Earle Birney wrote in response to his experiences of South America and Asia inspired reviews which questioned their Canadian-ness and wondered when the poet would get around to writing as well about his own country. Like Milton's Satan, however — and Birney the Romantic would I hope appreciate the comparison — the sensitive artist carries his "own country" with him wherever he goes. The sensitive critic must follow, appreciating the landscape in whatever direction it expands. In an age of mobility, one in which rapid transit and mass media give the artist physical as well as

mental running room, the occasions for meeting disparate experiences — for responding to them and for being responded to — multiply drastically. I want here to probe only some of those associations, to consider Canadian writers in relation to their Commonwealth responses and counterparts, and to indicate some of the directions that future criticism might usefully pursue.

If we start by throwing England out of the Commonwealth for a minute, thus peremptorily getting rid of the need to discuss visitors to England and direct contacts with English cultural traditions, we are still left with an intricate network of Canadian-Commonwealth literary relationships. Earle Birney observing the Caribbean, Asia, and the South Pacific; Sara Jeannette Duncan or George Woodcock in India; P. K. Page in Australia; Dave Godfrey, Audrey Thomas, Margaret Laurence, David Knight, Dorothy Livesay, and others in various parts of Africa — all reflect a direct experience with a foreign landscape that not only becomes transformed into metaphor in any particular work but also helps direct the course of each writer's separate literary development. The discovery of Africa or Asia, that is, does not remain static; it contributes to the progress of each literary mind.

As Audrey Thomas puts it in *Mrs. Blood*, a novel set partly in Ghana:

> There are smells here which will always be part of Africa for me; and yet if someone asked later what Africa was like and I said 'Mansion Polish', or 'Dettol', or 'the smell of drying blood', they wouldn't understand. And they would be right not to, for the real Africa (whatever that may mean) is none of these and my Africa is only real for me.

And for her central character, Africa is a metaphor for an experience to which she cannot adapt, a vitality she ambivalently loves but from which she is constantly separated, an environment in which a place name like Freetown utters sharply dislocating ironies, forcing her back into the harassing uneasiness of her own self. Margaret Laurence, at the opening of her autobiographical account of life in East Africa, *The Prophet's Camel Bell*, poses the question even more explicitly:

> Nothing can equal in hope and apprehension the first voyage east of Suez, yourself eager for all manner of oddities, pretending to disbelieve in marvels lest you appear naive but anticipating them just the same, prepared for anything, prepared for nothing, burdened with baggage — most of it useless, unburdened by knowledge, . . . bland as eggplant and as innocent of the hard earth as a fledgling sparrow. . . .
>
> And in your excitement at the trip, the last thing in the world that would occur to you is that the strangest glimpses you may have of any creature in the distant lands will be those you catch of yourself.

The trick is to glimpse oneself both as person and as writer. The admittedly white-liberal biases that helped impel Mrs. Laurence to translate Somali poetry for her first published book, *A Tree for Poverty*, added to her knowledge of the continent. So did the friendship with Nigerian writers like Christopher Okigbo, Wole Soyinka, and Chinua Achebe, which later contributed to the modulated judgments of her African literary commentary, *Long Drums and Cannons*. They left her, however, still an outsider. To place any of the works of Achebe, Ngugi, Ekwensi, Oyono, or p'Bitek beside *This Side Jordan* is to see how much more sharply defined the cultural conflict is in the African novels. In Ghanaian fiction, moreover — in the vitriol of Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones are not yet Born* and the traditional village commitments of the stories of Christina Ama Ata Aidoo — the pressures of language and of modernity carry an accompanying threat of deracination; to sense that is to appreciate more fully the fundamental differences between one kind of African cultural desolation and whatever is experienced in Canada.

Yet Margaret Laurence learned more than just the subtleties of characterization, the attraction of exotic settings, and the force of provocative metaphor from the writing of *This Side Jordan* and *The Tomorrow-Tamer*. She learned to probe the nature of freedom, to examine the relationship between hierarchical traditional order and the contemporary thrust towards individuality, and to take her discoveries back into her own culture. In 1969 she spelled out something of her changing awareness of Africa, the metamorphosis of the exotic marvel into (at once) a burgeoning reality and a metaphor for a quality of mind:

> I guess I will always care about Africa. But the feeling I had, in everything I wrote about it, isn't the feeling I have now. It would be easy to convey the impression that I've become disillusioned with the entire continent, but this would be a distortion. What has happened, with Africa's upheavals, has been happening all over the world. Just as I feel that Canadians can't say *them* when we talk of America's disastrous and terrifying war in Vietnam, so I feel we can't say *them* of Africans. What one has come to see, in the last decade, is that tribalism is an inheritance of us all. Tribalism is not such a bad thing, if seen as the bond which an individual feels with his roots, his ancestors, his background. It may or may not be stultifying in a personal sense, but that is a problem each of us has to solve or not solve. Where tribalism becomes, to my mind, frighteningly dangerous is where the tribe — whatever it is, the Hausa, the Ibo, the Scots Presbyterians, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the in-group — is seen as 'the people', the human beings, and the others, the un-tribe, are seen as sub-human. This is not Africa's problem alone; it is everyone's.[1]

Such an assertion does not insist on an identity between, say, Vanessa McLeod's loving rejection of her Calvinist grandfather in *A Bird in the House* and the uncertain growth of Obi Okonkwo in Achebe's *No Longer At Ease*, even though both characters find themselves continually influenced by the very traditions they have tried consciously to reject. The stories differ both tonally and in the extent of their cultural implications. But Margaret Laurence does insist on the principles of humanitarianism that transcend cultures, to which her affirmation of particular ancestral traditions gives form and by which, at the same time, restrictive customs are liberated. Her response to Africa was thus based upon her Canadian preconceptions and became the lens through which she re-examined and managed to voice them. Africa was both object observed and the subjective reshaper of experience; it did not absorb the artist, but rather stirred artistry into being.

In the poetry of Dorothy Livesay, we find a comparable African response, one that grows out of and contributes to the Poet's own developing point-of-view. The blend of lyricism and social conscience that characterized such early poems as "The Child Looks Out" or "Day and Night" had already given Dorothy Livesay a distinctive voice by the time UNESCO sent her to Zambia in 1959. A sensitivity to rhythm and a deliberate attempt to manipulate it for impassioned documentary purposes were only two of the features of her verse that resulted from that union. What Africa did was intensify her commitment to social causes, and immerse her — however slightly — in an oral culture, where the rhythms of speech had significant meaning and implicitly articulated the society's shared myth.

To illustrate what I mean by "implicit articulation", I want to refer to a book called *Muntu*, which probes the underlying principles of African culture. The author, Janheinz Jahn, writes about the spoken word as follows:

> All magic is word magic, incantation and exorcism, blessing and curse. Through Nommo, the word, man establishes his mastery over things. . . .
>
> If there were no word, all forces would be frozen, there would be no procreation, no change, no life. 'There is nothing that there is not; whatever we have a name for, that is'; so speaks the wisdom of the Yoruba priests. The proverb signifies that the naming, the enunciation produces what it names. Naming is an incantation, a creative act. What we cannot conceive of is unreal; it does not exist. But every human thought, once expressed, becomes reality. For the word holds the course of

> things in train and changes and transforms them. And since the word has this power, every word is an effective word, every word is binding. There is no 'harmless', non-commital word. Every word has consequences. Therefore the word binds the muntu. And the muntu is responsible for his word.
>
> The force, responsibility, and commitment of the word, and the awareness that the word alone alters the world; these are characteristics of African culture. . . .

But Nommo, the word, "precedes the image", is given "cultural significance" only by the *muntu* — by *man* (alive and dead, ancestor and deified ancestor altogether) — making the essence of language not a received vocabulary through which (as in Europe) a nation "understands its own cultural unity", but the creative, transmuting "way of using speech" that "places function ahead of object".

Dorothy Livesay acknowledges as much — and like Margaret Laurence admits her separateness from the culture she watches — when in her poem "Village" she speaks of the people who "do not love this place, or name it/ they are too much of it/ . . . / Between the land and themselves/ they feel no difference." Yet like Armah's Ghana and Achebe's Nigeria, Zambian society in the 20th century is beset by European modernism and awaits a reconciliation with its traditional past. The electrifying, potentially revolutionary visions of Alice Lenchina of the Lumpa sect were one result of such tension, and they stimulated in the early 1960's a remarkable social unrest, which the country's new nationalism could not altogether answer. Dorothy Livesay responded with her poem "The Prophetess", in which the rhythmic changes and incantatory repetitions draw upon the sounds of the drum culture.

One cannot, however, describe "The Prophetess" as a drum poem — a poem cycle called *Masks* by the Caribbean poet Edward Brathwaite shows how much further the technique can be taken — nor see it as "African" in anything but setting. It is sharpened, shaped, by an African experience, but it reworks themes of discrimination and childbirth that Dorothy Livesay had explored before, and it relates in its technique not just to drums but also to theories about speech patterns and incantatory effects that had become prevalent in Vancouver poetry circles by the time she returned from Africa. The continuing sensitivity to poetic technique that allowed her then to respond to the work of, for example, George Bowering and bill bissett, urged *The Unquiet Bed* (in which "The Prophetess" and "Village" appear) into the form it took; but Africa seems to have been a key experience in provoking that continuing sensitivity in the first place. Taking

her out of her culture, it made her conscious of her own identity — a recognition which let her poetic identity acquire new dimensions.

If Laurence and Thomas and Livesay in various ways utter a division between themselves and Africa which overrides their subjective possession of an African experience, Hubert Aquin, in his novel *Trou de Mémoire*, works from an intellectual proposition to insist on a metaphysical unity. The correspondence that opens his novel, that is, between an Ivory Coast revolutionary pharmacist and a Montreal one, rapidly develops beyond letter-writing into an identifying set of personality correspondences that blend character and give depth to the plot. Essentially what it underlines is an identity between the defiance of imperial power in West Africa and what Aquin sees as the need for revolutionary action in Quebec. David Knight's novel *Farquharson's Physique and what it did to his mind* probes a related issue: that of the personal effects of political involvement, the relationship between public and private identities and the upsets that occur when they war with each other inside a single culture or personality. (The existence of all these works, incidentally, emphasizes the need for further comparative studies of French- and English-language literatures in Canada; their differing perspectives often focus on the same issues and the fact that they might prove complementary warrants sympathetic examination.)

The contrast David Knight draws between idealistic and pragmatic political options relates to what Margaret Laurence says about tribalism as well as to Hubert Aquin's activism. But it is in Dave Godfrey's *The New Ancestors* that we find a more impassioned blend of Laurence's cultural sensitivity and Aquin's political fervour, and a more direct insistence on the necessity for metaphysics in modern Western life. Godfrey acknowledges, in other words, not just the Margaret Laurence sentiment that "the strangest glimpses . . . in the distant lands will be those you catch of yourself", but also the intensification of that statement as we can see it in, for example, Mircea Eliade's *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*. Quoting Heinrich Zimmer, Eliade affirms that a dialogue with the "true" African or Asian will help a Westerner rediscover a "universally valid" spiritual outlook, for " 'it is only after a pious journey in a distant region, in a new land, that the meaning of that inner voice guiding us on our search can make itself understood by us' ".

This belief, I take it, is what underlies the hallucinative, visionary "Fifth City" episode in *The New Ancestors*; it seeks the functions of African art, those of placing the independent forces of nature at man's command, of creating new reality, or issuing imperatives to time, and of fascinating (rather than arguing) its listeners to the conclusions that reside in its manner of expression. What ought to

result is a recognition of a valid life pattern, but such a discovery rests also on one's sensitivity to ancestral traditions. To quote from *Muntu* again:

> The past has a double function. On one side it is Kintu, the stuff of forces, which is awakened in images and ordered and transformed with reference to the future. On the other hand it is a pattern for the future, for it contains the wisdom of the ancestors, the knowledge of the order which is held to shape the present.

The political irony in Godfrey's book comes from his recognition of the artificiality of traditions currently being followed either in the Lost Coast of his novel or, by implication, in the Canada to which he himself is committed. To transfer allegiance to valid spiritual beliefs, to find "new ancestors" in other words, is a difficult task in the face of modern political pressures. It perhaps becomes a political as well as an ethical quest simply because of that. In any event it is inherently uncertain of its outcome. The literary method Godfrey employs to capture such tension — and to lead us, by fascination, to moral conclusions — involves him in cumulative references to African proverbs and quantum theory. The one serves as a kind of incantatory counterpoint, a flowing commentary that goes unnoticed in rigid contemporary political systems; the other voices a scientific theory of uncertainty that underlies the constant metamorphosis of energy forces. The function of such references is to remind us of the moral order absent from modern thinking and the fact that order is not a necessary or an easy result of any change. Despite such an equivocal prognosis, Godfrey is ultimately committed to action, committed to change, because only in constant re-creation can the forces that permeate life be awakened into images and made, in an African sense, "real". To participate in the making of that reality is his function as artist; to appreciate the nature of that function is to discover the interpenetration of a world of things (of images and objects) and the world of spiritual apprehension which the African "way of using speech" implicitly conveys.

EARLE BIRNEY IN Asia becomes another of Mircea Eliade's spiritual travellers to a distant region, but though his fundamental premise is not dissimilar to Godfrey's — dissatisfaction with the way American and European mythic structures impede any true expression of the Canadian imagination — the method he discovers for his art differs markedly. Where Godfrey found *word*, Birney finds *silence*; where Godfrey found a way to animate the world of things, Birney found a consciousness of the vitality of *Nada*; where Godfrey found a

culture that controlled time through artistic utterance, Birney finds a culture whose art acknowledges time but rejects its final authority. When in "Bangkok Boy" he celebrates a moment of joy that is forever, or when in "A Walk in Kyoto" he distinguishes between the script of language and "the simple song of a man", or when in "The Bear on the Delhi Road" he plays with the word "fabulous" in order to demonstrate the persistent reality of myth and the essentially insubstantial trance of empirical reality, we find examples of the way in which Asian culture has affected Birney's poetry. My point is not to assert that a radical change occurs in his viewpoint; what Asia seems to have done is to crystallize for Birney the essence of what he had long sought, to make apparent what the direction of his work had seen. When in earlier poems he had asserted freedom and the expanse of a new land, he drew his images from European myth. Like European explorers, he was seeking to articulate a "Strait of Anian" that would open the west to European access. The title of *Near False Creek Mouth* emphasizes the matter. "False Creek", an inlet of salt water that slices Vancouver part way, from west to east, was thought by early explorers to be the Strait of Anian; at that point they were trying to connect to Europe, to find a fast route home. Birney, however, comes in "November Walk Near False Creek Mouth", to stand reflectively near the western edge of the inlet, between the commercial empire that has expanded to the coast and the Orient out at sea. In that midway position, sensitive to both the European traditions and the Oriental mysticism that attract and exert their influence upon him, he locates the imaginative ground which as Canadian artist he accepts as distinctively his own.

If the pre-Asian poems fret about aging and the passing of time, the post-Asian poems acknowledge and accept it. If the early work seeks specific historical roots, the later work discovers a universality of spirit that transcends place and time. If the poems of the 1940's and 1950's press constantly for a fresh language of poetry, the most recent poems of the 1970's strive for the insights of vision that concrete poetry at its most successful can allow. Its design is not an escape from language, but an intensification of the vitality that language tries to render. In creating concrete poems he does not deny the word; he merely rejects the process of definition, of limitation, that words often impose on life. Writers like Margaret Avison and F. R. Scott have noted a comparable frustration with language and resolved their dilemma as much as they can by experimenting with patterns of print and sound. For Birney, encountering the Caribbean, Asia, and the South Pacific has been instrumental in allowing him to articulate the relation between that problem of artistic method and what he sees to be the central tensions in

Canadian experience. The Asian poems are not extraneous to his work, in other words; they grow from it, bear upon it, and therefore expand the literary consciousness which in Canada we can accept as our own.

CANADIAN WRITERS are not the only ones to travel and respond, however, and in the work of the South African and Barbadian émigrés in Canada, John Peter and Austin Clarke, we find reactions to Canada that give us a different perspective towards our image and towards the whole question of Commonwealth literary interaction. To read the works of Douglas Stewart, a New Zealander in Australia, or Clive Barry, an Australian in Africa, or William Hart-Smith, an Australian in New Zealand, or Vic Reid, a Guyanese in Africa, or Peter Abrahams, a South African in Jamaica, is to observe comparable processes of literary adaptation taking place. The point is that the new environment swims somehow into each writer's existing cultural commitments. John Peter's Canada, therefore, becomes as politicized as the South Africa he left behind, the South Africa that appears in the works of Nadine Gordimer, Dan Jacobson, or Alan Paton; and Austin Clarke's glimpses of Toronto in, say, *The Meeting Point*, ripple with all the racial indignation and implosive laughter of his countrymen George Lamming and Edward Brathwaite. When Peter tries to characterize the Canadian physiognomy, for example, a swift stereotype results, not a careful portrait; a character in *Take Hands at Winter* "even looked like a Canadian, rawboned and rangy — a cowboy with a disconcertingly English voice". It is an outsider's view. In another book, *Along that Coast*, Canadian society comes in for comparable description; a Canadian visitor to South Africa has this to say:

> "In Canada you don't seem to be really *in* the world. Whatever the real issues are today they aren't present, or at least they aren't tangibly present. They don't seem to impinge. It's in other countries that the real progress seems to be going on. Not progress, I guess you'd have to say evolution.... Canada's a backwater. I don't mean it's backward of course, I mean it's out of touch, off centre.... What's the most important single problem anywhere in the world, for this century? It's the problem of race, isn't it? It's *our* revolution, the Racial Revolution. It's going on all over Africa and Asia and the only way to get some idea of it is to come out to a place like this. The real twentieth century's here. We've got cars and television and things but in Canada the century's indeterminate.

Ignoring for a moment the style and simplistic tendencies of the argument, it is possible to link its viewpoint with that of writers like Aquin and Vallières. But to

say that is to link Peter with the most politicized (and in some sense, therefore, atypical) of Canadian writers. A different approach to the passage would observe what exposure to Canadian society has done for Peter's own perspective. In exile from a situation to which he has a strong moral reaction, he finds ways of making comparisons that will clarify his relationship with the moral issue; comparison becomes a dominant technical device, then, by which his work communicates its political stance.

As Peter and Clarke are variously aware, the racial situation that stirs such a character as Laura Hunt to seek twentieth century reality in South Africa exists merely to a different degree in Canada itself. The tribulations of Bernice Leach, a West Indian maid in Toronto, in *The Meeting Point*, demonstrate the matter clearly. In some ways more poignant, however, is a scene in Clarke's earlier *The Survivors of the Crossing*, a novel about social and economic inequalities in the Barbados plantation system. In it, a rebellious character named Rufus is disabused of his ideal vision of Canada. A co-worker named Jackson, who had earlier tried to buck the system and been run off the island, has been writing his friends in vivid terms:

> Boysie took the crackling letter from his pocket, cleared his throat five or six times, and began reading it aloud.
> *'Dear Rufus'*, he read, paraphrasing it to suit the temperament of the meeting. *'Life up here in Canada is the same thing as living in Goat-heaven and Kiddy-kingdom.... and if a man is a hustling kind of man, and if any of them fellars what working on the plantation is hustling kinds of men, they could bring home eighty, ninety, even a hundred dollars on pay-day. That is what Canada means. That is advanced, progressive living.'*

But when Rufus, in trouble with the plantation authorities, actually telephones Jackson to announce his wish to emigrate too, Jackson says:

> "You wake me up from sleeping. I vexed as arse. I just come home from washing off cars, and I tired as a dog. Rufus? Rufus? Lis'en to me! I say I tired as a horse. I write you a letter, but I had to write that kind o' letter — But, by the way, you not thinking o' making me pay for this blasted long-distance tellyphone call, eh? 'Cause I is a car-washer, and the money is only eighty cents a' hour! Rufus? You still there? I sorry to paint a technicolour picture o' the place, but, Jesus Christ, man! I couldn't let you know that up here in this country is the same slavery as what I run from back in the island — you understand, Rufus? Rufus?"

The passage carries an emotional authority even if stopped at that point, but Clarke has another purpose in mind as well; he wants not simply to probe the

ways in which a whole class of people is socially enslaved, but also to demonstrate the ambivalent effects of the difference between the reality of a place and the ostensible realities that get marketed to people outside it. He makes his character Boysie pick up the dangling telephone receiver that Rufus has abandoned, therefore, accept matter-of-factly how Rufus has been misled, but in the same breath ask Jackson blandly to send him a Roy Rogers shirt. Though empirical realities are openly articulated, the stereotype somehow lives on in a different compartment of Boysie's mind. The capacity for endurance that that represents mingles with an awareness at the same time of its blind, perhaps obstinate inaccuracy. The laughter that Clarke demands from his reader by the end of the scene is therefore tinged with both fond amusement and savage irony. The combination of humanitarian and reformist principles that guides the author's stance makes his satire gentle towards individuals like Boysie, but with types and institutions and liberal pretension it is concurrently severe. Canada, the pretend-liberal benefactor and absentee landlord in the Caribbean, comes in, therefore, for searing exposure.

Earle Birney's South American poems spell out the extent to which Canadians he observes share in many of the material grossnesses of North American life; characters like the lady monologuist of "Most of a dialogue in Cuzco" participate in all the narrowmindedness of the Oregon truck-driver in "Billboards Build Freedom of Choice". In so far as Madison Avenue has educated Canadian taste, the glimpses of America that one finds in Balachandra Rajan's *Too Long in the West* pertain to Canada too. The satiric tone is dispassionate, however, and though critical, somewhat bemused. Unlike Clarke's characters, Rajan's touring Indian student Nalini manages to adapt successfully to her new environment; though she is unrealistic before she arrives in New York, for example, she does not have to surrender her preconceived illusions because life in New York appears to be so bizarre that she can translate it into her own terms. The result of her initial encounter with the city is one of the book's most splendidly comic scenes:

> She seated herself precisely on a swivelling stool that was designed for someone with fourteen and a half inch hips. She disdained to reach for the menu; she had already read articles about American cuisine and knew what she should order to qualify as a citizen.
>
> 'I'll have Boston clam chowder,' she said, 'and roast stuffed, young Vermont turkey. With golden-brown, melt-in-your-mouth Idaho potatoes. And king-sized, tree-ripened California peaches.'
>
> 'We got chop suey,' the girl said, 'and Swedish meat balls and Swiss steak. But we ain't got none of the fancy stuff you're wanting.'

'Then I'll have a hamburger,' Nalini insisted, doggedly.

'You want it with French fries?'

'I want it,' said Nalini, clenching her pretty teeth, 'with potatoes that taste of American earth, fried in the only way they should be, in butter fresh as a New England welcome. And then I'll have pie like your grandmother used to bake it when America was real and itself.'

'You mean, home fried,' the girl reproved her. 'Why don't you say so instead of letting your hair down? And the pie's ten cents extra with French ice-cream.'

With a sigh of resignation, Nalini settled down to her international repast. When it was over, she took again to the roads of discovery. A tree-ripened smile beckoned to her from the shop window opposite. She walked up and looked cautiously into the face. It belonged to a man with a Louisiana shrimp complexion.

'I want some Palestinian oranges,' Nalini said. She had learned her lesson well. To be truly American one had to be exotic.

'What's wrong with Florida?' the man demanded grimly.

'I'm sorry,' she apologised. 'I've been on the wrong side of the street. I'll take a half-dozen, sun-drenched, passion-kissed tangerines.'

He looked at her approvingly. 'You sure know what's good for you.' He tossed some photogenic fruit into a bag and played an amorous tune on his cash register. 'They're sixty-eight cents a dozen and worth double. Wrapped in cellophane to seal in the goodness. Want anything else, honey? The egg plant today is super-special.'

Her faith in America was restored. Here was a civilisation that grew eggs instead of hatching them. It seemed rather a pointless thing to do, but creative energy in its nature often had to be pointless. . . .

'I'll take two of them," she said.

With Rajan, Clarke, Peter and others we find writers responding both to specific locales and to the idea of North America, the issues and attitudes that North American society represents in their own culture. When the Guyanese novelist Wilson Harris responds to Malcolm Lowry, by contrast, finding in his work

> a drama of living consciousness, a drama within which one responds not only to the overpowering and salient features of the plane of existence . . . but to the essence of life, to the instinctive grains of life which continue striving and working in the imagination for fulfilment, a visionary character of fulfilment,[2]

he is responding not to Canada and the Canadians but to the fictional world that exists within Malcolm Lowry's own books. Harris's range of response is remarkably wide, of course; he finds "daring intimations" of visionary fulfilment

> in the peculiar style and energy of Australian novelists like Patricia White and Hal Porter, a French novelist like Claude Simon, an English/Canadian novelist like

> Malcolm Lowry and an African problematic writer like Tutuola. Lowry's novel *Under the Volcano* is set in Mexico where it achieves a tragic reversal of the material climate of our time, assisted by residual images, landscape as well as the melting pot of history, instinctive to the cultural environment of the Central and South Americas.

Such endeavour imaginatively to discover and distil the patterns that emerge from the "native life and passion" characterizes Harris's own work and incidentally helps give it its challenge. One route into it is through the relationship with other Commonwealth writers to whom Harris has expressed an affinity; in discovering their worlds, they seek their culture's imaginative soul, they seek to transcend the material landscape in order to be enfranchised in the discovery of spiritual illumination. The particulars will vary from society to society; the literary techniques may differ; the purpose of the task and the quality of the response, however, remain essentially the same.

Something of the same symbiotic relationship accounts for the Australian poet A. D. Hope's response to P. K. Page. Page's own reactions to Australia — couched in poems like "Cook's Mountains" or "Bark Drawing", with their evocation of the simple power of private sight — express a characteristically personal reflection of a visited landscape. Hope, by contrast — though equally in character for him — manages to respond to Page herself, and to her language, country, and point-of-view, in such a way as to intellectualize about the nature and function of poetry. The key poem to pay tribute to Page is called "Soledades of the Sun and the Moon", written in 1957 and included in her *Collected Poems*. Its title draws for its metaphor on Page's 1944 novel *The Sun and the Moon*; what Hope does with it is apply it to the difference between the Australian and Canadian sensibilities as exemplified in the work of Page and himself, and to celebrate the meeting of these "solitudes":

> The hemispheres set their crystal walls between. . . .
> Yet, through the burning circles of desire,
> Immortal spirits behold, each in the other:
> His pillar of flame serene,
> She, the unknown somnambulist of her fire.
> . . . . . .
> Only in space, not time, the pattern changes:
> Over your land of memory, enchanted
> Glides the Celestial Swan, and in your bitter
> Darkness the She-Bear shambles round the Pole;
> Anvils of summer, in mine, the iron ranges

Rise from its arid heart to see the haunted
  River of Light unroll
Towards Achernar, where Hermes the transmitter
Of spirits, herald of men and gods, has granted
  Speech between soul and soul,
And each to each the Swan and Phoenix glitter.

The mortal hearts of poets first engender
The parleying of those immortal creatures;
Then from their interchange create unending
Orbits of song and colloquies of light. . . .

Accept the incantation of this verse;
Read its plain words; diving the secret message
By which the dance itself reveals a notion
  That moves our universe.
In the star rising or the lost leaf falling
The life of poetry, this enchanted motion,
  Perpetually recurs.
Take, then, this homage of our craft and calling!

THE FACT THAT we can locate so many points of contact between Canadian and other Commonwealth literatures indicates the possible existence of meaningful parallels between them. There are parallels among topics and ideas; political issues, ethical questions, and problems related to the motivation of human behaviour, for example, all transcend national boundaries. There are parallels that derive from particular literary associations, and from the changing patterns of taste and style. When the contemporary Australian poet Michael Dransfield writes "I'm the ghost haunting an old house, my poems are posthumous",[3] it is impossible not to be reminded of fragments from the second book of bp nichol's *The Martyrology*:

stein did say
the hardest thing is making the present continuous
living day to day
. . . . . .
i want to explain
as composition does
only this present moment

now actually past
. . . . . .
knowing the words are
i am

this moment is
everything present & tense
i write despite my own misgivings
say things as they do occur
the mind moves truly
is it free
nothing's free of presence
others pressing in
your friends assert themselves as loving you are tortured with
gradually you learn to enjoy

thus you write a history

And there are parallels in time; one effect of mass media communication has been to synchronize countries in disparate time zones, to make knowledge of an event anywhere in the world an almost instantaneous occurrence elsewhere. In a looser way, one can see shifts from colonial to national sensibilities occurring with approximate contemporaneity — for the "Old" Commonwealth at the end of the nineteenth century, and for the "New" one in the middle of the twentieth. And one can seek an instructive relationship between the attitudes and concerns of the European-centred societies and those of the Third World with their acknowledgment of radically different traditions. When in separate studies Claude Bissell and John Matthews have examined the "common ancestry" of Canada and Australia, the "problems that were basically similar, even though they often worked out solutions that were startlingly different",[4] they acknowledge the literary perspective one can gain from such comparative study. A familiarity with literary history and with the crosscurrents of literary thought can modify not only our understanding of past accomplishments but also our estimation and interpretation of the present. As the New Zealand poet and critic Kendrick Smithyman puts it somewhat later:

> Aware of our openness to influence [today], we are . . . inclined to think of earlier phases as significantly non-involved or independent. . . . If there was . . . a transcending sense of being a colonial, then it gained strength from direct connection with other colonials, fellows of an expansive, and not just North American, New

> World. If likeness between physical situations was credible, so too were credible likenesses of social situation and social problems, particularly when like aspirations were in play.... Influencing under such conditions was not simply 'being influenced', but an affair of participation, of exchange.... The commonwealth of commonwealth literature has a good deal more to be explored.[5]

It would be dangerous, however, after finding recurrent sensibilities, after noting opportunities for influence and actualities of response, after tracing historical ties and cultural parallels, to assume that the Commonwealth has produced a coherent community of literary artists or to affirm the existence of a single "Commonwealth Literature". The points of contact allow certain overlap; even more strongly — as critics like Matthews, George Whalley, and R. E. Watters[6] have variously noted — they emphasize the extent to which differing environments encourage artists to develop along different lines, to invigorate the English language with their own society's rhythms, images, and connotations, to cast universal humanity into particular social moulds, to draw upon local and specific truths for the concrete realization of their vision.

At best such a process would prove a genuinely creative endeavour, at once documenting the empirical realities of a region and illuminating the recurrent mental, emotional, and spiritual dilemmas of mankind. But the pressure to separate these literary functions is strong, particularly in newer literatures, where, as Balachandra Rajan notes, writer and committed citizen are one and the same, and the temptation exists to devise a work of art that will yield primarily to the social historian. Rajan distinguishes pointedly between such commitment to nationality, or what he calls "the establishing of a collective myth or image", and a concern for identity, "the process of creative self-realization" to which every true artist is necessarily dedicated. He writes:

> A sense of nationality can grow out of the discovery of identity and it is important that this should happen frequently, if one is to establish a tradition that is both distinctive and rooted. But while identities may cohere into a nationality, that emerging myth or image should not be used as a frame within which the artist is obliged to discover himself, or by which the value of his discovery is to be judged.[7]

Professor Carl Klinck alludes to a similar distinction when in his "Introduction" to the *Literary History of Canada*, he distinguishes between "whatever is native, or has been naturalized, or has a direct bearing upon the native" and "a chauvinistic hunt for 'Canadianism' ". The latter, which he rejects, would limit the freedom from national boundaries that art implicitly enjoys; the former, to which his

work has been dedicated, seeks that "studied knowledge of ourselves and of our own ways" without which neither artist nor critic can satisfactorily render the truths of experience.

In noting how individual writers exert their characteristic will upon the influences that bear upon them, we see the process of "creative self-realization" in action. To the extent that they participate in any given culture, they communicate the basic attitudes and assumptions that inform that culture's traditions; to the extent that they commit themselves also to the reality of their private vision, such traditions become transcended, transformed, and re-created in the fabrication of each new work of art. The relation between Canadian and other Commonwealth writing offers us one arena in which to seek that triumph of artistry: finding it is what engages and continually electrifies us as readers of literature.

NOTES

[1] "Ten Years' Sentences," *Canadian Literature*, no. 41 (Summer, 1969), 13.

[2] "Tradition and the West Indian Novel," *Tradition the Writer and Society* (London: New Beacon, 1967), 34.

[3] Quoted in Thomas W. Shapcott, ed., *Australian Poetry Now* (Melbourne: Sun, 1970), 203.

[4] Claude Bissell, "A Common Ancestry: Literature in Australia and Canada," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXV, no. 2 (January 1956), 142; cf. J. P. Matthews, *Tradition in Exile* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1962).

[5] "The Common Experience, the Common Response," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, VI (June 1971), 17-18.

[6] George Whalley, "Celebration and Elegy in New Zealand Verse," *Queens Quarterly*, LXXIV (1967), 738-753; R. E. Watters, "Original Relations," *Canadian Literature*, no. 7 (Winter, 1961), 6-17, and "A Quest for National Identity," *Proceedings of the 3rd Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association* (The Hague: Mouton, 1962), 224-241.

[7] "Identity and Nationality," in John Press, ed., *Commonwealth Literature* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1965), 106.

THE UNITED STATES AT JALNA[1]

J. G. Snell

THE JALNA NOVELS are best known for their evocation of the British ideal in a Canadian setting. The Whiteoaks are the epitome of the British heritage in Canada — haughty, aristocratic, conservative, bound strongly together as a family in a rural homestead of considerable tradition. And yet with English Canadians, loyalty and support for the Empire and for things British have always been paralleled by a rejection of the United States. Recent studies of Canadian imperialist thought have examined in depth the relationships between anti-Americanism and Canadian imperialism.[2] Certainly for Mazo de la Roche the image of the United States played an important role in supporting the pro-British sentiment and life-style so predominant at Jalna.

The period in which the Jalna novels were written (1927-1960) was one of considerable anxiety in Canada regarding the American cultural "take-over" of the Dominion, Royal commissions expressed their concern for the potential loss of Canadian identity and the growing intrusion of American popular culture; movements and journals led by Canadian intellectuals showed similar fears. Even the federal government was moved to action, however moderate: the Aird Commission, the Massey Commission, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board, the Canada Council. In the late twenties and early thirties, when the outlines of Jalna were being created and determined, Canadian attention to such problems was very strong, with a good deal of thrust and vigour to their proposals and actions.[3] At the same time, however, there was an appreciation of American success, prosperity, and well-being that fostered among Canadians some desires for emulation.

ONE PERSON at Jalna, Alayne Archer, symbolizes Americans. Born and raised in New England, she appears in the first novel written in the series as the wife of Eden Whiteoak. Before long she has been seduced by

Renny Whiteoak, and this is followed by her divorce from Eden and marriage to Renny, the family patriarch and the standard of Canadian and Whiteoak against which all other family members must measure themselves. At the same time Alayne is never shorn of her American background. "Though she had spent almost half her life in a British country she was still very conscious of her American roots. She subscribed to the more intellectual of American periodicals. She kept in touch with what was going on in the political scene."[4] The marriage of the representative figures of Canadianism and Americanism is never a real or a rewarding union. They have separate bedrooms; quarrels are frequent; communication is difficult and sometimes impossible; at one point a lengthy separation occurs. In truth Alayne never fits in. She is often at Jalna, but is never a part of it. In *Variable Winds at Jalna*, we read:

> It seemed to Alayne that the long yellow velour curtains at the windows of dining-room and library with which Renny refused to part laughed at her. As they heavily undulated in the warm summer breeze they seemed to say, "We shall hang here when you are gone." In truth she sometimes felt that the very essence of the house was antagonistic to her. . . .

And later:

> "If you [Alayne] are not one of the [Whiteoak] clan after all these years," he [Fitzturgis] said, "can I ever hope to be?"

Alayne never joins with the Whiteoaks fully and never really comes to understand them. Of her two children, one (Adeline) takes after Renny and the other (Archer) resembles Alayne in character and outlook. It is noteworthy that Archer too never seems to feel at home at Jalna.

In not admitting Alayne into the family while retaining her presence throughout the story since the mid-twenties, Mazo de la Roche was clearly manipulating this character in order to demonstrate that there are differences between Canadians and Americans. Language and geography might throw the two peoples together, but beliefs, attitudes, heritage and sentiment would continue to impose barriers between the two countries. While Canada and the United States might live beside one another, they would never truly join together. For although Alayne and Renny do join together in the sense of being married and having children, there is no fundamental union in the realm of spiritual harmony. Whatever attractions exist (and continue to exist) between the two, fundamental and deep-set differences make for very uneasy bed-partners.

Time and again throughout the Jalna series the United States is employed as a symbol of wealth, prosperity and economic success. Alayne personifies this image, particularly in the first novel, *Jalna*. When she first arrives at Jalna, Alayne is accepted (in part, at least) because of her supposed wealth:

> . . . as a matter of fact Meg did not greatly desire the love of Alayne. She rather liked her, though she found her hard to talk to, — 'terribly different,' — and she told her grandmother that Alayne was a 'typical American girl.' "I won't have it," Grandmother had growled, getting red, and Meg had hastened to add, "But she's very agreeable, Gran, and what a blessing it is that she has money!"

When Alayne's aunt arrives at Jalna, the same image is — in *Whiteoak Harvest* — invoked:

> "Just what *is* Miss Archer's position?" asked Ernest. "She looks like a million dollars."
>
> "Well — she owns a very nice house which she has let [said Renny]. But she has had very heavy losses. I didn't inquire into them. You know what Americans are. They cry poverty if they have to do without their accustomed luxuries."
>
> The minds of the uncles were profoundly relieved. They lost no time in letting the rest of the family know that Miss Archer's losses had still left her affluent. There was nothing to fear from her; possibly something to gain.

Canadians generally have a well developed image of the United States as a prosperous, well-to-do region whose inhabitants have a natural ability to make money. In particular Canadians often feel that Americans have a shrewd, almost uncanny sense of a good bargain. Miss de la Roche makes effective use of this image. At one time, in *Variable Winds at Jalna*, Renny was contemplating the purchase of a rather expensive colt, East Wind. He felt that the price was too steep until an American arrived and began to extol the virtues of the animal. Such remarks enhanced the horse's value in Renny's mind, and he quickly purchased the colt. At another time, the Whiteoaks dabbled in the boom mining shares in the 1920's. An American, Mr. Kronk, repeatedly increased the attractiveness of the shares by saying that Americans were "gobbling them up".[5] This same Mr. Kronk represents the standard Canadian image of an American shyster. The entire issue of these Indigo Lake mining shares was false; Kronk managed to swindle a number of Whiteoaks out of many thousands of dollars.

But more generally there is a favourable economic image of the States. The Republic had been a source of wealth and opportunity for Mazo de la Roche and her family, and that country fulfills many of the same functions for the

Whiteoaks. It is a place where one can "exploit" one's abilities to the greatest advantage, as in the case of Eden's writings. Americans set an example to be followed:

> ... Finch sought advice on the subject of the New York stock. Meg and Maurice threw themselves into the discussion of it with enthusiasm. He would be a fool, they said, not to take advantage of such an opportunity. Why should Americans have all the money in the world? And if they had got it, why should they be allowed to keep it? Finch could do no better than to bring some of it here where it was so badly needed. He might become a rich man.[6]

The United States was even looked on favourably as a developer of Canada's resources:

> The dark hand of the waiter taking up the tip pleased him [Ernest], the faces of the other passengers interested. Round-faced, shrewd looking New York business men, some of them. He thought rather ruefully: "Been looking after their interests in Canada, I suppose.... Well, if we haven't the initiative or capital to develop our own country, and if the Mother Country doesn't do it, why, there's nothing for it but to let the Americans undertake it."[7]

De la Roche has thus clearly realized the dichotomy in Canadian economic attitudes towards the American Republic. There is a love-hate relationship. While Canadians worship or envy American success and attempt to emulate their example, they also criticize and mock Yankee acquisitiveness and materialism.

THE UNITED STATES also assumes an image of culture and sophistication in the Jalna novels. American magazines and an American publishing house are the means whereby Eden is able to gain success as a poet. The only new books at Jalna are those sent out to Alayne from her friends in New York City. The United States is frequently pictured as a centre of culture where one is able to appreciate the finer things in life. The Republic is also regarded as being more sophisticated and progressive. On arriving in Manhattan, Eden felt that these "New Yorkers would surely look on him as a Canadian backwoodsman."[8] When another member of the family returns from that city, Meg greets him:

> "To think," she exclaimed, "that you have been in New York since I saw you last!" She regarded him as if she expected to find something exotic in him. "What you must have seen!"[9]

One is left with a decided impression of Canadian feelings of inferiority.

Yet at the same time the author has captured the prejudice that Canadians feel quite deeply towards America. The Whiteoaks frequently lash out at Americans.

> "Prejudices," put in Philip.
> "Very well. Prejudices. Prejudice against making a fetish of material progress — against all the hurry-scurry after money that goes on in the big American cities. They [our settler ancestors] wanted to lead contented peaceful lives and teach their children to fear God, honour the Queen, fight for her if necessary. In short, behave like gentlemen." [said Admiral Lacey][10]

And:

> "What Adeline should have been doing in these past months," said Alayne, "is to have gone to a university. I very much wanted to enter her at Smith, as you know."
> "Never heard of it," declared Nicholas. "Where is it?"
> . . .
> "It is the most notable women's college on the continent," she returned.
> "Never heard of it," he persisted, and emptied his teacup with audible gusto.
> . . .
> "I myself am a graduate of Smith College." Alayne spoke with a little asperity.
> "Ha," returned the old man. "That accounts for the only fault you have."
> Alayne looked enquiringly at him.
> "An air of superiority, my dear."[11]

The materialistic and aggressive nature of American society is frequently noted. Says Ernest: "What is there for you in New York? Crowds, crowds, crowds. Struggle, struggle. You, a Whiteoak, struggling in a foreign mob! Uncongenial work. Homesickness. . . ."[12] American society is represented as matriarchal; husbands are pictured as unmanly and submissive. In reference to Alayne, we read:

> "It is all the fault of that American woman," explained Meg. "She is utterly selfish. She is ruining my brother's life with her lack of understanding."
> "They are incompatible. That is all there is to it," added Piers.
> . . . "She is a very subtle woman," said Meg. "And a very determined one. She intends to stay away until Renny is thoroughly upset. She intends to frighten him. Then when his spirit is broken, she will come back to Jalna. She is determined to make an American husband of him."[13]

Such a well developed image of American marriage serves as a decided contrast to Jalna (certainly after Gran's death, and in some respects before) where the male dominates and controls developments.

THE OUTLINES of the American image had already been well defined by the series as a whole when *Morning at Jalna* was published in 1960. Although it was the final novel written in the Jalna series, it was situated in a very early time period. The American Civil War provides the setting for a weak plot involving Southern agents in Canada, Confederate schemes and a raid against the North, black slaves, and some Southern guests at the Whiteoak homestead. Many of the major characters of the Jalna series are, of course, absent, notably Alayne and Renny and their generation. And yet one is struck by the continuity of themes presented by Mazo de la Roche in her image of the United States. Here in this final work the symbol of the American Republic is most fully developed.

Lucy and Curtis Sinclair have been invited to stay at Jalna by their friends, the Whiteoaks, until the War ends. The Sinclair home in Southern Carolina has been ruined and their plantation destroyed. The novel clearly attempts (and not too successfully) to evoke some sympathy for these Southerners and to encourage antipathy towards the North. In the immediate context of the War, Yankee devastation of Confederate areas is emphasized; Northern forces have brought with them ruin, property destruction, looting, and rape. Southern plans to raid Union shipping on the Great Lakes are commended:

> Adeline [i.e., Gran] threw herself on her plump down pillows, her body quivering with excitement.
> "What a glorious revenge!" she said.
> "By Jove," he [Philip] said, "you have a wicked grin."
> "I feel wicked when I think of those despicable Yankees."

Destruction and killing by Confederate forces was only fair, given the actions of the North.

The Whiteoaks' guests are representative figures of that familiar stereotype, the Cavalier society of the South.[14] Both are well educated, cultured, and refined. Curtis Sinclair had been educated in France, while Lucy had studied music in Europe. Curtis was a Southern gentleman, "a figure of dignity. An arresting figure", and dressed "in the height of fashion".

> Outwardly he was as tranquil, as charming as a Southern gentleman should be.
> "Ah, what a manner that man has!" Adeline exclaimed to Philip.

Lucy Sinclair was "an exotic type", elegant, and dressed in Paris gowns purchased on a visit to France before the War. The Sinclairs have roots, tradition, a family

heritage. Just before their arrival, Adeline is portrayed as being very concerned that the well-to-do, sophisticated Sinclairs will disapprove of the lack of "real elegance", of servants, and of entertainment at Jalna; she wishes that there were an entire suite of rooms for such visitors, rather than "a paltry bedroom and a cubby-hole for Mrs. Sinclair's maid." The Whiteoaks go out of their way to accommodate the Sinclairs. The children are sent away for several days to provide the Southerners with peace and quiet. Adeline and Philip "dress" for dinner and "put our best foot foremost" to impress their guests.

Even the question of slavery is dealt with sympathetically. At various times we are informed that the Sinclairs own a large plantation with one hundred slaves, and then "great plantations and hundreds of slaves"; Curtis' father has several large estates and seven hundred slaves. And yet the Sinclairs hate slavery, according to the Whiteoaks. The blacks are retained in bondage because they are dependent on their white owners; the slaves are happy and contented; even after being freed, the blacks do not drift away, but rather remain on the estates to be clothed and fed.

In contrast to this favourable image of the Cavalier South (which the reader well knows has been destroyed by the defeat of the South in the War), the Yankee is also introduced into the plot. The Northern soldier, as already mentioned, is portrayed in negative terms. The Lincolns are uncouth and "know nothing of good manners". Yankees are aggressive and commercially grasping; it was their greed which first introduced slavery into the South. Curtis Sinclair declares:

> They're the people who have made money and are still making it. They sold the slaves to us in the first place.

Later in the story, Mazo de la Roche briefly introduces a New England merchant, Mr. Tilford. The stereotype is finely drawn. He "was a shrewd business man — still youngish, with a future far from dark ahead of him" and through relatives had prospered in the cotton trade with England. Tilford is a rich, clever, knowledgeable, unemotional, hard-headed, able, firm New England entrepreneur in the typical Yankee mould.

YET THESE CONTRASTING IMAGES of Cavalier and Yankee create in the reader some nagging uncertainties. There is evoked no simple commitment to the cause of the South. The Sinclairs are not entirely likeable. Curtis is physically deformed, a hunchback, and this characteristic seems to play no

important role in the story except to raise certain emotions in the reader. Slightly repulsive physically, Mr. Sinclair presents a somewhat ludicrous picture of a Confederate warrior riding off to mortal combat with the foe. This element of burlesque is underlined when the raid itself, after considerable planning and subterfuge, is thwarted with ease. The Sinclairs do not like children, a characteristic almost guaranteed to cause at least partial alienation of the reader and certainly presenting a contrast with the Whiteoaks. The slaves are ill-treated by their owners; the servants brought to Jalna are poorly clothed, but Sinclair does not care. After all the talk of Northern destruction and ruin of the Confederacy, the Sinclairs remain wealthy. In describing conditions in the South at the end of the War, Adeline declares:

> Ruin, James, ruin. But Curtis Sinclair has bought a fine house in Charleston, or what is left of Charleston. They beg us to visit them when conditions are more favourable.

At the end of the novel, the Sinclairs suddenly reappear on a ship bound for England. They are affluent, have enough money for a business holiday in Britain in good style, and are making excellent profits from the cotton trade. American "know-how" and commercial ability is stronger even than the Cavalier image of the South, and this idea appears elsewhere as well. All of these elements combine to moderate considerably any compassion one may have for the Confederate States.

While the North, then, has a decidedly negative image, the representations of the South are certainly ambivalent. This ambivalence is found also amongst Canadians in *Morning at Jalna*. While the Whiteoaks are clearly sympathetic to the South and opposed to the North, contrasting attitudes appear very early in the book. Two neighbouring families are strongly "on the side of the Yankees". The Busbys consider Lincoln to be "a splendid man"; they pray daily for the President and for their son who has joined the Northern Army. So opposed to slavery (and this is the determining issue) is this family of U.E.L. descent that they refuse to enter Jalna while the Southerners are there, and the Busbys succeed in discovering and foiling the plans for a raid. And yet even Elihu Busby has mixed feelings.

On the other hand, the Whiteoaks, the Laceys, James Wilmott, and Lucius Madigan are all opposed to the North. No wonder that young Nicholas asserts:

> If I were grown I shouldn't mind going to that war. The trouble is I shouldn't

know which side to fight on. Our friends are all for the North, but our mother and father and you [Madigan] are for the South.

Despite the North's opposition to slavery, the Canadians at Jalna (who also disliked slavery) in this novel sympathized with the Confederates for two major reasons. First, the South had a social structure and a civilization which was admired. This has already been indicated in the images of the Sinclairs, but it is also found in the depiction of the South itself. "How I should love to see Richmond!" proclaimed Adeline. "The very name captivates me. It's so romantic, so civilized, while here we are in the wilds." Second, the Confederate States were the victims of Northern aggression. The War was being fought, Augusta informed little Ernest, because the Yankees would not allow the Southerners to keep their slaves in peace. Southern agents were planning raids because they "don't want to see our [their] country swallowed up by the Yankees." This was something with which the Whiteoaks and their friends could empathize; it could happen to British North America.

"Before many years" — Madigan spoke sombrely — "this country will be taken by the Americans."

"We have the North Pole," said Ernest. "The Americans can't take that from us."

"Wait and see," said Madigan.

THERE ARE thus a number of constant elements to the symbol of the United States and Americans in the Jalna novels.[15] The culture and sophistication of the Republic (or the South) is there; all Americans seem to possess the economic ability, acquisitiveness, and wealth of the Yankee. But most important, the United States and Canada are different, even in conflict. Americans are aggressive, self-confident, and sometimes even "cocky". The Republic and its people are a threat to the inhabitants of the Dominion. Physical seizure, cultural and economic take-over, the changing way of life in the Twentieth Century (represented in part by noisy, disharmonious — but vibrant — big city life in Manhattan) — all of these represent important threats to the way of life at Jalna/Canada.

The image of the United States at Jalna acts as an effective counterpoise to the British-Canadian environment which predominates the rural and family setting in the novels. American characteristics and trends are used as a means of

emphasizing by contrast the British aspects of the Whiteoaks. But more than this, the attitudes of rural Ontario towards the United States are portrayed as a means of revealing more fully the kind of people — the kind of British Canadians — the Whiteoaks are. Attitudes towards the United States have always been an important element within Canadian thought, and Miss de la Roche has effectively caught the general thrust of Canadian images of the Republic. The animosity, the prejudice, the criticism, the envy, the emulation, and the respect are all captured in the representation of the Whiteoaks. The Jalna novels are an interesting and valuable reflection of one author's assessment (however idealized) of the nature of the English-Canadian environment in the first half of the twentieth century.

NOTES

[1] I would like to acknowledge the very helpful comments of my colleague, Professor D. M. Daymond, on earlier drafts of this article.

[2] Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto, 1970); Norman Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism, 1896-1899* (Toronto, 1965).

[3] See for example: A. MacMechan, "Canada as a Vasal State," *Canadian Historical Review*, I, 4 (December 1920), pp. 347-353; P. E. Corbett, "Anti-Americanism," *Dalhousie Review*, X, 3 (Autumn, 1930), pp. 295-300; "American Influences in the Dominion," *Round Table*, 43 (June 1921), pp. 671-675; J. E. O'Brien, "A History of the Canadian Radio League, 1930-1936," Ph.D. thesis, University of Southern California, 1964; J. C. Weaver, "Canadians Confront American Mass Culture, 1918-1930," unpublished paper delivered to the Canadian Historical Association annual meeting at Montreal, 1972.

[4] Mazo de la Roche, *Renny's Daughter* (London, 1953), pp. 5-6.

[5] Mazo de la Roche, *Whiteoak Brothers: Jalna — 1923* (Toronto, 1953), pp. 54, 83, 160, 162.

[6] Mazo de la Roche, *Finch's Fortune* (London, 1931), p. 92.

[7] Mazo de la Roche, *Whiteoaks of Jalna* (Toronto, 1929), p. 144.

[8] *Jalna*, p. 103.

[9] *Whiteoaks of Jalna*, p. 192.

[11] Mazo de la Roche, *Mary Wakefield* (Toronto, 1949), p. 54.

[11] *Renny's Daughter*, pp. 5-6.

[12] *Whiteoaks of Jalna*, p. 156.

[13] *Finch's Fortune*, p. 318.

[14] For an excellent analysis of this image in American literature see W. R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: The Old South and American National Character* (London, 1963).

[15] Some of these elements are also found in De la Roche's other works. See, for example, *The Two Saplings* (1942) and *The Return of the Emigrant* (1928).

BELL ISLAND BALLADS

Peter Neary

In 1895 large scale mining of iron ore was started at Bell Island, Conception Bay, Newfoundland. This mining venture, which in time became an important element in the development of an integrated iron and steel industry in the Atlantic region of Canada, lasted until 1966, when the sudden closure of the last of the mines (on one month's notice from the Company, Dominion Wabana Ore Limited, a subsidiary of Hawker Siddeley Canada Ltd.), deprived a community which had numbered 12,281 in 1961 of its sole means of support. This in turn precipitated one of the greatest single industrial catastrophes in Canadian history — a catastrophe for which neither the federal nor provincial government was prepared.

The ballads which follow were collected on Bell Island during the autumn and winter of 1972-73. My purpose in making this effort was to look for evidence in the popular culture of the Island which would reveal how ordinary Newfoundlanders had reacted towards industrial labour and life in company towns when these had first intruded into their traditional outport and mercantile world around the turn of the century. The ballad tradition of the island of Newfoundland and Labrador seemed an obvious place to look for information of this kind because it has clearly been carried over from the pre-industrial to the industrial Newfoundland world.

The best known ballad of the relevant genre is "The Badger Drive", which was written by John V. Devine around 1915 and which describes the life of loggers working for the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company, Newfoundland's first pulp and paper manufacturing concern. It bears many resemblances to the two songs presented here. All three celebrate the courage, fortitude and skill of the working man. In "The Badger Drive" the point is very explicit: "There is one class of men in this country that never is mentioned in song/But now that their trade is advancing they'll come out on top before long/They say that our sailors have danger and likewise our warriors bold/But there's none know the life

of a driver what he suffers in hardship and cold/With their pike poles and peavies and batteaux and all/And it's hard to get over their time." In the first of the Bell Island songs — "Wabana You're a Corker"[1] — the miner is characterized as someone who "must be more than brave". There was among the Newfoundland working class a great solidarity and a great pride but these were not such, as the checkered history of unionism on Bell Island suggests, as to make straight the path of working class organization in the new industrial world. The reasons why these very attractive Newfoundland attributes could not easily be mobilized by union organizers let alone by political reformers are also hinted at in the "Badger Drive" and the two Bell Island songs. All three point to a deeply entrenched acceptance of the efficacy of social and industrial hierarchy and a profound sense of deference among Newfoundland working people. "The Badger Drive" and the two songs printed below also suggest that there were many Newfoundlanders who welcomed enthusiastically the foreign entrepreneurs who sought to use the resources of their land; in contemporary economic nationalist terms they were full of "false consciousness". The frequent references to time in the ballad "Wabana You're a Corker" are also significant. As has been the case in many other pre-industrial societies, Newfoundlanders did not adjust very readily to the time discipline required by industrial work; significantly in 1925 there was a wildcat strike on Bell Island when the Company first tried to introduce a punch clock system. All these elements — the acceptance of social and industrial hierarchy; the sense of deference; and the enthusiasm for the new resource ventures — are made quite explicit in the last verse of "The Badger Drive": "So now to conclude and to finish, I hope that ye all will agree/In wishing success to all Badger and the A.N.D. Company/And long may they live for to flourish, and continue to chop drive and roll/And long may the business be managed by Mr. Dorothy and Mr. Cole." The song "The Eighteenth of April" from Bell Island is less explicit about this but the idea is there nevertheless: "It's for Bobby Chambers, he's the boss of the mine/He planned out the trestle and then the main line/He planned out the main line that runs east and west/And everything runs in his mine for the best." All of this is a reminder of the danger of projecting into the past and particularly on to the working class the contemporary disdain for the "corporate ripoff" of Canadian resources. The Newfoundland workingman offered little resistance to the activities of foreign entrepreneurs. Like the French Canadians who erected in the centre of the town of Baie Comeau a statue of Colonel Robert McCormick (1880-1955) of the Chicago *Tribune*, dressed in the costume of a voyageur and seated in a canoe, Newfoundlanders showed themselves very willing

indeed to be made over into an industrial proletariat. Nor was the point of their potential lost on the developers. In 1910 an English visitor to Grand Falls, the centre of the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company's operations and a town remarkably like Baie Comeau, gave this account of the Newfoundland working man:

> The workers at the Grand Falls factory, though the great majority are natives, are described by the superintendent as being as various of language as though they came straight from the construction of the Tower of Babel. But he hopes to have them practically all natives soon. The love of the sea and the fishing, however, is in the blood of the native folk, and they are apt to obey its call and get down to their fishing work again after a spell of this up-country labour. Still, it is thought that they will soon be broken of this, will realize the advantage of the good houses in which they are placed at the Falls, and the blessing of a constant employment and a steady wage. Lord Northcliffe, in his liberal, long-sighted way, does all that can be imagined to make their life agreeable. He has made a present of a gramophone to each of the more important houses — we are not informed of the effect, if all are set going with a different "record" in each, at the same moment — and has sent them out a large assortment of instruments of music, with a view to the institution of a town band. For lack of a bandmaster, it appears that a certain discord rather than the desired harmony, is the immediate result, but no doubt this will mend itself. And there is a cricket ground of sorts; so what more have they to wish for? Speaking in all seriousness, life seems as good as can be expected for these workers at the Falls, and in a short while they will, no doubt, realize all its goodness.[2]

The ballads which follow, and to which this note is intended to serve as an introduction, were collected on Bell Island in November 1972, and February 1973. John Fred Squires, who sang the ballads for the author, was born at Broad Cove on November 25, 1883. His parents died when he was very young and he was "raised up"[3] at Natick, Massachusetts, by two of his sisters. He returned to Newfoundland in 1910 and began work on Bell Island. In typical Newfoundland fashion he was unwilling "to tie [himself] up to one job all the time". He wanted "to try it all". Accordingly, he "worked on every job was on this Island". He loaded ore, laid rail, drilled, blasted, and repaired. He worked both on the "surface" and "underground". He also managed to keep a small farm. In short he is a fine example of a "knock about" Newfoundlander — the best that his island home has produced. The ballads he remembers date from the early years of the mining venture. Mr. Squires thinks that "The Eighteenth of April" is the older of the two; "Wabana You're a Corker" was written around 1910, mainly by his friend

Mike Hibbs, a "surface man" from Portugal Cove. The very existence of these songs is evidence of the successful transfer of an outport tradition to the industrial world. But the ballads are important too for the clues they give to the attitudes of ordinary Newfoundlanders to their new working environment. They form part of a small group of ballads that hold up this mirror for the historian to the beginnings of "the new Newfoundland". The songs remembered by Mr. Squires exhibit the infectious enthusiasm of the first fine careless moment, long before the more sombre side of the new life had become fully apparent — when Wabana was a corker in a real rather than an ironic sense.

Wabana You're A Corker[4]

Ye men that works down in this cave,
Your courage must be more than brave,
To work a mine beneath the wave,
Wabana you're a corker.

With your oil flash strapped up to your side,
And on your back a miner's pride,
And bold John Davis[5] for your guide,
Wabana you're a corker.

Down in those dark and weary deeps,
Where the drills do hum and the rats do squeak,
Day after day, week after week.
Wabana you're a corker.

The boss will show you to your room,
With a lighted lamp will show a gloom,
And perhaps those walls will be your tomb,
Wabana you're a corker.

John Fred Squires[6] repairs the drills,
When he gets them ready, he'll send them in,
If she don't work now she never will,
Wabana you're a corker.

The driller he jacks up his bar,
Between the rib and a loaded car,
Where all those miss exploders are,
Wabana you're a corker.

Come now boys and look alive,
Another pair of slices drive,
And don't come up 'till half past five,
Wabana you're a corker.

When you comes up by the drain,
Who will you meet but that McLean,[7]
Saying, "I will cut your time again",
Wabana you're a corker.

I asked old Alfred[8] for my time,
I knowed he couldn't write a line,
And Lockey[9] was down in the mine,
Wabana you're a corker.

All the women on Bell Isle,
They sleeps in bed 'til half past nine,
And light's their fire with the batcher's[10] oil,
Wabana you're a corker.

All the women joins a club,
To feed their pigs on the batcher's grub.
They feeds them in a ten pound tub,
Wabana you're a corker.

With one hello and a simple knock,
Get up old cook it's six o'clock,
The water wagon is around the block,
Wabana you're a corker.

If you're living on the Green,
Every morning you'll get beans,
And at supper time again its beans,
Wabana you're a corker.

The Eighteenth of April[11]

The eighteenth of April, being the date of the year,
We jumped in our small boats, for Bell Island did steer,
To land on the island we were all inclined
Take our picks and our shovels, go to work in the mine.

It's for Bobby Chambers,[12] he's the boss of the mine,
He planned out the trestle and then the main line,[13]
He planned out the main line that runs east and west,
And everything ran in his mine for the best.

It's for Davey Fraser,[14] he's boss on the pier,
And likewise young William is a chief engineer,
For doing up steamwork or anything wrong,
Stop a leak in a boiler, it won't take him long.

It's for Billy Nurse,[15] he's a fine looking man,
Comes down in the pit[16] with the book in his hand,
He'll ask you your number, he'll take down your time,
He will give you every hour that you work in the mine.

It's for Jabez Butler,[17] he's working up West,
He takes all the new cars away from the rest,
He fills them with ore, he fills them up there,
Grips them on the main line, sends them out to the pier.

The cars from the east'ard they comes very slow,
The cars from the west'ard like hell they do go,
They're took from the donkey,[18] oh isn't that fine,
Takes 'em out on the switch, and grips them to the main line.

It's for Billy Sutherland,[19] he's a sturgy old block,
He haves Charlie Carter[20] by night on the rock,
And likewise young William looking after the ore,
And if you lets a car off he'll dump you for sure.

NOTES

[1] The name Wabana came into existence after the mining operation began. It was not legally defined until 1950 but in general was taken to mean the area of the Island around the mining operation. E. R. Seary gives the following information on the name in *Place Names of the Avalon Peninsula of the Island of Newfoundland* (Toronto, 1971), 26: "Wabana, on Bell Island ... which is almost the most easterly land in the American continent, was imposed about 1895 by Thomas Cantley, an official of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company, which had secured a lease of the iron deposits on the island in 1893. WABANA seems to be an arbitrary formation from an Abnaki word *Wâbuna'ki*, from *wâbun*, a term associated with 'light', 'white', and refers to the morning and the east; *a'ki* 'earth', 'land'; hence *wâbuna'ki* is an inanimate singular term signifying 'east-land', or 'morning-land', the elements referring to animate dwellers of the east being wanting." Professor Seary's reference is to *The Daily News*, St. John's, January -6, 1962.

[2] Horace G. Hutchinson, *A Saga of the "Sunbeam"* (London, 1911), 119-20.

[3] Mr. Squires' words are from my tape-recorded conversations with him.

[4] The song was communal in origin and was, according to Mr. Squires, composed over a period of time, with many voices contributing to the final product. Mike Hibbs was not, therefore, an author in the conventional sense but the central figure in a communal process. The version of the ballad given here is a composite of two renditions by Mr. Squires — one given in November 1972, and the other in February 1973. A "corker" in Newfoundland is someone or something enjoying a heady success.

[5] John Davis was from Harbour Grace and had worked at the seal fishery. On Bell Island he was "head kicker" (foreman) in the Scotia No. 2 mine (Squires interview, February 12, 1973).

[6] The singer of the ballad.

[7] Lockey McLean was from Nova Scotia and was "boss man" with the Scotia Company (Squires interview, February 12, 1973).

[8] Alfred George was from Harbour Grace and worked on Bell Island as a "surface man", i.e. one who worked for the mining companies above ground (Squires interview, February 12, 1973).

[9] Lockey McLean.

[10] Batcher's were "mainlandsmen", i.e. men from elsewhere in Newfoundland, who boarded in company owned houses with resident families. They were expected to provide part of the family provisions.

[11] This song apparently has no formal title. The title given here is taken from the first stanza.

[12] Bobby Chambers was from Nova Scotia and was "head man" for the Scotia Company. The Scotia No. 1 area was often referred to as Chamber's No. 1 in his honour (Squires interview, February 12, 1973).

[13] For a long time ore was carried from the 'Back' of the Island to the piers at the 'Front' in open cars over a narrow gauge railway, which was known as "the main line".

[14] Davey Fraser was from Nova Scotia. He worked around the piers, on the deckheads and for a time ran the company staff house (Squires interview, February 12, 1973). The deckhead stood at the mine entrance and housed the machinery controlling its main transportation system. After passing over the deckhead the ore went through a refining process before being hauled across the Island to the loading piers.

[15] Billy Nurse was from Nova Scotia and was a timekeeper (Squires interview, February 19, 1973).

[16] A generalized name for the mines.

[17] Jabez Butler of Clarke's Beach, Conception Bay, was a policeman who "threw it up" to work on Bell Island (Squires interview, February 12, 1973).

[18] A small engine that hoisted cars from the surface pits and onto "the main line" (Squires interview, February 19, 1973).

[19] Billy Sutherland was from Nova Scotia. He was "foreman by night" with the Scotia Company (Squires interview, February 19, 1973).

[20] Charlie Carter was from Topsail, Conception Bay. He worked as a "rock picker by night" (Squires interview, February 19, 1973).

WHITEOAK CHRONICLES

A Reassessment

Douglas M. Daymond

DOROTHY LIVESAY recently suggested that "the time has come when we must cease being literary snobs in Canada and look seriously at the work of our popular writers."[1] Among those writers whose worth has been obscured by false myths is Mazo de la Roche, a writer who produced a substantial and significant body of work which achieved international recognition and admiration and yet has almost invariably been dismissed as a popular writer of romances. Since 1950, several writers[2] have expressed the belief that a reappraisal of de la Roche is needed; however, most recent studies have failed to provide a serious examination of her writing. Ronald Hambleton's fragmented and occasionally inaccurate biography[3] largely ignores her literary significance and George Hendrick's study is patronizing and superficial.[4] Repeatedly, critics have displayed an unwillingness to examine de la Roche's writing with the care that it merits. This present study is an attempt to clarify the structure, range and central themes of the *Whiteoak Chronicles*, the series to which de la Roche gave — as she said — "the sustained work of a lifetime."[5]

BETWEEN 1925 AND 1960, Mazo de la Roche wrote sixteen novels which describe the history of the Whiteoak family from 1852 until 1954. At the time of her death, she had begun work on a seventeenth. These chronicles, her best known work, represent a significant imaginative achievement, for, within the limitations involved in writing sixteen novels which deal essentially with one family in one setting, she displays considerable inventiveness.

The principal setting for the Whiteoak series is the Jalna estate and a limited surrounding area, although many of the novels include events which occur in New York, Ireland or England. In general, the chronicle of the Whiteoaks is coherent and consistent in its framework, chronology, characterization and themes,

despite the fact that the various instalments were not written in chronological order. After *Jalna*, nine novels carry the Whiteoak history forward until 1954, while the remaining six move back in time to deal with earlier events in the history of the family. The three novels which followed *Jalna* proceed in a direct chronological fashion through events which culminate in the death of Adeline (*Whiteoaks of Jalna*, 1929), Finch's inheritance (*Finch's Fortune*, 1931), and Renny's affair with Clara Lebraux (*The Master of Jalna*, 1933). With one exception, the following twelve, published between 1935 and 1961, alternate between the history of the family before *Jalna* (1851-1924) and the events which follow *The Master of Jalna*. The six novels which return to the past do so in no clearly organized pattern. Of these, the initial three, *Young Renny* (1935), *Whiteoak Heritage* (1940), and *The Building of Jalna* (1944), move progressively further into the past until the earliest events, which are outlined in the second chapter of *Jalna*, have been expanded. The next two, *Mary Wakefield* (1949) and *Whiteoak Brothers* (1953), move forward to describe events just prior to those dealt with in *Jalna*. The final novel in the Jalna series, *Morning at Jalna* (1960), is actually the second in terms of the history of the Whiteoak family.

Throughout the Whiteoak chronicles a number of motifs, scenes, and plot patterns are repeated, often with little variation. Skating and swimming parties; flirtations; family squabbles; precocious children; violent quarrels; the family church; arrivals and departures of family members or outsiders; characters who receive legacies; characters who long for experience, adventure, or power, or who feel stifled and seek a freer life in a new country; characters who are secret observers of erotic scenes or refugees from repressive domestic situations; secret trysts in primeval groves, on Jalna's rustic bridge, beside flowing streams, or along the lakeshore; extra-marital intrigue; incestuous and homosexual relations; passionate encounters and husky voiced conversations; romantic love; violence; loyalty to the family — these are staple ingredients of the Jalna world. Likewise, natural descriptions and descriptions of family history, household pets and the numerous Whiteoak horses occupy considerable space in each novel. Sudden and almost inexplicable shifts in characters' attitudes combine with the most remarkable coincidences to produce plots which occasionally make inordinate demands on the reader's willingness to suspend belief.

In surveying the Jalna novels, one may object to the repetition, the formulaic quality of some of the plotting, the lack of variety in style, the illogical resolution of emotional situations, the melodramatic tone of many of the conflicts, the sentimentality, the contrived and sometimes poorly integrated plots, the lengthy

debates over domestic trivialities and the awkward soliloquies and purple narration. Despite these objections, the extent of the Whiteoak history and the gradual expansion of that history without sacrificing unity and continuity; the creation of a large cast of clearly delineated characters; the humour, irony and sympathy with which these figures are most often viewed by their creators; the wealth of fine descriptions of flowers, animals and the changing seasons; the subtle blending of experience and imagination which is apparent in characterization and incident; the expression of a deeply felt concern for the decline of an era; the sharp definition of scene and background; the careful balancing of characters and intertwining of events; the sense of the close relationship between the human and the natural; and the successful expression of sincere feeling for individual freedom and tradition, represent a considerable achievement and therefore the chronicle merits attention, both as an extensive single work on an imaginery family and as individual novels which reveal the preoccupations of de la Roche and her readers.

The central and unifying themes of the Whiteoak chronicles are individual freedom on the one hand and tradition and order on the other. The chronicles consistently illustrate de la Roche's fascination with instinctive activity, vitality and rebellion as well as her devotion to tradition and to the family as an institution which provides stability and order. In the Whiteoak world, tradition resists change, and instinct challenges intellect. Characters regularly act or speak "passionately," "intensely," "truculently," "emotionally," "eagerly," "vehemently," and "suddenly." Yet, despite the disruptive results of instinctive and spontaneous behaviour, which often leads to infidelity, divorce and illegitimate children and threatens the fabric of family unity, life at Jalna remains fundamentally unchanged in the midst of a rapidly altering world.

Lovat Dickson, one of de la Roche's closest friends and her editor for many years, recently described the Jalna series as a single large house which began with *Jalna* and proceeded to grow as additional rooms were added to create an architecturally balanced and complete structure.[6] The original house, the additions and the complete whole reveal the architect's persistent concern for a design which would emphasize individual freedom and tradition, the most prominent themes of the Whiteoak chronicles. Thus *Jalna* (1927), *The Whiteoaks of Jalna* (1929), *Finch's Fortune* (1931) and *The Master of Jalna* (1933), the four novels which represent the core of the saga define the family and estate in terms of the conflict between freedom and tradition. This same conflict is apparent in varying degrees within each of the Whiteoak novels and in the larger contrast between the first

six and the last six instalments in the Whiteoak history. The initial six novels emphasize individual freedom; the final six novels stress the importance of tradition. To a large extent, the international success of these novels can be attributed to this design. De la Roche's popularity suggests not only the conservatism of her readers but also their longing for freedom. The Whiteoak novels satisfied the desire for personal freedom within the framework of traditional living; they offered both escape and reassurance. In a limited sense they embodied central ingredients of an entire culture, and to this extent de la Roche can be regarded as one who transformed social history into mythology.

JALNA (1927), *The Whiteoaks of Jalna* (1929), *Finch's Fortune* (1931) and *The Master of Jalna* (1933) carry the history of the Whiteoaks from 1924 to 1933. *Jalna* and *Whiteoaks* are among the most successful of de la Roche's novels; *Finch's Fortune* and *The Master of Jalna* are much less satisfying and seem to falter as a result of Adeline's absence and de la Roche's involvement with Finch Whiteoak. Nevertheless, in these earliest ventures into the Whiteoak world, the sources of de la Roche's original interest in the Jalna novels can be identified. On the foundation of these four novels, and, in particular, *Jalna* and *Whiteoaks of Jalna*, de la Roche was to erect the one-hundred year history of the Whiteoak family.

Jalna is a striking and original manifestation of de la Roche's desire to experience freedom and stability, to create an environment in which these contradictory and divisive values could co-exist creatively though not always harmoniously, and to demonstrate that stability could be achieved without repression and that independence need not lead to disorder and disintegration. Like the romance-novel form in which the Whiteoak series is written, *Jalna* and *Whiteoaks of Jalna* represent and reflect an unresolved tension between contradictory elements.

Jalna presents a family of independent and spontaneous individuals who share in a life characterized by continuity and disorder. The family of the estate, with its history and associated traditions, provide a sense of symmetry, continuity and stability despite the spontaneous and independent actions of individual family members. The course of life and love at Jalna is far from stable; nevertheless, though irrational behaviour intervenes to cause dissension, disruptions and, occasionally, violence, the family remains essentially intact. The family is torn by large and small, real and imagined conflicts and animosities. Still, despite Eden's hurried departure, the conclusion is far from bleak or pessimistic. The reunion of

Pheasant and Piers, the marriage of Meg and Maurice, and the dance which joins the Whiteoaks in a celebration of Adeline's centenary confirm the resiliency of the Whiteoak family and its ability to withstand the shocks and pressure which are the inevitable concomitants of their free and impulsive way of life.

Although the central figure of *Whiteoaks of Jalna* is clearly Finch, the novel also seeks to define the uniqueness of the entire Whiteoak clan. It attempts to clarify the pattern of life at Jalna and the essential characteristic of the family who live there — the "extravagant and wasteful energy of their emotion," their lack of reticence, the "solid wall they presented to the world", "the closely woven, harsh fabric" of their relationships with one another, their warmth, their sense of a common past, their empathy with animals, their "extreme devotion as a family", their negligence, variability and greed, their tendency to be a law unto themselves, their selfishness and selflessness: "They raised Cain and then they took hands and danced in a circle around the Cain they had raised. They sowed the wind and reaped the whirlwind, but they wanted no outside labour to help garner that harvest." The Whiteoaks represent the blend of tradition and individuality which de la Roche felt was crucial for survival in a rapidly changing world.

The Whiteoaks recognize the importance of both individual freedom and tradition and endorse these contradictory values while remaining vital, creative and free of irresolution and frustration. In the Whiteoak chronicles the tension between individual freedom and tradition remains but it is presented as a source of strength and energy. Not surprisingly, few outsiders find it an easy task to become assimilated into the way of life at Jalna. Too often they lack the necessary sympathy for a combination of the spirit of individualism and the spirit of conservatism, and as a result they find the Whiteoaks too traditional or too willing to abandon traditional ways of thinking and behaving.

Jalna is a garrison but not the usual garrison associated with Canadian literature and described by Northrop Frye and Douglas Jones as a response to the threat posed by the irrational energy of the land. Jalna is an embodiment of "nature and culture"; it incorporates both "the world of appearances and the world of spontaneous feeling."[7] The posture of Jalna and the Whiteoaks is defensive but the threat is associated neither with the anarchic individualism of the Whiteoaks nor with the pressure exerted by their wish that the traditions of the past be allowed to flow into the present. They are threatened by the changes accompanying the development of technology and the growth of the modern world. De la Roche's feeling that these changes would destroy individualism and

tradition resulted in an increasing nostalgia which gradually shifted the tone of the Whiteoak chronicles from celebration to lamentation.

BETWEEN 1933 and 1961, de la Roche wrote six novels based on events in the years between 1852 and 1924. Three of these — *The Building of Jalna* (1944), *Morning at Jalna* (1960), and *Mary Wakefield* (1949) — are set in the last half of the nineteenth century and three — *Young Renny* (1935), *Whiteoak Heritage* (1940), and *The Whiteoak Brothers* (1953) — are set in the period between the turn of the century and 1924. Though all but two of these are generally inferior to *Jalna*, they reflect a number of de la Roche's preoccupations and reveal her conscious efforts to create a consistent and coherent family history. In comparison with the later instalments in the Whiteoak history, the first six novels are more often self-contained, less inhibited by family history, more positive in their outlook, less nostalgic, and more preoccupied with individuals in search of freedom. Altogether, they suggest that de la Roche was more confident and more successful when she wrote of the past.

Of the six pre-Jalna novels, *The Building of Jalna* is the most successful. It functions as an excellent introduction to the chronicles and emphasizes the energy of the Court family and the stability of the Whiteoak family. It also establishes a number of motifs, themes, scenes and character-types. Inheritance, the new life, the struggle for power in male-female relationships, emigration, the hidden observer, the outsider, and the tension between freedom and convention are prominent aspects of this novel.

The Building of Jalna dramatizes and expands upon the outline of family history provided in the second chapter of *Jalna*, and nearly a third of the book presents events prior to the arrival of the Whiteoaks in Ontario. The opening chapter describes the meeting and marriage of Philip and Adeline and fills out their family backgrounds. Adeline, born in County Meath, Ireland, left her home when, despite her obvious beauty, she failed to attract any admirer with "sufficient means to set up an establishment." When her sister married an officer stationed at Jalna, Adeline accepted an invitation to visit there and in her sister's home in India, she was introduced to Philip Whiteoak, an officer in the Hussars. They were married in 1847 and, soon after the birth of their first child, Augusta, they decide to begin a new life away from the "conventionalities of Army life." Then, even as they ponder the move, Philip's uncle dies "leaving him a considerable property" in Quebec. Consequently the Whiteoaks depart for Canada; their

primary motivation is a deepset longing for freedom: "There was in them both an adventurous pioneer spirit that laughed at discouragement, that reached out toward a freer life."

In the spring of 1853, Philip, dissatisfied with life in Quebec, decides to move to Ontario where a military friend, David Vaughan, a retired Anglo-Indian Colonel, has settled "on the fertile shore of Lake Ontario". In his letters to Philip, Colonel Vaughan clearly indicates some of the essential values of the settlement into which the Whiteoaks move:

> "Here," he wrote, "the winters are mild, we have little snow, and in the long fruitful summer the land yields grain and fruit in abundance. An agreeable little settlement of *respectable* families is being formed. You and your talented lady, my dear Whiteoak, would receive the welcome here that people of your consequence *merit*."

Colonel Vaughan, the spokesman for this British garrison, "was one of those fortunate men . . . who can look forward to the future secure in the thought . . . that no further change is to be considered." His announced aim is "to keep this little settlement purely British".

> It was his most cherished wish to draw congenial people to the corner of the province where he had settled, and, with their help, establish the customs and traditions of England, to be enjoyed and cherished by their descendants. To these he wished to add the breadth and freedom of the New Land. He believed the combination to be the ideal one for comfort, tolerance and content.

Two of the elements indicated by Colonel Vaughan, tradition and freedom, are the essential components of the Jalna world. Novel after novel in the Jalna series celebrates the British connection and the traditions associated with that connection, as well as the importance of individual freedom and the instinctive life. The struggle depicted in the early novels of settlement and in the later novels of consolidation is not the result of man's attempt to subdue and then exploit a hostile environment but the outcome of a determined effort by members of the Whiteoak family to preserve these values in the midst of rapidly changing social, political, economic and physical conditions.

Six chapters of *The Building of Jalna* are devoted to events preceding the arrival of the Whiteoaks in Ontario in June 1853. The remaining seventeen chapters describe the events between then and October 1854, when both Jalna and the new Whiteoak church were completed. Considerable attention is devoted to the gradual evolution of the Whiteoak estate. From the outset, Jalna is asso-

ciated with energy and lively activity as well as stability and permanence: "Always there was some living thing to watch at Jalna". Its birth is accompanied by dance and song and we are told that "the house would teem with life, with emotion". The formless "vastness of the forest" is gradually shaped into a " 'park' " and Jalna grows amid the songs of French Canadian woodcutters and dance music provided by Fiddling Jock, an elderly Scotsman who lives in a small cottage on Whiteoak property.

In the later chapters of *The Building of Jalna* a number of social activities serve to introduce the members of the community in which the Whiteoaks live. Both Philip and Adeline are presented as " 'unconventional people' ": "They had wanted reality, freedom from rules made long before their time, the opportunity to lead their lives in their own fashion." Yet the community in which they settle is " 'close and conventional' " and, soon after their arrival, Adeline's "wild behaviour" and "unconventionality" give rise to criticism in the neighbourhood. Elihu Busby, a descendant of a United Empire Loyalist who in some respects resembles de la Roche's grandfather (Daniel Lundy) is particularly critical. Elihu was the original owner of much of the land about Jalna. Proud, egotistical, conservative and authoritarian, Busby shares several of Daniel Lundy's prejudices and, like him, resists his daughter's plans for marriage. Eventually, as the Whiteoak history develops, one of his grand-daughters marries Adeline's fourth child and becomes the mother of Renny and Meg Whiteoak.

Among the most familiar scenes in the fiction of de la Roche is the one in which one or more characters swim, often to the unconcealed delight of some secret observer. Swimming is consistently equated by de la Roche with freeing of emotions and a return to a childlike simplicity. In *The Building of Jalna* this scene becomes the focal point for several motifs and themes. Adeline decides to " 'give something more spirited in the way of entertainment' " and proposes a bathing party to which the " 'oldsters who carp at the licence of the young' " will not be invited. As the party develops the participants undergo a transformation and loss of inhibition: "the old conventions seemed cast aside and they lay relaxed in childlike abandon." For the swimmer, "life seemed strange and full of beautiful and violent possibilities."

This mood is shattered by the sudden appearance of Elihu Busby whose "sense of decorum is outraged"; he accuses the Whiteoaks of importing " 'outlandish habits from the Old World' " and describes their activities as " 'Dissipated' " and detrimental to the morality of the community:

> What I do say is that so much license is not good. In time it will lead to disgraceful things ... Manners and morals are never at a standstill. Either they rise or they decline.

Busby's attempts to end the party are unsuccessful. Throughout the Jalna chronicles the forces of convention make repeated attempts to subdue instinctive and individual behaviour.

The Building of Jalna is among the most successful of the Jalna chronicles. It is well constructed and carefully plotted, and clearly sets forth some of the crucial aspects of the Whiteoaks, their way of life and their estate. It also serves to set the tone for most of the early chronicles and provides an interesting contrast to *Centenary at Jalna*, the novel in which de la Roche describes the one-hundredth anniversary of the building of Jalna.

JALNA IS ESSENTIALLY detached from specific social, economical or political issues and developments; nevertheless, as the final six novels reveal, the Whiteoaks could not permanently ignore the implications of the changes which are taking place all around them or the effects of the depression and the Second World War, and the erosion of traditional sources of order and continuity. In the final six novels of the Jalna series, de la Roche's awareness of these events and conditions led to an increasing preoccupation with change. Her consciousness of one's family and one's sense of a common past as means of offsetting the sense of insecurity and meaninglessness engendered by rapid change are increasingly apparent in these works. Her nostalgia for the past and her antipathy for much that was modern are equally obvious. Not surprisingly, in the later novels the Whiteoaks, their home and their traditions, are seen by de la Roche increasingly as symbols of permanence and tradition and less as the upholders of individual freedom. Ultimately, de la Roche seems to imply, the individual must be willing to sacrifice himself to maintain tradition and continuity.

In the final six instalments in the Jalna chronicles — *Whiteoak Harvest* (1936), *Wakefield's Course* (1941), *Return to Jalna* (1946), *Renny's Daughter* (1951), *Variable Winds at Jalna* (1954) and *Centenary at Jalna* (1958), de la Roche was writing of her immediate present. All but one of these books were written after she had been forced to give up her life in the English countryside and return to Canada and life in Toronto. They reveal her bitter antagonism towards much that is characteristic of the modern world. Though the tension between individual freedom and tradition is evident throughout these works, there is an increased

tendency to sentimentalize the past, to resist all change, and to cling with a kind of desperation to those traditions which survive. These novels depict de la Roche's private confrontation with a world utterly unlike the one in which she had grown up and the one she had for several years been able to create while living in England. In the earliest Jalna novels, de la Roche turned comfortably to an essentially pastoral and idyllic world where change was gradual and life allowed a mingling of tradition and individual freedom. In the final Jalna novels nostalgia for that world is blended with a conviction that the modern world is less innocent, less free, more violent and more prone to disintegration. In the midst of significant change, she became sceptical in her attitude toward the modern world and more committed to the past and the values she associated with it. To her, change and progress often seemed synonymous with a decline in individual freedom and a loss of valid traditions.

Though individual freedom is stressed throughout the Whiteoak chronicles and remains a significant theme in the final instalments, the focus in the novels which deal with the Whiteoak history from 1934 to 1954 is on the conflict between the defenders of tradition and those forces which threaten to undermine and destroy it. Each of the novels which present the history of the Whiteoaks between 1934 and 1954 emphasizes change and the efforts of the Whiteoaks to protect Jalna and the way of life it represents from those developments which would alter or destroy it. Renny's willingness to arrange a loveless marriage for his beloved daughter is the final evidence of the sense of desperation with which he attempts to resist the erosion of Whiteoak traditions. It is difficult to read these final instalments in the history of the Whiteoaks without feeling that de la Roche was no longer celebrating a dream of liberty and order but lamenting the failure of that dream. This is nowhere more evident than in *Centenary at Jalna* (1958).

Like *The Building of Jalna* (1944), the introductory novel in the Jalna series, *Centenary at Jalna*, the final instalment, is one of de la Roche's better novels and provides an interesting conclusion to the long Whiteoak history. The book examines the events which culminate in the celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the building of Jalna. It reveals Renny's plan to arrange a wedding between the cousins Philip and Adeline (descendants of the original Adeline and Philip) as a fitting means of celebrating Jalna's one-hundredth birthday. Although he succeeds and although the novel and the series end, as they began, with a wedding and with the christening of a child whose name is Ernest Whiteoak, the centenary celebrations are shadowed by the violent and tragic events connected with Finch's son Dennis. And despite the novel's affirmation of the

continuing life of the family and its traditions, there is an underlying pessimism that reveals itself as a warning about the violence that a breakdown in family structure can precipitate. The malice and violence of several scenes in *Centenary at Jalna* are not equalled in any of de la Roche's other writings.

Renny's " 'worship of family tradition' " and his devotion to Jalna result in his proposal of a marriage between his daughter Adeline and Piers's son Philip; Adeline and Philip are strikingly like the original pair of Whiteoaks in appearance and temperament, and Renny fosters the idea of their marriage with all his Court determination. As he explains to Philip:

> "It would be establishing the family all over again — in a fine sort of way. Another good-looking healthy pair — in love with each other and with life at Jalna."

Renny is not deterred by the fact that Philip and Adeline do not reveal any love for one another. To him, it is more significant that Philip always is "respectful toward tradition", "accepts with pride the traditions of his family" and regards himself as "dedicated to their preservation". Renny is quite willing to gamble with the future happiness of his own daughter in order to ensure the continued existence of Jalna:

> A new and desperately urgent life was thrusting up, out of the colonial past, but he ignored it, not so much in antagonism as in absorption by his own manner of life. He simply could not imagine a change in Jalna itself.
>
> The fine-clad house, surrounded by its lawns, its meadows, its pastures and woods, was to him the enduring symbol of the life his grandparents had carved out of the wilds of a new country, and to which his uncles and parents had adhered. He saw no reason for changing it.

The loyalty of the Whiteoaks to the family is particularly evident in this novel. When Archer (Renny's son) questions Renny's purchase of a two-hundred-acre farm adjoining Jalna, Piers comments on " 'the many insignificant little places going up all about' " and then explains: " 'Its been our tradition, Archer, to follow in the footsteps of our forebears. To be like them and even more so . . .'." Archer, despite his unemotional nature and his detached point of view, responds to the family mystique: " 'This family has been the structure of all our lives. We don't think about it. It's like the air we breathe. It's sacred to us'."

Although Mazo de la Roche intended to write further instalments in the history of the Whiteoaks, *Centenary at Jalna* became the final chapter in the one-hundred-year saga. Despite its dances, dinners, weddings and its parallels with the events described in *The Building of Jalna, Centenary at Jalna* does not

recreate the sense of innocence, vitality and excitement which pervades the earlier novel. At times the "unrestrained high spirits" and the elaborate celebrations in *Centenary at Jalna* seem like artificial ceremonies that have lost much of their validity and significance and that scarcely conceal harsher realities. Those realities include violence, loneliness, change and death. The appearance of grey in Renny's hair, Noah Binn's tale of an old grey horse driven mad by a sudden encounter with one of his own species in a city where he had grown accustomed to seeing only " 'millions of cars' " the reference to "a changing world", the "troubled and uneasy state of the world", and "the crudity, the violent immaturity of modern life", and the reminder that " 'Time takes away our pleasures' " seem to undermine a gaiety which often appears artificial. Noah's macabre wedding gift, an enlarged photograph of the Whiteoak family plot in the graveyard, is equally sobering: " 'It goes to show what young brides and bridegrooms come to. Like the rest of us'."

Centenary at Jalna begins and ends with the reflections of Mary Pheasant, a delicate, shy and nature-loving child who represents the anti-thesis of the neurotic and morbid Dennis. In the midst of threats, attempted suicide, violent death, incest and jealousy, she manages to remain refreshingly innocent. When Dennis accuses her of being " 'an ignorant little girl'," Mary replies: " 'I don't want to know'." She delights in spiders and roses, "the sound of leaves being tumbled by a breeze or a sudden burst of song from an unseen bird," and the fairy-like atmosphere of Fiddler's Hut, and does not question "where or why". Though the adults have given her a watch "to make her more conscious of the passing of time", Mary still lives in an essentially timeless world, inhabited by Humpty Dumpty, the Mad Hatter, the Three Bears and Red Riding Hood. One is tempted to see Mary and Dennis as opposing sides of de la Roche's awareness and to regard Mary's appreciation of the innocence and vitality of childhood and her tragic awareness of their inevitable destruction. *Centenary at Jalna* may well reflect de la Roche's despairing acceptance of the fact that the world of order and independence which she had created through the one-hundred-year history of the Whiteoaks had become more remote than ever from modern reality.

THE WHITEOAK CHRONICLES, although they are often individually weak, represent an impressive accomplishment when viewed as a single history. Inevitably, the repetition of scenes and situations and even the consistency of the characterization detract from these works. Particularly in the novels set in

the post-*Jalna* years, one finds the new twist of plot and the new characters an insufficient antidote to the monotony developed by the repetition of family history, the similarity of scene and the predictable nature of so many episodes. Inescapably, the references to the portraits of Philip and Adeline, the lengthy debates over domestic trivialities, the inconsequential talk about horses, the conversations emphasizing character traits which have already become too familiar, and the repetition of family history grow tiresome. At the same time, the consistency of de la Roche's vision is a part of the attraction of the chronicles. In this large and complex tapestry with its innumerable strands and continually proliferating patterns one becomes increasingly aware of the creator's imaginative energy and the conscious and unconscious preoccupations which directed that energy. De la Roche was deeply involved, emotionally and intellectually, in the world she created and then extended over a hundred years: ". . . the Whiteoaks without her quite realizing it held a mortgage on her imagination; they would not leave her in peace unless she was writing about them."[8]

The Whiteoak chronicles provide an intimate insight into the nature of their creator and a fascinating documentary on the special tastes and needs of a very large group of readers, for one easily arrives at the conclusion that de la Roche's conscious and unconscious preoccupations were also those of a large proportion of her readers. The most prominent of these is the conflict between individual freedom and tradition which, with the exception of a few occasions on which de la Roche's involvement with events in her own life blurs this conflict, is developed with consistency throughout the Whiteoak chronicles. Her history of the Whiteoak family can be regarded as a defence of individual freedom and "the conservative ethos", which Philip Thody regards as "inseparable from the family novel as a literary form".[9]

The Whiteoak novels combine elements of romance and elements of the novel. On the one hand, their lively and convincing presentation of highly individualistic characters, the immediacy with which they dramatize domestic action, their working out of quite complex family relationships in the "great tradition" of Jane Austen, George Eliot and others, and the readers' awareness that Jalna has counterparts in past and present social history contribute to their sense of realism. On the other hand, Jalna's separation from the outside world, the fact that much of the action occurs outside the social order, the tendency toward anarchy and the equation of the wilderness with liberty, the looseness of the books' structure and their characteristic shifting from violent melodramatic actions to comic or pastoral scenes show the extent to which elements identified with the romance are

also incorporated in these novels. The contradictions which Richard Chase associated with the romance-novel[10] and the tensions which Douglas Jones, Northrop Frye and Warren Tallman identified with the tradition of Canadian fiction are present throughout the Whiteoak chronicles.

In the Jalna novels de la Roche created a microcosm which often suggests that civilization need not be founded on repression, that individual freedom and spontaneity are not necessarily destructive of order and tradition, and that the life instinct need not be sacrificed to culture. *Jalna* and the other novels in the Whiteoak chronicles are the imaginative expression of an ideal toward which de la Roche had been moving since the earliest of her short stories. In it she found a viable resolution of a problem with which she had long been concerned. From this point of view, her willingness to linger within the Whiteoak world is not difficult to understand.

The imaginative history of the Whiteoaks records de la Roche's sceptical reaction to the modern world and her nostalgia for an earlier existence, perhaps partly idealized as childhood recollections often are. Her sense of loss as well as her doubt are not simply a result of her recognition that the English influence was being weakened in Canada, though she clearly experienced this attenuation as a loss; she found too much in the emerging world which was destructive of a way of living and an attitude toward life which she cherished, perhaps not only as an idealized memory but also as a dream fostered by the constricting circumstances of her own childhood. In defiance of change, de la Roche clung tenaciously to a past in which memory and fantasy were interchangeable and created for herself and the multitudes who read and enjoyed the Jalna novels a world which appeared more free, more vital and more stable than the present.

> "I think my readers have a longing for the stability and freedom of those distant days when the world seemed very large."

The Whiteoaks are distinguished by their capacity for embracing the contradictory values which fascinated de la Roche all her life. They recognize the claims of both individual freedom and tradition and are able to live creatively despite, or perhaps because of these divisive pressures. Jalna and the family it protects and supports are the ultimate manifestations of de la Roche's need for an imaginary retreat characterized by freedom and stability without repression or chaos. Jalna is a symbol not only of the divided nature of Canadian culture but also of belief in the creative potentiality of the tension between the individualism and the garrison mentality.

NOTES

[1] Dorothy Livesay, "Getting It Straight," *Impulse* (Volume 1, No. 2) p. 34.

[2] Claude Bissell, "Letters in Canada," *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 23 (1953), p. 270. See also Dorothy Livesay, "Mazo Explored," *Canadian Literature*, 32 (Spring, 1967), p. 59.

[3] Ronald Hambleton, *Mazo de la Roche of Jalna* (Toronto: General Publishing, 1966).

[4] George Hendrick, *Mazo de la Roche* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970).

[5] Mazo de la Roche, *Ringing the Changes* (London: Macmillan, 1957), p. 265.

[6] Lovat Dickson, taped interview with D. Daymond, April 21, 1972.

[7] Douglas Jones, *Butterfly on Rock* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 33.

[8] Edward Weeks, letter to D. Daymond, March 2, 1972.

[9] Philip Thody, "The Politics of the Family Novel: Is Conservatism Inevitable?" *Mosaic* (Fall, 1969), p. 95.

[10] Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1957).

HONESTY

Audrey Conrad

I am laid bare —
a field of worms and flowers
open to the birds
and eyes of all.

I stretch my muscled abdomen
in adulation.
A lover's tongue
can find no secrets here.

Yet it is possible to find
in dark spirals of the mind
a small white nude
who curls herself and hides.

Openness is as fine
defense as any.

FRYE'S THEORY OF SYMBOLS

Robert D. Denham

IN A RECENT NUMBER OF *Poetics*, Tzvetan Todorov dismisses almost peremptorily Northrop Frye's re-interpretation of the medieval doctrine of four levels of literary meaning. "I find it inadequate," he says, "because, without being necessarily false, it is not really helpful. The four meanings are postulated in advance, and any utterance appears to be as ambiguous as any other."[1] Such a brief account, however, makes it impossible to determine whether Frye's theory of meaning is, in fact, of no use, and whether it does make any utterance as ambiguous as any other. Frye's theory of meaning is found in the course of an extended discussion of symbolism in *Anatomy of Criticism*, and to be properly understood it needs to be placed in the context of his argument there.

In *The Critical Path*, Frye remarks that his theory of literature was developed from an attempt to answer two questions: What is the total subject of study of which criticism forms a part? And how do we arrive at poetic meaning?[2] The Second Essay of the *Anatomy* — "Ethical Criticism: Theory of Symbols" — is addressed to this latter question. Frye's starting point is to admit the principle of polysemous meaning, a modified version of Dante's four-fold system of interpretation. Once the principle is granted, he claims, there are two alternatives: "we can either stop with a purely relative and pluralistic position, or we can go on to consider the possibility of a finite number of critical methods, and that they can all be contained within a single theory."

Frye develops his argument by first placing the issue of meaning in a broader context:

> The meaning of a literary work forms a part of a larger whole. In the previous essay ["Theory of Modes"] we saw that the meaning of *dianoia* was one of three elements, the other two being *mythos* or narrative and *ethos* or characterization. It is better to think, therefore, not simply of a sequence of meanings, but a sequence of contexts or relationships in which the whole work of literary art can be placed, each context having its characteristic *mythos* and *ethos* as well as its *dianoia* or meaning.

Context, then, rather than meaning, becomes the crucial criterion. Frye refers to these contextual relationships as "phases", which is the organizing category for the taxonomy of his theory of symbols.

The word "ethical", therefore, in the title of the Second Essay obviously does not derive from the meanings which *ethos* had in the First Essay of the *Anatomy*. Frye is not concerned here to expand the analysis of characterization found there. The word refers, rather, to the connection between art and life which makes literature a liberal yet disinterested ethical instrument. Ethical criticism, Frye says in the Introduction to the *Anatomy*, refers to a "consciousness of the presence of society. . . . [It] deals with art as communication from the past to the present, and is based on a conception of the total and simultaneous possession of past culture". It is the archetype, as we shall see below, which provides the connection between past and present.

Unlike the other three essays in the *Anatomy*, Frye's theory of symbols is oriented toward an analysis of *criticism*. "Phases" are contexts within which literature can be interpreted; they are primarily meant to describe critical procedures rather than literary types; in short, they represent methods for analyzing symbolic meaning.

"Symbol" is the first of three basic categories Frye uses to differentiate the five phases. Here we encounter the breadth of reference and unconventional usage so often found in Frye's work; for in the Second Essay "symbol" is used to mean "any unit of literary structure which can be isolated for critical attention". This broad definition permits Frye to associate the appropriate kind of symbolism with each phase, and thereby define the phase at the highest level of generality. The symbol used as a sign results in the descriptive phase; as motif, in the literal phase; as image, in the formal phase; as archetype, in the mythical phase; and as monad, in the anagogic phase.

Before looking at these abstractions more closely, we need to observe the two additional categories underlying Frye's definition of the phases: narrative (or *mythos*) and meaning (or *dianoia*). These terms also have a wide range of reference, much wider even than in Frye's theory of modes. One can only indicate the general associations they have in Frye's usage. *Narrative* is associated with rhythm, movement, recurrence, event, and ritual. *Meaning* is associated with pattern, structure, stasis, precept, and dream. The meaning of "narrative" and the meaning of "meaning", then, are never constant, always changing according to the context of Frye's discussion. The central role which this pair of terms plays in the Second Essay, as well as in the entire *Anatomy*, cannot be over-emphasized.

LITERAL AND DESCRIPTIVE PHASES. The first two of Frye's contexts, the literal and descriptive phases, are linked together in his discussion because, unlike the other three phases, they are defined in relation to each other. The method is one of dichotomous division, whereby Frye sets up a whole series of opposing terms within the triadic framework (symbol-narrative-meaning). The opposing sets of categories are then used to define, to give content to, the expressions "literal" and "descriptive".

The opposing terms of the first category (symbol) are motif and sign, representing the kinds of signification which the literal and descriptive phases respectively embody. These words are defined in turn by another series of opposites. When the symbol is a sign, for example, the movement of reference is centrifugal, as in descriptive or assertive works; and when the symbol is a motif, the movement is centripetal, as in imaginative, or what Frye calls "hypothetical", works. Similarly, in the former case, where allegiance is to the reality-principle, value is instrumental and priority is given to instruction; and in the latter, where allegiance is to the pleasure-principle, value is final and priority is given to delight. Underlying Frye's distinction between the "narrative" and "meaning" poles of the dichotomy is an assumption, fundamental to much of his work, that art can be viewed both temporally and spatially. This assumption, specified to the narrative movement of the literal phase, is seen as rhythm; and applied to the narrative movement of the descriptive phase, it is the relation which the order of words has to external reality. Similarly, when the spatial aspect is more important in our experience of a work, we tend to view it statically, as an integrated unit, or to use Frye's chief metaphors, as pattern or structure.[3]

Each of the phases of literature has an affinity to both a type of literature and a critical procedure. This relation for the descriptive and literal phases of *literature* can be represented by a continuum running from documentary naturalism at one pole to *symbolisme* and "pure poetry" at the other. Although every work of literature is characterized to some degree by both these phases of symbolism, there can be an infinite number of variations along the descriptive-literal continuum. Thus, when the descriptive phase predominates, the narrative of literature tends toward realism, and its meaning toward the didactic or descriptive (e.g., Zola, Dreiser). At the other end of the continuum is the tradition of writers like Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Rilke, Pound, and Eliot. Here the emphasis is on the literal phase of meaning: literature is considered "as centripetal verbal pattern, in which

elements of direct or verifiable statement are subordinated to the integrity of that pattern".

In a similar fashion, the literal and descriptive phases are reflected in two chief types of criticism. On the one hand, related to the descriptive aspect of the symbol, are the various kinds of documentary criticism which deal with sources, historical transmission, the history of ideas, and the like. Such approaches assume that a poem is a verbal document whose "imaginative hypothesis" can be made explicit by assertive or propositional language. A literal criticism, on the other hand, will find in poetry "a subtle and elusive verbal pattern" that neither leads to nor permits simple assertive statements or prose paraphrases.

As Frye's language indicates, the principal assumption underlying his analysis of the literal and descriptive phases is one he shares with the major proponents of the New Criticism — those whose concern has been to locate the meaning of poetry in the nature of its symbolic language. Frye's distinction between assertive and hypothetical meaning is closely akin, for example, to Cleanth Brooks's opposition between factual and emotional language, to I. A. Richards' emotive-referential dialectic, and to the procedure running throughout contemporary criticism which attempts to separate poetic language from that of ordinary usage or science on the basis of the more complex, ambiguous, and ironic meaning of the former. The characteristic method of inference in each of these procedures is, as R. S. Crane observes, based on a similar dialectic; for they all employ — Frye included — a process of reasoning *to* what the language and meaning of poetry are *from* what assertive discourse and rational meaning are not.[4]

Frye would like to refute the semantic analysis of logical positivism, that is, the reduction of all meaning to either rational or emotional discourse. While it is true that the subtlety and range of reference contained in his discussion of the literal phase will not permit a simple equation between the meaning expressed by symbols in this phase and the non-descriptive meaning of analytic philosophers, it is no less true that he still remains within the framework of the theory he opposes; for what Frye does is to convert his denial of the principles of linguistic philosophy into the principles of his own poetic theory. The primary assumptions remain the same, namely, that poetry in the literal and descriptive phases is primarily a mode of discourse and that there is a bi-polar distribution of all language and, thus, of all meaning.[5]

The first section of Frye's theory of symbols results in an expansion and rearrangement of the medieval schema of four levels of interpretation, according to which literal meaning is discursive or representational meaning. Its point of

reference is centrifugal. When Dante, for example, interprets scripture literally, he points to a correspondence between an event in the Bible and a historical event, or at least one he assumed to have occurred in the past. In this sense, literature signifies real events. The first medieval level of symbolism thus becomes Frye's descriptive level. His own literal phase, however, has no corresponding rung on the medieval ladder. The advantage of reshuffling the categories, Frye believes, is that he now has a framework to account for a poem literally as a poem — as a self-contained verbal structure whose meaning is not dependent upon any external reference. This redesignation is simply one more way Frye can indicate the difference between a symbol as motif and sign. As a principle of his system, however, it reveals clearly the dialectical method he uses to define poetic meaning. He is not satisfied, however, with the dichotomy, calling it a "quizzical antithesis between delight and instruction, ironic withdrawal from life and explicit connection with it". Therefore, in his discussion of the third phase of symbolism he attempts to move beyond these now-familiar distinctions of the New Criticism.

THE FORMAL PHASE. This aspect of symbolism relates specifically to the imagery of poetry. Formal criticism, however, can be seen as studying literature from the point of view, once again, of either *mythos* or *dianoia.* The meaning of these two terms remains close to the meaning they had in Frye's discussion of the literal and descriptive phases, though here they function differently. In the first two phases, narrative (*mythos*) and meaning (*dianoia*) tended to diverge in Frye's argument toward opposite poles. In the formal phase, however, his interest is on making them converge until they are somehow unified; for it is the essential unity of a work of literature which the word "form" is usually meant to convey.

Frye's explanation of this point involves a highly complex dialectic. He uses, first of all, the concept of imitation to contravene the form-content dichotomy. *Mythos,* he says, is a secondary imitation of an action because it describes the typical rather than the specific human act. And *dianoia* is a secondary imitation of thought because it is also concerned with the typical, in this case, "with images, metaphors, diagrams, and verbal ambiguities out of which specific ideas develop". The assumption here seems to be that the concept of secondary imitation, because it represents the typical, is a principle which unifies formal criticism and thus permits the discussion of poetry on this level always to remain internal.[6] The concept of typicality, Frye feels, avoids the antithesis implicit in the literal

and descriptive phases. Yet his use of the word "typical" is equivocal, meaning something different in each case: more philosophical than history on the one hand, and more historical than philosophy on the other.

The second argument for the unity of formal criticism rests on the movement-stasis dichotomy, analogized once again to the terms *mythos* and *dianoia*. Every detail of the poem is related to its form, Frye claims, and this form remains the same "whether it is examined as stationary or as moving through the work from beginning to end". His main point is that we need to balance the ordinary method of studying symbolism, which is solely in terms of meaning, with the study of a poem's *moving* body of imagery.[7] The method of definition at this point continues to rely upon the principle of dichotomous division: *mythos* versus *dianoia*, movement versus stasis, narrative versus meaning, structure versus rhythm, shaping form versus containing form. Yet the way the pairs of opposites function, as compared with their use in the first section of Frye's essay, is that they do not point to realities outside the poem. Poets do not directly imitate either nature or thought; they create potential, hypothetical, and typical forms. It is this conception of art which Frye sees as helping to resolve the split between delight and instruction, between form and content.

Criticism in the formal phase is called "commentary", or "the process of translating into explicit or discursive language what is implicit in the poem". More specifically, it tries to isolate the ideas embodied in the structure of poetic imagery. This produces allegorical interpretation, and, in fact, commentary sees all literature as potential allegory. The range of symbolism ("thematically significant imagery") can be classified according to the degree of its explicitness, which is to say, all literature can be organized along a continuum of formal meaning, from the most to the least allegorical.

The criterion for Frye's taxonomy is the degree to which a writer insists on relating his imagery to precepts and examples. Naive allegory is so close to discursive writing that it can hardly be called literature at all. It belongs "chiefly to educational literature on an elementary level: schoolroom moralities, devotional exempla, local pageants, and the like". Even though such naive forms have no real hypothetical centre, they are considered allegorical to some degree since they now and then rely on images to illustrate their theses.

Frye's two types of actual or formal allegory, continuous and *freistimmige*, show an explicit connection between image and idea, differing only in that the former is more overt and systematic. Dante, Spenser, and Bunyan, for example, maintain the allegorical connection throughout their work; whereas writers like

Hawthorne, Goethe, and Ibsen use symbolic equations which are at once less explicit and less continuous.[8] If the structure of poetic imagery has a strong doctrinal emphasis, so that the internal fictions become exempla, as in Milton, a fourth kind of allegorical relation is established. And to the right of this, located at the centre of Frye's scale, are works "in which the structure of imagery, however suggestive, has an implicit relation only to events and ideas, and which includes the bulk of Shakespeare." All other poetic imagery tends toward the ironic and the paradoxical end of the continuum and would include the kind of symbolism implied by the metaphysical conceit and *symbolisme*, by Eliot's objective correlative and the heraldic emblem. Beyond this mode, at the extreme right of the scale, we encounter indirect symbolic techniques, like private association, Dadaism, and intentionally confounding symbols.

What Frye has done is redefine the word "allegory", or at least greatly expand its ordinary meaning; for he uses the term not only to refer to a literary convention but also to indicate a universal structural principle of literature. It is universal because Frye sees all literature in relation to *mythos* and *dianoia*. We engage in allegorical interpretation, that is, whenever we relate the events of a narrative to conceptual terminology. This is commentary, or the translation of poetic into discursive meaning. In interpreting an actual or continuous allegory like *The Faerie Queene*, the relationship between *mythos* and *dianoia* is so explicit that it describes the direction which the commentary must take. In a work like *Hamlet* the relationship is more implicit. Yet commentary on *Hamlet* is still allegorical; for if we interpret the play as (say) a tragedy of indecision, we begin to set up a kind of moral counterpoint (*dianoia*) to the events of its narrative (*mythos*) that continuous allegory has as a part of its structure. We should expect, then, that as allegory becomes more implicit, the direction in which the commentary must go becomes less prescriptive. And this is precisely Frye's position: an implicit allegory like *Hamlet* can carry an almost infinite number of interpretations.[9]

THE MYTHICAL PHASE. If in the formal phase a poem is considered as representing its own class — a unique artifact lying midway between precept and example, in the mythical phase it is seen generically as one of a whole group of similar forms. Here Frye's most fundamental principle is his assumption regarding the total order of words; for the study of poetry involves not simply isolating works as imitations of nature but also considering them as

imitations of other poems. And since literature shapes itself out of the total order of words, the study of genres becomes important. Frye reserves his treatment of genres for the Fourth Essay of the *Anatomy*, concentrating here on the principle which ultimately provides the basis of the study of genres: convention. He emphasizes the conventionalized aspect of art not only because it is close to his own interests as a critic but also because he believes literary convention has been neglected by critics. Thus, he spends some time elaborating a number of his favourite topics: that the more original art is, the more profoundly imitative it is of other art; that we have been schooled in realistic prejudices about the creative process; that the conventional aspect of poetry is as important as what is distinctive in poetic achievement.

The symbol which characterizes the fourth phase is the conventional symbol — what Frye calls the "archetype." The study of convention is, of course, based on analogies. In the case of archetypes, it is analogies of symbolism. To see Moby Dick, for example, as an archetype is to recognize an analogy between Melville's whale and other "leviathans and dragons of the deep from the Old Testament onward". He is but one of a recurring tradition of such creatures clustered together in our experience of literature; such images come together in our imaginative experience, Frye argues, simply because they are similar.

The function of signs, Frye observes, are also dependent on conventional associations. But the difference between signs and archetypes is that the latter are complex variables, which means that a given archetype may symbolize a variety of objects, ideas, or emotions. Some archetypal associations are more obvious than others, even though there are no necessary connections, "no intrinsic or inherent correspondences which must inevitably be present." But archetypes are not only complex; they also vary in explicitness. Frye sees these relations schematically, running from pure convention at one extreme to pure variable at the other. The range of conventions should not be confused with the scale of allegorical meanings in the third phase; the two scales are parallel only in so far as their common criterion is the degree of explicitness which images and archetypes, respectively have.[10]

The symbol as archetype is the first principle underlying Frye's definition of the fourth phase. How do the categories *mythos* and *dianoia* function in this definition? The pairs of opposites in his dialectic now become *recurrence* and *desire*, *ritual* and *myth*. Relating these terms to *mythos* and *dianoia* depends once more on a highly abstract deduction. "Ritual and dream," Frye says, "are the narrative [*mythos*] and significant content [*dianoia*] respectively of literature in

its archetypal aspect." He reaches this conclusion analogically. That ritual is the narrative aspect of the archetypal phase follows only because of Frye's previous definition of ritual as a recurrent act of symbolic communication. The quality of recurrence, in other words, is what narrative and ritual have in common. How then does Frye arrive at the principle of recurrence? To some degree it is present in his initial definition of narrative in the literal phase, where *mythos* is seen as rhythm, or the recurrent movement of words. But in the formal phase, recurrence as an aspect of *mythos* disappears altogether from Frye's discussion. It might be argued that the principle is implicit in the formal phase in Frye's account of typical actions; but this hardly accounts for the fact that "typicality" is used to define both narrative and meaning. The "example" is the formal aspect of narrative, and the temporal association Frye makes is to see *mythos* as a *moving* body of imagery.

It would appear, then, that in order to keep his categories consistent, that is, to make recurrence a principle of narrative throughout each of the phases, Frye must find some way of re-introducing it into the formal phase. And he does this by simply asserting that in the "exemplary event there is an element of recurrence," which is to say, apparently, that we desire the exemplary event to be imitated again and again. The point is, however, that recurrence is maintained as a basic category by an analogical leap from the literal to the mythical phase, bypassing the formal phase.

Frye employs the same kind of dialectic in moving from the precept of the formal phase to the dream of the mythical. Here the transition is based on the assertion that there is a strong element of desire associated with the precept. Desire, therefore, becomes the mediating category between the third and fourth phases. Putting it straightforwardly, the form of the argument is this: Desire is related to precept; precept is the *dianoia* of formal critcism. Desire is related to dream; dream is the *dianoia* of archetypal criticism. The relationship is, of course, once again analogical.

Once Frye has distinguished ritual and dream, which on the archetypal level represent *mythos* and *dianoia* respectively, he seeks to unite them under the category of myth — which explains the title of the fourth phase. From the perspective of this phase, Frye argues, we see the same kinds of processes or rhythms occurring in literature that we find in ritual and dream. There are two basic patterns: one, cyclical, the other, dialectical. Ritual imitates the cyclical processes of nature: the rhythmic movement of the universe and the seasons, as well as the recurring cycles of human life; and literature in its archetypal phase imitates nature in the

same way. The dialectical pattern, on the other hand, derives from the world of dream, where desire is in constant conflict with reality. Liberation and capture, integration and expulsion, love and hate are some of the terms we apply to this moral dialectic in ritual and dream.[11] The same pattern, when expressed hypothetically, is to be found in literature. Archetypal criticism, Frye concludes, is based upon these organizing patterns.

To see archetypal criticism as concerned with the social aspects of poetry is, as we have observed Frye saying, to emphasize the relationship of the individual poem to other poems. But this is only half of what should be properly emphasized, for a poem is also a "part of the total imitation of nature that we call civilization." What does it mean to say civilization is a total imitation of nature, an idea that occurs repeatedly in Frye's work? He himself refers to it metaphorically as "the process of making a total human form out of nature." He means that as civilization develops, the natural world is transformed from the non-human into something with human shape and meaning, a process which is given direction by desire. Because man is not satisfied, for example, with roots and caves, his civilization creates "human forms of nature" in farming and architecture.[12]

Criticism on the archetypal level, therefore, is concerned not just with genre and convention. Because it views the symbol as a natural object with a human meaning, its scope is expanded to include civilization. And from this perspective, poetry becomes a product of the vision of the goals of human work. The Blakean influence behind these ideas, especially the concept of civilization as a "human form", is a point to which we shall return shortly.

This view, says Frye, makes it tempting for the archetypal critic to see art as an ethical instrument whose function is to serve society by visualizing its goals. Similarly, in the descriptive phase we are likely to encounter truth as an external goal for art, and in the literal and formal phases, beauty. But as none of these external standards can ultimately determine the value of literature, we need to move beyond the archetypal phase and the goals of civilization, where art is not an end in itself, "to culture, where it is disinterested and liberal, and stands on its own feet." By such passage, we climb to the anagogic level.

THE ANAGOGIC PHASE. This phase is Frye's beatific critical vision. Its argument is more difficult because more visionary. It moves into a world of Blakean ontology and Neo-Platonic metaphysics, a world of discourse so far removed from the usual languages of criticism that the quizzical response

of some readers has sounded like Pound's dismissal of the medieval fourth level: "Anagogical? Hell's bells, '*nobody*' knows what THAT is."[13] This kind of statement is understandable if Frye's statements are taken out of context, in which case, it is true, what he says about anagogy approaches the limits of intelligibility. The problem, then, is to place these statements in the framework of his discourse.

Frye begins by drawing an analogy between his anagogic phase and the medieval fourth level. Anagogy is defined as "universal meaning," a definition which, although not exactly consistent with medieval usage,[14] is important in Frye's description of the anagogic symbol. Frye draws a second analogy between the fifth phase and the fifth mode of his own framework. Both are concerned with the mythopoeic aspect of literature, that is, with "fictions and themes relating to divine or quasi-divine being and powers."[15] These two analogies should alert us to expect a description of the anagogic phase which draws upon religious or visionary language.

The analogy to myth having been drawn, Frye moves toward the principle upon which the fifth phase is said to rest: the *centre* of the order of words. That such a centre exists is predicated on the assumption that our "greatest" literary experiences derive from works which are the most mythopoeic. These are, at one end, primitive and popular works, both of which afford "an unobstructed view of archetypes," and, at the other, the learned and recondite mythopoeia in writers like Dante, Spenser, James, and Joyce. "The inference seems to be," says Frye, "that the learned and the subtle, like the primitive and the popular, tend toward the centre of imaginative experience." The crux of the matter comes in this heavily value-laden statement: "In the greatest moments of Dante and Shakespeare, in, say, *The Tempest* or the climax of the *Purgatorio*, we have a feeling of converging significance, the feeling that here we are close to seeing what our whole literary experience has been about, the feeling that we have moved into the still centre of the order of words."

Frye realizes the difficulties attendant on this kind of assertion; he, therefore, faces the problem of trying to define the norm underlying the order — the "still point" around which his literary universe revolves. His first recourse is to the categories which have been used continually, though not univocally, throughout the Second Essay: symbol, *mythos*, and *dianoia*.

The symbols of the anagogic phase are universal symbols, what Frye refers to as "images of things common to all men." Some symbols, therefore, are not bound by nature or history. This illimitable aspect of the anagogic symbol is what Frye's definition fastens upon.

The *dianoia* and *mythos* of the mythical phase, we recall, were dream and ritual respectively. Expanding these categories to define the symbol of the anagogic phase, Frye says that "literature imitates the total dream of man, and so imitates the thought of a human mind which is at the circumference and not at the centre of reality." This is the "meaning" pole of Frye's dialectic. At the other pole, representing the "narrative" aspect, poetry is said to imitate "human action as total ritual, and so [to imitate] the action of an omnipotent human society that contains all the powers of nature within itself." Unlimited social action (or total ritual) and unlimited individual thought (or total dream) are the dialectical opposites, therefore, which unite to produce the macrocosmic aspect of the anagogic phase. This centrifugal movement, extending indefinitely outward toward a periphery where there are no limits to the intelligibility of the symbol, is but one of the aspects of the anagogic symbol: the macrocosm of total ritual and dream. The other, as we have seen, is the centripetal movement, turning inward toward the centre of the literary universe, or toward the microcosm, which is "whatever poem we happen to be reading." Seen together, these two movements produce the anagogic symbol, or what Frye calls the "monad". This is a paradoxical concept, but only in the sense that an expression like "concrete universal" is also paradoxical; for "monad" refers to the individual poem which manifests or reflects within itself the entire poetic universe.

The figure of William Blake looms large behind Frye's thought in this section, a more important influence than the one allusion to him might suggest. In a prefatory note, Frye tells us he learned his principles of literary symbolism and Biblical typology from Blake in the first place. And when Frye refers to the "imaginative limit of desire" and to the apocalypse as "the imaginative conception of the whole of nature as the content of an infinite and eternal living body", he is using the same kind of language he used in *Fearful Symmetry* to describe the implications of Blake's view of poetry. In Frye's understanding of Blake, in fact, we begin to strike close to the heart of a number of his fundamental convictions: his Romantic aesthetic, the idea that critical principles derive ultimately from poetic vision, his belief in the possibility of a cultural synthesis.[16]

"Anagogic criticism," Frye says, "is usually found in direct connection with religion, and is to be discovered chiefly in the more uninhibited utterances of poets themselves". It is important not to overlook what is being proposed here. Frye is not saying that anagogic symbols can be found in uninhibited poetry. He is saying, rather, that if we want to discover what anagogic *criticism* is, we have to turn to the *poetry* of the more uninhibited writers. At the anagogic

level, in other words, poetry merges into criticism and vice versa. We find anagogic criticism, to give some of Frye's examples, "in those passages of Eliot's quartets where the words of the poet are placed within the context of the incarnate Word. . . . in Valéry's conception of a total intelligence which appears more fancifully in his figure of M. Teste; in Yeats's cryptic utterances about the artifice of eternity, . . . in Dylan Thomas's exultant hymns to a universal human body." Frye does not include Blake among his examples here, but ten years earlier he had written a book on Blake's prophecies in which he came to the same conclusion — that in deciphering Blake's symbolic code one must turn for a solution to the literature itself, not to critical principles lying outside the prophecies.

"I had not realized before this last rereading," Frye says in the preface to a 1962 reprint of *Fearful Symmetry*, "how completely the somewhat unusual form and structure of my commentary was derived from my absorption in the larger critical theory implicit in Blake's view of art. Whatever importance the book may have, beyond its merits as a guide to Blake, it owes to its connection with the critical theories that I have ever since been trying to teach, in Blake's name and in my own." The most important Blakean idea in the Second Essay has to do with the principles of simile and metaphor, Frye's discussion of these coming at the end of his theory of symbols. In a system so firmly dependent on the method of analogy as Frye's, where argument proceeds by associative leaps, it is not surprising to find frequent references to these two grammatical forms of association. Frye is not so much interested, however, in the historical use of simile and metaphor as he is in the modes of thought which underlie them. These are analogy and identity, principles representing the two processes by which the imaginative power of mind transforms the non-human world (Nature) into something with human shape and meaning (Culture). This is the point at which we begin to see the strong influence of Blake.

Frye associates analogy and simile with both descriptive meaning and realism, and identity and metaphor with poetic meaning and myth — a separation based on Blake's distinction between Locke's natural epistemology and his own imaginative one. The relationship, however, as it is spelled out in the *Anatomy*, is more complex than this. The conception one has of simile and metaphor depends on the level of criticism he is engaged in; the meaning which metaphor has at the descriptive level, for example, will differ from its meaning at the anagogical. Frye maintains, in short, that there is a conception of analogy and identity appropriate to each of the five phases.

We must ask, finally, what purpose is served by Frye's analysis of the phases

of symbolism? This question should be answered in the context of Frye's aim, which is to argue that a finite number of valid critical emphases can be sythesized into one grand system. Thus he is led to maintain, to take one example, that historical scholarship and the New Criticism should be seen as complementary, not antithetical, approaches. His attempt to join these and other legitimate methods into a broad theory of contexts means that his attention is always directed away from the peculiar aims and powers of a given critical method. And even though the differences among approaches provide the basis for his classifying them in the first place, these differences are always related to a single set of concepts, the most important being symbol, narrative, and meaning. In other words, Frye translates the principles and methods of other approaches into the language of his own discourse; and this, along with the breadth of reference of his own special categories, expanded far beyond the particular meaning they have in Aristotle, greatly facilitates the achievement of his synthetic end.

Our question then becomes: What function is served by the synthesis? A part of Frye's answer is found in his discussion of the formal phase, where he claims that knowledge of the "whole range of possible commentary" will help "correct the perspective of both the medieval and Renaissance critics who assumed that all major poetry should be treated as continuous allegory, and of the modern ones who maintain that poetry is essentially anti-allegorical and paradoxical." There is no need for the critic, in other words, to restrict himself to one approach. "The present book," Frye says about the *Anatomy*, "is not designed to suggest a new program for critics, but a new perspective on their existing programs, which in themselves are valid enough. The book attacks no methods of criticism . . . [but] the barriers between the methods. These barriers tend to make a critic confine himself to a single method of criticism, which is unnecessary, and they tend to make him establish his primary contacts, not with other critics, but with subjects outside criticism."

Frye's theory of phases, however, has a function beyond that simply of universalizing the critical perspective and thus serving to lessen critical differences. Whether or not the desired new perspective can become a reality depends ultimately on critics accepting the terms Frye uses to define their common concerns. It is important to note, however, as we move up Frye's critical ladder to the last two phases — the mythical and anagogic — that we arrive at the kind of criticism on which the unification of critical thought depends. "In the process of breaking down barriers," Frye says, "I think archetypal criticism has a central role, and I

have given it a prominent place." Frye's theory of phases, in other words, serves to indicate where he himself stands as a critic. His conception of the archetype is absolutely crucial to his entire theory, not simply as a stepping stone to the ultimate critical enterprise of the anagogic phase but also as the basis for his theories of myth and genre (in the Third and Fourth Essays).

IT IS, OF COURSE, too early to suggest how history will come to judge Frye's theory of symbols, or, for that matter, the entire *Anatomy* and Frye's later work. When the time comes for that judgment, however, it will be properly made, I think, only in terms of the entire framework of his criticism: his aim, his principles and assumptions, his critical language, and his method of reasoning. I have tried to keep these things in mind in this exposition of Frye's theory of symbols, for I think they lessen the chance of his statements being taken out of context and they help to guard against peremptory dismissals, like Todorov's.

Although anything like a final judgment lies in the future, a provisional assessment can be offered from the perspective which views Frye's work as a whole. First of all, it is clearly of practical value. It is a system of terms and doctrines and a method of doing criticism that can be used to answer one kind of critical question: the analogical relation of literary works to one another. The evidence for this is not only Frye's own practical criticism but also the growing number of critics who have found his general approach, his special categories, and his method of doing criticism genuinely useful. Second, his criticism is a creative, aesthetic achievement in itself. His conceptual structures are, as George Woodcock has pointed out, "as complexly structured and as filled with allusive resonances as any poem."[17] This is to say that Frye's work goes beyond a strict functionalism where utilitarian values reign supreme. It provides one good reason for reading him, especially for those who believe that criticism need not exalt instruction at the expense of delight.

Finally, Frye's writings taken together form a metacriticism, reaching far beyond literature itself in an effort to account for and defend all the products of culture. In this respect Frye provides a meaningful, if traditional apology for the humanities and a way of doing criticism on a grand scale. It is a kind of criticism which, to use a phrase from Frye's theory of symbols, approaches the imaginative limits of desire.

NOTES

[1] "Meaning in Literature: A Survey," *Poetics*, No. 1 (1971), p. 11.

[2] Frye equates pluralism here with relativism. Yet, although the pluralist would affirm that there is a finite number of valid critical methods, he would certainly deny that they can all be contained within a single theory.

[3] He says, for example, that a poem's meaning in the literal phase is "its pattern or integrity as a verbal structure," and its meaning in the descriptive phase is "the relation of its pattern to a body of assertive propositions" (AC, 78).

[4] See R. S. Crane, *The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry*, 1953, pp. 100-102.

[5] It can be argued that in attempting to refute the logical positivists, Frye has let the opposition dictate the terms of the argument. Meyer Abrams makes the same point about Philip Wheelwright's *The Burning Fountain* in "The Newer Criticism: Prisoner of Logical Positivism?" *Kenyon Review*, 17 (1955), 139-43.

[6] In formal imitation, Frye says, the work of art does not reflect external events and ideas, but exists between the example and the precept". Or again, "The central principle of the formal phase, that a poem is an imitation of nature, is . . . a principle which isolates the individuals poem".

[7] "The form of a poem is the same whether it is studied as narrative or as meaning, hence the structure of imagery in *Macbeth* may be studied as a pattern derived from the text, or as a rhythm of repetition falling on the audience's ear". *Anatomy of Criticism*. 85.

[8] *Freistimmige*: the pseudocontrapuntal style in music where strict adherence to a given number of parts is abandoned, voices being free to enter and drop out at will.

[9] See also Frye's essay on "Allegory" in *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 12-15. On "commentary" see also his essay, "Literary Criticism," in *The Aims and Methods of Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed. James Thorpe (New York: Modern Language Association, 1963), pp. 65-66.

[10] The most highly conventional literature is likely to be naïve (i.e., primitive or popular). It would follow then that archetypes are easiest to study, because more obvious and explicit, in naïve forms: which is one reason for the frequent allusion in Frye's work to primitive and popular forms.

[11] Frye uses the word "ritual" more or less conventionally. "Dream," however, as evident from our discussion already, refers not simply to the subconscious activities of sleep but to the entire inter-relationship between desire and repugnance in shaping thought.

[12] The complete scale of the human forms of nature (animal, vegetable, mineral), as well as those of the divine and social worlds, is developed in detail by Frye in the Third Essay.

[13] Quoted (and endorsed as aptly characterizing Frye's position on the anagogic symbol) by Walter Sutton, *Modern American Critcism*, 1963, p. 255.

[14] The word comes from the Greek, meaning "mystical" or "elevation" ("a leading up"). As a medieval level of interpretation, it signaled ultimate truth, belonging outside both time and space. Dante refers to it as "beyond the senses" and as con-

cerned with "higher matters belonging to the eternal glory" (*Convivio*, II, 1). Before him, Aquinas had defined the anagogical "sense" in similar terms (*Summa Theologica*, Part I, Q1, Art. 10). The word seems generally to have meant spiritual or otherworldly. Frye's term "universal" seems more accurately to parallel the second medieval level, the allegorical, which referred to truth in relation to humanity as a whole or universal truth. See Helen F. Dunbar, *Symbolism in Medieval Thought*, 1929, pp. 19, 95-98, 270-71, 468-69.

[15] Frye calls attention to the fact that he uses the word "myth" in two senses: myth as a form of communication combining ritual and dream (in his discussion of the fourth phase) and myth as a story about the gods (in this discussion of the fifth phase, as well as in the First Essay).

[16] In the history of discourse about literature most critics have derived the deductive foundations of their critical theories from philosophers, from other critics, or from what might be called broadly the speculative and discursive currents of thought which were prevalent at the time. Frye is a notable exception to this tendency, having derived a number of his most important critical principles from the study of imaginative writers. Some influential critics have, of course, been poets at the same time (e.g., Johnson, Dryden, Coleridge, Arnold, and Eliot), but their influence on other critics has not come primarily from their poetry.

[17] "Criticism and Other Arts," *Canadian Literature*, No. 49 (Summer, 1971).

BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR GOD

Catherine McKay

Because i could not stop for God
he kindly stopped for me
said—listen! I got a deal like you wouldn't believe
believe and you shall be saved.
I went to church i kneeled i prayed
i wanted a reply
but God said call back next week I'm all booked up
could you throw a dime in the basket?
I did, i went back next week
He said OK what's your problem?
I said i forget!
He said then come back next week
next week's Special Charities.
So i did, i went back
He said I got you a deal like you wouldn't believe
but i believed it
Things don't shock me the way they used to.
Amen.

FRANCOIS HERTEL

The Unprecedented Voice

Kathleen O'Donnell

FRANÇOIS HERTEL as a poet reveals the evolution of Quebec thought in this century. His poetry, published between 1934 and 1967, largely antedates the Quebec revolution. He was among the first in the province to question traditions. In the 1940's, his voice was unprecedented and unique. Hertel could not at that time remain freely in Quebec to express his thought. Some twenty years later, when his attitudes were widely appreciated, he returned to Canada. It is the purpose of this article to examine the development of Hertel's thought through his poetry, both for its own sake and as an indication of the Quebec revolution.

Born in Rivière-Ouelle in 1905, Rodolphe Dubé was educated in Trois-Rivières and ordained a Jesuit priest. In 1947, he departed for France where he has remained except for extensive travels and a recent sojourn in Kingston, Ontario. His move to France took place at approximately the same time as his abandonment of the Jesuit life. All of his works have been published under the pseudonym, François Hertel. The source of the name is explained:

> Mois, je me suis rebaptisé Hertel.
> Ce furent des espèces de hobereaux de chez nous,
> Des nobles qui étaient aussi coureurs de bois.
> Je leur ai pris leur nom; car ils avaient negligé
> d'avoir des enfants;
> Et il ne faut pas qu'un beau nom se perde.[1]

The original Hertel is commemorated also in the poems "La Verendrye" and "Le luth des vieilles rues".

Hertel published four books of poetry before 1947: *Les voix de mon rêve*, *Axe et parallaxes*, *Strophes et catastrophes*, and *Cosmos*, and four others, published

between 1948 and 1961, may be considered as forming a second group. They are entitled *Quatorze*, *Mes naufrages*, *Jeux de mer et de soleil*, and *Poèmes européens*, of which the final poem is "Adieu à la poésie". Many of the previously published poems are reprinted in the final volumes of poetry: *Anthologie 1934-1964*, *Poèmes perdus et retrouvés*, and *Poèmes d'hier et d'aujourd'hui 1927-1967*.

Les voix de mon rêve (1934) presents fifty poems under the divisions: "Voix de chez nous," "Voix des soirs," "Voix intimes," "Voix sculpturales," and "Voix de la fantaisie." Those titles indicate the fundamental attitudes and interests of the poet. His feeling for the homeland illuminates the first group of poems. "Voix des soirs" consists of poems expressive of the quiet, meditative, and sometimes melancholy mood of evening. The poems of "Voix des soirs" and "Voix intimes" often rise to the level of prayer. The author's most personal thought concerning his relationship to God, his work as educator, and his aim as poet, inspire the section "Voix intimes". In the poems of "Voix sculpturales" is revealed the poet's sensitivity to the beauty of poetry, of music, of dream, but especially of nature. The serious manner of the first four parts of the book is varied in "Voix de la fantaisie". In those poems, even though the subjects may be characterized by gentleness or nostalgia, there is an attempt at gaiety and humour, particularly in form. The neatly designed form of this first volume and of each poem was never repeated by Hertel. Nor did he ever again write poetry with the same measure of objectivity, and control of imagination and emotion as are found here.

Axe et parallaxes (1941) is dedicated to Paul Claudel. In the dedicatory poem, Hertel's aim is defined:

> Moi, je voudrais plutôt passer au delà de l'image
> Epurer le phantasme au creuset de la relation
> Décanter l'idée.

The search for intellectual meaning lies within Hertel's concept of poetry as defined in "Axe ou art poétique". In the poem, "Tristesse", there is a plea for pure knowledge: "Je veux le don total, la nue vision et l'étreinte de l'Idée solide." The poems of this volume treat the author's most serious thoughts: the belief in man's total dependence of God, the mystery of the trinity, the Eucharistic presence. The poem, "Dialogue" reveals an understanding of grace and leads to "Supplique de l'homme", a prayer for purification and salvation. "Prière à la vierge", a prayer only in its conclusion, is an attempt to know Mary, the inspiration of art and devotion through the ages. Divine and human creation are discussed in "Journal". "Parallaxe d'une même étoile" treats of the bond between

two widely separated people who regard the same star. The dramatic pieces also tend to describe and reveal a theme: destiny in "Soir ultime", suffering in "Notre-Dame des Laurentides", the nature of man in "Géometrie de Montréal". The final poem, "Prière pour les philosophes", prays for a continued awareness of man as a creature of God.

The same serious and religious attitude pervades *Strophes et catastrophes* (1934). Its first poems recall the patriotic and personal poems of *Les Voix de mon rêve*. A repeated theme is the regret for lost youth. Hertel expressed little desire for life beyond the time of youthfulness.

> L'homme qui doit vieillir, qu'il s'exile peut-être
> Qu'il renferme sa mort dans un coffre d'airain.

The theme of the beauty of youth is stressed through this book. The poems on Jesuit saints are written from the knowledge and ideals of Hertel's own youth. The last section of the book is addressed to the young poets of Quebec. Hertel speaks to them and counsels:

> Rien n'est plus beau que toi, jeune poète. Reste
> donc en grâce avec la nature et avec Dieu,
> Et que Celui-ce te mène à ton glorieux calvaire!

The drama "Jeunesse" stresses the similarity between youthfulness and art. The whole is founded on the belief in the youthfulness of God who is shown in "Viste du Dieu" to the ultimate source of human creativity.

Cosmos (1945) shows the height of Hertel's philosophical poetry. The opening lines are full of strength and conviction:

> Dans la maturité de mon âge
> Parfaitement sain de corps, et d'esprit me croyant sain,
> J'ai voulu d'un effort puissant de tous mes muscles
> Exprimer;
> Dire ce que n'avait pas été dit encore sur le Cosmos
> Grâce à une manière unique de la concevoir.

"Cosmos" presents the whole history of the universe, beginning and ending in God. Somewhat in the manner of the previous book, *Cosmos* explores meanings, describes experiences, delineates values. The human experiences of solitude, of the world, of self, and of art are touched in successive poems. The moods of the poems vary from anguish to ecstacy as Hertel ranges mentally through a gamut of human experience which culminates in the final pieces entitled "Petits poèmes

à la gloire du sport" and "Prière pour les artistes". Sports are described as "reflets d'un divinité joueuse" by which man is raised "vers Celui qui est l'auteur des techniques et des harmonies". Sports, characterized by technique and harmony, resemble art by which also man is drawn to God in the manner described in "Prière pour les artistes". In this concluding poem of the book, Hertel describes the artist as a man chosen to suffer, to give of himself, and to offer his work in homage to God.

Totally suggestive of the talent of the author, these four books yet do not clearly indicate the direction to be followed in his maturity. From the delicacy and charm of *Les Voix de mon rêve*, he moved to the meditative and philosophical work of *Axe et parallaxes*, then to the aesthetic and didactic notes of *Strophes et catastrophes*, and finally to the breadth and elevation of *Cosmos*. There was yet no quarrel with himself. The poems of charitable love, of humble faith, and of personal holiness were not to be repeated.

THE SECOND MOVEMENT of Hertel's poetry differs in subject matter and in mood from the work of his first period. In the publications of 1948 to 1961, strength of imagination, trenchancy of feeling, and the incisive truth of human experience are developed and illustrated. Hertel's prose works of this time reveal the direction of his intellectual development toward atheism and a cosmic humility.

Quatorze, the first book of his second period, reproduces many of the early works found suitable and adequate in form according to the theory of poetry described in the Introduction to that book. The elements of poetry are defined as a personal rhythm and an original conception of the world. Through poems of nostalgia, of imagination, of aesthetics, Hertel presents his understanding and creation of life. The new poems, added here, indicate a change in Hertel's thought concerning man. His view had been generally understanding and appreciative. His aversion, when it was expressed, was directed only against the errors of man as, for example, in "Cosmos" and in "Saints martyrs du Canada". In *Quatorze*, however, he wrote: "Entre les animaux, l'homme est le moins humain." The imagery becomes hard and metallic to convey this new and disillusioned view of mankind. Certainly, that attitude and understanding had been present in "Le surhomme" but here there is no counterbalance of "Le point de vue de Dieu".

That harsh view of humanity results in a turning away from mankind and a concentration on the self in *Mes naufrages*. The soul is in a state of wretchedness,

of despair, of exile. The intensity of suffering leads to a state of inversion so that satisfaction is found in the underworld, in the black silence, under the black sun. The damnation is accepted as the bitter fate of the unhappy and rejected. The state is most horrifying as it is active, strong, and vengeful. This book contains Hertel's strongest poetry, poetry of the anguish of the inward struggle.

The poems of *Jeux de mer et de soleil* represent a continuation, in a more concentrated form, of the themes of the inevitability of destiny, of the absurdity of life, of the vileness of man. Continued also are the images of ocean and of night, and the mood of bitter loneliness. The self-deprecation, which had been apparent from Hertel's earliest expression, is exaggerated until there is no respect for or value of the human state. "En pleine nuit" expresses a damnation of all mankind. Awareness of the condition is obliterated in sleep, in intoxication. Yet, there remains, as in the poem "A ma mère", an understanding of the worth of one human being and a hope for unity, for the end of loneliness, in some future life. For poetry of this density of thought, there is necessitated, as described in "Art poètique", strong and controlled verse. Through it, the author hopes to be delivered from the monster imprisoning him.

This whole second movement of Hertel's poetry is poetry of exile, poetry of Europe, work which does not have the security, physical or spiritual, of his home. The last volume of this second group of poems, *Poèmes européens* repeats the nightmare poems of *Mes naufrages*. Thus the book opens with a mood of harshness and bitterness. In the face of the suffering of life, death becomes an acceptable alternative. The desperation grows until all sense of reason and sanity is doubted. The only attitude found possible is that of epicureanism as described in the poem "Sterilité". That sense of sterility leads to the decision against poetry:

> J'ai plus de cinquante ans. Halte-là, mon beau vice!
> Ne faisons plus d'efforts au-dessus du normal.
> Fermons bien les volets sur l'univers complice,
> Car le bien qu'on impose est la source du mal.

There remain, if not the pleasure of writing, at least those of travel and discovery. Such subjects inspire the poems of Europe and Africa. All the sources of enjoyment by this time lie outside the self. Concentration upon himself or upon human nature leads only to revulsion. He must find beauty and exultation externally, and he does so magnificently in "Hymne à l'univers".

The poems of this second period of Hertel's writing reveal a complexity and concentration not found in the early work. The statements of poetic theory indi-

cate Hertel's deep consciousness of himself as poet. The forms are designed and justified in accordance with the development of his thought. In *Quatorze*, the sonnet form provides perfectly for the poems of description and reflection. In that book, Hertel also gave, as he demanded of any poet, his concept of life. It is hard and disillusioned. Unbearable, it could not be expressed simply or in prescribed forms. Hence, there are the poems of desperation of *Mes naufrages*, written in free verse. Some relief from the personal anguish was certainly found in the art of poetry as it is described and practised in *Jeux de mer et de soleil.* There was yet, though, no experience of peace. Only a sense of acceptance, as expressed in *Poèmes européens*, was to come. That ability to live and enjoy was to increase as it was directed outward to a glorification of the world and of the whole universe. In his first books, Hertel began from the security of faith and tradition which he began to question. The second group of poetry volumes show him rather beginning from disillusionment and desperation, and proceeding to a position of epicureanism and cosmic humility.

While Hertel's final three volumes of poetry give very little new material, they yet reveal concisely the development of the author and his own evaluation of his work. In *Anthologie 1934-1964* are conserved selected poems from all the previous publications. Given in chronological order, these poems show Hertel's first traditions and reflections, the increasing disquietude and inward suffering, the final view of man within the universe. *Poèmes perdus et retrouvés*, containing selections from *Poèmes européens* and *Jeux de mer et de soleil*, as well as previously unpublished work, shows the pleasure, the torment, and the final balance of feeling experienced in Hertel's development towards his personal philosophy of life.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HERTEL'S ATTITUDES may be summarized. From the beginning, there was a tone of melancholy. It became the bitter anguish of human solitude. The early tender feeling for mankind, particularly children, was replaced by an awareness of the inhumanity of man. The love of the homeland as expressed in the poems of Three Rivers gave way to a poetry of Europe and of the whole universe. The choice was one of anonymity over identity. The first poems expressed a clear reasonableness about life as being totally directed toward God. In the second period, that faith is lost, and there is only a feeling of the absurdity of life. Poems of historical or philosophical description were replaced by descriptions of personal inward suffering. The first book concluded with light humour; the last, with a statement of epicureanism. Poetry, which was at first

created as an offering to God, was explained and justified, and finally abandoned.

All such changes indicate the growth of individual thought, necessary in human maturity. Never to be regained was the original innocence. Yet, a greater peace than here expressed might be hoped for. Of all the mysteries that Hertel probed, suffering is not one. In the later poetry, it is masked with gaiety. Thus Hertel remains, in the end, without a philosophy of rest or happiness.

The examination and rejection of tradition and the subsequent formation of new thought characterizes the development of a people as well as an individual poet. In this sense, there was first suggested an analogy between the Quebec turmoil of the 1960's and the intellectual evolution revealed so succinctly in the poetry. The poetry of François Hertel forecasts and illuminates the growth of his native province from the early traditionalism to the self-questioning of the mid-twentieth century.

NOTES

[1] François Hertel, *Axe et parallaxes* (Montreal: Les Editions Varietes, 1941), p. 10.

A FIRST TIME

Joan Thornton

Our relationship shagged brilliant ice
Beard of the Arctic nights crenellated
Dreams beneath eyelids half closed ecstasies
Ice melting between our legs trickles cold
Exciting between my hands love cupping
Your sacrament drink it down to its dregs
Lapsed on this mattress soaking with our
Combined sweats white sheets rustle of words
Articulate unspoken feelings
Only fingers & thighs talk Memory
Sprouting ears all over my skin soaks
Up impressions retinal shifts sweet
Oscillations oiled Loves ball bearings
A World over frees this amazing shudder

NEW WOMEN POETS

Selected by
Al Purdy

STORM WARNING 2 *is a book of poems, soon to be published, by writers under thirty years of age; or slightly over if I stretched a point. And I hasten to add; that age limit is the publisher's decree, not mine. Many of the women poets in S.W. 2 are there as a result of a press release pleading for more women poets from all points of the Canadian compass. Over a three-week period I must have read five thousand poems, many written in the style or under the influence of writers like Marianne Moore, Leonard Cohen and other great Americans. However, in the poems published here, I can see few traces of other writers' influence; but that may be the result of severe eye strain on my part. In any case, I'm very enthusiastic about the book as a whole, and these poets in particular. They are dazzlers: and if I ever had any doubt about the ability of women poets, that dubious doubt is hereby solemnly exorcised by "people" in this book. As for male poets for whom there is no room in this stable — they are quite good too.* A.P.

ONE PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND FACTS

Rosemary Aubert

Ted Hughes
is smiling up at me
handsomely half-toned
in a borrowed anthology.
This is the first time
I have ever seen
the photogenic row
of perfect teeth,
the carefully casual hair
brushed back
from the dashing brow

and his neat little collar
pointing twice
at his silky tie.
He looks
like someone
you'd want to meet
in a bar
some night when you were
hell-bent on going
all the way
(when you were twenty, say,
and up til then
had been
saving it).
Or maybe like the guy
your otherwise useless roommate
brought to the senior prom.
What he looks like
is every man
your mother ever told you
to stay away from.
I don't know anything
about Ted Hughes,
don't even want to read
his sample poems
posed here
in natty little pinstriped
four-line stanzas.
I'd rather
nurse my prejudice,
hear him yelling
in the sunny little kitchen,
"You don't even know
what to use
a goddam oven for."
And hear behind her
her mother's voice,
soft, insistent,
like a charitable scourge
falling on dead ears,
"Sylvia, I told you so."

TRUSTING THE SONG

Erin Mouré

out of the black dawn
of british factories thru
switch-points of time & into
the black night of mountains
trusting the ritual
of metal gripped cold
in the palm of your hand

rumbling low & certain
across trestles curving dark
into cedar
trusting the blind robot
switches rail beneath you fixed
to rock trusting bolts electric
circuits trusting cylinders
lubed w/ oil
trusting ties & the wheels rusht
momentum luring you east
from vancouver

rolling thru the bend into
the white trusting light
of another train

knowing each wrenched
jolt seconds before —
knowing crusht metal
jerkt from your fist concussion
of steel hurtling your awful
flesh hard on the grade —
trusting
the black space before your eyes
trusting death

is this
what your ancestor children groped
coal from the cheeks of england for?
is this what your ancestor madmen

moulded iron into pistons for?
is this why your forebears
left sheep & their fields dressed
w/ cotton?

that one night on the mountain line
you should be discovered
dead beneath a diesel engine your trust
derailed glint of steel & a memory
of two centuries graved
in white light behind your eyes?

IN OUR HEAT

Elizabeth Johnston

I collected a paper hat as I came in the door
and frantic fingers pulled me into the room.
You stood by somewhere, a figure of cement,
while a voice whispered in my ear
that there was pot to be had near the stair,
I fancied that a young musician began to look at me
while we all inhaled desperately.

I forgot my reasons for coming
and watched while you ran hot hands
toward a cool blonde
and my head cursed revenge at your head,
then you turned your guilty eyes to loud conversation.

My best friend
asked me to attend while she tried to relate to strangers
and the more she drank, the more she wanted to relate,
I wondered that I wanted her
or even you with your polygamous lust.

The hostess' little daughter
crept slowly down the stairs and held hands with you
before being carried away by her mother.

My musician, in passing, put an unseen hand on my thigh
and muttered an invitation.
I heard myself moan as my eyes closed
and my dress slipped away.
There was an explosion and a man screamed
Suddenly you and I were outside,
naked and fucking in the snow
and, in our heat,
telling each other that this was enough.

ME AS MY GRANDMOTHER

Rosemary Aubert

Sometimes
I look up quickly
and see for an instant
her face
in my mirror,
random tightness
turns my mouth
into a facsimile of hers,
eyes caught oddly
in the glass
make me
into her
looking at me.
Now that she's dead,
I understand
that it is right
that I should age
and wrinkle into her.
It brings her back,
it puts me into
the cycle of family.
We look at all time
with just that
one same face.

FOETUS IN A JAR

Darien Watson

Hello baby. I
didn't expect to find you here
bathed
in the sterile hiss of Science;
but
the light is sterling
and rejoices in your presence,
ovals its mercuries
to admire you as
I do.
So here you are,
resting like submerged waterlilies
do,
halfway between bottom and top
of your jar:

Rare baby, parian
porcelain and creamy rose, I
see jewellers' veins finer than
silk from caterpillars
tracked under your cobweb skin,
and ten toes!
Ten fingers: Twenty
pink bristles plucked
from a cat's tongue.
Rare boy, I
see herring ribs, a cage
for your locket-sized heart;
and a fat umbilicus twisting white
like a first birthday candle,
keeping you company.

It's me baby. I
thought you were gone, but
here you are, smiling
as though you were made that way,
your eyes small
incisions, unwrinkled.

Effortless, your smile goes in
for itself and the light.
I'm glad you
didn't scream; there was no
time for interruption
of spherical dreams like
clouds or balloons, you
came through intact, right
down to your
single floret of
baby's breath balls;
rocked
in the warm jelly
of your jar,
six-inch Christmas stocking child,
innocent
homunculus.

GROWING OLDER

Maureen McCarthy

Growing older
I begin to feel
the immensity,
the snow begins to glisten in my marrow,
the loneliness echo from my voice,
and though I long to wander like Ulysses
this has become
slowly, finally,
the land of all my language.

(*Other poems from this selection appear on pages* 13, 62, 79, 86, 108)

review articles

ANIMATE IMAGININGS

Mike Doyle

ELDON GARNET, *The Last Adventure*, Oberon Press; VICTOR COLEMAN, *Stranger*, Coach House Press; BILL BISSETT, *medicine my mouth's on fire*, Oberon Press; STUART MACKINNON, *The Intervals*, Coach House Press.

A FRIEND suggested recently that my *criticism* doesn't fully live up to its name, that it doesn't *find fault* enough; so let me preface my brief discussion of these four books by saying that for a long time I've felt it is the critic's primary job to illuminate the work he is discussing, as, say, Ford Madox Ford habitually did in a long reviewing career. Marianne Moore once said that, "Criticism should animate the imagination, afford comparisons one had not thought of, should be affirmative with unequivocal gusto . . ." As an example she gave Pound's *The Spirit of Romance*, admittedly a landmark work. In my view, almost any book that is worth discussing is worth affirming. Given the choice, I'd rather ignore a bad book or a bad poem altogether (unless there's a chance that it may do definite harm). Of course, there's not often the opportunity to be *unequivocally* affirmative, but one's central view of the work should be positive.

When I come to the four books in hand I respond to them with varying degrees of enthusiasm. All are competent (there are so many hundreds, thousands perhaps, of competent poets today), all are fluent, and if they have a pervasive weakness it is that they are *too* fluent. I find that the one which might be considered the least literate is the strongest in poetry.

Although Eldon Garnet has done some good things (including co-founding Press Porcépic), I am not much turned on by *The Last Adventure*. This is a pity, in the first instance because I am a great admirer of Tony Onley, whose graphics grace the book. As a "piece of book" *The Last Adventure* (Oberon, but printed by Coach House) is good to hold in the hand. It's the poems which make me uneasy.

Moments of experienced reality seem to be scattered about among generalized musings, lacking in hard specific contact. Such musings are nearly impossible to lift to the level of incandescence:

> phantoms riding across the open field
> lances drawing quarters
> with the air screaming
> their way into the guns into
> the sound of the gun and we ride
> drawn ride the tide following
> the moon. no turning back
> after the first kick, standing still.

Presumably because it has special significance this poem opens the "adventure". Is it a birth poem ("first kick")? Possibly. Are the phantoms real? Everyone's

are. But are these convincing, compelling? Who, or what, is "screaming"? Technically the word is meant to work on "air" and on, what, "phantoms"? Or "lances"? Why is "screaming" placed at the end of line three? It's melodramatic there. Garnet's syntax doesn't grab at one's attention, make one do any work, but generally goes "trailing on/ in one straight unbroken line". He subscribes to the new orthodoxy of minimum punctuation, which can be (unless you have the *élan vital* of someone like Williams) an invitation to snore off.

Conjured up in a world in which there is "no escape from the downward spiral", his protagonist, rider in strange cars through strange night landscapes, hunter, bare survivor in frozen terrain, is "unable to do more than circles", moving inward towards a self-imposed death (after which he writes the poem!). Blankets, chestnuts, microscopes, many specifics are mentioned, but they are not somehow rendered palpable, largely because they are offered in a dour and unresonant measure. Where do such conclusions leave me, after my opening statement? A first line of one Garnet poem, "shadows in an uneasy dream" sums up the book for me, not a *bad* book, but lacking in rigour.

Like Garnet's book, Victor Coleman's *Stranger* begins by moving into traffic. For Garnet's "I wander in the stream" we have Coleman's "the too soft arm enfolds us/ as we elbow our way up stream", and that "soft arm" is the extra dimension. Coleman experiments syllabically and with the line, technical matters which tend to make him stick to the point. The point, however, might seem to some rather old-fashioned—for the stance is discursive and (sometimes even explicitly) moralizing. Is it looseness or epistemological ambiguity which makes him write, "the gazebo glints/ or is it a plant?" and "you would think/ the shadow elsewhere"? Both these are from "A Glove", which has taut resonance, on the theme "my arms/ around you/ bleed this poetry". Skilful use of line does not altogether offset the abandonment of traditional punctuation. As so often, the method has led to a reduced syntax, loss of some of the advantages of language. Gain in swiftness and ease, avoidance of the static and cumbersome, has also meant loss of complexity and sophistication, though the *gaps* in "Back East", for example, have a kind of meta-syntactical effect.

"I can't stop being there/ accumulating the pleasures/ of being other people", he says, though *Stranger* is an apposite title. That the "other people" are almost always women, and the relationships erotic, may account for a voyeuristic element in the poems. A tension, hard to explain, invests their texture, which is monotonous (i.e., in a monotone), yet fragmented, spiky, "crumpled shards" (the man says, of his heart. Never use the word "heart" in your poems, they used to tell me in the days of Eliot's hegemony). The substance of the whole may be gathered from a brief "trailer" (rather more directly "explanatory" than usual, however):

> I look for you in mythology
> I look for you in the books in the room
> I can see your face in the window
> but I am afraid to turn my head
> I snarl behind a darkened door
> and push my heavy self against and by
> you

By no means the most engaging or gripping moment in *Stranger* this passage nonetheless has it all (except for the odd starburst), the self's preoccupations, the

self-preoccupation, the single-track syntax, and the push for contact, at once oblique, aware, and anxious. When all's said, within a small area of consciousness the book has genuine magnetism.

Bill bissett's is a more hopeful world. By now his mixture of chant-poems, visual concretes, and commitment poems, always offered with engaging energy, is very familiar. The *shapes* of the poems (in the mouth, in the eye) fix one's attention, the personal phonetics and typo-orthography and the absence of "careful libran". Again one notes the absence of venturesome syntax (a strong preference for the declarative sentence) but perceives it in a different universe, not of thought, but meditation, here in many instances on the soul, "yr soul twind around th orange ths time".

Many of the "soul" pieces are shape poems, based on the single word, apparently exploring the soul's (physical?) dimensions. Others ("soul", and other) are based on a mantra-like line repetition, which is often also visual. Still others shape as a repeated line which gradually modulates into either an exploration of the *meaning* ("what does mean mean?") of that line, or takes a direction (or variety of directions) the frame-line opens the way to (such are "a forest in the shell and water" and "into the open lips of th sun"). Others again are discursive, though these too commonly offer arresting individual visual shapes. For obvious reasons these are the easiest to talk about at length, but they often have the least impact. One here offers a poetic, "a pome dusint have to be about anything often it can be abt nothing". His best poems are not "about", but are meditation-objects. Approximately, the one critical note in the book, struck several times, is anti-government, anti-political. Though perhaps the weakest of the poetry, these add a dimension and to some extent *earth* the book, which is a welcome addition to the canon of a distinctive poet.

Stewart Mackinnon's *The Intervals* is both like and unlike Garnet's book. Garnet cools our heels in an Arctic inner landscape, Mackinnon is less spectacular, more ruminative, though lacking bissett's ultimate joyousness or Coleman's reverberating of syllables against the range of his experience. "Why am I here?" Mackinnon seems, in effect, to be asking, and dares to open his whole collection with a line like, "In the long silence of the heart". The book (another physically good to the hand) reminds one of a moment in Ibsen's *Brand,* when Agnes thinks:

> It is easy to be strong in the storm
> Easy to live the warrior's life
> But to sit down alone in silence . . . is
> harder

(or, of course, Pascal's famous observation, that all man's difficulties come about because he can't sit quiet at home alone.) Mackinnon has mixed feelings about "this interval/ of comatose seclusion". He writes of it both as "halcyon days" and "winter in the heart" in what appears to be an autobiographical sequence on a time of retreat and inner questioning.

What I come up against in *The Intervals* is an often-quoted dictum of Eliot's with which I've quarrelled for most of my life: "The more perfect the artist, the more separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates". I have never agreed with this, but it has edged me towards carefulness. When we *publish* have we the right to assume that our day-to-day life will inevitably interest a thousand people? Of course not. *I* am

interested in what Mackinnon goes through in this book, I discover a fellow-feeling there, but I couldn't confidently assert that many others must be. Again, if the substance is routine enough (and it is) and the thought also (as it is), we are left with the area of "language experiment", but Mackinnon himself says "anyway I'm no strategist" — his poem-structures and syntactical deployments are in no way a making-new or a discovery. Again here lack of punctuation leads to attenuation, revealed by repeated use of conjunctive or disjunctive sentence patterns. I can't resist it: the lack of rigour either leads to or derives from a lack of vigour. I feel I'd like the man behind these poems, and I'm curious as to how he has such sinewy heroes as David Livingstone, Rasputin and Rosa Luxembourg (as the book's cover states).

Though Mackinnon's work is nearer in kind to my own, a reading of these four books together tends to highlight for me a fitful magnetism characteristic of Coleman's work, but most of all the hard energy and assurance which make bill bissett's writing so distinctive.

COLOURS OF DIFFERENT KINDS

Roderick Haig-Brown

HUGH MACLENNAN, *Rivers of Canada.* Macmillan. $25.00.

THIS IS NOT one book, but two. There is the heavy quarto picture book, rich with colour as they all are these days, and there is Hugh MacLennan's text, rich in colours of an entirely different kind. The two are interrelated, of course, but they do not really belong together. The picture book is to be looked at and left around — pleasant and often interesting. MacLennan's text is to be read; it should not be printed in double columns on shiny paper in a volume weighing the better part of four pounds. It belongs in a book of a size and shape to be held in the hand and read.

It is something, to take on the rivers of Canada. Canada has a substantial proportion of the world's freshwater, and rivers to match. Canada is an immense conception, as a nation, as geography, as distance, as social history and her rivers play a big part in all of this. MacLennan has faced the challenge honestly and has made a fine book about the big Canadian rivers.

No book could possibly tell the whole story of Canada's rivers. To write an effective book of this kind one must select certain rivers and choose a point of view from which to write. MacLennan sees our rivers as geological agents and as nation-makers and he selects them to these ends. He writes as scholar, Canadian, poet, riverman; he is not intimate with his chosen rivers, nor are such big rivers really subjects for intimacy. MacLennan sees them broadly as powerful forces shaping the physical aspects of the country and almost equally powerful in directing its human development. But he

feels and expresses also the emotional aspects of moving water, its beauty and patterns and persistence.

Time and again in the course of the book I found myself with an almost eerie feeling that MacLennan's roots and associations extend right back to the beginnings of Canada. His sympathy for the Selkirk settlers is so deep and strong that he might well have been one of them; the association through a recollection of his great grandmother Abigail Bigelow with Timothy Bigelow almost gives the impression that he was himself a traveller with Timothy to Niagara Falls, Lake Ontario, Toronto and Montreal in July of 1805. There is a similar intensity in his accounts of the explorations of Alexander Mackenzie, David Thompson and Simon Fraser, but those men seem quite close to all of us.

Perhaps the best idea of the book can be given in the names of the chosen rivers: the St. Lawrence first and foremost, the Ottawa, the St. John with so much of its lovely valley lost to the "status symbol" of Mactaquac Dam, the Miramichi, the Niagara, the Red, the Saskatchewan, the Mackenzie, the Saguenay, the Hamilton, the Fraser and the Columbia. There is a special view of each and every one of them and each is fitted into its place in the pattern of Canada. MacLennan, as always, is searching into "the riddle of Canada" and the type of men and women the country produces from the different parts of itself. In ways of life and settlement along the different rivers he offers some of the answers.

Some of the most exciting parts of the book take one back through geological ages to the different forms of land and water that are still echoed on occasion today — the flood plain of the Red River, for instance, that was once Lake Agassiz, "the largest fresh water lake in existence", and included the wonderful Delta Marshes and Lake Winnipeg. The sense of the glaciers is never far away in MacLennan's Canada, nor is the haunting concept that one day they will take over the land again. The sense of geological past is strong in the magnificent description of the Grand Falls of the Hamilton, which MacLennan never saw and could not have described with anything approaching such vivid strength if he had seen them; the description is a reconstruction from the granite skeleton of the falls after the water had been diverted to the Churchill Project. Following closely upon this vivid description his appreciation of the magnificence of the Churchill Falls Development is deeply moving and in strong contrast to the bitter condemnation of the ill-conceived James Bay Development that follows a few pages later.

It disturbed me a little to find the Fraser characterized again and again as "savage" and once as seeming "absolutely hostile to man and all his works". To me the Fraser is also the Thompson, the Chilco, the Stellaco, the Nechako and itself clear back to Tête Jaune Cache and the Rocky Mountains, a superb and beautiful river system that makes the life and character of half of British Columbia. Nor do I feel it should be called "yellow": through most of the year it is the colour of desert sand and in spite of its glacial origins it does not carry a particularly heavy load of silt. These inaccuracies of impression are easily explained by MacLennan's later note that all his visits except the last one were made during the spring run off and perhaps I should not have hurt feelings over

them. But "yellow malevolence" seems hardly fair to a river so magnificent in beauty, so superbly powerful and so rich in yield to those who live with it and know it.

This sort of comment is really nothing more than regional chauvinism and in no way alters the fact that this is a splendid, even noble book about rivers, Canadian rivers and their meaning in the past, present and future of our country. It is more than able to stand on its own and I hope that when the present edition is exhausted it will be republished as a book to be read, perhaps with a few carefully selected pictures, certainly with a few additional maps. No book by a great writer should become lost in the evanescense of a modern picture book.

TOWARDS UNIVERSALITY

Christopher Levenson

EARLE BIRNEY, *Collected Poems.* McClelland & Stewart. 2 vols. $20.00.

IF A SELECTED WORKS is a simplified plan of the inner city with all the requisite tourist sights, the complete works is more like the local street map with index that contains as well the mental homes and sewage treatment plants. For Earle Birney such an analogy is particularly appropriate, both because in his poetry (and here even in the geographical rather than straight chronological ordering of his poems) he shows himself to be a seasoned world-traveller whose trunk is plastered with many exotic labels, and because in his maturer poetry he has consistently used his sense of place as the starting point not simply for local colour but also for casual-seeming but well-developed meditations on such recurring themes as the relationship between poverty and affluence, civilization and the primitive, in which he views himself ironically as the self-conscious outsider, spy disguised as tourist. "Cartagena de Indias," which finds human and poetic unity beneath social and cultural diversity is a well-known example of this strategy, but the geographical metaphor extends also to such a movingly witty late poem of love or longing as "i think you are a whole city". The metaphor of woman as landscape, familiar to us at least since Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, takes on a fresh twist in his low-key conclusion:

> i can hear your beat-
> ing centre will i
> will i make it
> are there maps of you
>
> i keep circling imagining
> parks fountains your stores
>
> back in my single bed i wander
> your stranger dreaming
> i am your citizen

Indeed, this poem reveals one key aspect of Birney's work. Although, as Frank Davey has pointed out, there has been a general shift in Birney's writing since the late forties from the public to the private man and from "professorial omniscience" to a humbler willingness to discover, his private man still operates within a public context. Even though his best poems have

become increasingly personal in the sense that they are recording not universal truths but *his* impressions, they are never confessional in tone but observe and evoke relationships between individuals and races.

If one returns to the first volumes this public aspect can be seen to be one unifying factor throughout his œuvre that counteracts the somewhat centrifugal effect of Birney's immense formal virtuosity. Although Birney has remained a left-wing, liberal agnostic whereas Auden turned to Christianity, the parallels with Auden's personality and career are suggestive. Because of their strong socio-political commitments, both poets wrote much in the thirties that now seems over-rhetorical; both expressed a sense of social doom:

> If the crops from these smoking furrows
> the ache in the back, the smile of his wife
> were lines in the map of a reasoned future
> without booby traps and hidden mortars of class
> and the doom forever poised in the eorld s heaven. . . .

and both poets experimented with Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse, though what at its best, as in "Vancouver Lights", served as a valuable structural principle, sometimes disintegrates into mannerism and encourages one of Birney's earlier weaknesses, adjectivitis, with a corresponding diminution of the role of the verb. Both poets, finally, have modified their dominant tone from didactic to ironic backed by a keen moral awareness and a concern for humanity in all its frailty, though Birney's conclusions, as distinct from the sense of the rhythms, are considerably more pessimistic. The main difference, of course, lies in Birney's enormous gusto and exuberance, which leads him to disregard literary tact and even didactic effectiveness for the sake of pyrotechnics, whereas Auden's characteristic stance is one of cool, bored distance. Sometimes, as in "Atlantic Door", an abundance of disparate imagery results in metaphoric overkill: too much is happening in the individual lines so that one never really enters into the cadence of the poem and the semantic meaning stifles in a clutter of adjectives. Yet it is probably this same capacity for excess that has given us such entertaining tours de force in mimicry of Chaucerian or New Zealand English and of Fiji or Mexican "pidgin".

This element of excess decreases in the later poetry, which is more laconic, though its attention to the occasional vivid detail is no less precise. Like Purdy, however, Birney is often most effective in recent modes when he can give free rein to his garrulity, or what appears as such. Sometimes he lapses into the slackness of conversation rather than its colloquial vigour ("In Purdy's Ameliasburg" strikes me in this way) but a poem such as "Cucurachas in Paradise" by contrast modulates gradually and attractively from casual anecdote to science fiction.

Beyond one's admiration for Birney's sheer versatility, that ranges from the traditional narratives of "David" and "Conrad Kain" through the dramatic structure of "Trial of a City" to his recent experiments with concrete poetry, the overwhelming impression is that of the triumph of a certain sort of personality, a certain way of looking at the world. For despite his success in some longer meditative poems like "Near False Creek Mouth" and the smaller-scale charm of such epigrams as "Curaçao", Birney's virtues seem to me to be essentially those of the ironist. One does not necessarily

attain universality by travelling but, starting out as he does with a breadth of human sympathy, Birney's journeys have afforded him many occasions to develop it. All that Birney's reputation needs now, to complement this splendidly-produced but expensive boxed edition is a paperbound version at half the price.

THE MINOR MARVEL

Hallvard Dahlie

BRIAN MOORE, *The Great Victorian Collection.* McClelland and Stewart. $7.95.

BRIAN MOORE'S new novel is essentially a work about the act of creation and the attendant philosophical speculations about the nature of reality. The extravagant premise upon which it is predicated — the tangible realization of one's dream — poses a problem both for Moore and the reader, though I suspect that Moore is far more satisfied with his handling of it than the average reader initially will be. Indeed, the control and confidence that Moore displays over his material suggests that he has no qualms about it at all, and all reports indicate that he finds this novel one of the most satisfying of his ten novels to date.

The weaving of a realistic story upon a fantastic premise has of course been a long accepted part of our literary heritage, as works like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* amply testify. Once Gulliver is transported to the appropriate island, as it were, the rest of his tale is quite acceptable as a realistic chronicle, and Swift makes sure of that initial step by spelling out precise geographical and navigational details. Moore achieves a similar degree of verisimilitude by providing rational, logical explanations of the very ordinary events surrounding Anthony Maloney's arrival in Carmel-by-the-Sea, of his character and background, and of his dream with its sudden fulfilment. The trick is of course to delude the reader momentarily into a "willing suspension of disbelief" and then to re-instate him quickly and logically into the credible world. The dream coming true is admittedly the sticky point in the novel, but since we realize along with Maloney that "no one has ever done anything remotely like it before," we really cannot apply the rational rules of reality to this phenomenon, any more than we can to the many kinds of miracles that have been recorded throughout the world.

The place of miracles, secular or otherwise, and more generally of faith, has always occupied a large part in Moore's novels: Judith Hearne, Mrs. Tierney, Fergus Fadden, Tomas O'Malley, all in their own way dramatized the emptiness and terror of a world devoid of the miraculous. In *Fergus* (1970), Moore had also experimented with the fictional possibilities of dreams, hallucinations, and other inexplicable visions, but that novel was concerned more with a kind of personal exorcism than with the more objective and complex realm of ideas.

There was a certain *déjà vu* quality about it, and in many respects the dilemma of Fergus Fadden was revealed and resolved through his being exposed to a ghostly procession of variants of earlier Moore protagonists — Diarmuid Devine, Ginger Coffey, Brendan Tierney, Gavin Burke. In that work the dividing line between reality and unreality, or between dream and waking, was always quite clear, and when Fergus dismissed his ghosts at novel's end, his position on terrestrial reality was, if not completely comfortable, at least tangible and recognizable.

The Great Victorian Collection suggests among other things that at least all of Moore's personal ghosts have been laid to rest, for in terms of his own life and career it is probably the least autobiographical of all his novels. Yet in a larger sense it is an autobiography of himself as an artist, and a portrait of all artists whose most extravagantly imagined works of art have come into being. The realization of one's dream is, next to creating life itself, the ultimate act of creation, for one can shape this product without any regard for the rules of a rational world, though, as Maloney quickly discovers, the created thing brings with it its own rules which must not be violated. When an artist creates anything — book, painting, sculpture, or Collection — there are really two aspects of the creation which are frequently in opposition: the product as the artist conceived and shaped it, and the interpretation(s) of it offered by the rest of the world. The artist cannot change what he has created, and any attempt to do so will debase it, but the rest of the world is really free to do what it will to the work of art — even, Moore wryly concedes, transform it into a kind of Disneyland. If the work is in any way remarkable — and Maloney's Collection is certainly that — then it will remain, as one scientific journal commented after Maloney's death, "a minor marvel ... which will outlive the man who created it."

Yet, remarkable as the Collection is, Moore's attention keeps coming back to "the man who created it," for Maloney's dilemma as a human being involved with a creation that he cannot really control provides a complex challenge for the novelist. Like many of Moore's earlier protagonists, Maloney represents the very essence of ordinariness, and there is nothing in his career or his nature which hints at any extraordinary possibilities: "that ordinary young man was twenty-nine years old and an assistant professor of history at McGill University in Montreal," and though his rational nature is stressed, Moore allows the *New York Times* man, Brewster, to comment, "I've been wondering who's behind Maloney. He doesn't strike me as very smart." There is no irony here — Moore reserves that device for other characters in the novel — and Maloney is ultimately totally credible because he is so ordinary and guileless.

There is, however, sufficient evidence in Maloney's academic background to make the nature of his miracle plausible: his doctoral dissertation had dealt with the art and architecture of Victorian England, and he had once nourished a hope, quickly squashed by his academic adviser as "impractical", of creating his own collection of Victoriana. The form of Maloney's creation, therefore, is not entirely fortuitous, and Moore adds a further element of conviction to Maloney's part in it by carefully dramatizing the demanding commitments it im-

poses upon him. For him it is not merely a pleasant dream come true but rather the creation of a new and somewhat frightening consciousness for Maloney, with its own irrevocable conditions which ultimately destroy its creator.

The whole question of the creative act and the nature of the resulting reality occupy Moore from the outset, and the novel's opening paragraph establishes the uncertainty shared alike by Maloney and the reader throughout this extraordinary experience:

> There is still some confusion as to when Anthony Maloney first saw the Great Victorian Collection. Can it be said that he first envisaged the Collection in his dream? Or did he create it in its entirety only when he woke up and climbed out of his bedroom window?

Reminiscent of Keats' lines, "Was it a vision, or a waking dream? ... Do I wake or sleep?", this passage raises similar questions about the creative imagination that the nightingale did for Keats. But Maloney does not drift into the imaginative state either through "a draught of vintage" or "on the viewless wings of Poesy"; instead, he "went to sleep in a normal manner and passed an uneventful night. Sometime in the early morning he awoke for a few minutes, then, falling asleep again, began to dream."

Such is the prosaic, unprophetic beginning of Maloney's secular miracle, and in the same plausible tone, Moore moves deftly to explore the human and metaphysical implications of the phenomenon. In a sense, such an event calls out for melodrama and hyperbole, but Moore long ago recognized the dramatic power of the unheightened scene and of ordinary realistic dialogue, and through these low-key devices he brilliantly demonstrates how the world's multitudes, as it were, very quickly betray the creator of this miracle for their own ends. Moore takes the opportunity here to get off a few satirical thrusts at the manipulators of present-day miracles — journalists, television ogres, policemen and other guardians of public order. A particularly clever scene involves the two acknowledged world experts on Victoriana, Professor Clews of Yale University and Sir Alfred Mannings of London, who have come to offer their learned pronouncements on the Collection. They meet by chance in the darkened parking lot location of the Collection, and refuse to consult with one another while examining the items by means of flashlights. "Soon," Moore observes, "[Mannings'] flashlight began crisscrossing that of Professor Clews": surely an appropriate picture of

unimaginative research experts feebly probing the vast darkness of their ignorance while all the while the object of their research stands revealed for all to see. On much the same note, Moore seems to be whimsically exploring what man's responses would be if a miracle suddenly were visited upon the world. One suspects that if Christ did return, Professor Clews would undoubtedly declare Him to be a clever imitation of the Real Thing, and Bernard Hickman of Management Incorporated would promptly offer to represent Him on a cross-nation tour, promising lots of "audience potential" and "first class for [Him] and [His] party all the way."

In a way, the entire novel can be read as an allegory — somewhat speeded up, to be sure — about the mutual disintegration of the artist and his art, or about the relationship between these two entities. It is significant that in his original dream, at the precise moment that Maloney knows he is in charge of the Collection, he wakes up, and he must thus literally confront what he has created. From that point on, he is exclusively in charge of his creation only in his dreams, for his waking jurisdiction over it is methodically being assumed by the world at large, which is, of course, as it must be. Many months after he had dreamed his Collection into being, Maloney experienced a sudden revelation about its real nature: "He saw it for the first time as it really was: a faëry place, ringed around by spells and enchantments, a web of artifices as different from the reality it sought to commemorate as is a poem about spring from spring itself." Part of this sentiment must be construed as a product of his private despair, for by this time he was unable either to control his creation or to escape from it, as his frenzied visits to Los Angeles and Montreal proved to him. For a poem about spring may not be as essential to mankind as spring itself, but it can still be a very remarkable and artistic achievement, worthy of perpetual preservation. So it is with Maloney's creation: it may have been debased and transformed in the Disneyland atmosphere of the world at large, but it continues to be "a minor marvel," even though its creator fades from the world.

In terms of characterization, *The Great Victorian Collection* is particularly successful in its cast of peripheral figures — especially police Lieutenant Polita, Professor Clews, Bernard Hickman, and Maloney's mother. With a few deft strokes, Moore captures the essence of both their nature and their functions in relation to Maloney's dilemma. Moore seems to me not quite so successful with the major secondary characters, Frederick Vaterman and Mary Ann McKelvey, whose sub-plot of repeatedly thwarted seduction attempts stands perhaps formally in counterpoint to the Collection's scenes of strange sexual perversion, but who as characters don't quite earn sufficient credibility. It is perhaps inevitable that the only character who gains our full attention is Maloney himself, for only he has no ulterior motive in relation to the Collection. In his sympathetic understanding of this man's human dilemma, Moore gives the lie to his own words by ensuring that Maloney will in fact for the reader outlive the "minor marvel" that he created.

COLUMBUS COLUMBO?

Linda Sandler

JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO, *The Sad Truths*. Peter Martin. $8.95 (cloth), $3.95 (paper). JOHN ROBERT COLOMBO, *Translations from the English*. Peter Martin. $8.95 (cloth), $3.95 (paper). *Under the Eaves of a Forgotten Village: Sixty Poems from Contemporary Bulgaria*, translated by John Robert Colombo and Nikola Roussanoff. Private printing, Hounslow Press.

ON PAGE ONE of *The Sad Truths*, John Robert Colombo catalogues the phenomena that go by the name of Colombo. He does not mention the similarity between his name and that of Christopher Columbus, whom he most resembles. Like Columbus, Colombo is an explorer whose discoveries extend the awareness of his people. The found poem, which he popularized in this country, is a device for translating history and/or popular culture from the periphery to the centre of consciousness; *Colombo's Canadian Quotations* is a massive extension of this device, while Colombo's original poetry brings foreign forms into Canadian culture.

The language of Colombo's poetry is the denotative language of the eighteenth-century *philosophe*, translating meaning from the dark places of the mind into the light; and the frame of his poetry is philosophical. Understandably, perhaps, Colombo's readers are partitioned into those who call him the quintessential poet and those who reserve the term poetry for the metaphoric language of passion — for whom Colombo is an anti-poet. The factions arise from a desire to define and limit the language and forms of poetry, and from unfamiliarity with the poetry of other countries.

John Glassco, in the introduction to *The Poetry of French Canada* (1970) says that "Faithful translation ... is in fact the strictest examination a poem's intimate structure can undergo, an ultimate screening that may leave it nothing but its intellectual content or 'meaning', its images and inner pulsation." Colombo's poetry has the semblance of poetry which is pre-screened in the process of being translated from the inarticulate poetic impulse into language. His poems have a dispassionate, intellectual surface, but his language and his borrowed forms evoke the inarticulate realm of experience.

The first of Colombo's *Sad Truths* is himself. He explores the mystery of his identity and experience, moves to national identity and his own sense of Canada, to stories and speculations about history and culture (to which he admits both Helen of Troy and the Hollywood heroines). The theme of each poem is developed in a series of sketches or a story. The source for these forms is the French *récit*, which Colombo has defined in a private communication as a prose narrative with poetic overtones. André Gide, one of the foremost practitioners of the *récit*, gives a rather more illuminating account of the form in the *Journal* of *The Counterfeiters*. Gide was oppressed by the fictional simplification of complex events and ideas, and resolved to avoid direct narrative. An event, he said, should be shown from varying angles, so that the reader collaborates to shape its meaning.

Colombo's poems, found and made, work on the principle of oblique presentation. "All in the Family" is a series of comic anecdotes about his son Jonathan, showing the way a child filters cultural phenomena.

> Garbage trucks fascinate him. Here's what he said a few months before his fourth birthday:
>
> "Oh, here come the garbage men delivering garbage!"

Contemplating a plastic mannequin, Jonathan asks his mother whether his own arm is plastic, or whether it works electrically.

Innocence and its converse, experience of evil, are running themes in *The Sad Truths*, evoking Colombo's most powerful responses. In "The Child of Europe" he tells the story of Kaspar Hauser, the visionary wolf child whose fate inspired so many speculations about the brutality of civilized society. Colombo again presents the story obliquely, through several contemporary versions, so illuminating the interrelation of history and myth. "After Stesichorus", perhaps the most beautiful poem in the book, articulates the idea that we live less by sad truths than by magnificent fables.

> What about fabulous Helen, whose face,
> we know, because they wrote so,
> "launched a thousand ships."
> (A thousand? A hundred? A single sloop?)
> Not a wave was made, not a blade of grass,
> not a grain of sand, was crushed underfoot,
> or thrown joyously high in the air.
> Not a word, not a word.
>
> What we do know is this:
> This tale is not true.
>
> No tale is ever true.

The impact of the poem doesn't depend on verbal rhetoric: Colombo has borrowed a simple rhetorical device that translates passion into form. This is the work of a craftsman and a poet.

Translations from the English is a book of found poems, variously arranged, which shows Colombo in his familiar role as treasurer and interpreter of popular culture. In his found poems as in his original poems, Colombo collaborates with some "first author" — this time not with the great poets, but with the folk artists of advertising and commerce, with local heroes, matinée idols, and above all, with Robert LeRoy Ripley, the collector of "Incredible Oddities". The found poem borrows content rather than form — and this, Colombo says, is what makes it credible. "Who believes a sonnet these days?" But the best entries have the low credibility of a sonnet.

> RESOLUTIONS PASSED BY THE BOARD OF COUNCILMEN, CANTON, MISSISSIPPI
>
> 1. Resolved, by this Council, that we build a new Jail.
> 2. Resolved, that the new Jail be built out of the materials of the old Jail.
> 2. Resolved, that the old Jail be used until the new Jail is finished.

This is a fragment of authentic officialdom.

An obvious feature of the found poem is that it must (usually) be identified and placed in a cultural context. Appropriately, every text has a subtext in fine print consisting of editorial comments and quotations related to pop culture and the aesthetics of collage. *Translations from the English* is a lot of fun, but Colombo operates defensively, with a weighty, and sometimes misleading, validation of his enterprise. Under "Handbill", an ad for an old-fashioned panacea, Colombo appends T. S. Eliot's theory that "Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal" — which is hardly applicable

to this case. Another tendentious quotation is from Marshall McLuhan: "art is anything you can get away with." "4's" is a fourteen-page catalogue of phenomena that come (go?) in fours. Colombo calls it a conceptual poem based on "the notion that a work of art can be a selective accumulation". I'm not sure he should get away with that — it seems an appalling waste of space.

As evident in *Colombo's Canadian Quotations*, Colombo has an eye for significant oddities. But some of the poems show him more clearly as the maker than as the collector. In "Some of the Artifacts of the Twentieth Century", he achieves a strange music by interweaving a discursive line and an inventory of artifacts. "Monopoly" is pure folk art: a song for two voices, the winner's and the loser's. Like most folk art, "Monopoly" is a poet's work, wrought from found elements.

Under the Eaves of a Forgotten Village: Sixty Poems from Contemporary Bulgaria is the latest product of Colombo's diverse and inventive energies. Despite the fact that Colombo's only access to the Bulgarian language is through his co-translator, Nikola Roussanoff, and to Bulgarian poetry through magazines available in Toronto, *Under the Eaves* is a valuable book that deserves to have more impact on our poetry than it will — having been privately financed and distributed.

In Bulgaria, literature has an officially recognized social function. The writer's function, as articulated by Georgi Djagarov, president of the Bulgarian Writers' Union, is to communicate Bulgaria's "discoveries about human nature", its hopes and anxieties about the present and the future. Although these poets are manifestly unfree to criticize social institutions, and are sometimes required to write poems with a progressive message, *Under the Eaves* is a book of lyrics and speculative poems, and is remarkably low on cant. That there are advantages in being a people's representative shows in the poetry—in the strength of the philosophic habit, in the directness of expression. Bulgarian poetry is not the territory where "a poem should not mean, but be."

The translations apparently follow the originals closely, but this is Colombo's kind of poetry, and in the main, diction and rhythm are rendered in their English equivalents — simply and directly, as in these startling lines from Damyan Damyanov's "Freedom".

> [Freedom] is the future's seed and soil.
> It is a shirt with a bullet hole
> through which you can see the sun.

Alexander Gerov's "Man", reminiscent of Thomas Hardy's poems, has a late nineteenth-century flavour.

> Along its cosmic paths,
> the cosmos blindly roams . . .
> but man alone, my friends,
> thinks and feels and knows. . . .

Trouble comes when the co-translators confuse their dictions, inverting the word order for the sake of rhyme or whim, subverting an otherwise contemporary idiom. Andrei Germanov's *Bridge*, a superb political parable, is marred by inversions and awkwardness.

> I am the bridge, for you erected,
> I am the bridge you have neglected.
> • • •
> But the shore opposite is your future's dream.
> I still say nothing. My mighty arch
> merely carries you across to the other side.
>
> I am the bridge.

But this is of secondary importance. What

counts is that Colombo and Roussanoff have done some good translations of fine poems, and that *Under the Eaves* is a cultural document embodying a view of literature radically divergent from our own.

In his capacity as editor and translator, Colombo has served Canadian culture well. In his capacity as poet, he is no less of a cultural dynamo: I have portrayed him as the supreme translator, who converts foreign forms and techniques to his own use, and so extends the possibilities of Canadian poetry.

KEEPING THE REALITIES IN LINE

Maureen McCarthy

Burning paper
crumbles into ash,
and so we learn the lesson of irreversability.
the process is
a final one,
no matter how we rage.

it is only in the caverns
of the mind
that ash turns into paper,
and that's a question of
imagination.
it's important
to keep the difference straight.

says who?
you ask,
and I am not surprised.
I find it difficult myself
keeping all these realities
in line.
following that principle —
he goes on —
we are incessantly reduced by death.
I don't know who he is —
I watch him —
from a distance.

books in review

ARDUOUS GAMES

MICHAEL BULLOCK, *Randolph Cranstone and the Pursuing River*. Rainbird Press, $10.00.

MICHAEL BULLOCK invites the reader to play games with his newest work of surrealistic fiction, *Randolph Cranstone and the Pursuing River*: trace the parallels between the first and second sections! discover a line of progression within the fragmented tales! guess the significance of the drawings which accompany the text! detect all the patterns of myth and imagery! The games will be long and arduous; one hopes that the prize will be substantial.

The first half of the book traces the imaginative adventures of Randolph Cranstone, a figure for the creative artist and, by extension, all mankind. His adventures are "imaginative" because they take place in a fictional world liberated from all laws of time, space and logic. Bullock does not establish his character within a world apparently familiar to his reader and then transform it into a world of dream and hallucination. Instead, he plunges his readers into a nightmare. No paraphrase or summary can do justice to the fertility of Bullock's imagination, for at every turn Randolph Cranstone experiences some incredible, unpredictable sensation. This section finds its structuring metaphor in Randolph's departure from his estate and his visit to a Western City which contains within it a walled Oriental City. Randolph's major adventures occur inside the Oriental City, and Bullock gradually makes explicit the parallel between this region and man's powerful imagination, hemmed in by a hostile material world. By teaching him to resign himself fully to his imagination, Randolph's experiences free him from the futility and apprehension that he felt while he lived on his own estate. When he discovers that he cannot eliminate nor control these powers, he yields himself to their direction. His imagination is the "pursuing river" of the title. It threatens to drown him, but it assures him that he need never thirst.

Randolph returns to his estate, where he begins to write in order to cultivate the imaginative depths he has discovered within himself. The second half of the book consists of a series of his tales and sketches, from one paragraph to a few pages in length. In many ways, these short pieces are much more effective than the sustained narrative which preceded them. Randolph Cranstone may be, in effect, a better writer than Michael Bullock. Each tale serves as a metaphor for the operation of the imagination. In their cumulative effect, these fragments describe Bullock's conception of the power and potentialities of man's capacity for feeling and creativity. Individually, each sketch welcomes a relaxed contemplation of a detailed image. These pieces avoid the vague expressions of emotional response favoured by Bullock in the opening section: "feeling for some reason"; "he sensed a connexion"; "though baffled by it, she quickly accepted the metamorphosis as a fact." Randolph Cranstone writes with a freshness and directness which make Bullock's part of the narrative look amateurish in comparison.

After the reader has established this basic amount of order in the material, he must exert all this energies to decipher the message it contains. Unfortunately,

that message is rather perfunctory. The imagination is a powerful force in man's nature; man's rationality cannot control his imagination; a developed imagination in one individual can exercise a widespread influence on the world; the imagination offers freedom, but it also threatens possible danger. Bullock's statements are little more than platitudes, and as a consequence his writing appears to spring from self-indulgence rather than a clear sense of an audience with whom he wishes to communicate. He displays himself to his readers and orders them to admire and imitate his imaginative freedom.

Why should the reader play the games demanded by the author? Bullock refuses to write as an intermediary between his own imaginative awareness and his reader's sensibility. Instead, he engages his audience in the explication of a text which he has designed to praise the imagination, not to understand it. By expressing himself in a literary form which encourages the exercise of man's rational faculties, Bullock actually hinders his reader's attraction to the world of the imagination. The intellectual intricacies of his relentlessly surrealistic form effectively counter his creative purpose: they make the imagination appear cold and distant, not warm and immediate. Although Michael Bullock urges man to cultivate his imaginative powers instead of his rational nature, his particular use of surrealism prevents the suspension of one's intellectual perceptions. He forces his reader to play literary games with his text. Bullock's games are masterfully designed, but the rewards for solving his puzzles are disappointingly meagre, and the method of solution is dishearteningly counter-productive.

CALVIN L. SMILEY

PLACING PRATT

SANDRA DJWA, *E. J. Pratt: The Evolutionary Vision.* Copp Clark, $3.50.

THE TITLE announces the intent and central concern of this exceptionally fine study. It sets out to define a vision, not a static one, largely in terms of analogues and influences without doing violence to the poetry itself. The purpose is clearly to place Pratt as a transitional figure in the intellectual tradition of the late nineteenth century while acknowledging his right to stand with the moderns.

There are dangers in such an approach. The meaning of poetry is different from the meaning of philosophy, theology or science. Distinctions made by the working intellect are often absorbed or transmuted by the working imagination. A poem's essence as language in movement, language responding often to conflicting feelings and intellectually unresolved perceptions, demands that it be much more than a sum of influences or the embodiment of a view.

One of the virtues of this book is that in spite of its doggedness in pursuing relationships the critic is well aware of the poetic vision as something finally beyond the reach of these. Her caveats are necessary both for herself and for her readers.

> Darwin's evolution 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.

Sandra Djwa rightly assigns the substance of the poetry to the final imponderables while her concerns in this limited study are clearly more with the initial ponderables. In the weighing-up, though,

she sometimes allows what she can define and document more value than what she cannot. This is not an unexpected drawback in such a study, especially since the critic is constantly recording her own awareness of it. After a good seven pages of clear-eyed analysis, in which she lays the ground of her study, Sandra Djwa figuratively throws up her hands —

> One of the pleasures awaiting the reader of Pratt's work and criticism on it will be the discovery of a multi-dimensional yet ultimately opaque figure. Pratt resists easy classification.

But her acknowledgement of Pratt's opaqueness does not deter her from the effort to penetrate as close to the heart as she can get in a brief and limited study.

The book consists of an introduction and ten chapters which take up the major poems in a roughly chronological fashion. Djwa's purpose to a large extent dictates the ordering and selection. The introduction is a most useful chapter, for it contains the central argument concisely yet substantially. The critic traces Pratt's development from an anti-romanticism rooted in Darwinian ideas and his own experiences of the natural world, through attempts "to equip man with an ethical guide for the struggle against nature", to "an evolutionary cosmology amalgamated with J. C. Smuts' 'holism' ", which she sees as underlying the last major work. The rationale of the book is clear:

> Because Pratt was such an indefatigable researcher and because an understanding of his specific uses of source materials illuminates the synthesizing quality of his poetic imagination, a substantial amount of new material suggesting sources and analogues is introduced into this study. Sometimes ... I have indicated textual analogies and left the reader to decide for himself whether or not this identification is justified.

The direction given the reader to "decide for himself" is a needed one, since the critic appears to push some of the less well-documented analogies more persistently than those for which she can give external evidence.

Since the intent of the book is to place Pratt solidly in a late nineteenth century intellectual tradition, the early chapters, I think, are strongest. The relationships between "Clay" and the early published poems and various strands of influence are clear and clearly shown. Chapter 2, "'Demonology,' 'Pauline Eschatology' and *Newfoundland Verse*," is characterized by such perceptive statements as —

> Pratt seems to have assimilated Newfoundland folk belief, a broad spectrum of feeling which at one end, admits superstitious "hap" and assigns demonic power to nature and, at the other end, widens into Christian faith.

and

> The relation between man and nature in Pratt's view is primarily the animating force of life, the vital spark of "authentic fires" or energy, which first evolved in the sea and now flows through human veins.

From the latter, Sandra Djwa proceeds to one of the most sustainedly illuminating sections of the book, an analysis of the "blood" metaphor in the early poems.

Her interpretation of *The Witches' Brew* as a "mock heroic structure" in which Tom the seacat becomes the Adam of an upsidedown *Paradise Lost* is ingenious. It suffers perhaps from the effort here to see Pratt's imagination wholly in terms of other writers. In comparing the poem to the popular Newfoundland ballad, "The Killigrew's Soiree", Sandra Djwa offers a stronger description of the active ingredients in the recipe:

> ... the sense of driving rhythm which in-

> forms Pratt's poetic voice in general . . . can be linked with the Newfoundland oral tradition, in particular with pulpit oratory, the hymn, and the folk song. All these expressions have in common a brisk and insistent rhythm that is largely a reflection of the patterns of Newfoundland speech. . . .

Of the later chapters, "The Problem Hero: Brebeuf and His Brethren", is perhaps the best, largely because there is no effort to bring the poem into a fixed resolution.

> . . . the real problem of the work seems to go far deeper. In essence, it appears to be the dichotomy between the transcendent seventeenth-century Christianity of Brebeuf, the poem's subject, and the human-centred, turn-of-the-century, new theology of Pratt, the poet. In other terms, the poem may dramatize a certain conflict in Pratt's own mind. . . .

This base allows the critic a full awareness of the paradoxes at the heart of Pratt's mature vision.

It is surprising and perhaps disappointing in much the way that "Towards the Last Spike" is itself disappointing that in her penultimate chapter Sandra Djwa should insist so on a single influence, that of J. C. Smuts, on Pratt's final vision. The evidence is tenuous —

> Pratt probably knew of Smut's work prior to his 1930 visit because *Holism and Evolution* had been a popular book for some time. Also, a paper which Smuts gave about a year later . . . was given world-wide publicity. But, perhaps because his subjects prevented him, Pratt does not begin to seize upon holism as a way out of the evolutionary dilemma until the 1940s.

The saving grace of such passages is that they are admittedly speculative. The use of Smuts' ideas in conjunction with those of Einstein in an analysis of the opening of the poem justifies the argument. Further justification comes from seeing this chapter as an effort to place Pratt's last large work more firmly in his total development and to assign it the weight there it deserves.

The concluding chapter is one of the book's great strengths. It complements the introduction by defining more precisely the Canadian tradition and by asserting Pratt's central place in that tradition on the strength of the intervening chapters. The conclusion also allows Sandra Djwa to speak of matters of form and tone and diction and to underline the ambivalences that these inhere in. Having been at such pains throughout to make connection, Sandra Djwa wisely chooses to end her study by affirming the distinctions.

This study is one not likely to be displaced soon. Its value is not one of simply asking for assent but one of challenging the reader to view more largely our largest poet.

ROBERT GIBBS

LIBERATION IN THE RAG-AND-BONE SHOP

MICHEL TREMBLAY, *Les Belles Soeurs*. Translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco. Talonbooks. $3.50. *Hosanna*. Translated by John Van Burek and Bill Glassco. Talonbooks. $4.95.

THE PARADOX OF Michel Tremblay is that his mode of realism succeeds in making theatre a liberating experience despite preoccupying themes of submission and failure. Although *Les Belles Soeurs* (first performed in 1968) is about the destruction of a woman's dreams of status while *Hosanna* (first performed in 1973) is about a transvestite whose male body traps a female psyche, both plays drive towards liberating Québecois

theatre from its conservative subjects and tame resolutions.

Such liberation involves a question of language. Tremblay is unabashedly a dramatist *en joual*, that unique brand of Quebec French so difficult to translate into an English equivalent. *Joual* probably has as many champions as it has opponents, and there is no reason to believe that all or even most playgoers will agree that it has a legitimately liberating function in Quebec theatre. Of course, its usage is more popular now than it was in the past, for *joual* has survived the famous onslaught of Frère Untel whose castigation of its "barbarity" once heated a controversy of the late fifties and early sixties. Frère Untel (or Brother Anonymous), in his famous tirade, claimed that *joual* was a dehumanized language that was insidiously negative in both form and effect. Taking his cue from *Le Devoir*'s André Laurendeau who had invented the word as a corruption of *cheval*, Frère Untel claimed that the language was one of horses. Today, of course, Frère Untel's is a muted voice in Quebec, but the province has its Claire Kirkland-Casgrain who, a few years ago, railed against Tremblay's plays for their unflattering image of modern Québecois. Not that such attacks would hurt Mr. Tremblay, for he is a playwright who does not allow partisan politics or nationalism to interfere with his artistic purpose. We could, of course, question the extent of his theatrical achievement, but we cannot prohibit his use of *joual* as a legitimate diction for the French stage any more than we could disallow Israel Horowitz a Bronx argot, Shelagh Delaney her Cockney, and John Arden his various dialects.

Tremblay's characters — especially in *Les Belles Soeurs* — speak a racy, tart language as loose and slangy as it is sharp and cutting. The dramatist appears to know the old maxim that language is a mirror of life, and his realism is achieved as much through *joual* as it is through a type of bittersweet tragi-comedy. And *joual* is, above all, a language of reality, for its vulgarity and hybridization are qualities obtained from the culture of Quebec. The characters of *Les Belles Soeurs* cannot help themselves when they mix regionalisms with Anglicisms or when they intermingle religiosity and scurrility. They are most truly themselves — a people, victimized by overt and hidden cultural violations, who live in sordor while they dream of romance. Their language becomes an expression of their condition, giving them a social stamp which they, in the final analysis, cannot reject unless they wish to be outcasts.

"To change your language you must change your life" — so runs a line by Derek Walcott, a West Indian poet, and I can think of no better epigraph for a discussion of the language in *Les Belles Soeurs*. We see in this play that characters speak *joual* because they think *joual*, and they think *joual* because they live it. The play is rooted in the spirit of its language and since much of this spirit is rough, tough, fast, and shrill, the characters — all of whom are female — come across as battling vulgarians whose violent passions burst into the open once the veneer of camaraderie has worn off. The fun and trouble begin after Germaine Lauzon has won a million saving stamps, and there is no let-up in the dialogue which maintains a quick clip through the inflation and deflation of Germaine's dreams of luxury. The women come and go, speaking not of Michelangelo and art

but of lotteries, sex, and the wearying routines of daily life. Without the force of language, these characters, we feel, would descend forever into an Ulro of the spirit, for their lot in life is basically cheap and, therefore, cheapening. Theirs is a domestic existence of drudgery where daily routine seems to revolve around housework, quarrels, television, and enforced submission to demanding husbands. In frustration the women cry that they are sick of this "stupid, rotten life" but we must not be misled. They are not sentimental sob sisters — despite their occasional self-pity — for they all participate together in a life of mixed emotions. Their moods run the gamut from ribald humour to nasty pettiness, from malicious gossip to weekly prayerfulness. After attacking one another, the women conform to the norms of a homogeneous group. Their language, with its special mixture of eccentric idioms and adulterated expressions, becomes a mirror of their confusion and contradiction, and it sustains them as a breed who have acquiesced to more violation than they could ever imagine for themselves. Those few — such as Lisette de Courval — who are aware of this subtle victimization fail to break out of the setting for they know instinctively that they need acceptance in the place of their breeding.

The unfortunate thing about Tremblay's play is that the *joual* is largely untranslatable. How do we find an equivalent in English for an idiom in another language unless by a substitution of one metaphor for another or by a general approximation of meaning? And this is just the problem which has been forced upon John Van Burek and Bill Glassco who have sought to render Tremblay's plays into a colloquial Canadian-English.

Unfortunately, the translation of *Les Belles Soeurs* is not a total success. I am not altogether convinced that I am listening to French-Canadian characters speak Tremblay's lines. True, I have the feeling that I am listening to no-nonsense speech, as direct and frank as it is muscular and often *escamotée*, but the rhythm seems off and I can well understand why Tremblay has been so reluctant to allow English productions of his plays.

But despite the loss of the linguistic rhythm and cadences of the original, this version does project itself forcefully as a satire. Replete with eccentrics and single-minded slatterns, the play exposes greed and jealousy while insisting that the real culprit is a society which encourages materialism and mindless conformity. When Germaine's own sisters scheme to steal her stamps, it is not because they are simply jealous of her sudden good fortune, but that, like Marie-Ange, they demand a system of equitable accretion. They ask why only one member of society should benefit from wealth while the majority (oh, that democratic word!) are forced to slog through endless drudgery. This is the plaint which galls them as Germaine plans a renovation of her apartment. This is also the voice of protest that produces a savage climax when the women battle over the stamps and demolish Germaine's dreams.

It is a useless complaint in a sense for there are no winners in the play. Everybody loses — especially those who had hoped to be liberated from the tyranny of drudgery and the grip of social conformity. Tremblay appears to be implying that it is finally a question of broad cultural influences rather than of narrow psychological ones. That is why he ends the play with choruses of "O Canada" as

a rain of stamps falls over Germaine who weeps and sings in final submission. Germaine and her rivals are all part of a false society — one whose members try to destroy in others what they lack in themselves. Nobody breaks out of this society without paying a heavy price, but this is a society that, at least, provides the consolation of numbers for its nature is such that it pulls *all* to the same level.

Our reactions to *Les Belles Soeurs* need not depend on our identification with its characters' subculture, for the vices of greed and jealousy are universal ones which cut across all lines of regionalism and language. When we hear Germaine cry "My stamps! My stamps!" we do not have to concern ourselves with the question of race or dialect for here is a person whose utopian dream has been lost irretrievably, and she becomes as relevant to us as Harpagnon or Shylock.

Tremblay has a way of locating the most sensitive areas in his characters' psyches without being lugubrious in the process. The *belles soeurs* never beg their audience for sympathy for they try and react to life with the wholeness of antithetical emotions, without tipping the scale in favour of either laughter or tears. Tremblay accordingly manifests a special gift for taking unpleasant or discordant characters and using their humanity as a subject for unsentimental treatment.

This is a gift especially evident in *Hosanna*, an affecting study of psychosexuality. Ostensibly a story of two homosexuals in a love-hate relationship, it is really an exploration of a transvestite's confusion, and I find it less noisy and more penetrating than *Les Belles Soeurs*. I also find it unencumbered by the burdens of translation, for *joual* is really of minor importance in this drama unless we choose — as some may want — to read the play as an allegory of Quebec's identity-crisis. I prefer to read the play straight (if you pardon the pun), and leave the allegory to others.

Hosanna is more affecting than either Charles Dyer's *Staircase* or Mart Crowley's *The Boys In The Band*. It is also more accomplished than Edward Albee's one-act play, *The Zoo Story*, and its decadent force recalls some of the best moments in Tennessee Williams. Yet its Broadway appearance was an unfortunate disaster, and I feel that this was because of crassly commercial competition and critical ennui with plays about homosexuals.

As in *Les Belles Soeurs*, Tremblay looks into his characters' lives from the outside. As Jean-Claude Germain has pointed out in a preface to the 1968 French edition of the play, Tremblay is unlike either Gratien Gélinas or Marcel Dubé in his external approach. Although there are family feuds in his plays, as there are in those by Gélinas, Tremblay does not find himself standing in the centre of the living-room. He observes as if through a window-pane, but he observes keenly and succeeds in moving us.

One of the most striking aspects of *Hosanna* is its lack of sensationalism. There is an undeniable degree of explicit language, double entendres, and theatrical pyrotechnics but these do not distract us from the pitiable plight of the title character and "her" mate. Tremblay once again is able to mix pathos and laughter in this slice of life, and although Hosanna loathes and pities herself she does not become cloyingly sentimental.

There is always a fundamental mixture of toughness and tenderness in Tremblay's main characters, and the mixture

serves as an adhesive for flawed psyches. This play is set in a furnished bachelor apartment somewhere in Plaza St. Hubert and the setting is steeped in a sadness and solitude that serve as a sign for the characters' fates. As in *Les Belles Soeurs*, the dichotomy between aspiration and reality is simultaneously romantic and depressing for we are dealing with two figures whose lives have a smell of psychic death amid the lurid colours of their apartment. Nowhere, of course, is this irony so highly in evidence as in Hosanna's extravagant imitation of Elizabeth Taylor's Cleopatra costume. Its heavy wine-red lace, decorated with gold, traps a female soul in a male body and thereby frustrates Hosanna's most intense wish to be a *femme fatale*, a triumphant queen (in two senses). And Tremblay compounds the dichotomy in Cuirette, the fattening stud, whose name suggests the leather he wears so tightly and provocatively like a motor-cycle freak, a sort of early Marlon Brando rebel. Cuirette's arrogance and easy self-assurance occasionally dissolve into the ridiculous and, as such, counterpoint Hosanna's frequent self-ridicule.

Hosanna and Cuirette are desperate people fighting for an integrity that is impossible to achieve. For one thing, both have pseudonyms for Hosanna is really Claude Lemieux, hairdresser, while Cuirette is Raymond Bolduc, artist-*manqué*. For another, both are incapable of a sexuality based on a stable psyche for they are continually at battle with each other in an attempt at irreversible domination. They are ridiculously caught between two sexes, and have only a tenuous consolation for being a third sex, as it were. While it is true that their reconciliation at the end is touching (after both have lost certain illusions) it is also true that their lives never lose a second-rate pathos.

While Tremblay joins Albee, Dyer, and others in delineating the tyranny of psychosexuality, he does not indulge in armchair psychoanalysis. He allows his two characters a give-and-take that is much more balanced than the one-sided protest in Albee's *The Zoo Story*. Moreover, *Hosanna* is never strident even at its most desperate, and its force is achieved through action or imitation rather than through hypertrophic language.

In effect, then, the achievement of *Hosanna* is also one of liberation for this play, like *Les Belles Soeurs*, shows that Quebec can provide a stimulus to talent that seeks to transcend clichés of situation, character, and language. *Hosanna* refuses to become a melodrama or a comedy that rounds out its vision with a false or unconvincing resolution. Fittingly, it has two acts as if to show — again like *Les Belles Soeurs* — that there is really no third act in life because last-minute conversions or resolutions are the relics of outmoded theatre. If Tremblay did nothing other than expose this simple fact, he would achieve a sort of artistic liberation, but, of course, he does more: he uses vulgar characters and portrays them most strikingly in prose-poetry. Hosanna's touching self-contempt leaves an indelible impression, and though the play will not have broad appeal, its mixture of anguish and humour is controlled with admirable verve and shows Tremblay's mastery. Like *Les Belles Soeurs*, this play succeeds in giving artistic form to unrefined instincts and urges, confirming that truth, in any language, must begin in the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

KEITH GAREBIAN

SIMPLE STORIES

ERNEST BUCKLER, *The Rebellion of Young David and Other Stories.* McClelland & Stewart.

ERNEST BUCKLER'S overdue collection of short stories contains fourteen which have appeared in periodicals between 1941 and 1959. All were published in relatively large circulation magazines — *Atlantic Advocate, Chatelaine, Esquire, MacLean's* and *Saturday Night* — which may have influenced Buckler's use of forms and language which are closer to the mainstream of popular writing than one finds in his longer prose works. His style in these stories is much simpler than the complex and at times involved manner that characterizes his novels *The Mountain and the Valley* and *The Cruelest Month.* Most of the stories have a folksy, fireside manner, as if they are being told rather than written. The oral nature of the stories is enforced by the frequent use of repetition and reminiscence.

Whatever its motivations, the simpler approach does have its advantages. I find Buckler's style in his longer works often becomes self-conscious, too highly wrought. On the other hand the stories do not generally have the deep resonances that make *The Mountain and the Valley* such a rich experience. All but a few of them have a rather conventional happy ending, perhaps required by the magazines' readership. Still, the prose reveals all the loving care that Buckler has for language, occasionaly startling the reader with breathtaking images: "The sun drowsed like a kitten curled up on my shoulder." Or: "Somehow in the country men never seemed to skate after life stopped its circling just above their shoulders and settled on them."

A strong moralistic strain pervades these stories. Especially important is the idea that we never get to know another person, so that our judgments of them must always be suspect. The need for charity and tolerance plays a large part in "The Rebellion of Young David" and "Long, Long After School", and is present in most of the other stories. This moralism contributes to a sentimental strain in many of the stories, which becomes especially obtrusive in some of the shorter pieces such as "Long, Long After School", where the moral issue assumes a central position.

The predominant rural themes of the stories have much in common with *The Mountain and the Valley.* One of the earliest, "The First-Born Son", was incorporated into that novel, while the title story, "The Rebellion of Young David", found its way into *The Cruelest Month.* Most of the stories are set in the rural Maritime surroundings before the advent of machinery. The most successful are those such as "The First Born Son" and "The Dream and the Triumph", in which Buckler succeeds in communicating the richness of the land and the vital figures who struggled to survive, both emotionally and physically, in a land where living was difficult but deeply rewarding. Those stories which are more removed from the land seem superficial by comparison. This is especially true of "Glance in the Mirror" and "Another Christmas", which deal with scenes from the life of a writer.

Buckler makes the most out of a few archetypal situations. This gives a rhythm to the book which imparts a greater unity than possessed by most volumes of short stories. A number of stories are narrated by or about a sensitive boy. Often, as in "The Clumsy One" and "The Wild

Goose", the sensitive but impractical narrator has a more earthbound but reliable brother. Other stories explore the contrasts between city and country, or the relationship between a child and his father or stepfather. A number of the stories explore the various tensions the death of one parent can introduce into the family situation, especially when a child is involved. Romance is rare and low-key. Buckler's portraits of women are few and generally not as penetrating as those of his powerful men who draw their vast strength from their communion with the land.

This collection of stories solidifies Buckler's reputation, although it does not greatly extend it. They are unsophisticated, sometimes even naive in their approach, but embody a tremendous compassion and understanding for his land and the people who inhabit it. Readers who can share Buckler's sympathies, and there will be many, will find the book a satisfying experience.

FRANCIS MANSBRIDGE

WINDOWS

100 Poems of Nineteenth Century Canada, selected by Douglas Lochhead and Raymond Souster. Macmillan.

100 Poems of Nineteenth Century Canada is an anthology of poetry selected from the work of authors who lived and wrote in Canada before 1900. In addition to choosing the poems, Douglas Lochhead and Raymond Souster introduce them with a "Preface" which places them in an historical and literary context; arrange them in chronological order according to the date of birth of each author; and conclude them with "Biographical Notes" on each of the poets and an author/title "Index." According to the editors, the "aims" of the anthology are "to provide the reader with one window overlooking the landscape of our past, . . . to help to establish a sense of *that* time and place, to stimulate a taste for our early poetry or to nourish one already established."

As a reader with a "taste . . . already established" for nineteenth-century Canadian literature, I was happy to find that some of Lochhead and Souster's "old favourites" were also mine. I reread "The Tantramar Revisited" with delight and greeted the name of Rosanna Eleanor Mullins Leprohon with pleasure. My taste for this literature was also "nourished" by the inclusion of William Wilfred Campbell's elegy "Bereavement of the Fields. In Memory of Archibald Lampman" and "stimulated" by the selection from the poetry of Isabella Valancy Crawford.

As well as enjoying these aspects of the selection, I also like other features of *100 Poems of Nineteenth Century Canada.* The "Index," although not really needed, is useful. The placing of the "Biographical Notes" after the poems underlines the editors' wish "to allow the poems to speak for themselves." The inclusion of the "Notes," however, and the chronological presentation of the poetry stress that it is important for Canadians to have "a view of the past . . . a sense of *that* time and place." This historical sense is further cultivated in the "Preface" by Lochhead and Souster's brief description of nineteenth-century Canadian publishing, their references to nineteenth-century literary styles, and their avowed uneasiness at the currently fashionable clichés about Canadian culture evoked by such terms as "colonialism" and "garrison mentality" and popularized by Margaret Atwood's

Survival, which they rightly dub a "dangerously narrow book".

Looking through a window at a landscape does, nevertheless, limit what one sees. And the pleasant views through the "window" of *100 Poems* notwithstanding, several aspects of its landscape are disturbing. The editors warn the reader in the "Preface" that their selection of poems has been affected by "the usual limitations . . . [of] space, time, personal preference, and whatever else conditions the choice of those who make anthologies." This is a necessary warning, for every anthologist has to make choices which in the end probably do not entirely satisfy even himself. Still, some "limitations" of the landscape of Lochhead and Souster's window are worth noting.

The work of thirty-four authors is represented in this anthology. Of these, eighteen, including Susanna Moodie, are each represented by one poem; five, including Joseph Howe, by two; and another three, Charles Sangster, George Frederick Cameron, and Francis Joseph Sherman, by, respectively, five, five, and four. Only the poetry of Isabella Valancy Crawford, William Wilfred Campbell, Charles G. D. Roberts, Archibald Lampman, Bliss Carman, and Duncan Campbell Scott is more adequately represented. Because of the 1900 cut-off date of the anthology, however, the selection of poems by Campbell, Roberts, Carman, and Scott is chiefly limited to those each wrote or published in the nineteenth century. There are, for example, no Indian poems by Scott.

These choices have several results. The landscape of *100 Poems* is one in which six larger trees dominate many bushes, most of them too small to be easily visible. Since these big trees, with the exception of Crawford, are those which have traditionally represented Canadian poetry, the picture seen through Lochhead and Souster's window is itself virtually a cliché view of the Canadian literary landscape. Because of the time limitation on the selection, the trees of Campbell's, Roberts', Carman's, and Scott's poetry are each trimmed in a lopsided way. Scott's poetry in particular is badly cut.

Other aspects of this "window . . . on our past" bother me as well. Fragments such as the few lines lifted out of Mair's "Tecumseh" serve no purpose and misrepresent both the author and his drama. Even though the editorial problems of nineteenth-century Canadian poetry are sometimes complex and "every effort has been made to present in this anthology versions of poems as they appeared during the lifetimes of the poets themselves," an effort should also have been made to state clearly the source of the version the editors chose of each poem and to indicate variations of each poem when they exist. Although the Toronto Reprint Library is reproducing important works first published in nineteenth-century Canada, the "puffing" of these reprints and the virtual neglect of other Canadian series in the "Biographical Notes" seem just a little unfair. Surely, for example, the New Canadian Library's edition of Mrs. Leprohon's *Antoinette de Mirecourt* deserves a mention. The note on Mrs. Leprohon, moreover, is unfortunately typical of many of these "Notes". It is inaccurate in that her date of birth is incorrectly stated. It is misleading in that it stresses her poetry when her most important work was her prose fiction. And it is vague: "popular as poet and novelist" says little about the role that Mrs. Leprohon actually played in the

cultural life of nineteenth-century Canada.

My response to this anthology, then, is on the whole more negative than positive, more troubled than enthused. One reason for this response is the quality of the editing, which is just not good enough. But the main reason for it is, I think, that for many of us the time for the kind of "generalization" about Canadian culture seen through the window of *100 Poems of Nineteenth Century Canada* has gone and that now when we look at our literature, we expect a sharper and more detailed view of "the landscape of our past" than that selected by Douglas Lochhead and Raymond Souster.

MARY JANE EDWARDS

GRATUITOUS ACTION

JUAN BUTLER, *The Garbageman.* Peter Martin Associates, $6.95.

IN A *Saturday Night* review of Juan Butler's first novel, *Cabbagetown Diary: A Documentary*, Eldon Garnet wrote, "The 'characters' of Cabbagetown are ... just as we might imagine them. Preoccupied with sex and drinking, uninterested in the humanitarian efforts to lift them out of their lives." And it's true. The characters *are* just as one might imagine them — if one accepts the stereotype of the working class perpetuated by Butler. If one doesn't — and I don't — *Cabbagetown Diary* is little more than superficial and patronizing, its characters and situations (despite the subtitle) without documentary value. The book is remarkable only for its lack of compassion and for an obsession with the sadomasochistic that is at times reminiscent of Mickey Spillane. In these passages Butler's prose comes to life in a way that it doesn't at any other time.

Sadomasochism is central to Butler's plotless second novel, *The Garbageman.* The first three-quarters of the book consist of the psychopathic and sadomasochistic fantasies and/or recollections — one is never completely certain which — of Fred Miller during three early morning hours in his suburban Toronto bedroom. The fantasies and/or recollections take us from Toronto to Kenora to Barcelona to Paris; the novel ends with Miller in a Toronto psychiatric hospital attempting to organize some of his fellow patients into "Paranoids for Peace".

At various times, Miller's voice as he tells his story takes on some of the character, but unfortunately never the feeling, of a number of other voices — Samuel Beckett, Hubert Selby Jr., J. D. Salinger, William Burroughs, Jerzy Kosinski, R. D. Laing. (The title is taken from a passage in which Miller appears to be trying out some of Fritz Perls' wisdom: "... reality is the very instant something is happening.... Reality is right now. Second after second after second of it. For the rest of your life. And life is what happens to you.... Garbageman or mystic....")

But as in *Cabbagetown Diary*, it's only when Butler is writing about sadomasochism that *The Garbageman* comes to life: Fred Miller kills his cat twice — first by bashing in its skull and later by slicing its head off. He doesn't just roll a homosexual sailor in Barcelona; he butchers him — first by smashing a bottle over his head and ramming the jagged remains into him. Then he shoots the top of the sailor's head off. "Without knowing why," Miller tells us deliciously, "my first reaction is to plunge my left hand into his brain cavity, grab a handful of

mucous-like matter, pull it out, blood running down my wrist, and throw it heavily towards the wall where it lands with a dull plop.... Gray-white, blood-coated brains with nerve ends still twitching." Later, in a scene set in Paris and more vividly gruesome than any I can recall in fiction, Miller rapes a young woman, bites off one of her nipples and stabs her to death. All the while he gives us a dispassionate play-by-play description of the event as if it were an artistic happening. "From where I'm standing," he reports, "I see a large head of unkempt black hair cascading in disarray over two pulsating yellow globes. A very interesting surreal perspective. One that would have equally intrigued both the Marquis de Sade and Max Ernst." Her face reminds him "of the ghastly and contorted features of the unfortunate wretch in Edward Munch's 'The Scream'." After he's stabbed her and pulled out the knife, he says, "I stand back in awe at the spectacle I have inadvertantly created: a blood-flower blossoming in a blue-jean ocean ... a real-life René Magritte.... How I wish I had a camera." He begins and ends the scene by reading poetry to her — Baudelaire to her live body and Swinburne to her corpse: "That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat/Thy breasts like honey! ..."

Apart from the violence, however, what we have in *The Garbageman* is not the controlled madness of the surrealism Butler continually tells us we're reading, but rather a soporific and mindless catalogue of clichés. Fred Miller winds up sounding like someone who's never quite got over the discovery that the tooth fairy doesn't exist. "People don't love each other," he complains, "they use each other." A liberal, he sneers, "is an ivory-tower radical who ... cringes in horror the moment he is asked to personally help alleviate the problem he informs us about in such a scholarly way. A liberal is a status-seeking snot-nose who lacks even the courage of his convictions."

The violence itself — particularly the rape scene — reminded me of the death of Viennese body artist Rudolph Schwarzkogler in 1969. Over a number of months until he died, Schwarzkogler sliced off his penis and other parts of his body inch by inch while a photographer carefully recorded the event. The photographs were later shown in a gallery. Had Schwarzkogler martyred himself for some clear *reason*, one might applaud his act. But so far as I can tell, he didn't. Compared with, for example, the social comment clearly implicit in Mark Prent's pickled penises and sliced breasts at the Isaacs Gallery in Toronto last year, what Schwarzkogler did seems gratuitous, a cruel perversion of the notion of art for art's sake.

Butler's novel seems equally gratuitous. It's not that psychopathic fury can't be an understandable response to the world. We know that it can be. The trouble with Butler (as with so many recent filmmakers, etc.) is his inability to make that point clear — to explicitly or implicitly provide a context for the violence. All that's clear — painfully, hauntingly, but ultimately pointlessly clear — is the violence itself. All the novel does do is once again raise the thorny question of what it says about us that so many writers, artists, popular singers, photographers and members of their audiences are so hooked on what appears to be a gratuitous concern with the grotesque and the violent.

MORRIS WOLFE

A KIND OF TURBULENCE

E. W. THOMSON, *Old Man Savarin Stories.* Introduction by Linda Sheshko. University of Toronto Press, $4.50.

LORRAINE MCMULLEN (ed.), *Selected Stories of E. W. Thomson.* University of Ottawa Press, $3.75.

A CANADIAN FELLOW of the Royal Society of Literature of the United Kingdom, speaking in honour of Archibald Lampman in 1914, said of his native literature:

> Between our patriotism and our criticism we born Canadians more or less indulgently acclaim as Canadian poetry almost any verses that indicate amiable design. This is as it should be. To listen awhile to any who try to sing wholesomely, is at worst a fault which leans to virtue's side. Brickbats may properly be thrown at those who bawl harmfully. We can always go away if we don't like the singing.

While the sentiments of "The Canadian Abroad", the poem which precedes the larger of these two collections of E. W. Thomson's short stories, can scarcely be designated harmful bawling, the reader may well be tempted to go away. Nostalgia for his homeland, felt while the writer spent ten years in Boston as revising editor and short story writer for the *Youth's Companion*, is conveyed through the well-worn images of the Maple Leaf school, crooning rapids, honking geese, gold and crimson woodlands, all of which send his heart "winging north" to where "rosy-cheek maiden and hazel-hue boy/ Listen grave while the Angelus ends . . . "

The biting opening of Thomson's first story in Douglas Lochhead's reprint of the 1917 collection, *Old Man Savarin Stories: Tales of Canada and Canadians,* is a welcome relief from these verses of amiable design. "Yes, indeed, my grandfather was once in jail" is a familiar sentence to most readers of native short stories, as is the comic balance of honour, family affection, and financial juggling in "Privilege of the Limits". The other sixteen tales are less well known, and only nine of them are Canadian in context, although five of the seven others, set in the United States, South Africa and England, have Canadian-born narrators. The 1917 collection was an enlarged version of *Old Man Savarin and Other Stories* (1895), leaving out two of the original fourteen tales and adding the opening poem and five stories. In it the vigorous aspects of Thomson's writing are well displayed. The keynote to his prose style is action. In many of the tales a narrator tells of his personal experiences; in all of them voices speak continuously, often in dialect, bringing a dramatic liveliness to the scene. Movement and activity are always present; a heroic father is swept over Niagara Falls; a lumberman's son works feverishly to salvage a broken crib of logs in order to support his starving family; ten soldiers of the Army of the Potomac gallop through the night carrying despatches at the risk of their lives. Even in the quieter stories, the inner action is vigorous. Old John, in "The Waterloo Veteran," is a comparatively static figure, standing martially erect, fiercely proud of his campaign medal; but his imagination lives on the battlefield, with Boney and the old Duke, with the troops at Inkerman, and finally with his warrior son, who dies attacking a Sepoy fort in the Indian mutiny.

Thomson's characters tend towards stereotype, but are usually cast in a tough mould. Dour Davie, a Scots hero, with his jaw set like iron, drives a sleigh over forest trails to his home despite his broken leg,

in order to save the fortunes of his employer. In the title story a girl of fifteen traps her avaricious landlord under water with her fishing scoop, while her cousin "she's laugh so she cant hardly hold on wis me to de hannle." Even the poor and hungry retain a feeble vitality. Mini, in "The Shining Cross of Rigaud", is not strong enough to get milk to his dying baby sister before his callous mother seizes it to exchange for gin; but he finds the power to walk and climb many miles to the mountain cross where he believes that Angelique's spirit will be found. The vigour of sentiment, humour, and melodrama inhabits most of the characters in these tales. Setting, too, usually reinforces Thomson's effect of movement and strength. The sweeping currents of the Niagara River above the Falls are brilliantly visualized in "John Bedell, U. E. Loyalist", while the crackling and falling rocks in "Petherick's Peril" grimly emphasizes the hero's dilemma as he clings to a Cornish cliff, looking down five hundred feet to the ocean "now almost hidden by the vast concourse of wheeling and affrighted birds."

Thomson's prose style, then, has more to recommend it than the quality of his prefatory verse might suggest. Linda Sheshko's introduction to the University of Toronto reprint, after giving useful biographical information on this political journalist, poet, and short story writer, reflects the comment of several critics that Thomson's obstinate, humorous, honest individuals are good representatives of local types of Glengarry Scots and Ottawa valley "habitant" life. Lorraine McMullen, editor of *Selected Stories of E. W. Thomson*, points out the masculine qualities of the narratives, the lack of romantic interest, and the passive nature of most of the women described. Her introduction to that collection, which consists of eleven of the stories from the 1917 edition, describes Thomson as an important part of the nineteenth century. He was a friend of Lampman and D. C. Scott, a critic of contemporary poetry, and a writer of boys' stories and verse as well as of the *Old Man Savarin Tales*. McMullen sees his "local colour" qualities as typical of writers of this period, and suggests that in addition he reflects some of the realism of American and French novelists such as James and Zola.

While I can appreciate the angular and mobile values of Thomson's writing, and can see their place in the development of Canadian letters, I question Lorraine McMullen's comment that Thomson was "the most skilful Canadian storyteller of the time". Scott and Roberts, at least, could lay claim to more enduring notice. Thomson tells a good tale, in the sense that he manipulates character, suspense, crisis and climax with skill. There are, however, a number of negative aspects to the stories which make them, perhaps, more of a historical curiosity than a pleasure to the modern reader. His peasant characters, for example, tend towards caricature, particularly in their dialogue. "Sure, it'll be cold entirely, Peter dear," says the Irish Mrs. McGrath as she ladles out the last bowl of cornmeal mush to her destitute family, "and the warmth is so comforting. Give me little Norah now, the darlint, and be after eating your supper." In "The Red-Headed Windigo", superstitious French Canadian loggers shake with fear at the thought of the cannibal spirit whose apparent tracks they find in the snow, and it takes a level-headed Englishman to discover the trick behind

the footprints and to reassure his underlings.

Personality caricature is often accompanied by emotions expressed in a way popular in the nineties, but possessing a distinctly period quality now. Obstinate Peter McGrath, who refuses cut-rate logging work, is reduced to stealing food from his former employer. When John Pontiac, catching him, makes him a gift of the provisions instead of hurling him in jail (and offers him a new job at the same low rate), he is bathed in tears and gratitude. "Go in, Mary Ann — go in — and kiss — the feet of him." Equally cloying, the deathbed scene in "Drafted", with brothers reunited and a heart-rending memory of the folks at home, must have affected the sensibilities of many a female reader when it first appeared.

Emotions are difficult to separate from values; and Thomson's values seem to me to be conservative ones. Loyalty to the employer and maintenance of his financial stability are issues in at least five stories. While Renwick realizes that his editor, Miss Minnely, is manipulating his power of free expression, he accepts this with a kind of admiration. Greedy landlords or storekeepers appear in several tales, but the poor use only the weapons of luck, wit, and laughter against them; their place in the order of things goes unquestioned. Poverty is accepted (for the French or Irish) as a corollary of foolishness, bad judgment, or vice, and for the hungry children gnawing a bone the only hope is charity. Most unacceptable about the writer's values, however, are the indications of a racial hierarchy. The English are loyal, strong, and practical; the Scots are frugal, hardworking, courageous, witty, tough, financially stable, and teetotal (a formidable list); the French and Irish are picturesque, devout, emotionally volatile, liable to sink into poverty, and born to be manual labourers; while in the distressing story "Great Godfrey's Lament" we find the last living son of a Scots father and an Indian mother, sorrowing over his long-dead youngest brother, who had been the parents' favourite because "White was Godfrey, and rosy of cheek like my father; and the blue eyes of him would match the sky when you'll be seeing it up through a blazing maple on a clear day of October . . . The rest of us all were just Indians . . . " The Gaelic idiom on the Indian tongue is as incongruous as the idea that the jealousy of the six brown brothers was based not directly on the father's injustice but on the fact that they were shut out from the great McNeil cultural inheritance. When the father died and Godfrey, though the youngest, became their paternal director, all was peace and contentment until his death — from consumption, the fatal Indian disease.

It is worth remembering that Thomson was a successful writer of boys' stories. The tales in these two collections possess the better qualities of juvenile fiction, the rapid action, the simple, clear characterization, the vivid dialogue; but they also tend to suffer from the weakness inherent in many of the narratives of the *Boys' Own Annual* or the B.O.W.C. series. Their predominant values and themes are those of the late nineteenth century, values not for all time but for a particular day.

GLENYS STOW

A MODERN CIRCE

JOHN S. CROSBIE, *The Incredible Mrs. Chadwick: The Most Notorious Woman of Her Age*. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, $7.95.

CASSIE CHADWICK LIVES. Although the notorious embezzler, forger, and seductress was buried (albeit in a suspiciously light coffin) in 1907, she is still conning people. The latest victim of this latter day Circe is none other than John Crosbie, author of *The Mayor of Upper Upsalquitch*, the world's first *Dictionary of Puns*, and now self-appointed hagiographer of Cassie Chadwick, nee Betsy Bigley, alias Emily Heathcliffe, Cassie L. Hoover, Lydia De Vere, Elizabeth Cunard, and a variety of other pseudonyms.

Crosbie's wife first drew his attention to the "most notorious woman of her age," and from that moment, he dates his slavish devotion to the woman who fleeced many of America's financial wizards of all but their shirts by claiming to be the natural daughter of Andrew Carnegie. Crosbie painstakingly has recreated her flamboyant escapades and erected what he calls a "monument to Betsy Bigley." Cold as stone, without a breath of vitality, the book is essentially a straightforward reordering of contemporary newspaper accounts. The only exception occurs in the first few pages where Crosbie seems to be indulging his own fantasies under the guise that he "dared to guess what kind of childhood would produce such a woman."

Born on a farm in Eastwood, Ontario, in 1857, Betsy Bigley quickly learned the value of money, trading her virginity for $50 at age 13 and using the proceeds to float her first round of spurious cheques. This was only the beginning of a career that saw her as a prostitute, clairvoyant, and society matron. She netted three husbands — the second signed a marriage contract giving her full possession of all his assets should they separate. Her third mate was a wealthy and socially prominent Cleveland doctor named Leroy Chadwick, whom she encountered in a brothel. He quickly swallowed her tale that she had accepted the position of madam, mistakenly thinking she was to be the matron of a home for girls. Chadwick determined to "rescue her" and in a neat reversal of the "spider and the fly" invited her into his home.

Using her marriage as collateral, Betsy embarked on a glorious buying spree financed first by husband Leroy, and then by kiting cheques, seducing bankers, trading on her relationship to Andrew Carnegie, and finally forging the steel baron's name to notes worth as much as $5 million. Eventually, she was caught short, arrested, put on trial — Andrew Carnegie himself was in attendance all six days — and sentenced to ten years imprisonment. She died in jail after pre-arranging an elaborate funeral, including the composition of her own eulogy.

The author gives us little insight into Betsy's character and makes no analysis of motivation. Yet, even this superficial account cannot obscure the fact that Betsy/Cassie was an extraordinary woman. What drove her to commit such excesses and to trifle so cavalierly with men's affections? She was not a great beauty, nor was she particularly clever, cultured or witty. What then was the secret of her power? The enigma remains for certainly the impressionable John Crosbie is in no position (condition?) to tell us.

SANDRA MARTIN

RESEARCHER'S GAZETTEER

THE THIRD EDITION OF THE *Directory of Special Libraries and Information Centres* has just been published by the Gale Research Company of Detroit, under the editorship of Margaret Labash Young, Harold Chester Young, and Anthony T. Krukas. This immensely useful compilation is a guide to the kind of specialized collections that are likely to be of interest to researchers in the libraries and archives of the United States and Canada; the institutions covered include not only university libraries and libraries maintained by all levels of government from the centre down to the municipality, but also the libraries and archives of societies, business corporations, newspapers, whether accessible to the general public or otherwise. Volume 1 ($55.00) is the actual directory of the libraries and information centres, 1,435 pages in length and covering some 13,078 institutions in the United States and Canada. Volume 2 ($35.00) is a geographic index of the actual libraries and a directory of personnel.

I have never yet found such a directory that was flawlessly complete, and this, despite its vast coverage, is no exception. For example, there is no mention of the Special Collections division at the McPherson Library in the University of Victoria, with its important archives of modern English poets like Robert Graves and Herbert Read; there is no mention of the collection of Lowry papers at the University of British Columbia library; nothing is said of the collection in the Vancouver Public Library devoted to Northwest History. These are all important research resources in our immediate locality; other readers in different areas may find further omissions. Yet as it stands the Directory performs a definite service, and the editors are quite evidently conscious that their task is not complete, since their plan provides for periodic supplements.

G.W.

ADDITIONAL INDEX

THE *Canadian Essay and Literature Index, 1973* (University of Toronto Press, $27.50) is a new venture that one hopes may continue. Compiled by Andrew D. Armitage and Nancy Tudor, it brings together items published in magazines of general interest or of specifically literary interest, including poems and stories as well as articles and reviews; the main other criterion for inclusion is that the periodicals in question should not be indexed already in *Canadian Periodical Index*. This means that, while *Canadian Literature* and other established journals feature in the *Canadian Periodical Index*, the *Canadian Essay and Literature Index* includes many short-lived and obscure little magazines which the older index has ignored. Together, they leave few periodicals untouched, and give as comprehensive a view as one could wish of the offerings of Canadian magazines in a given year. An immensely useful research tool, which librarians should be talked into buying.

G.W.

opinions and notes

LOOK BEYOND ENG. LIT.

IN HIS ARTICLE "The Unending Cycle," for *Canadian Literature* No. 63, Leonard W. Sugden writes, "In *l'Incubation*, for the first time, the author had incorporated into his work the methods of the French New Novel and shown the strong influence of the 'conscious stream' method pioneered by James Joyce and Virginia Woolf."

I found this statement disturbing. Though this critic acknowledges that Gérard Bessette's novel shows the influence of the *nouveau roman* he feels that the stream of consciousness method comes from the works of Joyce and Woolf. These authors may be the pioneers of this narrative technique in English literature, but in French where the method first appeared the pioneers are Proust, Gide and Dujardin. Joyce acknowledged his debt to Édouard Dujardin whose 1887 novel, *Les Lauriers son coupées*, is the first significant instance of *monologue intérieur*. Does it not seem likely that the French Canadian novelist may also be following the example of these influential French authors?

It is not my intention here to single out this fine essay for criticism but only to cite this one flaw as an example of a problem: too narrow a perspective in Canadian letters. We find such lapses in many places. To me they are representative of an Anglophone habit of thought. I am not suggesting that Sugden shares this mentality since he shows a good knowledge of French fiction, both Québecois writing and French existentialism. The habit of thought to which I am referring seems to view literature almost exclusively in terms of English and American cultural traditions.

Now that English Canadian scholars are looking into French Canadian literature more and more they should keep in mind that, despite their Anglophone backgrounds and biases, there is a French literary tradition to consider. When examining literary phenomena not only from French but from English Canada we should be aware of traditions from the European continent.

On a wider note we should begin to look beyond the confines of the English cultural tradition and examine Canadian letters in terms of works from more remote parts of the world. Commonwealth literature is one context in which to place the writing of our authors. Another approach is comparative studies involving Spanish American literature. Bessette's *le Cycle* with its broad perspective dealing with several generations of characters has affinities with *Cien Años de Soledad* (1967) by the Colombian novelist, Gabriel García-Márquez. Canadians concerned with the regionalism in our novels might be interested in the emphasis on regional aspects in the works of Carlos Reyles (Uraguay) and Mariano Latorre (Chile). The small towns of Laurence's *A Jest of God* and Ross' *As For Me And My House* have a parallel in the Argentine novel of Manuel Gálvez, *La Maestra Normal* (1914). Callaghan's *More Joy in Heaven* has kinship with the Chilean novel *Hijo de Ladrón* (1951) by Manuel Rojas.

I am not suggesting that these novelists have influenced one another nor even

that they were aware of their respective works. The general affinities are the striking ones here. It is intriguing the manner in which all these authors of the New World, writers of relatively young national traditions like that of Canada, have been able to create distinct national literatures that reflect the native environment and the aspirations of their people. These lands of the Western Hemisphere, with often harsh climates, and these multi-cultural nations are shaping new traditions of which Canadians should be aware. Multi-cultural like Canada for among the many Spanish names of these southern authors we find Irish, German, French and Italian ones too: Reyles, Lynch, Eichelbaum, Carpentier, Usigli, Storni, Agustini.

By comparing the works of our authors with those of South Americans we will get new and wider perspectives of the achievements of Canadian writers. Canadians will be pleasantly surprised both by the similarities and the differences between Canadian letters and those of Latin America.

JOSEPH PIVATO

NO MORE TWIST

Just to refer George Bowering, reviewer of Audrey Thomas's *Blown Figures*, to the Oxford Concise ("*Twist*, thread, rope, etc.,") and to Beatrix Potter's *Tailor of Gloucester*, the source of the quotation "No more twist."

Twist, George, is thread for sewing up little coats, repairing the "parameters of the self" and presumably for hanging blown figures.

LINDA ROGERS

(For the pleasure of ironists, the Shorter OED gives at least 14 other definitions of *twist* used as a noun, and almost as many of its use as a verb; few are in any way connected with tailors and even fewer with hangmen. ED)

FICTION IN FRENCH

WITH ALMOST TWENTY books published or announced, Harvest House's French Writers of Canada series is rapidly becoming an institution in the Canadian literary world that in its own way parallels McClelland & Stewart's New Canadian Library. It is true that the New Canadian Library includes some translations of Québecois novels, but these are usually the rare books — like the novels of Gabrielle Roy — that have received wide attention in English-speaking Canada. The French Writers of Canada, as a series, sets out to introduce to the Anglophone public Québecois books of high standard, and also high standing in their own world, which have not previously been made available in translation. This means that in each case new translations have been commissioned, and so, quite apart from making some excellent books available to a whole new readership, the series gives encouragement to the activity of translation which is so necessary for the mutual understanding of the two major Canadas. Except for Louis Dantin's *Fanny*, a semi-naturalistic novel based on the author's experience of living in a black ghetto in Boston, the novels in the most recent batch of titles (all priced at $2.50) are in that vein of lyrical fantasy which one encounters so often among French Canadian and so seldom among English Canadian writers, *The Double Hook* and Gwen McEwen's novels being among the rare exceptions. *The Grandfathers* by Victor-Lévy Beaulieu, *Jos Carbone* by Jacques Benoît and Jacques Ferron's two books, *The Saint Elias* and *The Juneberry Tree*, all lead us into dreamlands whose relation to the actual world is real but ironic, even when, as in *The Saint Elias*, a pseudo-historical form is used and people who have actually lived are introduced or indirectly mocked. Such fiction belongs, perhaps, to an older, more ordered and more static society than that of English Canada. One has to be at grips with one's daily world to build above it one's artificial Edens. L.T.C.