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CANADIAN LITERATURE No. 71

Winter, 1976

REMEMBERING RODERICK HAIG-BROWN

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CANADIAN
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UMBER 71, WINTER 1976

Quarterly of Criticism
id Review

DITOR: George Woodcock

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INTED IN CANADA BY MORRISS
INTING COMPANY LTD., VICTORIA

cond Class Mail registration
mber 1375

blication of *Canadian Literature* is
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nadian Literature is indexed in the
nadian Periodical Index and is
ailable in microfilm from
niversity Microfilms,
Mobile Drive,
oronto M4A 1H6

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SN 0008-4360

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editorial

PRIDE OF PLACE AND PAST

MARGARET LAURENCE's latest book, *Heart of a Stranger* (McClelland & Stewart, $8.95) is not entirely her newest, for it consists of essays and memoirs written over a fair period, some of them published in magazines, others — like a fascinating essay on Mahammad 'Abdilla Hasan, the so-called "Mad Mullah" of Somaliland — written and put aside for many years. Together, with their echoes of experiences that stretch from Margaret Laurence's prairie childhood, through her periods in Somaliland and Ghana, down to her Ontario present, they form not merely an evocative background to her fiction, but also a minimal autobiography of a remarkable author and a remarkable person.

What emerges most strongly from *Heart of a Stranger* is that fact about recent Canadian writing which an excess of thematic criticism has tended to obscure: the extremely concrete feeling that emerges out of a heightened sense of place and past in so many of our novels, short stories and poems. Canadian writers — the best of them at least — have become highly visual in their way of expression, and real as their thematic motivations may sometimes be, it is more often their preternaturally intense projection of the Canadian land and Canadian life that is likely to stay in our minds. I believe that recent Canadian critics were attracted to the thematic element in our writing largely because of the simplistic and deceptive obviousness of the themes which the last generation of Canadian writers — the MacLennans and Mitchells — tended to develop. Our literature in the past had strong didactic inclinations, and what the thematic critics have found is largely the product of that lingering desire to teach. And this, I think, has led them to pay less than sufficient attention to the way in which Canadian geography and history are being used by our writers symbolically yet at the same time almost super-realistically to create a mythology very different from that developed by verse-writers in the 1940's, a mythology characterized by an almost

chthonian attachment to the solid earth and flesh of here and then, memory incarnated into myth.

This is something Margaret Laurence seems to have recognized clearly enough through reflecting on her works as well as her world, for her novels, while in no direct way autobiographies, have been rooted always in experience intensely lived and understood. Manawaka may, as she says, exist in the mind and not on any maps, but it would hardly be there but for the existence of the map town of Neepawa for Margaret Laurence to have grown up in. All of us, as writers, know that our works come into fullness only when their umbilical cords are severed, but also that there is no spontaneous generation in art any more than in life; somewhere there is always the parental organism that the creative imagination has abandoned. Or perhaps never truly abandoned, which may be why Canadian novelists and poets these days are so concerned to evoke and at the same time to exorcise the realities of place and past. Of this, in "A Place to Stand On", Laurence speaks wisely:

> My writing, then, has been my own attempt to come to terms with the past. I see this process as the gradual one of freeing oneself from the stultifying aspect of the past, while at the same time beginning to see its true value — which, in the case of my own people (by which I mean the total community, not just my particular family), was a determination to survive against whatever odds.

(These words were written and published, incidentally, before Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, which in turn was written without prior reading of Laurence's piece, an illustration of the way ideas, when they become timely, often appear simultaneously in a number of minds.)

In a later essay, "Where the World Began", Laurence develops this dual aspect of the past in the writer's consciousness, and relates her personal experience to the more general shifts of consciousness that make us seek through history for the myths that distinguish a culture moving towards maturity.

> When I was eighteen, I couldn't wait to get out of that town, away from the prairies. I did not know then that I would carry the land and town all my life within my skull, that they would form the mainspring and source of the writing I was to do, wherever and however far away I might live.
>
> This was my territory in the time of my youth, and in a sense my life since then has been an attempt to look at it, to come to terms with it. Stultifying to the mind it certainly could be, and sometimes was, not to the imagination. It was many things, but it was never dull.
>
> The same, I now see, could be said for Canada in general. Why on earth did generations of Canadians pretend to believe this country dull? We knew perfectly well it wasn't. Yet for so long we did not proclaim what we knew. If our upsurge of so-called nationalism seems odd or irrelevant to outsiders, and even to some of our own people (*what's all the fuss about?*), they might try to understand that for many years we valued ourselves insufficiently, living as we did under the huge

shadows of those two dominating figures, Uncle Sam and Britannia. We have only just begun to recognize our legends and to give shape to our myths.

* * *

One direction in which the inclination to undervalue ourselves has been remarkably reversed in recent years is, of course, in history. I do not mean merely the kind of imaginativeness that has characterized the writings of historians like Donald Creighton, who are themselves notable myth-makers in the best sense of the term, but also the care and interest and mere cash that are being put into the rediscovery of the past's very texture through the resurrection of material long buried in archives and family treasuries.

This has been a nation-wide process, and its result has been a fleshing out, not merely of national history, but also of long neglected regional historical traditions. Everywhere in Canada old memoirs and cycles of correspondence are becoming available for the first time, and one notable project has reached the stage of first publication in Vancouver, where the University of British Columbia Press has started to issue scholarly editions of items preserved in the rich collections of the Provincial Archives in Victoria and the City Archives in Vancouver.

One of the first two volumes to appear in the series is a work that has long been known and used by local historians, though it had to wait until 1975 for publication: *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken* ($18.95). Helmcken, London-born of German parents, came to Fort Victoria in 1850; he died in 1920, having played a central role in the colonial politics of Vancouver Island and, later, British Columbia, and having been deeply involved in the events that led up to British Columbia's entry into the Canadian confederation. His experience and his memories were rich, and early in the 1890's, having written a series of reminiscent articles on Victoria in the 1850's for the Victoria *Colonist*, he sat down to his autobiography, beginning with his London childhood and his medical apprenticeship at Guy's Hospital in pre-Lister days, and describing very vividly the Victoria he first knew, dominated as it was by the Hudson's Bay Company's fur interests; the great changes that came about through the gold rushes from 1858 onwards; and the political history of the Pacific coast colonies until British Columbia's separate existence vanished into Confederation; at this point, with dramatic appropriateness, Helmcken put down his pen. His later life was that of an ageing general practitioner in a small provincial capital, and we have to see it from outside in fugitive references made by other writers, notably Emily Carr, who in her *Book of Small* presents an engaging vignette of Helmcken in his old but active age as one young patient knew him. The *Colonist* articles, somewhat more sharply impressionist than the *Reminiscences*, are printed as an Appendix, and, with a useful introduction by Dorothy Blakey Smith, the whole volume combines not only to give a unique view of early European life on the

Pacific coast, but also to project a sympathetic personality whose qualities of humour, of endurance, of good sense tempered sometimes by excessive loyalty, emerge very clearly through a serviceable and often eloquent prose.

There was more of the self-conscious writer about Susan Allison, whose Recollections are published as the second volume in the UBC Press series, under the major title of *A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia* ($18.95). As Susan Moir, the author of these recollections arrived at Fort Hope on the Fraser River with her mother and her spendthrift stepfather, Thomas Glennie, who was attracted by the thought of becoming a country squire in the rich land of the goldfields. Fortune did not flow as easily as Glennie had expected, and in 1864 he vanished, leaving his wife and children to make do as best they could with the help of genteel acquaintances in Victoria and the Fraser Valley. In 1868 Susan Moir married John Fall Allison, after whom the Allison Pass is named. Allison was one of the pioneer farmers in the Similkameen Valley and in the Okanagan, and one of the founders of Princeton, and Susan shared the life of a rancher-trader that he pursued. She was deeply interested in the Indian peoples of the region, and deeply concerned as she watched their decline during her decades in these valleys whose late nineteenth century remoteness is hard to envisage now that they are traversed by main highways.

The fact that she was often involved in life at its most elemental — for fire and flood several times left her homeless in a virtual wilderness — did not diminish Susan Allison's interest in the artistic accomplishments she had learnt in her girlhood, and after Allison died in 1897 she began to turn to writing, publishing a long poem on the Similkameen Indians and also a paper on them which was published by the British Association for the Advancement of Science. But most of her work went into the Recollections which are here printed. They are the only major account by a woman of pioneering life in British Columbia during the mid-nineteenth century; it would not be inappropriate to describe *A Pioneer Gentlewoman in British Columbia* as the far western equivalent of *Roughing It in the Bush*, though Susan Allison had greater qualities of philosophic endurance than Susanna Moodie and also a greater empathy not only with the wild land but also with the strange and sometimes alarming people she encountered.

Mrs. Allison's actual text is in fact quite short; together with a couple of her versions of Indian stories as an appendix, it runs to little more than 80 pages. The remainder of the 200 odd pages of *A Pioneer Gentlewoman of British Columbia* is taken up with Margaret Ormsby's long introduction and her elaborate notes identifying and telling the basic history of every individual and place named in the text. Some such apparatus was needed, since Susan Allison writes as if on the assumption that her readers would know everyone she mentions; Dr. Ormsby's work has been done so well that what we have is not merely the story of one woman, but a kind of shadow history of the extraordinarily beautiful region

through which one travels from Hope across the ranges to the Similkameen Valley and on to the western shores of Okanagan Lake.

Finally, a note of regret. Roderick Haig-Brown, a contributor to the first issue of *Canadian Literature*, a constant friend of the journal, a personal friend of the editor, has died with sudden grace in his garden, near to the unsleeping river he loved. We know all of our readers who have read his works will join us in our sadness over the departure of this splendid prose-writer who carried the tradition of the great naturalists and was the true heir of Isaak Walton and of W. H. Hudson.

GEORGE WOODCOCK

BLUE CITY

Ralph Gustafson

The air is quiet
and the window
holds a truce
with the sun
red
where it went down.
The sill is dust.
This is
a dirty city.
Blacks sing in the dusk
slowtime.
They have invaded
the neighborhood
with harmony,
greatchords
like sorrow,
a broken armchair,
TV, bedsprings
Junk
on the street,
and the universe
constructed of stars.
The Lord God was hung
on the lonesome tree

they sing in the dusk.

RODERICK HAIG-BROWN

W. J. Keith

IN AN ARTICLE appearing in 1958, Roderick Haig-Brown was described as standing firmly "in that front rank of Canadian writers whose works are published in New York and London, as well as in Toronto, and whose reputations are international, rather than national or provincial."[1] I consider this a valid assessment, yet it must be admitted that his name is not one likely to spring to mind whenever contemporary Canadian writers are being discussed. He is a presence, certainly, but he remains as a writer shadowy, almost aloof — definitely outside the current "establishment". Most anthologies ignore him, and we look for his name in vain in such literary surveys as *Butterfly on Rock* or *Survival* (his absence from the last-named is all the more surprising, since survival is a recurrent theme probed deeply and variously throughout his work); even Pacey's comprehensive *Creative Writing in Canada* includes only two perfunctory references.

The main explanation for this neglect lies in the fact that Haig-Brown works best in a slighted genre. Though he has produced a number of works of fiction, aimed at both juvenile and adult readers, his most significant writing has been in discursive, non-fiction prose, and those who devote themselves to this literary genre are almost invariably the last to be recognized as writers of enduring merit. In Haig-Brown's case, however, there are a number of other contributory factors. His favourite subject-matter, wild life in general and fish in particular, places him in a special category likely to earn him the devotion of enthusiasts but the neglect of others. At the same time, his interests transcend the usual classifications; thus in most libraries his work will be split between fiction, literature, history, natural history, sociology, juvenile books, etc., and this inevitably discourages any unified response to his achievement. Finally, his international publishing history notwithstanding, he is a decidedly local writer, focusing his attention on western North America (particularly, of course, British Columbia), and it is well-known that, despite the provenance of this magazine, Canadian literary activity in its publishing, advertising, fashion-setting aspects is concentrated upon the eastern part of the country, with all the unconscious preferences and prejudices that always accompany such a situation. The aim of this article (by one who, though

a student of the literature of wild life, is no fisherman and lives and works in Toronto) is to try to right the imbalance; I hope to offer an introductory survey of Haig-Brown's work (in the logging terminology of which he is fond, a "cruise"), to establish its basic pattern and assess his overall contribution.

Haig-Brown's first book, *Silver: The Story of an Atlantic Salmon*, was published in 1931; his most recent, *The Salmon*, appeared in 1974. Across a span of over forty years, these two provide an appropriate frame for his literary career. The common subject-matter indicates a lifelong interest in fishing and ichthyology, and it is noteworthy that, although the former was written for children and the latter for adults, although the first is narrative and the second expository, both are didactic, informative. Haig-Brown has always been an instructor, a teacher or nothing. The connections between the two books suggest that his work does indeed possess a coherent pattern, but there is one significant difference between them: *Silver* was published in England and has an English setting, while *The Salmon*, though international in scope, was commissioned by the Canadian government and is primarily concerned with the North American situation.

An approach to Haig-Brown's writing is best made, in fact, through an account of his "transplanting" from southern England, where he was born in 1908, to Vancouver Island, which has been his permanent home since 1933. His roots go deep into the English countryside. His maternal grandfather, Alfred Pope, who had gone to school with Thomas Hardy, was mayor of Dorchester in 1886, the year Hardy published his Dorchester novel, so could legitimately think of himself as the mayor of Casterbridge. Haig-Brown spent many holidays in Dorset during his boyhood, and on one occasion accompanied his grandfather to tea with Hardy at Max Gate.[2] And it was in the environs of Dorchester that the foundations of his knowledge of outdoor life were well and truly laid. "In my earliest fishing years," he writes, "I fished between the chalk hills of Dorset until any change in the river Frome or the fish that swam in it or the duns that hatched from its weed beds marked itself instantly upon my mind."[3]

But alongside a loving familiarity with the natural world he also inherited literary interest and activity from both sides of his family. His grandfather was the author of *The Old Stone Crosses of Dorset* and his father, who was killed in the First World War, had published *Sporting Sonnets and Other Verse* in 1903 and *My Game-Book* in 1913, the latter dedicated to the five-year-old Haig-Brown who has since called it "as beautifully written a piece of tradition as any that ever sought to mold a boy" (*RNS*, 216). With this background, it is scarcely surprising to find him well versed in the English rural writers, and we encounter references to them throughout his work — naturally enough, to Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton (Haig-Brown's interest in fly-fishing leads him to prefer the latter to the former), but also to Gilbert White, Cobbett, Surtees, Barnes, Jefferies, Hudson, and Henry Williamson (whose *Salar the Salmon* [1935] was

anticipated to some extent by Haig-Brown's own *Silver*). Although I would not wish to imply that Haig-Brown is anything but Canadian in his mature writings, it is important to lay some emphasis on his connections with the essentially English rural tradition.

Haig-Brown first came out to Canada in 1925, travelling to British Columbia and the American Northwest, working in logging-camps and on surveys, and thereby gaining his initiation into what was to become "years of living with prospectors and trappers and stump ranchers" (*RNS*, 14). Before long, he had registered a trap-line in the northern part of Vancouver Island and entered into a hand-logging partnership. He returned to England between 1929 and 1931, at which time *Silver* was published, but he came back to Vancouver Island in the latter year, and after working for some time as professional hunter, trapper and guide, he married and settled down by the Campbell River, home of "the most famous run of big salmon in the world."[4] In the books written since then — *The Salmon* is his twenty-third — he can be said to have made the mountains, forests and waters of British Columbia his own.

The relation between an immigrant and his adopted country is a complex one, especially for a writer who has established his literary niche as a detailed and wide-ranging commentator on his new land. One gets the impression when reading through Haig-Brown's work that he has been particularly conscious of a responsibility to justify his change of allegiance by a thorough mastery of all the historical, zoological and sociological aspects of the province in which he lives. I have taken my title for this essay from a passage in *Starbuck Valley Winter* (1943) in which Don Morgan, following in his creator's footsteps (he is also an immigrant, but in his case from the United States), is about to establish a trap-line in the wilds:

> He had names of his own for most of the creeks and swamps he could see, and even for some of the logging roads. Standing there, looking over it, he felt a sudden pride in the country, a sense of ownership through knowledge, through having set his feet upon so much of it in the three years he had lived there.[5]

Similar sentiments recur in Haig-Brown's writing. Here, for example, is the continuation of the account of his Dorset upbringing in *A River Never Sleeps*: "In the years since then I have fished one or two Vancouver rivers [*i.e.*, the Nimpkish and the Campbell] until I know them as well as I know the Frome; I feel at home in them, and everything I see in them or about them has its meaning for me, as the life of the Frome meadows had" (*RNS*, 83). Ultimately, he can observe: "I fish the Campbell with a sense of ownership fully as strong as that of any legitimate owner of fishing rights in the world. . . . The sense of ownership grows simply from knowing the river" (*RNS*, 350).

The image of exploration and discovery may be seen as a unifying thread that

links his numerous writings. In his historical books for schoolchildren — *Captain of the Discovery* (1956), *The Farthest Shores* (1960) and *Fur and Gold* (1962) — he has brought to life the exploits of the men who first explored both the coast and the interior (Bering, the Spaniards, Vancouver, Mackenzie, Fraser, Thompson, etc.) and in the last-named the administrators and politicians (notably James Douglas) who consolidated the achievements of the explorers and initiated the subsequent development of British Columbia. In *Silver* and *Return to the River* (1941), at first sight books of a very different kind, a comparable interest is to be found, though this time the discovery is scientific; Haig-Brown is fascinated not only with the life-cycle of the salmon but with the efforts of dedicated human beings (the unnamed "Good Fisherman" in the first, Senator Evans and Don Gunner in the second) to discover and reveal the complex secrets of natural processes. In his juvenile adventure stories — especially *Starbuck Valley Winter* and *The Whale People* (1962) — the boy-heroes embark upon personal voyages of discovery, venturing into new places and proving themselves in new accomplishments. Haig-Brown's own role as fact-finder and sympathetic interpreter is less dramatic but no less real; he communicates to his readers a sense of intellectual discovery through painstaking research and a lifetime of practical experience.

His favourite subject is, of course, fishing, and he has written on virtually every aspect of it, from practical handbooks like *A Primer of Fly-Fishing* (1964) to authoritative surveys like *The Western Angler* (1939), though he is at his best in the more personal mode, in such books as the four accounts of the fisherman's year divided according to the seasons, and books of essays on fishing subjects like *A River Never Sleeps*. But he is by no means confined to the literature of angling. His ownership through knowledge extends over many other areas. One of his novels, *Timber* (1942; published in England as *The Tall Trees Fall* [1943]) is based upon his intimate acquaintance with the logging industry, and he made a special study of cougars in order to write *Ki-Yu* (1934; later republished as *Panther*) and another of the traditions of the Indians of the Pacific Coast for *The Whale People*. But the seal on his intellectual ownership of his adopted province was set by his writing of *The Living Land* (1961) — a veritable anatomy of British Columbia, which surveys its natural resources and future prospects on the basis of the studies produced by a series of Resources Conferences.

This whole image of ownership can, however, be carried too far. Haig-Brown is acutely aware of the fact that "any given generation of men can have only a lease, not ownership, of the earth; and one essential term of the lease is that the

earth be handed on to the next generation with unimpaired potentialities."[6] He also knows that ownership of any kind, though accompanied with privileges, carries with it duties and responsibilities. It was not enough for him merely to discover and enjoy the wild life and natural beauty of British Columbia; these constitute a priceless heritage that must be both shared and conserved. The sharing of both his knowledge and his enthusiasm for the natural world has been accomplished by means of his writings. The need for conservation has similarly been urged through the written word, but it has in addition been furthered through his action and example.

Although his preoccupation with wild life had been fostered by his early upbringing and the practice of his father, he is by no means a blind follower of traditional ways. While his father's book reflected, in the son's words, "a vigorous man's love of shooting and fishing" (*RNS*, 217), his own development has been towards protection. During the half-century in which he has known Vancouver Island, the situation of its wild life has changed out of all recognition, and Haig-Brown has recognized and adapted to this change. As he writes in *Measure of the Year* (1950):

> I hunt as often as I can get out, with greater enthusiasm and interest than ever; I shoot less and less, and with an ever-increasing reluctance, because a wholly new factor has come in to destroy all the calculations that once seemed to make my measure of killing reasonable and sane: I am no longer a single hunter among a few others of my kind; I am a part of a vast and always increasing army of hunters that suddenly seems to threaten the future of every wild creature I love. (*MY*, 199)

More recently he has made comparable statements concerning the population explosion among fishermen, and has proposed more stringent legislation and advocated rules of self-discipline to meet the new dangers involved. Although to some outsiders the combination of the roles of hunter, angler and protector of wild life seems contradictory, Haig-Brown is one of our leading conservationists, and he carries special conviction because of his previous, and continuing, experience as a sportsman.

He defines conservation as "a religious concept — the most universal and fundamental of all such concepts, the worship of fertility to which man has dedicated himself in every civilization since his race began."[7] But his arguments have hardly anything in common with those of urban arm-chair conservationists who all too often have little or no familiarity with the wilderness they profess to defend, and whose opinions are abstract and theoretical. Like Thoreau and Jefferies before him, he is prepared to defend sport because "carrying a gun has taught me a thousand things about animals and country and wind and weather that I should not otherwise have bothered to learn" (*MY*, 203). He knows the differences between hunters and butchers (*MY*, 205), and insists that genuine

sportsmen "are the keenest and most effective of all conservationists" (*MY*, 201), that they can play a powerful and, indeed, essential part in any rational programme of protection.

In recent years, Haig-Brown has devoted a great deal of time and effort to his civic duties as magistrate and judge. This side of his life has found little immediate reflection in his writings (two amusing essays in *Measure of the Year*, the boys' adventure story, *Mounted Police Patrol* [1954], some uncollected articles in popular magazines), and it seems, indeed, to have interfered substantially with his writing — *The Salmon* is his first book for a decade, and even this is little more than an up-to-date recapitulation of earlier material. We may well regret this, but it is not difficult to see the relation of this work to the overall context of his life. Haig-Brown is very much a humanist, and he knows that the framing of wise laws and the firm but humane enforcement of them are essential to our own survival and also to that of the other species with which we share the earth. His emphasis on ethics and restraint extends from conduct when hunting and fishing to behaviour in day-to-day living. Whether as magistrate, sportsman or writer, he actively upholds the need for human understanding, co-operation and discipline.

A DETAILED LITERARY EXAMINATION of Haig-Brown's writings soon reveals the existence of two marked — and, at first sight, opposed — attitudes recurring regularly in his work. The first, one of the features that probably derives from the English rural tradition, is an ever-riding concern for truth and accuracy. Thus, in his dedication to *Silver* he writes: "I have tried to make it an interesting story and at the same time I have tried to keep to the truth about salmon and their ways."[8] Similarly, the preface to *Ki-Yu* begins: "Every detail of panthers and their ways set down in this book is strictly accurate — yet accurate knowledge of panthers is not easily gained."[9] And in the discussion of his own work that appeared in the first issue of this magazine, he told how his early logging-companions begged him "to tell the truth, the whole truth, not as poets and writers and film directors see it, but as they themselves saw it — the daily truth of hard work and danger."[10]

Yet against this earnest preoccupation with unadorned fact is a balancing acknowledgement of the sense of elevating wonder to be derived from a knowledge of wild things. This is best described at the opening of *Measure of the Year*:

> The great clear signs of the changing seasons, the migration of geese and salmon, of caribou and buffalo, the swell of leaf buds in spring, the first fall snow on the high mountains, have meaning beyond themselves and a power of association that must go far back into the earliest development of man. They have passed, many

> of them, through wonder into superstition and religion, and are now become wonder again and living pleasure. (*MY*, 3)

Ultimately, however, these two attitudes are by no means incompatible. Haig-Brown is impressed by the realization that truth is itself wonderful. This is, indeed, one of the paradoxical (and pleasing) results of recent scientific discoveries in ichthylology. "In my own lifetime," he writes, "many questions about salmon have been answered, many mysteries have been revealed. But every answer, every revelation serves only to make these graceful forms lying over the gravels at the headwaters of a mountain stream a more affecting miracle."[11] Haig-Brown finds the same principle at work in all branches of natural knowledge; it is not too much to say that the prime impulse in his work is to reveal this miracle of the living fact.

Fact and the interpretation of fact: these not only make up the content of Haig-Brown's writings but also define their form. In *Return to the River*, for example, the subject is the life-cycle of a chinook salmon, but Haig-Brown's introduction of Senator Evans and Don Gunner the scientist is more than a technical device to guarantee authentic observation. The two follow the movements of the fish because it is in the interests of man that their habits are known and their runs preserved. The chinook-run on the Columbia River is appropriately scrutinized by conserving politician and research scientist because it is on co-operation between these two that the salmon depend in the modern world for their survival. Moreover, truth lies in the combined wisdom of the two observers. Don Gunner is prepared to admit that "you old anglers come much closer to understanding a place like this [the breeding-pool] than scientists do." Evans, who is sage as well as senator, replies that scientists have taught him about "the rhythms of life," and proceeds to articulate the pattern that gives the whole book its subject-matter, its form and its underlying philosophy: "From algae to plankton to insects to fish, from diatom to daphne to stonefly to fish again. From there to the birds and animals, finally man. And it all starts from decay, chemicals, bacteria. I like it."[12] *Return to the River* is a narrative of natural history, a demonstration of ichthyological research, a conservationist tract and a celebration of the natural process all in one.

In an earlier book, *Pool and Rapid* (1932), Haig-Brown employs imaginative means to convey a comprehensive truth beyond the scope of statistics or prosaic description. Based on his experiences on the Nimpkish River in northern Vancouver Island (called the Tashish here), the book chronicles the history of the river and its human inter-relations from the earliest times. Thus it begins in pre-history with the world of the Indian gods and continues through the period of early white settlement to the threat to the river (conveniently defeated in what seems now an over-optimistic climax) from industrial development. Alec Lucas,

who properly stresses the function of the river as a structural, unifying device within the narrative, classifies the book as "a novel,"[13] but it is hardly fiction in the accepted sense. It is best described, I think, as imaginative history — history which recognizes myth as a legitimate part of the psychological, tradition-sanctioned truth of its subject, and admits created but representative figures (the young Indian chief, Skookum the first white settler, his son Redhead) as elements within a contrived but essentially accurate account of an extended historical process. Haig-Brown reveals the breadth of his own viewpoint by criticizing that of the technological experts brought in by the Tashish River Power and Pulp Company: "They talked of her [the river] as a *thing*; they could not see that romance and mystery were hidden in every crevice of her rocks, in every twist of her current, in every smooth curve of her graceful length."[14] Had *Pool and Rapid* been written a little later, I suspect that Haig-Brown would have found words with less vague associations than "romance" and "mystery" to convey his sense of wonder at the span of historical continuity, but as a whole the book well illustrates his attempt to reconcile the needlessly opposed perspectives of scientific fact and literary creation.

Haig-Brown seems to have been drawn towards fiction (though, under the circumstances, imaginative narrative might be a more suitable term) by the opportunity it provides for genuinely creative presentation. It is not altogether surprising, however, that his novels are most memorable for their informative, non-fiction qualities. This is as true, I believe, of his juvenile fiction as of his adult novels. Thus *Starbuck Valley Winter* derives its interest from the account of trapping in a remote valley, the dangers of such a life under tough conditions, the sheer struggle for survival; these are far more compelling than the rather perfunctory plot-mystery centred upon the sinister figure of a rival trapper. Similarly, in *Timber*, the recreation of life in the logging-camps, the techniques and even the terminology of logging (which Haig-Brown reproduces exactly, together with a useful glossary), hold the attention more readily than the inconclusive love-triangle or the excessively didactic (and now outmoded) discussion of trade-unionism. The background proves more absorbing than the events played out against it.

His most important novel is unquestionably *On the Highest Hill* (1949). Though it shares some of the weaknesses of *Timber* — a rather rambling narrative, an uneasy compound of elements that do not belong integrally together — its interest lies in its hero, Colin Elmslie, whose compulsion towards a wilderness not yet discovered and spoiled by mankind provides the central focus of the book. It is a novel half-way towards allegory. The first confrontation between Colin and the mountain takes place in the school-room when he is required to write an essay:

> No writing had ever poured from him so fast as those stored-up thoughts of the high mountain. He had stopped only when his imagination climbed beyond easy reach of words, and he scarcely knew that he had stopped; he had simply followed his thoughts into the mountains beyond reach or touch or need of pen and paper. Thought had climbed in him and with him, away from the room, from the valley, from the reality of the road home and suppertime and his father's return from work.[15]

Colin's life-pattern is implicit within this moment of revelation.

On the Highest Hill records the withdrawal of a solitary; Colin's love of wilderness develops into acute misanthropy. His mountain must be unsmirched, inviolate: "He thought: this is of me and I am of it. Nothing here is evil, nothing is touched, nothing dirty or destroyed" (*OHH*, 83). Away from mankind, "he was free to think clearly for the first time in his life" (*OHH*, 215). Though warned by an older hermit-woodsman that he may die in them if he persists in retiring into the mountains, Colin must follow his destiny. His tragedy (possibly too strong a word) is that complete solitude, whether desirable or not, is no longer feasible: "Seems like there's no place left where a man can keep to himself and act like a man" (*OHH*, 294). Ultimately, in a climax which offers an inadequate resolution of the tensions that have been building up in the plot, Colin turns to violence to defend his supposed right to isolation and dies a fugitive on the mountain to which he has retreated.

According to Alec Lucas, Colin Elmslie "becomes the author's final comment on civilization's ever increasing encroachment on the natural world and its suppression of man's freedom of spirit."[16] My own response is rather different; I find Colin limited as a character because he represents what is virtually a distortion of his creator's general attitude. For all his dislike of developers and polluters, Haig-Brown is *not* a solitary; indeed much of his strength, as I have tried to demonstrate, lies in his active, positive role as defender of an authentic wilderness (his vigorous and eloquent protest over the governmental spoliation of Strathcona Park in the 1950's is a case in point[17]). In his neurotic escapism, Colin stands in marked contrast to Haig-Brown's own clear-sighted, balanced response to the often depressing tensions inherent in modern living. Part of the unease I detect in the novel stems from a difficulty in reconciling his apparently sympathetic presentation of his hero with the superiority of his own views as manifest in his writings as a whole.

In a recent interview, Haig-Brown was questioned about his preferences among the literary genres and replied: "I think novels really give you the greatest satisfaction in a way, because you live most intimately with them, but I like the essay form. It's straightforward and practical, and has a lot more useful purpose today than a novel does."[18] Like so many writers on the natural world, he has effectively explored the indeterminate area between fiction and non-fiction. But

his best work, I have no doubt, is to be found in his essays and discursive prose. Here he is most at his ease. An adequate structure is provided by the natural divisions of the seasons or, often enough, can be imposed by the terms of his own interests and personality. (One of the most satisfying of his books, *A River Never Sleeps*, combines unity of subject — fish-lore — with month-by-month seasonal presentation, and buttresses the artistic structure by juxtaposing biographical experiences in England with those in North America.) An open form allows him to combine practical advice with anecdotes, reminiscences, didactic argument, evocative description. As familiar essayist, he claims the right to roam as his fancy inclines, and although in *Measure of the Year*, properly considered among his best collections, he demonstrates his versatility by studiously avoiding any direct discussion of angling, for the most part we are rarely far from the river-bank.

Roderick Haig-Brown has strong claims to be considered the North American "Compleat Angler." This continent has, doubtless, produced more expert fishermen, but none who can rival him in his comprehensive grasp of all that makes up the experience of angling or can convey a quintessential impression of its manifold attractions. Fishing, we might say, is where he starts from. For him, as for Izaak Walton, it is a multi-faceted activity, and the satisfactions to be derived from it include appreciation of the beauty of his surroundings, recognition of the numerous species of wild life around him, sheer joy in a challenge that combines skill and judgment with strength and physical exertion, the warm companionship of friends, and (recalling Walton's definition, "the contemplative man's recreation") "the flowing ease of thought that comes upon me as I fish" (*FS*, 13). He classifies angling as "an art, ephemeral, graceful, complicated, full of tradition yet never static, . . . as much a part of civilization as most of the minor arts and sciences" (*FS*, 11). Although a devotee, he is never pompous about it; he states frankly that he fishes because he likes it ("I go fishing to please myself, not to catch my breakfast or prove anything" [*FS*, 12]), and the words that tend to recur in his angling books are "pleasure," "beauty" and (especially) "observation."

Success in angling depends upon intimate "local knowledge" (*FS*, 70), and in acquiring this the fisherman must develop his powers of observation and sharpen his responses. The key-phrase here is "observation as participation" (*MY*, 4) — the necessary preliminary to ownership through knowledge. In order to attain expertise, the fisherman is impelled to "see" the countryside in the most positive sense: "A stream is just that to a casual observer — a pretty flow of water with life on its surface and growth on its banks. To a fisherman it is pools and runs and riffles, hidden rocks, sunken weed beds, gravel bars, log jams and cut banks."[19] The fisherman's concerns, indeed, extend to include the whole of the natural world: "Nothing that moves or lives within range of his vision and understanding is unimportant to a fisherman. Birds, trees, mammals, insects and weeds,

weather skills, meadows and rock and sky, are all part of a fisherman's world and of his pleasure" (*FS*, 120).

Once again, comparison between his English and North American experience proves central. In *Fisherman's Summer* he makes an important distinction between "a parent stream" ("the river of growth, the scene of boyhood endeavors, successes and failures") and "a home river," to which the adult fisherman comes and brings experience and skill to be applied and tested.[20] The former, for Haig-Brown, was the Dorset Frome, but his "home river" is the Campbell, and he shares with the reader a loving exploration of every inch of it. The child, in Wordsworthian phrase, is father of the man in a very real sense. The whole structure of *A River Never Sleeps* depends upon this relation, and an extended passage from *Fisherman's Spring* needs to be quoted not only for the subtle distinctions it makes but for the admirable prose in which it is written:

> No man loves the felt-soled boot and breast-high wader more than I do, no man throws a fly at leaping current waves with greater pleasure or keener expectation. Yet I remember well the easy, unhampered walking through the meadows, the calm of resting under a shade tree to watch a long, quiet reach of gliding water, the rhythmic, tearing sound of cropped grass as some rich dairy herd fed along the river's banks. And even more than these, the chance meetings with country people about their country affairs — hedgers and ditchers, herdsmen and shepherds, keepers and millers and farmers, the exchanges of tobacco and information, acceptance and acknowledgement of each other's business in the meadows.
>
> Here, these things have their dimly recognizable counterpart; the trapper in his cabin on lonely lake or stream fork, the occasional game warden or prospector. We accept the deer coming down to drink, the bear seeking berries, the beaver swimming, in place of the slow-stepping Devons, the gleaming Jerseys or the block-bodied Shorthorns. They make a wilder scene, more exciting and unpredictable, essentially different. One may prefer it, as I do, but the other remains a part of angling, a part of fly-fishing. (*FS*, 214-4)

This seems to me a key passage for establishing Haig-Brown's unique merits as a writer; its argument depends upon subtle discriminations of response that can only be conveyed through a carefully modulated control of language. This is highly effective prose, yet it is difficult to isolate its qualities. There is a deceiving simplicity about it; it flows so easily that its excellence is apt to pass unnoticed. The concentrated multi-sensual precision (in "the rhythmic, tearing sound of cropped grass," for instance) is masterly, but we find no dominating use of metaphor, no conscious high points, no ostentatious patches of "fine writing". None the less, the prose can express, clearly and economically, all the distinctions and nuances he wishes to make. Without striving for any dazzling effects, it is richly evocative, yet keenly exact. We can visualize each scene as it is brought before us — not in the minutest detail, perhaps, but in all its essentials. "Neither sport nor art," he tells us, "should be unnecessarily cluttered and complicated" (*FS*, 45).

One might say that his prose shares its qualities with the rivers he loves — lucid, briskly and smoothly flowing, containing abundant life.

THE BOY who grew up in the English countryside becomes a Canadian adult, but one who nevertheless remains essentially rural in his attitudes. He is maturely aware of the importance and dignity of the regional and the provincial, and is not the kind of writer to be overwhelmed by an imagined sense of isolation — "whatever measure of isolation I have known," he comments when pressed, "I do not regret."[21] He defends rural values with fervour and determination, insisting in *The Living Land* that "a sound and prosperous farm population is just as important for its human yield of valuable citizens as it is for its more commonly recognized yield of milk or potatoes or grain" (*LL*, 89). Unimpressed by the complacent attitudes of cosmopolitans, he refuses to equate reality with the latest urban fashion, and, though countryfied, he is a master of the urbane: "City people talk of 'escape' when they talk of country living. To me a cow is a reality. Escape is homogenized, pasteurized milk, delivered to the back-door in a disposable carton" (*MY*, 263). The tone is light-hearted, gently ironical, but Haig-Brown is wholly serious in his convictions. A few pages earlier, with earnest sincerity, he has noted how he hopes to protect his children "from the abysmal ignorance of the city, from the naïveté of extreme sophistication" (*MY*, 260). We recognize the committed tone of the unabashed countryman.

As a writer whose main subject-matter is the natural world, Haig-Brown does not fit readily into literary categories that are determined by either chronological periods or national boundaries. In many respects, he has more in common with the early nineteenth-century explorers of British Columbia than with the Canadian writers of the last thirty years that count technically as his contemporaries. He is read, in the United States, Great Britain and elsewhere, by a readership that, if modest in size, is loyal and appreciative, but he is read, of course, as an outdoors-writer, not for any particular Canadian quality in his work. Yet, in his undemonstrative way, he is firmly nationalistic, though without any trace of the flamboyant or the self-conscious. He shows little interest in ponderous discussions of "the Canadian identity," and is unlikely to grant that any insuperable or even unique problems confront Canadian authors. Asked some years ago to comment on the future of Canadian writing, he observed: "A writer should aspire to write for the world, or as large a section of the world as he can reach, and for this reason conscious nationalism as opposed to its incidental expression has little real significance."[22] He is concerned himself with more basic matters. Preoccupied with the conservation of the Canadian environment, he knows only too well that the threats do not necessarily come from the other sides of borders; his opponents,

more often than not, are Canadian developers and logging-companies — and even Canadian governments.

As a significant contributor to Canadian culture, he has found his English origins a stimulation rather than an inhibition. He has always been aware of the fact that "Americans and Canadians share some traditions that British and Canadians do not: traditions of mass immigration and western development, of the opening up of land and the development of a country without hereditary rulers" (*MY*, 16). On the other hand, he is not ashamed to admit that he put aside many possible advantages when he left England; with the figure of Hardy still bright in his remembrance, he acknowledges that "for the writer . . . there is more to know, more to understand, more to use in the thousand square miles of Dorset than in the three hundred and fifty thousand square miles of [his] own province."[23] But he has never regretted his choice; the gains outbalance the losses. He has resolutely gone his own way, and finds nothing to lament in his position (as the urban cosmopolites would describe it) "outside the main stream."

Above all, it is the invigorating, pioneering challenge of the Canadian experience that he has found so stimulating. He has succeeded in grafting his English sense of tradition and history on to that purposeful energy that is so characteristically North American. "I love American and Canadian literature," he writes, "because they speak directly to me with a fierce urgency and a closeness that is not in things European" (*MY*, 178). There can be no better summing-up of his attitudes — and of his inspiration — than the following sentences from *Measure of the Year*:

> It is good to be writing at the start of a country's history instead of at the end, to be looking on new unwritten places and new unwritten people, trying to understand, trying to find shape and pattern and meaning where none has been found before. There is no limiting tradition at such a time, no need for precious form or pretty experiment. There is only the subject, too vast to be seen clearly, too amorphous to be pressed into completely recognizable shape, an infinity in which to search and reach and feel for finite things. It is a freedom beyond all conceivable freedoms, bounded only by the imagination's reach and the imagination's skill in finding words for it. If there can be no full success, if neither we who write nor the times we write in are ripe for profound understanding, at least we are in and of the country's flood, her spring, her increase. (*MY*, 25)

To this "increase," Roderick Haig-Brown — still the explorer and the discoverer — has made a notable, enduring contribution.

NOTES

[1] Stanley E. Read, "Roderick L. Haig-Brown," *B.C. Library Quarterly*, 22 (July 1958), 15.

[2] For his account of this visit, see "Hardy's Dorset," *Tamarack Review*, 2 (Winter 1957), 46-54.

[3] *A River Never Sleeps* (New York: Morrow, 1946), p. 83. Hereafter cited in text as *RNS*.

[4] *Fisherman's Spring* (Toronto: Collins, 1951), p. 185. Hereafter cited in text as *FS*.

[5] *Starbuck Valley Winter* [1943] (New York: Morrow, 1954), p. 34.

[6] *Measure of the Year* (Toronto: Collins, 1950), p. 226. Hereafter cited in text as *MY*.

[7] *The Living Land* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1961), p. 21. Hereafter cited in text as *LL*.

[8] *Silver: The Life Story of an Atlantic Salmon* [1931] (London: Black, 1947), p. 7.

[9] *Ki-Yu: A Story of Panthers* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), p. 1.

[10] "The Writer in Isolation," *Canadian Literature*, 1 (Summer 1959), 8.

[11] *Fisherman's Fall* (Toronto: Collins, 1964), p. 85.

[12] *Return to the River: A Story of the Chinook Run* (New York: Morrow, 1941), p. 48.

[13] Alec Lucas, "Nature Writers and the Animal Story," in Carl Klinck, ed., *A Literary History of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 378.

[14] *Pool and Rapid* (London: Black, 1932), p. 142.

[15] *On the Highest Hill* (Toronto: Collins, 1949), p. 11. Hereafter cited in text as *OHH*. It may be noted that this novel takes on a special interest for students of Canadian fiction, since its theme bears significant relation to the later explorations of man and his artistic conquest of nature in Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952) and Gabrielle Roy's *The Hidden Mountain* (1961). Characteristically, however, Colin's compulsion is to retreat into the mountain, not — despite the passage quoted — to express it in words like Buckler's David Canaan or in paint like Roy's Gédéon.

[16] Lucas, p. 388.

[17] See *The Case for the Preservation of Strathcona Park* (Victoria, B.C.: *Daily Colonist*, 1955).

[18] "Roderick Haig-Brown Talks with Joan Heiberg," *B.C. Library Quarterly*, 35 (April 1972), 5.

[19] *A Primer of Fly-Fishing* (Toronto: Collins, 1964), p. 126.

[20] *Fisherman's Summer* (Toronto: Collins, 1959), p. 49.

[21] "The Wrier in Isolation," 11. It is worth noting that Haig-Brown's subtitle for this article was "A surprised exploration of a given subject."

[22] "Two Authors Look at the Future of Canadian Writing," *Canadian Author and Bookman*, 46 (Spring 1971), 4.

[23] "Hardy's Dorset," 52.

TO SEEK A SINGLE SYMMETRY

Ellen D. Warwick

GWENDOLYN MACEWEN has stated that in her writing she hopes to construct a myth. At its simplest, myth can be defined as an attempt to make concrete and particular a cosmic view. Mythopoeic writers are those who "suffering the lack of an acceptable or widely believed body of mythic material to give order to their imaginative restatements of experience, set about consciously to make a mythic frame for their works."[1] In her four major collections of poetry, *The Rising Fire*, *A Breakfast for Barbarians*, *The Shadow-Maker* and *Armies of the Moon*, MacEwen works toward creating such a frame. Its basic shape is indicated in the poem "Tiamut" (*The Rising Fire*): in a divided but holy universe all things strain toward reunion.

A woman called Chaos, she
was the earth inebriate, sans form,
a thing of ripped green flesh
and forests in crooked wooden dance,
and water a wine drunk of itself
and boulders bumping head-on the fool clouds.

Tiamut, her breasts in mountainous collision,
womb a cave of primeval beasts, thighs torn
greatly in the black Babylonian pre-eden —

Woman, she winced at the coming of Marduk;
his hands laid her out flat and angry on a bed of void,
Marduk stretched her out, and Tiamut lay,
coughing up black phlegm.

and Marduk flattened her belly under one hand
and sliced Tiamut down the length of her body —
the argument of parts, the division of disorder —
and made the sky of her left side
and fashioned the earth from her right . . .

> We, caught on a split organ of chaos,
> on the right half of a bisected goddess
> wonder why moon pulls sea on a silver string,
> why earth will not leave the gold bondage of the sun,
> why all parts marry, all things couple in confusion
> why atoms are wrenched apart in this
> adolescent time.

In an era of lean, spare lines, *The Rising Fire* (1963) impresses a reader with its verbal richness. Words pour out with abandon as if they have magical power and a right to exist without reference to an objective reality:

> under the knuckles of the warlord sun how long do we have
> how long do we have, you ask, in the vast magenta wastes
> of the morning world when the bone knuckles under for war
> when the bone intersects as the tangents in the district of the sun
> centipedes and infidels, snakes and the absence of doves?
>
> ("The Breakfast")

Nor does MacEwen use structure to control the outpourings. As the above example illustrates, her verse form can be as arbitrary as her meaning. Neither rhyme nor punctuation helps contain the flow, though the latter appears more often than the former. Instead, each poem gives the impression of an undisciplined creation that gushes out in emotive language.

Though its surfeit of words, its looseness of thought and its arbitrary forms display little feeling for integration, *The Rising Fire*'s thematic material tends toward synthesis. At times it surfaces as a desire to recapture a simple, more perfect state. In "Evidence of Monday," a young boy, new to the world of experience, remembers the innocence of a "brief green world." Exiled to work-a-day reality, he longs to return to "eden under the tugging years,/ eden at the end of days." Though "The Breakfast" is less well-realized, it echoes the urge to capture the world, create a self-contained space. "... eat only apples/ to improvise an eden.... by eating the world you may enclose it./ seek simplicities; the fingerprints of the sun only/ and the moon duplicating you in your body,/ the cosmos fits your measures; has no ending." The poem cannot sustain close analysis, yet it is in part an attempt to integrate experience into a meaningful whole that "fits" man and that man can fit into.

One recurring image that exemplifies MacEwen's tendency toward synthesis amid disintegration is her use of the circle, a figure that encloses. The shape appears in such diverse guises as a ferris wheel, a conical hat, the sun, the moon, the earth, an orbiting path, an egg, a man's eye and even the movement of neutrons and protons around an atom. In a three-poem sequence about space exploration she parallels the "sweet fanatic pace" of the smallest bit of molecular

matter with the movement of planets; compares the circling of an astronaut's spaceship with the "sweet/ concentric circles" of the mind's logic:

> but look to limits for a minute
> as the introverted eye looks inward
> we find the inward Eye looking out
> and finally, the astronaut swims
> through yellow yolks of total suns
> toward the ultimate inquiry
>
> ("Nikolayev and Popovich")

The outward journey that orbits the globe becomes a pattern for the journey inward to enclose, integrate, find meaning.

The inquiry, the search for meaning, rarely meets with success. The astronaut, reaching the limits of the universe, discovers not walls, "but mirrors/ reflecting the question mark/ of his own face back. . . . " Similarly, a ride on the ferris wheel means to move at "the/ point of absolute inquiry/ and stop nowhere on the mind's circumference." Though integration may never be attained, the attempt counts. "I ask you to revise your codes of holiness . . . I/ ask you to join me on/ the ferris wheel." ("The Ferris Wheel".)

In addition to the figure of the enclosing circle, MacEwen utilizes dance as a symbol of synthesis. Frequently the poet seems to gasp at the diversity of a world where "all/ must be taken into account/ sooner or later." Dance can become a primitive, ritualistic ceremony that keeps the unknown, feared complexities at bay. " . . . dance before it is possible to walk,/ dance crookedly into the difficult night." ("Poem for G.W.") More often, however, dance takes on the symbolic function Yeats assigned it, the role of an image so pure that thought and the form used to express it fuse into one. "The Athletes" in the park perform a classical ballet with their "syntax of perfect limbs". So welded are spirit and matter in their play that "the big forums/ of the skull collapse and/ the soul blows through its horn of bone." In "The Two Themes of The Dance", Adam must dance inward to find the identity he longs to express. God, on the other hand, can dance outward, express pure image, since his perfect state allows an integrity of intention and action man lacks. In "The Absolute Dance", MacEwen says explicitly that "something sustains us/ between the crib and crypt . . . the dance which is the synthesis." Each man struggles to discover this synthesis on his own. Old dancers are knocked aside for "they have no answers." By being willing to try each of us can "move towards the total power of the dance/ to seek a single symmetry, an hour of totality." ("The Absolute Dance".)

Both the encircling astronaut and the energetic dancer highlight the sense of desperate movement this poetry conveys, its "sweet fanatic pace". Fleeting moments of stillness, then, might imply the attainment of the integration sought.

In "Black and White", a poem strongly reminiscent of "Leda and the Swan", such a still point of perfection occurs. The winged muse plummets down toward a supine body, onto "knees which crashed the sheets" and "oh/ dark outrageous anchoring and the beauty of it." The single, ultimate meaning is momentarily caught in the still point Art effects when it unites the ideal and the real, mates eternity with time.

Despite a lack of cohesion in individual poems, *Rising Fire* shows MacEwen working toward the cosmic view she wishes to create. In a divided world straining toward reunion, her circle and dance imagery point up a drive toward synthesis. Though the movement is usually thwarted, the poet at least suggests that in the realm of art an instant of such perfection is possible.

IN THE PROSE INTRODUCTION to her 1966 volume, *A Breakfast for Barbarians*, the normally reticent author offers some comments on her attitudes *vis-a-vis* the world and writing. "My prime concern has always been with the raw material from which literature is derived," she says, "not with literature as an end in itself." As her title implies, she writes with a sense of hunger and appetite "even though it be satisfied with such diverse first courses as kings, dancers, sperm whales, astronauts, escape artists or fruits from algebraic gardens." The horrors of modern civilization have cut man off from himself, leaving him exiled, alienated. To this state of affairs MacEwen says: "No — rather enclose, absorb, have done. The intake. . . . I believe there is more room inside than outside. And all the diversities which get absorbed can later work their way out into fantastic things. . . . It is the intake, the refusal to starve./ And we must not forget the grace." This brief statement echoes "Tiamut." The world is holy but not whole, in need of being rescued from its fragmented, chaotic state. The poet acts as saviour by constructing a frame, a world-view that absorbs diversities, giving them significance within an over-all pattern.

One of the greatest differences between *Breakfast for Barbarians* and MacEwen's earlier poetry is the new discipline imposed on the language. As Davey remarks, "Gone is the inflated poetic language of the first two books which presented MacEwen as a variation on the ecstatic dryad, and in its place impressively realistic speech which presents her as a most attractive flesh and blood woman."[2] Part of the change springs from a realization that words should point to the real; the poet walks in fear of abstractions. "For you I would subtract my images/ for the nude truth beneath them." ("Poem".) Thus, in "It Rains, You See," the boys shy away from the pathos of mathematics, preferring to work with concrete objects such as chewed pencils and fingers. There also

appears a delightful coupling of the formal phrase with the colloquial that imparts to the work, however exotic the subject might be, a sense of immediacy:

> *now there are no bonds except the flesh*; listen —
> there was this boy, Manzini, stubborn with
> gut stood with black tights and a turquoise
> leaf across his sex
>
> ("Manzini: Escape Artist")

As in earlier works, verse form in *Breakfast for Barbarians* seems to spring from a spontaneous creation; poetry is discovery as well as communication. Perhaps because thought patterns are more clear, line divisions become more organic, make more sense. Occasionally, MacEwen lapses into pure prose ("Ultimately, Said The Saint, We Are All Of Us Devouring Each Other") or, conversely, sets herself the task of working within a confined, artificial form ("Modrakhina" and "The Cyclist In Aphelion"). She is at her best when line length, rhythm and punctuation are unobtrusive, conversational:

> they knew what it meant,
> those egyptian scribes who drew
> eyes right into their hieroglyphs,
> you read them dispassionate until
> the eye stumbles upon itself
> blinking back from the papyrus
>
> ("Poems in Braille")

"There is a great unspeakable wheel which keeps/ Us slender as myths, and green with sleep." ("Green With Sleep".) In *Breakfast for Barbarians* the enclosing circle, be it orbit, arc or microcosm, continues to grope toward the synthesis it symbolizes. In "The Kindled Children" the lens, the sun and the children's eyes all suggest this figure. More important, the one kindling the fire creates at the same time, through the integrity of his thought and action, his own miniature universe:

> When you hook a whole afternoon into a small lens
> and change it into fire for the kindled children,
> when you move about, having little need
> of wider fires, whole burning worlds, or anything
> beyond the intact moments of your deeds.

The orbiting astronaut traces this same sort of enclosure: "his body has become a zodiac of bone/ its own myth, a personal cosmology." ("The Astronauts".) And the moment of poetic inspiration, which MacEwen portrayed as mating of ideal and real in "Black and White", here becomes a circular action compared to the path of a planet whirling around a sun.

More often, as the introduction indicates, the theme of eating becomes an analogue for the need to contain the universe.

> let us make an anthology of recipes,
> let us edit for breakfast
> our most unspeakable appetites —
> let us pool spoons, knives
> and all cutlery in a cosmic cuisine,
> let us answer hunger
> with boiled chimera
> and apocalyptic tea,
> an arcane salad of spiced bibles,
> tossed dictionaries —
>
> (O my barbarians
> we will consume our mysteries)
>
> ("A Breakfast for Barbarians")

By consuming we will regain and make one with ourselves that which has been divided, split, and hence lost. In a society damned as materialistic and overly consumer-oriented, the poet literally turns the tables. She suggests that consuming is sacred, a sign of a holy hunger that longs to digest everything, thus bringing together all into an integrated whole. Even man himself, she says only half-playfully, may be the object of a divine appetite that wants to subsume him into a larger existence:

> Finally, the gigantic universal spoon like something from the cover of an SF magazine, dips down with the shining symmetry of a rocket's nosecone towards the earth, towards us here on our geographic tablemats at a sure, alarmingly sure angle . . .
>
> It seems that we the consumers are also consumed.
>
> ("Ultimately, said the Saint, We Are All of Us Devouring Each Other")

In *Breakfast for Barbarians* to devour signifies not a cannibalistic but rather a Eucharistic act wherein all creation unites in a feast of holy communion.

The impulse to consume may be sacred; still, it is doomed to leave the consumer always dissatisfied. No matter how much is taken in, more remains waiting for the intake. Simple, uncomplicated, "bright ancestral food" has disappeared from our complex cities. Now, "we eat and we eat and we know and we know/ that machines work faster than the machines of our mouths. ("Strange Breakfast".) Modern technology makes possible for man such a plethora of experiences to be integrated that one staggers back, daunted by the task. In this sense,

"we have too many myths." Having too many means we are left with none, since no single pattern emerges to give coherence to the confusing array of choices. So crowded is the altar with dishes that one cannot perceive the sacred food. As MacEwen puts it in "The Last Breakfast,"

> sometimes the food refuses to be sanctified
> and you stand over the table beating your chest
> and screaming impotent graces

What is the solution when "the food has become an anathema" and "the whole thing is decidedly insane"? One consumes anyway because in so doing can conjure up the image of "dark men running through the earth/ on their naked, splendid feet." The bared foot touching earth brings back into contact two parts of a Tiamut-sundered universe.

In *The Rising Fire* both the astronaut and the dancer moved toward a "single symmetry" but did not attain it. So also in *Breakfast for Barbarians* the intake proves insufficient. After incorporation comes transformation. "And all the diversities which get absorbed can later work their way out into fantastic things." ("Introduction".) MacEwen pictures transformation not as change imposed from outside, but an intrinsic movement coming from the inside out. A sculptor is surprised to find a shape emerging of its own accord: "I was working with clay and a face/ inherited my fingers; nor did I ask it/ to rise from the grey amorphous mass." ("The Face".) The poet becomes a queer "incredible animal" in her garden "working from the inside out". ("The Garden of Square Roots".) The escape artist finds "there are no bonds except the flesh" when he slides free "as a snake from/ his own sweet agonized skin". ("Manzini: Escape Artist".) The very universe is expanding outward, transforming itself in a cosmic sigh into nothingness. ("Thesis".)

A reader is not sure where MacEwen's transformations lead: to the void mentioned above or to some bright new order? In "Safed: Israel," the poet mourns that "In all things/ we lack the final syntax, the total form./ The eye is not full on Safed." Art fails to achieve the total form, for Chagall paints the eye turned sideways and hence communicates only a limited half-vision. But

> Once
> the Eye turned full of Safed
> and wrestled for the light with
> that total and sarcastic dark,
> and won the jacob-angel fight.
>
> ("Safed: Israel")

The capitalized "Eye" suggests that mystical union with some Godhead, a coming together of the ideal and the real, captures a moment of integration that Art cannot. In "Subliminal," on the other hand, the instant of perfection occurs in

sexual union when two beings are transformed into one and time stops: "where there is not time/ no differentiation of identities/ . . . Christ oh Christ no one lives long/ along that layer." ("Subliminal".) And finally, art does capture a second of supreme integration when it transforms both perceiver and perceived into one entity. Thus, the poet communicates the thing-in-itself: "with legs and arms I make alphabets/ like in those children's books/ where people bend into letters and signs." ("Poems in Braille".)

In the final poem of the volume, "The Aristocracies", MacEwen brings together all these avenues to perfection — sex, mysticism, art — and presents them in the figure of the dance. Cannot, she wonders, the body of her lover-muse and the body of God "dance through the same diagonal instant/ of my vision." If so, "I will altogether cease to speak/ as you do a brilliant arabesque within the bas-relief/ your body bent like the first letter of an unknown, flawless alphabet." The reader gives thanks that such happens only in the realm of MacEwen's desire. If coherence, order and perfection were achieved, the poet would no longer need to function as saviour. Silence would be the result.

Breakfast for Barbarians communicates above all the wish to bring pattern to the overwhelming diversity of contemporary society. Images of the circle, eating, transformation and the dance suggest that experience must be contained, ingested, changed and figured forth in a new perfected mode. Modern man struggles under an ever-growing body of past history and faces the possibility of new worlds and new time systems being discovered. All those realms have to be comprehended, then integrated, lest man find himself irrevocably alienated from the universe. In the Arcanum poems and those dealing with the Middle East, MacEwen tries to go backward in time and space; in those dealing with modern technology she reaches forward into the future. Both movements seem to spring from the same impulse, a need to gather up every jot and tittle so as to fit it into her mythic "brief green world". Only by taking the necessary step first, that of encircling and absorbing *all*, can the poet hope to transform reality into some significant whole.

BECAUSE IT URGES an emphatic "no" to nay-saying, *Breakfast for Barbarians* is an affirmative book. MacEwen's 1969 volume, *The Shadow-Maker*, delves into the negative aspects of man's experience. Though individual poems do not show the drive toward enclosure and synthesis to the degree that earlier works do, the collection itself is a self-conscious effort to mark off one particular area of life. Evil, the dark regions of existence, must also be incorporated into myth if the poet's vision is to be a whole one. The author subdivides these regions into "Holy Terrors", "The Unspeakable", "The Sleeper"

and "The Shadow-Maker". Unfortunately, the divisions remain artificially imposed, yielding little insight into either the poetry or the rationale behind such a partition. Indeed, the entire book comes perilously close to being poetry written to prescription. NEEDED: a volume on the tragic sense of life. "I have come to possess your darkness, only this," says the title poem. The statement sums up the purpose of *Shadow-Maker*.

MacEwen's usual involvement with language is blunted in this book. Rather than fearing abstractions, she revels in them and hence slips all too often into banality. "Love, move me, cast me furious through space;/ Love, bend me to your time — / Test and revise me, I fear your face!" ("Two Voices") comes dangerously close to the verse of ladies' magazines. Though she wishes to contain the darkness, the author complicates her task by refusing to make evil real, concrete, and hence believable. In "Westminster Abbey", by contrast, Irving Layton uses a cluster of tangible objects — chapels, monuments, tombs — to stand for a corrupt tradition that he despises. MacEwen, however, explores twilight regions by direct statement about emptiness, loss, the absence of good, but without linking such concepts to experiences that might arouse the appropriate emotions:

> And once fearful I no more wanted
> Sunflowers, conquests, kingdoms, stars,
> But that priceless loss of things —
> The unbearable dark and sweet lack of wanting
> The death in the mouth, the utterly empty eye,
> The easy wealth of nothing for it needs
> No tending and no holding
>
> ("The Pillars")

Because the language remains subjective, abstract, the shadowy realms are ultimately unreal. The "priceless loss of things" does not leap out from the writer's imagination to take on a full-bodied meaning in the reader's mind. The blandness of MacEwen's evil is typified in "The Taming of the Dragon," where the beast becomes both unbelievable and foolish with harmless claws, golden teeth and a wreath of flowers around his neck.

Perhaps the poet's experiment with more conventional verse forms has contributed to the dilution of her language. In any event, she seems ill at ease in these more structured poems, hampered, forced into vague, thin phrases. The frequent use of end-rhyme becomes simplistic: "Death . . . breath; you . . . shoe; four . . . more; back . . . track." Punctuation is also used more often than before, and like the other devices, controls and hems in a writer whose style cannot seem to survive such bounds. In *Shadow-Maker*, poetry is no longer written as discovery. Instead MacEwen has adopted a poetry of calculation. Spontaneity

disappears; the poetry of effects takes over. The tacked-on, clever endings of "The Red Bird You Wait For", "Invocations", "Poem", "The Sacrifice" and others attest to this tendency.

Not every poem in *The Shadow-Maker* fails, however. Some of the better efforts reveal a pattern evident in *Breakfast for Barbarians*, the movement to encompass other times, other places. "I say all worlds, all times, all loves are one," claims the author and she travels to exotic places to explore the truth of that statement. Sometimes the trip is an actual one, as in her poems on the Middle East, sometimes an imaginary one through space to the future. Always the trip stands for the more fascinating inward journey to the hidden recesses of the human mind, a terrain MacEwen prefers.

"One Arab Flute", perhaps the most successful poem in the book, reports such an outward-inward journey in a vivid, memorable way. Certain pictures from it remain in a reader's mind, persisting with Kodachrome clarity: "a blue-eyed Arab/ with a wild profile, standing/ in front of blond stone"; "a small girl carries a loaf/ of bread that reaches to her knees"; "To reach Jerusalem you ride/ through ribs of dead jeeps/ and rusted wreaths of war"; and "The chalk-white/ salt of bleached houses, white-/ faced, wide-eyed towns." Here are no shadowy, misty evocations, but rather hard, bright, real images. Workers scratching dirt from an archeological dig become emblematic of modern alienated man searching for roots. They relate to the one in "The Last Breakfast" who eats in order to conjure up the sight of dark men running "on their naked, splendid feet". The "I" of the sequence, the tourist, is "the disinherited" from the New World who seeks links to an ancient past. The tourist's desire for the wholeness and continuity of tradition gains hope from observing the Arabs' tenacious survival in a hopeless situation:

> But I have seen
> trees that grow sideways
> in Esdraelon, fighting gravity;
> their bark is strong
> and corded with patience
> and their leaves rush upwards
> in incongruous dance.

In several other poems MacEwen goes further back in time than the Judeo-Arabic world. In "Dream One: The Man-Fish" and more successfully in "The Heel", she regresses through evolutionary eons to pre-history when man emerged from sea-life. She blesses those ancestors who "came from the waters/ scaleless and shrewd, and walked with unwebbed feet/ to create memory." Longing for a share in their fortitude, she asserts her kinship with those unknown creatures as she feels "the holy waters lapping just behind my heel." ("The Heel".)

Shadow-Maker does more than attempt to contain the "black fields of history",

however. Many of the poems travel forth, usually via a space ship, into the future. "First Song from the Fifth Earth", "Second Song from the Fifth Earth", "The Hollow", "Fire Gardens" and "Letter to a Future Generation" attempt to reach forward in time. Unfortunately, few of these are well-realized enough to be convincing. Most work on the level of simple assertion: "I *say* all worlds, all times, all loves are one." (*italics mine*)

The theme of the trip as an inward journey shows up most clearly in the haunting "Dark Pines Under Water". Here the terrain explored is explicitly the interior landscape. "This land like a mirror turns you inward. . . . Your memory is a row of sinking pines." The poet wants to examine not only the furthest reaches of time and space but the mysterious world of the sub-conscious. " . . . the dark pines of your mind dip deeper . . . There is something down there and you want it told."

In earlier volumes MacEwen implies that sexual union, mystical experience and art can each bring about the integration necessary to an earth that is "the right half of a bisected goddess." Tiamut reappears in *Shadow-Maker*; "angel, look again — / it is only that these seas are blood,/ this continent the torso of/ a tougher god than we can name. . . . " ("First Song for the Fifth Earth".) Who shall reunite the sundered parts? The thesis around which this book seems to have been conceived is that art must integrate all, even the blacker sides of existence. In "Dream Two: The Beasts", the poet does bring about a momentary reconciliation of opposites. The warring tiger and dog are transformed and lie down together, one on her right side, the other on her left. A new order emerges, that of the peaceable kingdom. The moment of perfection lasts but an instant, however. Law, order, the forces of convention appear in the person of a policeman: " 'Nobody brings the beasts together,/ It's illegal,' he said" ("Dream Two: The Beasts".) For the first time in MacEwen's works, a sense of despair becomes prominent. Formerly the effort to contain a divided, various earth was admitted as hopeless, but the attempt to do so counted. It occasioned a bursting, bleary laugh rather than a sigh. Now the complexities of living elicit resignation tinged with a whiff of self-pity: "And beyond the freest reaches of our sight" lie realms we shall never comprehend, bound as we are by "the shores of pain." ("Dark Stars".) Neither art, nor sex, nor mysticism nor even love can bridge the painful spaces that keep man from wholeness. Unfortunately, since the pervading despair and occasional affirmation in this volume are asserted rather than proved, both attitudes become ultimately unreal, devoid of impact.

The Shadow-Maker, then, represents an effort to incorporate even the darker realms of human existence into its author's vision. In that sense, the book continues MacEwen's plan to create an all-embracing myth that demonstrates "all worlds, all times, all loves are one." In the pattern of the inward-outward journey she reaches back into history, forward into space and down into the

subconscious in an attempt to integrate all these possible regions of being. Too often, however, tightness of form and vagueness of language prove barriers to effective poetry. Much of the verse fails because the shadowy realms remain shadowy, unreal, not linked to a concrete reality existing outside the writer's mind. A reader is left puzzling whether MacEwen's vision or technique is most to blame. That is, is the problem that the poet cannot see evil as operative in the world or is it that she cannot communicate evil in anything but bloodless phrases? Whatever the reason, the world of holy terrors, nightmare and darkness remains, for the most part, unarticulated in this book.

ARMIES OF THE MOON, MacEwen's 1972 collection, may well represent a plateau in her development. The language in *Armies* modulates from formal to colloquial, depending on the requirements of the particular poem. Thus, one of the Arcana pieces begins: "now as I wear around my neck a necklace/ of a million suns, you come/ undead, unborn, thou Ghost of the morning!" ("Arcana in Seven".) The somewhat rhetorical, elevated tone fits the remote, stylized tale of love, death and incest in ancient Egypt. On the other hand, "Memoirs of a Mad Cook" starts with the slangy observation that "There's no point kidding myself any longer,/ I just can't get the knack of it." The everyday language suits the everyday problem of meeting other's needs which the poet poses in terms of preparing edible meals, an everyday chore.

Happily, MacEwen returns here to poetry as discovery. Though a reader can never know definitely how a writer creates, *Armies* projects less of the sense of calculation which characterized *Shadow-Maker*. Rhyme has disappeared once more; line length and stanza breaks are organically linked to thought rather than existing as a preconceived imposed structure. "Apollo Twelve" proves the poet can in fact work within a conventional form, but in general her more exciting verse avoids such predictable patterns. "Into whose future am I moving," asks "A Letter To Charos", and many of these poems give the impression of growing and developing to a climax previously unknown.

The epigraph to this volume indicates the turn MacEwen's myth-making has gradually taken. The Laurens van der Post lines say, in part, "It was then that I first realized that the war I was fighting was in me long before it was in the world without." Despite the astronaut and space ship imagery, this poetry does not communicate the feeling of frenetic movement evident in earlier books. The impulse to orbit, encircle, enclose, take in the universe has changed in favour of a more microcosmic approach. The traveller chooses the inward journey to encompass the self, a trip that began in *Rising Fire*.

Goodbye, goodbye
the planets have resigned
and left me all alone;
you have collapsed to a microcosm
where your brilliant secrets
no more masquerade as stars,
there are no more galaxies
there is no more moon. . . .

("The Telescope Turned Inward")

The search for integration has become less cosmic, more personal. Instead of comprehending the universe, one must comprehend the self.

Not that MacEwan has abandoned her desire to create a myth, a world-view. Both the opening title poem and "Apollo Twelve" suggest the need to orbit the universe and thus contain it, force it into some comprehensive whole. As in earlier space poems the movement is ultimately thwarted. The earthmen die and "become one with the gorgeous anonymous moon," a fate that hints at a reunion of Tiamut's divided parts. The astronaut of "Apollo Twelve" does indeed become "the satellite of his own dream" and succeeds in orbiting "the white world of his youth". But the moment of completion is, again, fleeting, for, that accomplished, he "climbs/ Through vacuous doorways to the gasping dark beyond." What is most significant about these two "cosmic" poems however, is their placement in the volume. Coming on the first and last pages, they themselves enclose the more personal, intimate, often domestic lines of the rest of the collection. MacEwen thus suggests that while a world-view must be sought it remains a frame within which the implications of such a vision are worked out in individual daily existence.

Some of the most successful poetry in *Armies* begins in the world of the ordinary. The poet starts with simple experiences in the realm of the domestic and, without straining to do so, endows housewifely tasks with mythic meaning. In "Meditations of a Seamstress (1)", for instance, she retreats to wine and the sewing machine when the universe starts to fall apart. "I make strong strong seams for my dresses/ and my world." And, if the job isn't done by nightfall "everything will come apart again;/ continental shelves will slowly drift into the sea/ and earthquakes will tear wide open/ the worn-out patches of Asia." Here the *need* to create a world where "everything fits at last" comes close to being the myth itself. The world-view, the vision of completeness becomes precisely the picture of man searching for perfection. The domestic poems about eating and house-cleaning echo this notion of a personal search for wholeness. Again, the search will fail, but the process itself, rather than the goal sought, attains cosmic significance. In "Dining at the Savarin," the poet, as in *Breakfast for Barbarians*, eats to the bursting point in an attempt to capture the essence of all

things. "Forgive me this second/ unreal hunger," she pleads, "Lord of the infinite buffet." In "The Vacuum Cleaner Dream," the "best cleaning woman/ in the world" succeeds in consuming everything with her "extra-galactic vacuum beast." Such perfection, however, ultimately destroys the very life the poet hoped to capture. "And when I opened the bag/ to empty it I found:/ a dictionary of dead tongues/ a bottle of wine/ lunar dust/ the rings of Saturn/ and the sleeping body of my love." In "The Aristocracies," the moment of perfection stunned the poet into silence, the need to speak vanished when integration occurred. Here too, the "dictionary of dead tongues" suggests that once everything is caught, taken in, synthesized, the need for poetry will be gone. Thus, both poetry and life exist not as completion, but as process.

At first glance "The Nine Arcana of the Kings", MacEwen's sequence based on obscure events in ancient Egypt, would seem to afford an opportunity for presenting a vision of completeness. That is, while the present and the future defy any attempt to encapsulate them, remaining stubbornly ongoing, open and processive, certainly one can see the past as a whole. The tale itself has elements of myth: heroic figures, a royal brother and sister, strive to throw off the tyranny of an oppressive parent-ruler. Their incestuous love survives death and two millennia of waiting until resurrection occurs. Even here, however, the poet refuses to freeze the past into lifeless completion. At the end of the poem-series, the prince only half-heartedly embraces his nubile sister-lover. Instead, he longs for the homosexual, self-destructive relationship with the old king. The reader guesses that the sequence is actually a cycle of recurring events, a representation of the ceaseless struggle between fecundity and sterility, freedom and domination, life and death. Even antiquity cannot be caught once and for all. The pattern it suggests is not synthesis, but one of change, evolution, struggle.

During the past decade Gwendolyn MacEwen has worked to create a myth, to make concrete and particular a cosmic view. She has used images of the circle and the dance, has dwelt on themes of consuming and the inward-outward journey to point up man's need for integration. She has indicated that mysticism, love and art can all, at least momentarily, heal a Tiamut-divided world, a "split organ of chaos." Ultimately, however, her vision remains open, unfinished. The process of searching for wholeness rather than its attainment becomes the myth.

NOTES

[1] C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*, p. 335.

[2] F. Davey, "Gwendolyn MacEwen: The Secret of Alchemy," *Open Letter*, Second Series, No. 4 (Spring 1973), p. 19.

TAYAOUT, UNE QUETE MYSTIQUE

Louise E. Nelson-Vanhee

UN DES ÉCRIVAINS canadians-français les plus connus est Yves Thériault. Ses nombreux livres nous mettent face à une réalité contemporaire brûlante: celle de l'homme moderne dans une société déshumanisante. Dans la plupart de ses livres tels *Aaron, Ashini, Agaguk*, Yves Thériault nous a fascinés par une technique visuelle propre à son art de conteur, par un sens poétique englobant les plus simples réalités d'une atmosphère quasi mythique et surtout par son amour pour l'homme primitif, que la civilisation ne peut corrompre. Cette lutte continuelle entre les valeurs traditionnelles et les nouveaux standards d'une civilisation de consommation, se retrouve dans beaucoup de ses romans. Bien qu'Yves Thériault se prétende être un écrivain non engagé, il est certainement le défenseur d'un humanisme fondamental en voie de disparition. Pour Thériault, l'homme véritable est celui qui, uni intimement à la nature, trouve l'épanouissement du corps et de l'esprit; c'est l'être qui à travers les réalités physiques atteint le domaine privilégié de la vraie sagesse et de la connaissance.

Dans cet article, nous désirons montrer que dans *Tayaout* il y a plus que la simple histoire du fils d'Agaguk. Toute une symbolique mystique transparaît, car en fait nous trouvons indéniablement un message métaphysique dans ce livre exceptionnel.

Homme de feu dans un désert de glace, Tayaout nous apparaît comme un être privilégié, défenseur de toute la race esquimaude. Tayaout est le fils d'Agaguk.[1] Tayaout est la continuation du père, le fils réincarnant le chef de famille. Agaguk, l'Homme, renaît et se perpétue dans son enfant. Or, rappelons-nous le physique d'Agaguk: "à la place du nez . . . il n'y avait plus qu'un immense trou". Agaguk dans son combat contre le loup, sort victorieux mais mutilé. Son visage n'est plus qu'un "masque hideux".

Ce visage d'Agaguk qui avait été décrit avec minutie dans les deux livres concernant le père, n'est plus effleuré dans le livre au sujet du fils. Tayaout voit son père, jamais il ne fait une remarque sur l'aspect quasi monstrueux que ce visage offre. Agaguk, l'homme sans visage, introduit l'esquimau sans âme qui

vendra ses statuettes et donc sa propre vie aux Blancs. Agaguk au lieu de sortir héroiquement de sa lutte contre la nature et la civilisation est défiguré par la noble bête et déspiritualisé par un mercantilisme matérialiste. L'épreuve était surhumaine! A la fin du livre *Agaguk*, l'homme avait atteint une grandeur peu commune, le sommet de l'amour et de la pureté. L'homme dominait les éléments, survivait grâce à un courage sans pareil et était regénéré par l'amour vivifiant de la femme. Le don de vie s'échangeait de la femme à l'homme, de l'homme à la femme qui ratifiait le droit de vivre de l'enfant-fille. A la fin d'*Agaguk*, le couple Iriook-Agaguk formait le couple réétabli au paradis terrestre, paradis de glace et de feu.

Au début de *Tayaout*,[2] nous retrouvons un Agaguk totalement différent, vieilli, changé, maté en quelque sorte. Il a abandonné la vie solitaire trop isolée, il s'est réintégré au groupe, il a choisi la voie facile, lui l'homme du Nord, jadis indomptable. L'esprit de conquête et d'indépendance qui l'animait, a cédé à l'esprit de confort facile, de sécurité endormante.

Tayaout hérite de la lourde tâche de perpétuer l'Esprit de la race:

> Avait-il donc été choisi pour retrouver la pierre verte de la mer? Et ramener aux Esquimaux de toute géographie et de tout dialecte, la possession ancienne de la fierté et du recommencement?

Tâche impossible, car Tayaout est condamné d'avance. En Tayaout, de l'homme-enfant qu'Iriook avait déjà sculpté, l'enfant va retrouver la pierre venue du fond de la mer, mais l'homme ne pourra survivre, car l'homme a depuis longtemps déjà perdu son visage. Tayaout hérite du père, et en tant que double, que reflet du père, il sait que le père n'est plus qu'un mirage, un être inexistant, "un monstre nocturne". Au fond, Tayaout est un instrument du destin comme l'était Oedipe:

> ... il retrouvait des humilités qu'il ne se connaissait point. N'être qu'un instrument et non la main maîtresse; n'être que lui-même, tel que toujours il a été, avec seulement une assurance en plus, celle d'être observé par les dieux, jaugé et pesé, et chargé de mission pour qu'il l'accomplisse en silence et sans gloire.

Oedipe épousait Jocaste et l'inceste ainsi avait lieu contre la volonté même d'Oedipe. Iriook, la mère de Tayaout, rejette Agaguk, le déspiritualise. En fait, Agaguk est devenu agnostic: "Il n'y a plus de pierre verte", dit Agaguk. "Il n'y aura plus jamais de pierre magique. C'est fini pour nous. Il est trop tard." Ce manque de foi exprime le désert spirituel d'Agaguk. A-t-il compris que les dieux mêmes ne pourront sauver sa race de la déchéance, de l'asservissement de la chair et de l'esprit au matérialisme?

La femme a le rôle de vestale. A elle échoue la tâche de garder la flamme de vie:

> N'était-ce pas la pierre ancienne qu'autrefois les Inuit formaient patiemment en lampes immortelles, dont jamais la flamme ne s'éteignait? Cette flamme qu'on portait d'une halte à l'autre dans le pot de même pierre, qu'il était du devoir de toute femme de garder comme sa vie, comme ses yeux, comme le coeur battant en elle, comme la langue de sa bouche et la vie croissant dans ses entrailles.

Iriook est conciente de son rôle de vestale. Elle sait comme Tayaout que: "Les esprits ont repris la pierre, et l'ont rejetée au fond de la mer, et la Femme des fonds, qui protège les phoques, ne la renverra pas . . . "

Dans cette mythologie esquimaude nous trouvons les deux éléments masculin et féminin intimement assemblés. La pierre, élément de virilité, est trouvé dans l'eau, la mer, élément maternel du debut des siècles. Toute vie est issue de la mer. La femme est origine et défenderesse de la vraie vie, de l'esprit de l'homme. Iriook en ce sens, continue le rôle de protectrice de l'âme humaine. Elle assume la tâche sacrée de garder intactes les traditions millénaires. Elle a compris qu'Agaguk avait commis le crime impardonnable, celui de défier les dieux, celui de nier l'existence d'une âme, celui de regarder la pierre comme un vulgaire caillou, non comme l'expression indélébile et inéluctable d'un destin plus grand que l'homme, plus mystérieux qu'une nuit polaire.

Cette pierre des Esprits, pierre qui "ne périssait jamais, ne se craquelait jamais, ne se consumait pas plus . . . ", devient peu à peu l'instrument des dieux condamnant les mortels. Elle donne à son fils les droits du père, elle lui confère son droit de vie et de mort, l'autorité d'un chef de famille. Elle l'investit du droit et du devoir de tuer Agaguk. "Il doit mourir et tu dois le tuer." Il y a plus ici qu'un simple parricide. Père et fils sont si intimement unis, si fonciérement liés qu'en tuant l'un, l'autre se suicide. En effet, Tayaout succombera aux griffes de l'ours et sera comme son père défiguré. Il est impossible pour Tayaout de survivre à la disparition de son père, de son double.

"Il déchargea l'arme en plein visage de son père." Remarquons que c'est cette figure inhumaine, monstrueuse que Tayaout vise. La vision-mirage a éclaté. Le miroir est brisé. Agaguk au visage défiguré n'était que le reflet de Tayaout, le père réincarné. L'énigme du sphinx, du chasseur de la statuette est résolue. Intimement liés, Agaguk et Tayaout avaient sculpté dans la pierre le même "Esquimau visant une bête au loin et s'apprêtant à tirer le coup mortel". Si Tayaout s'était reconnu d'emblée dans le chasseur délivré de la pierre, il ne pouvait imaginer la cible visée. Voici la victime dévoilée enfin! En acceptant de tuer son père, Tayaout se condamne d'office. Lui qui d'un coup de pierre faisait détaler l'ours, alors qu'il n'était qu'un enfant, le voici impuissant devant la bête sauvage, ayant oublié de donner les offrandes propitiatoires. Est-ce une simple négligence? Nous savons pourtant que Tayaout a toutes les qualités de l'homme mystique. La solitude l'enrobe, favorise un lent cheminement vers la méditation et la compréhension des êtres et des choses. Son oubli n'est que la ratification

inconsciente d'un doute fondamental. La découverte du Graal à elle seule ne suffisait pas à sanctifier le héro. La pierre verte trouvée, ramenée, réintégrée aux traditions n'a pas pu transformer les âmes. Et sa signification est perdue à tout jamais. La pierre a été profanée, vendue elle est désacralisée. Elle perd à tout jamais son charme magique. En elle, l'Esprit esquimau restera prisonnier, car les mains se sont souillées de dollars, les formes délivrées de leur gance de pierre ont été vendues comme de vulgaires objets de commerce.

Tayaout, victime d'un fusil déficient et surtout d'un manque de foi, meurt, mais en mourant il réalise sa faute; il pressent la mort comme une justice fulgurante des dieux. Il aurait pu . . . il durait dû penser à offrir ces offrandes pour l'âme de l'ours! Tayaout a-t-il inconsciemment défié l'existence des esprits? A-t-il tenté de nier la validité des rites ancestraux? A-t-il connu la tentation du père de renier lui aussi, l'Esprit? Dans cette perspective, *Tayaout* devient une quête métaphysique. Le livre traduit l'angoisse fondamental de l'homme face à son destin, face à la mort, seul avec lui-même et le visage inconnu de l'au-delà.

A la minute suprême et dernière, Tayaout a la vision lucide du monde spirituel. En un éclair, il réalise la fulgurante et foudroyante réalité de l'esprit. C'est pourquoi le corps déchiqueté de Tayaout importe peu. Ce corps méconnaissable a accouché enfin d'une âme, quelque errante qu'elle soit:

> J'habite le sommet du monde. J'y suis depuis des millénaires l'homme continuel, je suis sans âge car j'ai tous les âges. Je suis sans trace l'ancêtre parce que je suis l'ancêtre en même temps que la continuation . . .

Le cercle est retracé. Le drame est terminé ne pouvant se perpétuer faute de fils, Tayaout étant resté célibataire. Les jeux sont faits. Agaguk, homme, a disparu. Tayaout, Lancelot sans corps, ombre fantomatique de l'Esprit esquimau erre désespérément dans les glaces du Nord pour retrouver un jour un visage peut-être disparu à jamais, le visage de l'Homme vrai et libre.

NOTES

[1] Yves Thériault, *Agaguk* (Insitut littéraire du Québec, 1958).

[2] Yves Thériault, *Tayaout, fils d'Agaguk* (Les Editions de l'homme, Montréal, 1969).

THE DIVIDED SELF

Gary Ross

"the labyrinth holds me" ("A night in the Royal Ontario Museum")
"I am the cause" ("It is dangerous to read newspapers")

IN *The Animals in That Country*, as in her other volumes, Margaret Atwood gives her poems direction and movement. This book takes the rough shape of a journey: it starts with a departure, moves progressively closer to a confrontation with horror, then finds an exit and moves toward it. The volume deals less with discrete experiences than with modes, patterns. The poet imposes a grid on experience in an attempt to expose the elements of myth and ritual, characteristics beyond the thing itself — in an attempt, that is, to make sense of what otherwise would be an incomprehensible avalanche of minutiae.

Things assume a kind of legitimacy, a tentative order, when viewed as representative types, signs of something more fundamental and widespread. The animals "in that country" exist in formal, ceremonial situations:

> the fox run
> politely to earth, the huntsmen
> standing around him, fixed
> in their tapestry of manners
>
> the bull, embroidered
> with blood and given
> an elegant death, trumpets, his name
> stamped on him, heraldic brand.
>
> ("The animals in that country")

These circumstances — fox hunting and bullfighting — are ones in which men brutalize and victimize animals. Perhaps we move toward an understanding of our institutionalized cruelties by focusing on the ritualistic elements of the slaughter; as the poet writes in "The festival", "it is the ceremony/ they say, that gives a sacramental/ meaning to butchered meat". Why does man bother to

dress his killing in dignity? Perhaps because the bull "is really a man". Then, man recognizes his own mortality each time he sees life end? Surely not, or why would he be causing the cessation of life? Perhaps we kill simply because we like to kill, or because we'd like to kill ourselves, or other people, and animals are the best substitute.

Just where or what "that country" is, is not clear; but it doesn't matter. The only difference between there and here is that in "this country" the deprivation of life is unintentional, and thus not ritualized. The animal victims are anonymous, inhuman (they have the "faces of animals", of "no-one"); their deaths are "not elegant". Nor is it clear which country Atwood belongs to. The word "this" might seem to tell us, except that the voice in the poem is flat and disembodied. She may belong to either country, or both. Each is horrifying, since each is a landscape of man-inflicted death.

"The trappers" pursues the themes of violence and mortality. The poet writes of "the abstract hunger/ to trap and smash/ the creature"; but as soon as the hunger is sated, the trappers feel guilt both "because/ they are not animals" and "because they are". Again, the person who exploits an animal's vulnerability is reminded of his own; the man who dictates life and death to other creatures holds no such power over himself. In "The festival", what are we to make of the hunters who "circle tensely among the trees", waiting "for the god to appear,/ crossed in the sights of their rifles" — especially when the god turns out to be "a man with antlers"?

GRADUALLY, inevitably, the poet arrives at a painful realization: the only difference between a random world and a structured one is form. The disheartening content is unchanged; indeed, the framework of myth and ritual, like a gift-wrapped, empty box, only serves to emphasize what it encloses. The exploration of modes of experience tends also to give universal dimensions to the findings; these are not isolated incidents, after all. As an ordered place, a set of rhythms, rituals, repetitions, the real world is simply a landscape of futility, constriction, desperation, slaughter. The further into the book we proceed, the more evident that fact becomes.

Atwood conveys this aura with images that are always telling, frequently brilliant. "The surveyors" have left a "trail of single reason" through the bush, but the trail is now merely a collection of

> signs without motion, red arrows
> pointing in no direction; faint ritual
> markings leached by time
> of any meaning.

It would not be far-fetched to suggest that the trail bears a certain resemblance to the path of the poet's life. She inhabits an atmosphere of impermanence in which even the most basic natural laws are without meaning.

> The plates are on the table
> to weight it down.
>
> I call you sometimes
> To make sure you are still there.
>
> Tomorrow, when you come to dinner
> They will tell you I never lived here.
>
> ("Roominghouse, winter")

Somewhere along the line something has gone wrong. Priorities, logical orders, have been inverted. The slain green giant is not a murder victim, he's an "essential/ fact for the practice of their [detectives'] art, these cool/ dissections" ("The green giant murder"). "A night in the Royal Ontario Museum" stands as a microcosm of the poet's journey toward pure, monolithic horror, and as the ultimate metaphor of human isolation. The condition is one which offers little hope of escape.

> Under that ornate
> golden cranium I wander
> among fragments of gods, tarnished
> coins, embalmed gestures
> chronologically arranged,
> looking for the EXIT sign
>
> but in spite of the diagrams
> at every corner, labelled
> in red: YOU ARE HERE
> the labyrinth holds me.

She exists amidst stopped life, living a sort of death in life; she realizes her predicament, seeks a way out, but is trapped. Physical escape is not only impossible, it's literally unimaginable. Subconscious attempts just to envision flight are futile:

> and when I dream images
> of daring escapes through the snow
> I . . . wake up shouting.
>
> ("The landlady")

As in *The Circle Game*, the need for love is an unfulfilled constant. As it remains unsatisfied, it transmutes itself into an irrational, desperate hunger that

becomes a "wish to assimilate", to draw "everything into its own/ space" ("More and more"). But too many conflicting forces are at work, and the poet is unable to take refuge, to find comfort, in another. Attempts to do so are useless, one-directional:

> If he could cram his mind
> into my body
> and make it stay there,
> he would be happy.

The attendant emotions are solitary or frictional, and without value.

> Across the table
> each of us reflects
> the despair of the separate
> object. Paper despair.
>
> ("Part of a day")

What possible sustenance remains? For a poet, the final resource is words, but they by themselves are inadequate.

> Why do you need
> the blanket of another body
> . . .
> Aren't there enough words
> flowing in your veins
> to keep you going.
>
> ("The shadow voice")

Like people, words have become encrusted, altered. When the poet speaks of "an armoured skin/ that is a language", she is at once defining the failure of communication, and explaining it. The currency of language has lost its significance and precision, making interpersonal commerce all the more difficult. Clearly, something has been lost. The missing element is meaning — in its broadest sense, and its most specific one.

> The words lie washed ashore
> on the margins, mangled
> by the journey upwards to the bluegrey
> surface, the transition:
>
> these once-living
> and phosphorescent meanings
> fading in my hands
>
> I try to but can't decipher.
>
> ("Notes from various pasts")

In *The Animals in That Country*, the physical, perceptible wilderness — lakes, mountains, cut stumps, glacial rock — is condensed and incorporated into a larger setting. We still encounter trappers and totems in these poems, but we also come across Frankenstein, giant tortoises, Captain Cook, the green giant: fictional and historical and fantastic beings. They inhabit a rarefied, rootless place, a "blank void" of which the physical world is simply a component. Atwood is progressing beyond the personal, "real" world; she adds imaginary fragments to her vision. This new landscape is more intimidating, more terrifying still: it is all-inclusive.

The poet's explorations describe increasingly larger orbits about the self. She moves further away, into different, more forbidding atmospheres. But though the orbits grow larger, they are concentric; always at the centre is the hollow, bleak self. The vision is elaborated, moves through the personal toward the universal; and the landscape expands proportionally. This movement — the journey mentioned earlier — takes place on two levels — an inner, psychological one as well as the surface, quasi-physical one. The psychological movement is towards absolute schizophrenia, a total division of the self, and the eventual escape takes the form of reintegration. The poet sets up this dualism quite deliberately, and we can follow inner progress by noting outer signs; the expanded landscape operates on both literal and figurative levels.

The title poem presents a bifurcated world — "this country" and "that country". The poet's place may be uncertain, but her very dissociation prefigures a more basic separation. By the time we reach "The shadow voice", a persona has detached itself ("My shadow said to me/ What is the matter"). In "A fortification" there are two distinct selves; body and mind have diverged: "I get up, extend the feet/ into my body which is a metal spacesuit." Moreover, she is fully aware of her schizophrenia. In her awareness lies the possibility that she has consciously created it.

> Still for an instant I
>
> catch sight of the other creature
> the one that has real skin, real hair,
> vanishing down the line of cells
> back to the lost forest of being vulnerable.

Her only escape from the outside world is invulnerability to it, and she can make herself invulnerable only by severing herself, making two selves. It's as though one part of her being, a sort of nebulous moon, is circling around the physical being — that part of the self that cannot escape. The moon drifts further and further away; the connection between the two parts grows weaker. In

"Speeches for Dr. Frankenstein" the alter ego has broken away, gone careening off into "a flat void/ barren as total freedom". The poet has created another self all right, but she has taken her creation a step too far. She has made it complete, autonomous ("I will not come when you call"). In effect, she has made a monster of herself.

More important, she is aware that she has done so. Here, for the first time, she implicitly accepts responsibility for her state. The effect of the outside world is paradoxical: it both alienates and implicates. Her schizophrenic stance is defensive; the world forces people into self-protective postures. It would be simple enough to leave it at that, to say the world is brutal, irrational, responsible: it has made me what I am. But such an assertion fails to consider that the world, like all human institutions, is moulded and governed by people. An army can be regarded as an abstract, devastating, faceless entity, but to see it exclusively that way is to overlook an important point — an army is composed of individuals. To use an analogy more appropriate to Atwood, the error in perception is like failing to see the trees for the forest.

Thus the issue of personal responsibility is raised. At what point is an aggregate horror the result of individual horrors? The problem is introduced directly in "A night in the Royal Ontario Museum". The opening lines are more germane than they may seem: "Who locked me/ into this crazed man-made/ stone brain." The museum, a metaphor for the poet's dilemma, is "man-made"; and while someone may have locked her into it, she no doubt entered of her own accord. So the dilemma may be not only man-made, but self-made. (I don't want to draw too many convenient implications from one poem, but that much is surely reasonable.) She feels victimized by others, yet she is aware that others are similarly trapped, equally victimized. She recognizes, in other words, that she is an inflicter of misery and isolation, as well as a sufferer: "*each of us* reflects/ the despair of the separate object."

A more subtle illustration can be drawn from "A fortification". When the poet says "I have armed myself, yes I am safe: safe", she makes a striking, and I'm sure not unintentional observation. Arming is more than protecting, or at least it's a forbidding genre of protection: it's potential retaliation. It is easy to justify arms — physical or emotional — as defence. Unfortunately, the situation can only perpetuate itself; everyone must follow suit lest they be left vulnerable; and the pool of latent violence swells. The following line — "The grass can't hurt me" — demonstrates the paranoia evoked by an atmosphere, a landscape, so intensified. In two lines, she conveys the general harm done in the name of individual welfare, and shows at the same time that the alienating process is one from which she herself is not exempt.

The question now is, how to restore meaning, to break out of the circle game of isolation? There appears to be little hope of an answer. "It is dangerous to read

newspapers" indicates the profound extent to which the poet is trapped, the totality of her helplessness.

> While I was building neat
> castles in the sandbox,
> the hasty pits were
> filling with bulldozed corpses
>
> and as I walked to the school
> washed and combed, my feet
> stepping on the cracks in the cement
> detonated red bombs.

As a child, she inferred a connection between her own actions and violence. She sees herself now as endangered by the world, a potential victim to be sure; but also as a source of harm, an unwitting perpetrator:

> I am the cause, I am a stockpile of chemical
> toys, my body
> is a deadly gadget,
> I reach out in love, my hands are guns,
> my good intentions are completely lethal.

When she writes

> Each time I hit a key
> on my electric typewriter,
> speaking of peaceful trees
>
> another village explodes

are we to think that, as an adult, she has simply accepted a logical fallacy — argument from correlation to cause — or is she actually convinced of, and correct in assuming, a causal link between herself and destruction? This is the most terrifying possibility of all: perhaps the logical bridge is not fallacious: the world is simply beyond comprehension, and beyond remedy.

"GETTING AWAY WAS EASY", writes the poet in "Astral traveller", "Coming back is an exacting theory." Why, then, try to return at all? Why not abandon the self to its secure division? The answer must be that isolation, the emotional fortress, is not worth it. The security it affords demands the absence of all genuinely human association, and for the poet — or anyone, perhaps — that is too great a price. She's like a city dweller who grows increasingly paranoid about the crush of humanity around her — the unpredictability, the

chance of harm — and builds and inhabits an igloo in the middle of nowhere, to be safe. Inevitably, she must realize that the sterility of her shelter is worse than the things she fled in the first place.

The return to humanity takes the form of the reintegration of the self. The poet's task is to become whole again, to overcome her inability to contain the polarities of self, the two halves. This process is not unlike the one she describes in "Chronology". She must peel away the built-up layers of protection — not a simple task, because by doing so she revokes her most prized quality, invulnerability. She is fully aware of the risks ("I will be unshelled"), yet chooses — a conscious effort is involved — to trade her dead security for the precariousness of "blank innocence".

As in *The Circle Game*, such a reintegration can be achieved only in the presence of another. In "After I fell apart", it is another person who is actually performing a reconstruction. Perhaps because she herself takes no active role, she remains two beings, one there, submitting ("my neck turns, moved/ by your mending fingers"), the other outside, observing ("With what taut/ attention I watch you/ fitting me back together"). It's only when she sees the equivalent of her condition in others ("I search for you/ in your body"), only when she appreciates the unifying function she too must serve, that progress is made. "A pursuit" is in fact two simultaneous pursuits — the seeking of another ("I look for you/ in this room"), and of the self ("Through the tangle of each other/ we hunt ourselves").

The movement toward an integrated self is paralleled by a return from the rootless, rarefied landscape to the physical one:

> Through the wilderness of the flesh
> across the mind's ice expanses
> we hunt each other
>
> I keep being afraid
> I will find you
> dead in the snow.

Perhaps the final step can never be taken, the unification never achieved ("These expeditions/ have no end"); but the direction is clear, and has been deliberately determined. It leads inexorably "towards that undiscovered/ cave, heavy/ archaic treasure:/ my own/ obsolete body, my face,/ my own fingers" ("Astral traveller"). It leads at the same time toward another's completion. Human touch is reciprocated, and as it is the landscape is infused with the burgeoning wholeness of those who would deny its chaos:

> Axiom: you are a sea.
> Your eye-
> lids curve over chaos

My hands
where they touch you, create
small inhabited islands

Soon you will be
all earth: a known
land, a country.

("Axiom")

OROZCO'S CUPOLA: ASTRONAUT AND ASTRAL SELF

Tom Marshall

man of fire
hurtles into air
for sustenance of gods angels
what you will

consuming himself

I had not seen him
when I wrote
"burning man fall outward
into ardent space"
ten years ago

now I want to be a man of air

cool dry air

be consumed
infinitely slowly beautifully by god

rising without flame or movement

entered by sun water

leaning over earth

floating as trees

clouds house island planet stones float

eaten away by air

LAURENCE AND THE USE OF MEMORY

Leona M. Gom

IN MARGARET LAURENCE'S Canadian novels, *The Stone Angel, A Jest of God, A Bird in the House,*[1] *The Fire-Dwellers*, and, most recently, *The Diviners*, perhaps her most important technique involves the use of time, and in particular her use of subjective time as memory. Hagar, Rachel, Vanessa, Stacey, and Morag each are deeply defined by their Manawaka pasts, and they plunge frequently into these pasts; their memories, particularly those of Hagar, Vanessa and Morag, become as important as their presents. Significantly, *The Diviners* opens with the sentence, "The river flowed both ways," the river obviously being the river of time. There is not, then, for Laurence, simply a forward movement of time, but a backward flow as well, into subjective time[2] and into memory. Like Ford, she believes that to get a vivid impression of any fictional character, "you could not begin at his beginning and work chronologically to the end. You must first get him in with a strong impression, and then work backwards and forwards over his past."[3]

In the first of her Canadian novels, *The Stone Angel*, which is, interestingly enough, paralleled most closely by her last, *The Diviners*, in its emphasis on prolonged memory-segments, the reader participates as actively with Hagar in her fictional past level as he does in her fictional present level. Since the memory process is so crucial in the development of this novel, then, its misuse is the most serious artistic flaw in the work. Consider what Mendilow says of following a character's mental processes: "flashes of the past jerk in and out of his present consciousness, telescoping, coalescing, disintegrating, breaking out of sequence, starting off chains of unpredictable and sometimes untraceable associations."[4] Memory, then, does not follow a temporal "logical" sequence, as common sense accustoms us to expect; rather memory must be seen as a form of disorder, as a violation of objective, serial order.[5] *The Stone Angel*, obviously, does not use this principle of disorder and distortion of events in memory, a principle basic to the stream-of-consciousness writers. In fact, Hagar's recollections on the second narrative level could be set apart from the present-tense sections of the novel and become a most coherent and chronologically-developed story on its own. Although Hagar speaks of "the junkyard of my memory," it is a junkyard in which all the

discarded memories are organized in a linear sequence, from Hagar remembering herself at age six to her memory of her last trip to the Manawaka cemetery with Marvin and Doris. Surely this is a highly artificial and contrived use of memory, which follows no sequence of time, especially over interruptions and passages of time in the present. That details or events in the present should almost always cause Hagar's reminiscences seems to indicate that Hagar had no preconceived plan to tell her story chronologically; Laurence herself admits that she is "not at all sure that flashbacks ought to be in chronological order, as I placed them in order to make it easier to follow Hagar's life."[6]

It is unlikely, then, that Clara Thomas is correct when she says that "any questions about a forced tidiness of form are hushed as Hagar takes shape and authority; this is the way she would remember, forcing order on her own mind as she had tried always to force her own order on all those around her."[7] What Thomas does not account for here is the fact that Laurence also uses associative memory. If Hagar could have forced "order on her own mind," her memories could not have been triggered continually by some sight, sound or thought in the present, for these "trigger mechanisms", to use Edel's phrase, do not evoke memories in a neat chronological progression, but shuffle them out of sequence. Like Proust's Marcel, Hagar is led into the past by a sensory guide in the present:

> But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, . . . the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.[8]

Thus, as the crumb of madeleine with tea and the phrase from Vinteuil's sonata evoke memories for Marcel, so are the memories of past activities for Hagar evoked by similar activities or objects in the present. As she drinks her tea (which, unlike Marcel's, "tastes like hemlock"), the "sense of being alone in a strange place, the nurse's unseeing stare, the receding heat of the day — all bring to mind the time I was first in a hospital, when Marvin was born." The waiting in the doctor's office reminds her of the "many years I waited at the Shipley place"; her moving to the seashore reminds her of the other move she made, away from Manawaka; the children playing house make her remember "some other children, once, playing at house, but in a somewhat different manner". Although George Robertson, who prefers "to have the jumps, when they come, to be abrupt, disconnected," may be right when he accuses the transitions between the narrative levels of lacking "deftness," and of making the reader "too much aware of them when they do occur,"[9] these trigger mechanisms do operate according to the principles of associative memory.

Laurence, however, does not rely exclusively on the long excursions into Hagar's

memory on the second narrative level to reveal Hagar's past, and it is when she incorporates brief flashes of memory into the first narrative level that the process seems most natural, most true to the principles of associative memory. Thus the colour of her lilac dress reminds Hagar of "the lilacs that used to grow beside the grey front porch of the Shipley place," and the brief paragraph-long description is an especially arresting one, precisely because it does not fit into the order of the second narrative level, which has left the reader with Hagar Currie, not Hagar Shipley. Similarly effective is the mention a few pages later of Bram, whom the reader has not yet met, but whose name consequently is implanted in the mind at an early point in the book. The best use of such anticipatory hints, however, concerns John. Hagar first mentions his name in the first chapter, and Laurence feels no need to explain more than this: "John's eyes were grey, and even near the last they looked the same to me as the boy's, still that hidden eagerness as though he half believed, against all reason and knowledge, that something splendid would suddenly occur." His name slides easily into Hagar's consciousness several times before his birth, eighty pages later, occurs in the second narrative level, and the cause of his death remains tantalizingly mysterious until very late in the novel. Hagar tells the woman in the nursing home that she had two sons, one of whom "was killed — in the last war"; but although she admits to the reader that this is not true, she does not elaborate, and the reader must wait until her scene with Lees before he understands, finally, what *is* true, and what Hagar really means when she tells Lees, "I had a son, and lost him." The impact of her revelation is greatly heightened by the anticipations.

Excellent as the purely associational jumps into the past are, however, in *The Stone Angel* Laurence has committed herself to the use of a sustained second narrative level, and it is unfortunate that she realized only in retrospect that the flashbacks might have been more effective if not in chronological order.

Yet in *The Diviners* Laurence returns to this basic structure. Although she does make use of some of the technical and typographical devices she developed in *The Fire Dwellers*, it is the form of *The Stone Angel*, with its two parallel plot lines and two Hagars, that *The Diviners* uses most as its model. There is an even clearer separation of the two narrative levels, and the reader spends even more time with the younger Morag than he does with the younger Hagar. And, perhaps most significantly in terms of this study, both novels have their second narrative levels move ahead chronologically. The obvious question is, does it work for *The Diviners* where it failed in *The Stone Angel*?

What must be considered first in proposing an answer is whether or not Laurence uses associative memory, the "trigger mechanisms," with Morag. The answer seems clearly to be yes. Granted, the causal connections are much more subtle than they are in *The Stone Angel*, and there are occasional instances where there are apparently none at all; but in most cases, Morag's "memorybank

movies," as she calls them, unwind on a definite cue from their director. Seeing a picture of Brooke in the paper begins the series of film-flashbacks about her life where she met him. Thinking of lost languages leads her to — and quickly past — reflections on Dan McRaith, Christie, and Jules; it is only when she thinks of Brooke and his forgotten language that she stops, and the second narrative level resumes, conveniently where it had left off, with her life in the midst of her marriage to Brooke. Later, her reflections on her "need to make pilgrimages" and her "quest for islands" leads immediately into a memorybank movie called "Sceptr'd Isle"; the title makes the thought-connection obvious, and the following memory segments quite plainly are explanations of the older Morag's reflections. Finally, her last series of memories is preceded, on page 336, with her observation that "the Canada geese were flying south"; the second of the subsequent memory segments ends with the same sentence-paragraph.[10]

On this basis alone, then, it is possible to conclude that Laurence was not particularly serious in her statement about reconsidering her chronological arrangement of Hagar's memories, for in *The Diviners* she falls prey to the same inconsistencies concerning the memory process; again she tries unsuccessfully to reconcile associative and chronological memory. However, before accusing Laurence of not having learned her lesson, there are two other points to consider: first, the actual form of these flashbacks, and, second, Morag's profession — a writer.

Morag's earliest memories are contained in photographs, and she presents these to the reader chronologically, which is only to be expected; "Order," after all, "flowed in Morag's veins, despise it though she might," so it is reasonable for her to arrange her photographs in sequence, causing them thus to become chronological, associative stimuli. The same is true of the four early photographs of Pique, which Morag has arranged, chronologically of course, in an album, and each of which introduces a memory bank movie; since this set of memories has already been under way for five "reels", the use of photographs is gratuitous to legitimize chronology, but makes an interesting parallel with the childhood snapshots of Morag. The use of photographs, however, is not a sustained technique, and may at best represent frozen frames in Morag's longer mental movies.[11] It is the convenient arrangement of these reels in Morag's consciousness that seems to be contradicted by her own admission that they are "*sneakily* unfolding inside her head" (my emphasis).

This rather dreadful mixed metaphor might, however, provide the reader with a clue as to the real role of these memorybank movies. A film cannot be "unfolded", but paper can, and Morag is, after all, a writer, a "wordsmith", whose novel unfolds for her even as Laurence's unfolds for the reader. And Laurence gives us strong hints throughout *The Diviners* that the novel on which Morag is working is actually a verbal transcription of the movies she is playing. Thus, the

movies actually become chapters in Morag's novel. She even speaks of her writing inspirations in cinematic terms: "Last night, sleepless until three A.M., long and stupendously vivid scenes unfolded. Too tired to get up and write them down, she still couldn't shut the projector off for the night". One of the mysterious "key words" she has jotted down is "Jerusalem," which turns out to be part of Morag's subsequent memorybank movie; elsewhere Morag tells Pique, "I don't know if I'll want it [the novel-in-progress] published when it's finished." Indications are strong, then, that Morag is actually writing an autobiographical novel. The final words of the novel, after Morag's movies have caught up with her fictional present, reinforce such a view: "Morag returned to the house, to write the remaining private and fictional words, and to set down her title." That the close of Laurence's novel should parallel so closely the conclusion of Morag's is hardly coincidental.

If Morag's novel, then, is really her memorybank movie sequence, a stronger case can be made for the chronological arrangement. Morag, is, in effect, writing down the movie sequences simultaneous to the reader's reading of them, and that she, as a competent novelist, should be organizing her material, chronologically as it happens, is certainly not unusual. The associative stimulus becomes the point at which Morag last left off her novel and to which she returns with intentions to resume writing. Laurence never explicitly tells us that Morag is translating her film images into words, but the clues are there. Frequently, immediately after a prolonged movie sequence, the next reference that occurs is to a sustained period of Morag's writing. After the memory series culminating in Christie's death, Morag speaks of words "rushing out in a spate so that her hand could not keep up with them". More often, the return to Morag's present is preceded by such phrases as "work over for the day. . . . "

THUS, IF THE READER is aware that what he is actually reading, in Morag's memorybank movies, is her novel, the chronological arrangement seems much less contrived, and indeed necessary. Laurence has preserved the technique of *The Stone Angel* and legitimized it. For the most part, however, she has dispensed with those brief and out-of-sequence flashes of memory that worked so superbly with Hagar. There are occasional references to Dan McRaith before the reader actually meets him, but they have none of the subtlety or effectiveness of Hagar's brief references to Bram and John, perhaps because, when the reader at last meets him, Dan is a disappointment as a character and is certainly less significant in Morag's life than Bram and John were in Morag's.

A Jest of God, which is free from the rigorous demands of two distinct narrative levels, handles the memory process much more naturally, although there is a

sense of manipulation of Rachel's recollections, simply to give the necessary exposition. On the whole, however, it is well-integrated with her present state of mind and her thoughts, and although her memories are not entirely associational, they at least avoid the restricting chronology with which Hagar is faced. The most effective use of memory in *A Jest of God*, however, concerns those recurring memories, usually very brief, that involve some painful experience. "Such moments," Rachel says, remembering the young couple on the hill, "are the ones that live forever. . . . I wish I could forget that day, and those kids, but I can't." Frequently, the memories are ones of events in which the reader participated earlier in the fictional present; it is a technique Laurence uses excellently in the flashbacks in *The Fire-Dwellers*. For Rachel, perhaps the most painful of such memories is the Tabernacle scene: "I remember everything, every detail, and will never be able to forget however hard I try. It will come back again and again, and I will have to endure it, over and over." She recalls it as she talks to her mother, and to Calla, and she is "back there in that indefensible moment, trapped in my own alien voice, and the eyes all around have swollen to giants' eyes. How will I ever be able to forget?" The memory of her making love with Nick is likewise characterized by a mocking painfulness, by a sense of the absurd: "I can see myself now, the frenetic haste, like a person in some early film, everything speeded-up comically." The memory is very similar to Stacey's mocking flashback in *The Fire-Dwellers* of her hurried loving of Luke: "Stacey, touching him too urgently — now, now, no time to waste, I haven't got all day."

Stacey, of course, is frequently struck by such unpleasant recollections of her recent behaviour. As she watches Katie dance, she relives her own dance scene, seeing herself as a grotesque; she torments herself with memories of her behaviour with Thor; she cringes from Ian's shrill "Can't you just leave me alone?" because it recalls Mac's words. Her memories of her more distant past, outside the fictional time covered by the novel, have in common with Hagar's the trigger mechanisms which integrate the flashbacks into the fictional present. Mac's bitter words, "You do, eh? You really think you do?" suddenly provoke a flashback of her father, locked in the mortuary, saying the same words to her mother. The almost-automatic love-making with Mac recalls the magic of their early years together. Luke's mention of horoscopes creates a flashback of her job with Janus Uranus. The trip to the morgue inspires a memory of Cameron's Funeral Home. And the name of Vernon Winkler, as "the recollection filters blurredly back," gives rise to a flashback of Stacey in Manawaka watching a fight. Although the trigger mechanisms in Stacey's fictional present might be accused of the same obviousness that Robertson believed was a problem in *The Stone Angel*, they are generally handled much more deftly, and Godfrey's criticism of *The Stone Angel*'s transitions, that "a good deal of space is wasted,"[13] would certainly not apply to the sharp and sudden jumps in *The Fire-Dwellers*.

The use of memory in *A Bird in the House* is, although the basis of the book, less interesting than that of the other novels. The entire novel is memory, recalled by the forty-year-old Vanessa, whom the reader meets only at the end. As in *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners*, the memories are recounted chronologically,[14] and although the reader can accept this disciplining of memory into a linear order because it is recounted deliberately and without interruption, in the past tense, by the mature Vanessa, he cannot feel the same excitement he feels at one of Stacey's sudden flashbacks. The memories become memoirs, recapturing not the visions of childhood but the reflections of the writing adult. Even when sudden associative memories strike the young Vanessa, such as the memory of driving in the car with her grandfather, they are so elaborately prefaced that their effect is dulled.

If, however, memory is examined according to Mendilow's concept of it, where "the event in the past at the time of its occurrence is not as it is recalled later," where "the reaction, not the action, is important," and where "something has changed — the perceiver,"[15] *A Bird in the House* becomes a more interesting study of memory. That the recollected event differs from the actual is readily apparent in both *The Fire-Dwellers* and *A Jest of God*, where the reader can see for himself how Stacey and Rachel distort in memory significant events, usually painful ones; however, it is only in *A Bird in the House* (and to a lesser extent, *The Diviners* and *The Stone Angel*) that the entire novel is devoted to a revaluation of the past, by a character attempting to understand herself in time present. It may be this search for integration of self that leads Kent Thompson to such praise for the technique of *A Bird in the House*, in which he says Laurence has avoided the "usual dangers of this method" and "accomplished the virtues. . . . In the same period of time different things occur in the life of Vanessa. She does not recognize their significance. However, the narrator — by looking at different patterns in that same sequence of time — does."[16] Although the novel really never gives a precise sense of the adult narrator against whom the younger Vanessa is played, there is a use of the double perspective, or the "double focus," which interested such much earlier writers as Sterne, Richardson, and Defoe.[17]

Richardson's comments on the "two characters" that the author has to support are relevant here; the author, he says, "has to consider how his hero felt at the time of the events to be related, and how it is natural he should feel them at the time he is relating them."[18] Furthermore,

> *Much more* lively and affecting . . . must be the style of those who write in the height of a *present* distress; the mind tortured by the pangs of uncertainty . . . ; *than* the dry, narrative, unanimated style of a person relating difficulties and danger surmounted, can be . . . the relater perfectly at ease; and if himself, unmoved by his own story, not likely greatly to affect the reader.[19]

It is easy to place the Vanessa who narrates *A Bird in the House* in the latter

category, relating events "when curiosity is extinguished" and "passion cooled."[20] Thomas, however, appreciates the novel for just this distance between the character who experiences and the character who narrates "from a platform of adult awareness. . . . Hagar and Rachel were characters embroiled in intensity and requiring intense response; Vanessa, the narrator, provides a calmly consistent viewpoint."[21] Even if one does not dispute the "calmly consistent viewpoint" of the narrator, as Laurence herself does,[22] it is debatable whether the sacrifice of the more immediate perceptions of the experiencing Vanessa is worth the restrained style of the adult. The distance between the two characters is too great for the reader to accept Vanessa's credibility as a child, or to participate in the life which she herself looks back on with relative uninvolvement.

There is another problem involved in working with the two characters, a problem Mendilow notes in *Moll Flanders*, where "two characters are superimposed one upon the other, and the impression of the one who acts is coloured and distorted by the interpretation of the one who narrates."[23] In order to retain Vanessa's childhood perceptions while at the same time presenting an adult evaluation of a situation, Laurence is forced to overuse both the eavesdropping device and the listening-but-not-understanding device, both of which allow the child Vanessa to remain "only partially knowing" while the older Vanessa can use her as a medium for presenting an incident. The young Vanessa, then, frequently must say, "I could not really comprehend these things"; "her face became startled, and something else which I could not fathom"; "at the time I felt only bewilderment." The strain between the two Vanessas becomes one of the greatest problems in the novel, and it often requires an unwilling suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader to accept both the understanding of the child and also the detailed and more objective recall of the older Vanessa, whom the reader never actually gets to meet and evaluate for himself.

The two Hagars in *The Stone Angel* present much more of a challenge to the reader, for he is continually evaluating not only the younger Hagar, but also the older Hagar who remembers her; thus the narrating Hagar is of greater interest precisely because she is not, as is the older Vanessa, a fully self-aware and objective character. And, having realized that the old Hagar is anything but infallible, the reader become increasingly interested in seeing how she restructures and revaluates her past life. Evidence of a change in Hagar's attitudes is easy to find, and, like Vanessa, she frequently uses the "now-then" distinction to show an increased understanding over the years, but her understanding is often, and significantly, a movement from a definite assessment to one of doubt. Seeing her father with Lottie Dreiser's mother, she "felt no pity for her nor for him. I scorned them both. . . . Yet now, remembering their faces, I'd be hard put to say which one of them had been the crueler." Elsewhere, she says of Dan that he "cultivated illness as some people cultivate rare plants. Or so I thought then." And, "it

seemed to me then that Matt was almost apologetic, as though he felt he ought to tell me he didn't blame me for her dying, when in his heart he really did. Maybe he didn't feel that way at all — how can a person tell?" Remembering her life with Bram, she recalls, "It was so clear to me then who was in the wrong. Now I'm no longer certain"; "I have to laugh now, although I was livid then." This greater understanding of her earlier self, and her final acceptance of the necessity of needing other people — shown, for example, in the juxtaposing of her earlier refusal to "cry in front of strangers, whatever it cost me" with her present discovery that with the man at the beach she is "not sorry I've talked to him, not sorry at all, and that's remarkable" — is made possible by the two-character technique.

The Diviners of course also uses this method, presenting the reader with two Morags, but there is less reader interest in the older Morag than there is in the older Hagar. The older Morag, unsure as she may be as to the best way to handle situations, particularly with Pique, is nevertheless a self-aware character, and probably more secure in her identity than are any of Laurence's heroines. The reader thus is rarely able to see more than Morag herself does, and the woman that is introduced at the first of the book is not significantly different from the woman at the end — which is not the case with Hagar. Morag grows and learns, particularly in her relationship with Christie, throughout the second narrative level, but does not move toward a significant character development on the first level; she has, in a way, like the narrating Vanessa, already "arrived" when the novel begins. She has new experiences, of course — some with new friends (Royland, the Smiths) and some with characters the reader encounters in her memories (Pique, Jules) — but she does not change significantly because of them. Nor can the reader see her change because of what she learns from her memories.

This latter condition is true because Morag not only understands herself, she understands the memory process. She realizes her "invented memories," as she calls them, are unreliable as documentaries of fact, that they are "maybe true and maybe not". "A popular misconception," she says, "is that we can't change the past — everyone is constantly changing their own past, recalling it, revising it. What really happened? A meaningless question." Reflecting on a childhood memory, she seems even to be addressing herself to Vanessa's problem: "I can't trust it [her first clear memory] completely, either, partly because I recognize anomalies in it, ways of expressing the remembering, ways which aren't those of a five-year-old, as though I were older in that memory (and the words bigger) than in some subsequent ones. . . ." Morag's consciousness, then, of her editing, and of her "refilming" her memorybank movies, makes her aware of her own unreliability as a projectionist. The reader cannot be involved in this editing, this revaluation of her past, as he is in Hagar's, for Morag is aware that there

can be no totally factual version of "what really happened." Hagar attempts to give the facts, with retrospective footnotes; Morag assures the reader that the footnotes would have changed the facts. They are equally valid ways of dealing fictionally with the memory process.

In terms of the two-character technique, however, its use in *The Stone Angel* is much more significant and successful than it is in either *A Bird in the House* or *The Diviners*, for there is more dialogue between the two Hagars, and between them and the reader, than is possible with the two Morags or the two Vanessas. Compared to the dynamic Hagar — who changes most, not on the second narrative level, but on the first — Vanessa in particular is a static narrator. As for Morag, it is interesting that the reader takes leave of her, as well, where he had first met her: watching the river that flows both ways and looking "ahead into the past, and back into the future, until the silence".

It is what Morag does best. It is also, of course, what Margaret Laurence does best. She has launched her novels like boats on the river of time, her characters in them swept backwards and forwards in their search for a mainland that will give them, at last, an unclouded view of their little island of Manawaka.

NOTES

[1] *A Bird in the House* has been considered as other than a novel, albeit as more than a collection of short stories; Thompson may be closest to an accurate classification when he calls it a "whole-book," in which "some stories re-examine the same chronological period as other stories, but examine them with a new focus and a different pattern of events." For the purposes of this paper, however, it will be considered a novel.

[2] The distinction between objective, conceptual or linear time, and subjective, perceptual or psychological time has frequently been made, and can be applied readily to Laurence's characters, who each are strongly influenced by their internal time-clocks. Memory is only one aspect, albeit the major one, of subjective time.

[3] Ford Madox Ford, quoted by Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 191.

[4] Mendilow, A. A., *Time and the Novel*, 221.

[5] Remembered events, however, do follow each other in a causal relationship; there is an orderly progression of B follows A, C follows B, etc. The point is, as Meyerhoff explains, "that this peculiar order of the inner life appears as, or must be judged as, a form of disorder when it is compared with objective temporal sequence" (*Time in Literature*, 23).

[6] Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences," *Canadian Literature* 41, 14.

[7] Thomas, Clara, *Margaret Laurence*, 38.

[8] Proust, Mancel, *Swann's Way, part one*, Vol. 1 of *Remembrance of Things Past*, 61.

[9] Robertson, George, "An Artist's Progress," *Canadian Literature* 21, 54.

[10] The second sentence, to be consistent, is in the present tense, and uses "are", not "were"; this serves only, however, to emphasize the similar situations on the two narrative levels, on two temporal levels.

[11] It might be noted here that her memorybank movies are in the present tense, while her real present is narrated in the past. The exact reverse is true with Hagar. The reason for Morag's memories to be told in the present is implicit in their movie format; there is an unaging presentness in both movies and memories, and the film medium lends itself, for this reason, readily to flashback. It is no contradiction, incidentally (as will be discussed later), for Morag to say her movie-memories have "been refilmed, a scene deleted here, another added there" (D, 23), for this does not affect their quality of immediacy.

[12] An interesting parallel might be drawn here with the artistic satisfaction of Woolf's Lily Briscoe in *To The Lighthouse*, who ends the novel by finishing the painting she had been working on throughout: "With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision" (p. 310).

[13] Godfrey, Dave, "For Bonfires," *Tamarack Review XXXIII*, 92-4.

[14] Individual stories, however, move ahead in time beyond the fictional present of the next story, but the general movement of Vanessa's memory is chronological rather than associative, both within the separate stories and in the novel as a whole.

[15] Mendilow, *Time and the Novel*, 219.

[16] Thompson, "Margaret Laurence: *A Bird in the House*," *The Fiddlehead LXXXIV*, 109.

[17] Mendilow includes an interesting discussion of these authors and the double focus, in a section called "The Time Locus of the Pseudo-Author," pp. 89-96.

[18] Richardson, quoted by Mendilow, *Time and the Novel*, 90-1.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid.*

[21] Thomas, *Margaret Laurence*, 55-6.

[22] Speaking of her grandfather, she says, "I think I honestly kept on disliking him until I got all the way through those stories, . . . when I realized not only that I didn't dislike him anymore, but that there were things about him that I greatly admired." (quoted by Wigmore, "Margaret Laurence," 52).

[23] Mendilow, *Time and the Novel*, 91.

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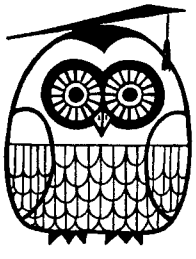


BATTLES WITH THE TROLLS

Peter Baltensperger

THE ASSERTION OF Magnus Eisengrim near the conclusion of *The Manticore*, "I am what I have made myself," and Liesl's postulate in the same chapter that "the modern hero is the man who conquers in the inner struggle" crystallize the theme which underlies all five novels of Robertson Davies from *Tempest-Tost* (1951) to *The Manticore* (1972). It is the theme of psychological growth toward wholeness which is based on the existential struggle carried on in the interior spaces of the mind and culminates in the fulfilment of the "yearning for greater enlightenment through mystical experience." (*Tempest-Tost*)

This theme runs through the five novels in a three-fold manner. In its most obvious form it serves as the framework in which the events and the characters evolve and progress within the boundaries of each novel. Whether the inner growth of the principal characters is painfully slow and barely recognizable as in the early novels, or far-reaching and symbolically significant as in the later ones, it is embodied in a specific way in each of the five books.

The series of novels viewed as a whole reflects the same theme in the progression from its embryonic expression in the form of unrest and dissatisfaction and the "yearning for greater fulfilment" through various stages of development toward levels of insight and into realms of wisdom and serenity.

Thirdly, as manifestations of a creative consciousness as it has found expression in and through language, the novels reflect the existential struggle and growth not only of their principal characters but also, and more importantly, of the author himself.

A neo-Romantic novel exploring the interior spaces of the human mind is essentially the expression of a creative consciousness at a given point in time, while the body of work of an author is the manifestation of the growth of that consciousness as it has moved through time. Robertson Davies has posited in his novels the patterns and the essences of his life in ways which enable the reader to take part actively in the developmental processes of the author's consciousness and to follow his quest toward the realms of fulfilment, self-realization, and mystical revelation.

Whether the struggle of the striving individual is conceptualized in terms of Jungian individuation and self-realization, in the symbolism of the Superior Man

of Eastern philosophies, or as a Kierkegaardian progression toward the leap of transcendence in which the temporal body and the eternal mind fuse to create spiritual totality, it is always conceived of as a struggle without end. The processes of psychological growth are not directed toward definite goals which can be attained and directly comprehended, but rather into higher, more complete and more spiritual realms of awareness and wisdom which can be glimpsed in moments of fulfilment and totality.

Nor is it a quest for happiness, because happiness is a state of repose and therefore stagnation. Self-realization is a dynamic process which for ever reaches beyond itself in often painful struggles with the confines of existence. None of the main characters in the five novels ever achieves happiness. Those among the secondary figures who appear outwardly happy and securely complete function as foils for contrast and often satire because they have ceased to become and therefore to be alive in the truest sense of the word.

From Hector Mackilwraith through the Yarrows and the McGorkills to David Staunton's trolls, these characters are never capable of any significant kind of insight or growth. The novels therefore never conclude with a "happy ending" because at the conclusion of each book the main characters who are involved in the struggle, and who live because they grow, have not come to the end of their road but rather to a new plateau which points to a new height and not to itself.

As they in turn focus on different aspects of the theme of growth and at their conclusion point to the next step, to another Chinese box inside itself, to a new struggle and a new attainment, the novels form an ascending succession of stages representative of the many levels of individual strife. From one novel to the next, the main theme becomes more and more pronounced, its treatment more and more complex and refined, its boundaries more clearly defined and its components more sophisticated. It is in this respect that they reflect the psychological growth of the author. Attainments which are merely hinted at in the early novels are realized through later protagonists, and themes sketched out for the Salterton characters become fully developed in the lives of Dunstan Ramsay and David Staunton.

The basic movement in the psychological growth process is the progression from "confident innocence through the bitterness of experience toward the rueful wisdom of self-knowledge" (*A Mixture of Frailties*), in which the task of the seeker is to fuse the temporal with the eternal so as to posit spirit and acquire true individuality. The initial experience of a growing consciousness on its road toward self-realization is extemporalized in the conflicts arising from the restrictions and obligations caused by the parent-child relationship. Filial predicament and the guilt caused by the struggles of the young to liberate themselves from the parental bondage permeate all of the novels. Robertson Davies makes one his mouthpieces express this theme in *A Mixture of Frailties*.

> I think the most disgusting and immoral relationship is between mothers and sons — no, on second thought, between fathers and daughters.

The father-daughter as well as the mother-daughter conflicts are in reality more easily resolved, though the effect of the struggle stops short of transcendental attainment. It is the mother-son conflict and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the father-son confrontation which Robertson Davies finds most difficult and at times almost impossible to resolve.

All the variations of the parent-child relationship are utilized in the novels to initiate the struggle of the main characters after their leap from innocence into experience. For the protagonists in the earlier novels it is also their last significant act; they are incapable of moving on to higher levels of liberation. For the modern heroes in the later novels it is merely a beginning, the first though deeply significant link in a long chain of traps which have to be recognized and overcome.

Hector Mackilwraith is the first figure to liberate himself successfully from the maternal bondage, but since his is an act of intellectual determination rather than of self-realization it is of little psychological significance and does not result in any growth.

Solomon Bridgetower and Pearl Vambrace are much more deeply involved in their predicament, though their success is still limited. Pearl succeeds in asserting her individuality and resolves the conflict with her father, but Solly's struggle with his dominant and demanding mother extends over all of the first three novels without resulting in relief from the unending pain imposed on his life by his chief troll.

Bridgetower is in this respect characteristic of the first two Salterton novels. The protagonists are presented primarily in unsuccessful battles with each other and only peripherally in significant encounters with their innermost selves. Some are capable of resolving the problems arising from interpersonal relationships, usually with the aid of one of the early mentor figures — Humphrey Cobbler, Valentine Rich, and Elspeth Fielding. None can come to grips with their internal discrepancies. Their formative years are narrated in retrospect but are rarely analyzed psychologically as they are in the later novels. Characters of predetermined personalities who act out their lives according to predictable patterns, they are pre-psychological types whose mental growth is restricted to ordinary levels of maturity and whose involvement remains on unassuming planes.

THE MAJORITY of the characters in all five novels are frozen into this kind of spiritual immobility. The figures representative of the negative forces in life are incapable of developing psychologically and experiencing any

deep kind of change. They are the foils against which the struggles of the heroes take place, the trolls with whom they have to battle, the Shadow figures which they have left behind. The personifications of the positive forces are immobilized at relatively advanced levels of development as they are deemed sufficient for the immediate purposes. These are the influential archetypes who guide the heroes on their quests, provide cues for their movements, and represent sources of insight and revelations.

In the first two Salterton novels the latter types are only rudimentarily developed while the former ones constitute the main content. The main protagonists are not significantly differentiated from them as yet, so that the theme of psychological growth is practically non-existent except in a few isolated cases. Yet it is contained in both and foreshadows its greater development in the later novels.

In *Tempest-Tost* it finds expression in the form of the embryonic externalization of unrest and dissatisfaction in the main characters, coupled with a longing for something more, something beyond the fruitless battles with the trolls, a "consciousness of a destiny apart from these unhappy creatures" and a "seeking for means by which he might be delivered from his fate". The author is groping for a resolution of the conflict, for a liberation from the confines imposed upon the Salterton characters, but is not yet able to actualize the longing, and the yearning is not fulfilled.

The same inability pervades most of *Leaven of Malice*. The characters remain caught in the absurdity of existence and in the struggles continues without bringing relief. Toward the end of the book, Gloster Ridley comes to terms with one of his ghosts and attains a measure of freedom through his realization that "wisdom may be rented on the experience of others, but we buy it at an inordinate price before we make it our own forever."

More importantly, Pearl Vambrace manages to extract a meaning from her struggle and become a person in her own right. She breaks through her quiet submissiveness to recognize her predicament, free herself from the paternal bondage and become the first protagonist to move toward a new awareness and selfhood. She assumes a new name, Veronica, to signify the change, foreshadowing the romantic flight of fancy and ultimate renaming in *A Mixture of Frailties*, the similar though more profound baptism in *Fifth Business*, and the gesture of despair in *The Manticore*. Yet she cannot transmit her new strength to Solly, who despite his awareness of the predicament and his desire for liberation, remains chained to his impotent role in the drama of "Mother alone with her Boy." (*Tempest-Tost*)

The questing figures can liberate themselves, but they cannot assist others in the struggle. This function is carried out by the Magus in his many forms, those higher figures who have already attained levels of insight and can therefore give

advice and guidance. But these figures do not come into existence in an effective way until *A Mixture of Frailties.*

Rudiments of the Magus appear in the first two novels, though they operate at low levels of spirituality and have little effect upon those they attempt to aid. Hector Mackilwraith is the initial personification of the Magus, but he fails drastically in his supposed role of "honest counsellor" and "oracle of wisdom" (*Tempest-Tost*), when he loses himself in his own dilemmas. Elspeth Fielding effects a rudimentary liberation in Ridley, but only Humphrey Cobbler displays a significant potentiality as Solly's friend, confessor, and advisor. With his independent approach to life and his insights into human predicaments he succeeds in starting Solly on an initial course of positive action. Little comes of this, however, because — as Cobbler himself realizes — the framework within which he has to act is limited. "You are a prisoner of circumstances," he lectures Solly, "and it is my considered view that you are not one of the tiny minority of mankind that can grapple with circumstance and give it a fall." (*Leaven of Malice*) In his own right, he is nonetheless a worthy forerunner of the later Magus figures. His flash of insight with which he tries to launch Solly on a course of self-realization foreshadows much of what Dr. von Haller will teach David Staunton in *The Manticore.* "Everybody is trapped. The best you can hope for is to understand your trap and make terms with it, tooth by tooth." (*Leaven of Malice*)

The true Magus figure takes a more positive approach than that. He treats life as a challenge which can be met successfully to the ultimate benefit of the contestant. Solly's final triumph over his life consists in "giving up caring too much about anything" and "blunting the edge of fate by being stoical." (*A Mixture of Frailties*) This would not suffice for the later seekers, but without a true Magus it seems the best which can be accomplished within the confines of Salterton.

The Magus comes to maturity and full effectiveness in the figure of Sir Benedict Domdaniel. This new character possesses the attributes of the Wise Man: his personality has a controlled forcefulness which is awe-inspiring to those around him, his hold on life is firm and determined, and his philosophy of life is a creative union of imaginative and materialistic forces which alone can lead toward self-knowledge and fulfilment.

Robertson Davies is not yet able to create "one of the tiny minority of mankind that can grapple with circumstance and give it a fall" to match the dominance of Domdaniel, but in the character of Domdaniel's pupil Monica Gall the capacities for intellectual quest and awareness have been sufficiently developed to make *A Mixture of Frailties* a successful novel of growth. The novel is still rooted in Salterton and peripherally continues the analysis of Solly's and Veronica's conflicts with their world, but the main focus is on the more mature and psychologically more successful Monica. By exchanging the local scene for the inter-

national and the individual for a more universal theme, it moves beyond the restriction of the first two novels into realms of genuine discovery.

The new heroine is still not capable of self-realization and individuation in its true sense. Her character embodies the basic prerequisites for growth but not the ability to liberate and utilize the dormant forces without constant external guidance. The novel is primarily a treatise on the role of the Magus in his many forms rather than on the processes of individuation in the interior spaces of the mind. Its main characters are all mentors of varying degrees who guide Monica through the tribulations of experience, provide her with wisdom and means of fulfilment, and are responsible for all her major progressions.

Heading the array of mentors is Domdaniel, characteristically European and characteristically of the opposite sex, as are most of the mentors in the five novels. His is a multiple role which surpasses in impact and importance the dominance of Davies' professional mentor Dr. von Haller and of that cryptic guide into the darkest caves, Lieselotte Vitzlipützli/Naegeli. He lacks, however, the psychological astuteness of the Jungian analyst and the oracular spirituality of Ramsay's devil, and Monica's self-realization necessarily remains at an intellectual and emotional level without reaching the spiritual stages characteristic of total individuation.

Domdaniel is at once chief guide through the Kierkegaardian stages of experience, source of self-knowledge, shaper of artistic career, liberator, and future husband (and, as such, giver of a new name). By managing the interactions between his pupil and his assistants with diligence and purposeful determination, he is indirectly responsible for her physical liberation through Murtagh Molloy, her initiation into the mysteries of passion and joy through Giles Revelstoke, the refinement of her interpersonal relationships through Amy Neilson, and her intellectual enlightenment through John Scott Ripon and Bun Eccles.

Monica's story ends with the integration of the levels of experience into a balanced whole, but her final attainment falls distinctly though marginally short of the Kierkegaardian leap because of Domdaniel's essentially intellectual nature. The temporal has not been fused with the eternal, and Monica's final salvation remains confined to a longing which she is incapable of realizing, the longing which is expressed in her favourite song, "Water Parted".

> It meant . . . a longing for what was perhaps unattainable in this world, a longing for a fulfilment which was of the spirit and not of the flesh . . . It meant the aspiration toward that from which she drew her strength, and to which she returned when the concerns of daily life were set aside. It was a yearning toward all the vast, inexplicable, irrational treasury from which her life drew whatever meaning and worth it possessed. It was the yearning for — ?

The novel ends on this questioning note, with the final fulfilment an unattain-

able goal despite the thorough reformation of Monica's Self and despite her re-birth into a new life, because as she realizes herself, "not all the wise men in the world would ever tell her."

THE LEAP INTO SPIRITUALITY requires more than wisdom and more than a Magus figure. It requires a flash of insight which is not of the mind but of the spirit itself, a mystical revelation of the essence of existence which cannot be forced because it transcends existence and is beyond immediate comprehension. It can only be realized in mysterious moments when the spirit is full of itself and fuses briefly with the eternal to become its own wisdom and its own fulfilment. The driving force leading into these moments does not come from the Magus but from mystical beings which have themselves transcended the confines of temporal existence and are in contact with the absolute.

It took a twelve-year span for such a being to materialize for Robertson Davies and to make possible the logical sequence to Monica's transformation. The influence of Liesl on Dunstan Ramsay and David Staunton begins where the Magus figures leave off, so that their processes of individuation transcend the self-realization attained by Veronica and Monica into realms of wisdom which were suggested but never actualized in the earlier novels.

The patterns of growth in *Fifth Business* and *The Manticore* follow veins essentially identical to those in the Salterton novels. The basic obstacle is once again the parental bond which must be broken in order to move from innocence into experience. In the story of Hector Mackilwraith's childhood this move was accomplished as a matter of course early in *Tempest-Tost*, but since his mother was a weak figure and he himself relatively strong in a rigid and purely deterministic way, its significance remained marginal and in terms of self-realization inconsequential.

Pearl Vambrace faced the dilemma twice, in *Leaven of Malice* with her father where it served to launch her on a new path, and in *A Mixture of Frailties* with Solly's mother where it took in symbolic significance. With Monica's liberation from her mother's dominance, two important elements were introduced into the struggle: the concept of guilt as an inherent aspect of the loss of innocence, and the ability to come to terms with that guilt by recognizing and accepting its source and integrating the experience in its fullest. The narratives of Ramsay and Staunton are built on this pattern, though the treatment of the theme is considerably more complex and allegorical.

Ramsay's bondage to his mother is severed early in *Fifth Business* without too much apparent difficulty and effort, but the guilt is immediately sublimated into a religious kind of dependency and transferred on to the strong Anima figure of

Mary Dempster, from whose bonds he can only liberate himself late in his life and only under the influence of the cryptic figure arising out of the farthest reaches of his consciousness.

David Staunton remains chained to the shadow of his powerful father for the best part of his life although in adulthood he defies the parental intentions and strives to become a person in his own right. But the bondage is deep-seated and retains a strong influence despite the superficial break.

The parent-daughter conflicts have by now been resolved and both Veronica and Monica have successfully transcended the restricting bondages, but the two sons are forced to suffer long and often fierce battles. The failure of Solomon Bridgetower reverberates through Ramsay's life with his saint and through the long sessions of David's psychoanalysis. The personal struggles of the two sons are unsuccessful in this respect, and the influence of their Magi is insufficient. They both in turn require a transcendental leap to effect their final liberation and complete their processes of self-realization.

The externalizations of the Magus figures and of the lesser types of Troll, Shadow, Anima/Animus, Friend, and Mentor of *A Mixture of Frailties* appear again in *Fifth Business* and in *The Manticore*. Where the narrative of Monica's artistic and spiritual education gathered together the possibilities and latent patterns of the first two Salterton novels and gave them new significance in a strictly controlled and purposefully directed framework, the two psychological novels refine the externalizations of the psychic forces and elevate them into symbolic realms in two further variations on the theme.

In *A Mixture of Frailties* the ambivalence of Humphrey Cobbler was resolved in the figure of Domdaniel and the range of mentors was extended to include specific personifications of the various stages of growth. In Ramsay's narrative, the Magus figure is fused with the hero and Ramsay acquires the self-knowledge and insights previously provided by Domdaniel largely on his own. The mentors are at the same time de-emphasized, though they appear at the appropriate phases of Ramsay's journey in forms very similar to those outlined in *A Mixture of Frailties*. Diana Marfleet assists in the physical re-birth and gives Ramsay his new name, Liesl in the emotional initiation, and Padre Blazon in the intellectual liberation, but the main movements are accomplished by Ramsay himself. The novel is primarily a treatise on the role of the Self, and Ramsay's attainments are therefore correspondingly more significant and profound.

The Manticore repeats the movement a third time. David Staunton moves through the same phases as his two predecessors, but his actual movement through the physical (Myrrha Martindale), emotional (Judith Wolff) and intellectual (Pargetter of Balliol) levels of experience is reminiscent of the struggles in the first two Salterton novels in that it is largely meaningless to him at the time and does not result in significant growth. The emphasis is not, how-

ever, on the actual movement, but rather on its analysis in terms of Jungian symbolism in a retrospective psychoanalytic setting. It is this analysis of past events which provides Staunton with the insights necessary for the integration of his experiences into a meaningful process of individuation. The novel adds a third element to the theme of growth, the role of the Psyche, by means of which it brings into clearer focus the tribulations and attainments of the earlier seekers.

The figure of the Magus re-appears as a separate entity in David's psychoanalysis in the form of Dr. von Haller; not as a guide through external experience like Domdaniel, but rather as an interpreter of the dark symbolism of the interior spaces of the mind.

With respect to the movements through experience, the two novels closely resemble *A Mixture of Frailties*, but they are brought past the questioning note reflected in "Water Parted" with the creation of the transcendent Liesl, whose visionary revelations enable both Ramsay and Staunton to attain the promised wisdom of self-knowledge. With this, the two novels transcend all the earlier experiences of the author and move into the visionary comprehension of existence in its many-faceted temporality as it is contained and reflected in the eternal truths. The struggle ceases with the oracular revelations of the spirit of wisdom. The anguish of existence, which created the dominant atmosphere in *Tempest-Tost* and *Leaven of Malice* but which started to lose its threat in *A Mixture of Frailties*, is finally overcome by the highly introspective and psychologically astute maturation processes of the two protagonists as they move into the realms of enlightenment and fulfilment. The yearning posited in *Tempest-Tost* is fulfilled in the spiritual re-birth of Ramsay and Staunton as they realize the unity of the infinite and the finite which transcends existence and arrive at a deeper understanding of themselves and of their role in the totality of existence. Their leap yields "some secret, some valuable permanent insight, into the nature of life and the true end of man" (*Fifth Business*) as they "learn to know (themselves) as fully human" and acquire "a fuller comprehension of (their) humanity" (*The Manticore*).

Robertson Davies has moved through the levels of externalization of the creative consciousness in the three Salterton novels, in the disguise of Actor, Editor, and Artist, and in that of Scholar and Initiate in the two psychological novels, in his search for the "flashes of insight (with which a great man) pierces through the nonsense of his time and gets at something that really matters" (*Tempest-Tost*). Over the course of five novels and a twenty-year process of growth, what really matters to him has clearly emerged and has found increasingly complex and sophisticated expression in the language of his books. It is the conquest of one's Self in the inner struggle and the knowledge of oneself as fully human. It is to be.

L'ESPACE INTERIEUR CHEZ RINGUET

René Labonté

LA PERSONNALITÉ d'un romancier se révèle de bien des façons à travers son oeuvre: par exemple, par ses interventions dans le ràcit, son attitude face à ses personnages ou encore par le choix qu'il a fait du matériau linguistique qui constitue son roman. Cependant, c'est par l'intermédiaire de personnages en situation, c'est-à-dire par la façon qu'ont ceux-ci de sentir les objets et de vivre avec d'autres hommes, que le romancier exprime le mieux — et souvent à son insu — une vision du monde qui lui est propre. Quelle est cette vision chez Ringuet? Quelle conception de la vie se dégage de l'ensemble de l'oeuvre romanesque de cet écrivain québécois? Pour décrire son espace intérieur, nous avons recomposé dans ses grandes lignes la démarche d'un personnage synthétique, dont la conscience, par son acceptation ou son rejet du monde extérieur, détermine un mode d'existence, qui corresponde à celu de l'écrivain.

Le paysan de *Trente Arpents* n'a pas eu à choisir la direction qu'il aurait pu donner à sa vie, car "ce sont les choses qui ont décidé pour lui, et les gens, conduits par les choses." Michel Garneau, lui, a eu à choisir de quelle façon il voulait "se" vivre: "pour être heureux: faire fortune. Pour faire fortune: être fort. Ce qui se ramenait à l'équation: pour être heureux, être dur." Pour mieux atteindre ce but, il a même été jusqu'à changer son prénom, croyant ainsi abolir un passé qu'il déteste. L'argent permettra-t-il, un jour, à Robert M. Garneau de connaître le bonheur? Non, parce que, inconsciemment, il ne cesse de chercher un *point d'appui* et que, toujours, il fait face au *vide*.

Le passé de Garneau, peuplé de fantômes, lui apparaît constamment comme un abîme. L'image de la fosse est même projectée dans l'avenir: "le soleil, qui s'en (va) rejoindre les soleils passés dans la fosse du couchant" et "le paysage qui une fois de plus (va) s'engloutir dans le gouffre de la nuit" ne représentent-ils pas le gouffre de la mort? En effet, le déclin du jour représente le déclin de la vie. Même si le narrateur ne fait, dans ces deux textes, aucune allusion directe à la mort, la fosse et le gouffre, associés à un déclin, signifient le *vide* et la *mort*, *le vide de la mort*. Globalement, l'abîme (la fosse ou le gouffre) symbolise "les états informels

de l'existence", et au point de vue psychologique, "il correspond autant à l'indétermination de l'enfance qu'à l'indifférenciation de la fin, décomposition de la personne."[1]

La représentation que Garneau se fait de la mort ne diffère pas de celle qu'Euchariste se fait de sa mort, lorsque celui-ci revoit sa vie, "un chemin paisible et long, (. . .) une douce montée vers le terme de l'horizon où il viendrait à disparaître en une cassure brusque et nette, en plein azur, un jour, plus tard." Sans manifester de crainte ou de surprise, le paysan de Ringuet voit le vide succéder tout naturellement à la matière. Il n'y a donc pas d'appui au-delà de cette rupture de l'horizontale (la vie humaine), et le silence de Ringuet face à l'après-vie laisse entendre que le ciel est vide. D'ailleurs, entre ce dernier et la terre, il n'y a pas de point de jonction, la verticale s'arrêtant à la hauteur du monde visible.

Cette image de l'abîme ou de la fosse est récurrente dans l'oeuvre de Ringuet. Ainsi, on peut lire dans *Trente Arpents*, à propos d'Oguinase, qui vient de quitter la ferme paternelle pour entrer au collège: "c'est tout cela (les siens et son entourage familier) que des choses et des gens nouveaux et étrangers allaient jeter dans l'abîme du passé, allaient vider de toute importance." Dans *Confidences*, l'auteur qualifie le passé de "puits profond" et parle de "ces acteurs d'un jour la plupart tombés au creux de la mort, les autres dans la fosse tout aussi cruelle de l'oubli".

Dans le *Poids du jour*, le vide n'est pas uniquement une caractéristique de l'abîme, il est ressenti physiquement par Garneau, qui, par exemple, ne descendra pas dans le puits d'une mine pour en faire la visite, car "les ascenseurs, même modérés, l'angoissaient fortement". Il n'est pas jusqu'au *mur* qui ne devienne le *vide* à un moment où Garneau se sent impuissant à régler un problème familial: "(il) tourna légèrement la tête vers le mur, vers le vide", nous dit le narrateur; pourtant, le mur, matière qui limite l'espace, serait tout indiqué pour servir d'appui dans les moments de défaillance. On trouvera dans *Confidences*, un souvenir d'enfance où l'on voit quelle valeur le mur peut revêtir pour l'auteur. Celui-ci parle d'un apostat bien connu au Canada français: Chiniquy.

> Nous étions de toutes façons certains qu'il mourrait de la façon classique et obligatoire pour les apostats: "Trop tard, trop tard, s'écrierait-il. Et se tournant vers la muraille il expirerait". Je ne me demandais pas en quoi le fait de se tourner vers le mur était un signe certain d'éternelle perdition. Mais le lien s'était à ce point imposé à mon esprit que je fus longtemps à ne pas oser me tourner du côté de la muraille le soir pour dormir.

Cette hantise du mur pourrait peut-être expliquer pourquoi ce dernier ne peut être senti comme un objet sécurisant. Au mur, est lié l'idée de perdition éternelle, d'enfer, d'abîme.

LE PERSONNAGE RINGUÉTIEN va-t-il trouver un point d'appui dans le présent? Certainement pas Garneau, car celui-ci vit dans un espace qui est un décor sans fond. Enfant, n'a-t-il pas éprouvé dans la nature le "vide étonnant de l'eau à perte de vue, qui tout là-bas rejoignait le vide jumeau du ciel et se confondait avec lui," et Garneau, vieillissant, ne ressent-il pas encore le vide dela nature "en face de cette campagne immense, devant, cet horizon repoussé à l'infini, ces arbres et ces maisons hors de portée?" Faute d'avoir trouvé un point d'appui, Garneau reste démuni. Pour abolir la distance qui le sépare du monde, il lui faudrait créer des liens, être tendre, car la tendresse abolit les distances; mais de cela Garneau est incapable. Et puisque l'abîme du passé ne peut être aboli, la distance que son passé établit entre lui et le monde ne peut être franchie.

Euchariste, lui, a trouvé la sécurité, tout d'abord auprès de ses parents adoptifs, puis dans la petite société paroissiale dont il se sait accepté et à laquelle il participe. Mais c'est dans la terre, qui est Femme, que ce paysan trouve son principal point d'appui; que ce support se dérobe, pris de vertige, il ne peut reprendre pied sur un autre sol. Le paysan de Ringuet est l'homme d'un seul temps et d'un seul espace: le temps de la nature vécu sur trente arpents de terre laurentiennne.

Cette présence ou cette absence d'un point d'appui, on la retrouve également dans des nouvelles de Ringuet.

L'orphelin de *l'Héritage* sera rejeté par la petite société mesquine et xénophobe où il est venu essayer de prendre racine. Il ne reçoit d'accueil que d'une orpheline dont il sent qu'elle est "la seule chose de cette terre (la terre où il a tenté de s'établir) qu'il eût voulu emporter en son coeur." Et c'est ensemble qu'ils quittent ce milieu hostile, chacun d'eux semblant avoir trouvé, au moins pour un moment, dans l'autre un soutien.

Dans *Nocturne*, un naufragé, qui lutte contre l'élément liquide qui veut l'absorber, trouve soudain un point d'appui:

> Il a touché quelque chose qui n'a pas cédé, qui a résisté, obstinément; quelque chose qui . . . tient au sol. Il a touché quelque chose qui n'est pas de l'eau . . . (. . .) Le ciel et l'air et les étoiles et le vent appuient sur sa tête, ses épaules, ses bras, le collent à cette pierre bénie à laquelle il ne peut croire.

Ce passage, où quelqu'un savoure l'intensité du moment, est vraiment exceptionnel chez Ringuet, car son personnage ne s'arrête pas plus à penser à la mort qu'il ne s'arrête à accueillir l'instant dans sa nouveauté. Tendu vers un but à atteindre, ce volontaire s'éprouve dans la durée, car il a besoin de continuité pour donner de l'unité à sa vie, conçue selon un projet. D'instinct, il évite le temps de la sensibilité, qui est discontinuité. Un roman de Ringuet, c'est la vie

d'un volontaire, qui se déroule selon un projet, avec la présence ou l'absence d'un support. De ce point de vue, *Trente Arpents* finit où le *Poids du jour* commence. Dans *Trente Arpents*, c'est le point d'appui qui s'est dérobé; dans le *Poids du jour*, c'est le point d'appui qui est recherché. Cette recherche d'un support coïncide avec celle du bonheur.

Où donc tous ces orphelins que sont les personnages de Ringuet peuvent-ils trouver le bonheur? Précisons immédiatement qu'il s'agit d'un bonheur relatif, car le bonheur absolu, chez Ringuet, ne saurait exister que dans la tête de schizophrènes, qui vivent continuellement un rêve devenu l'unique réalité. Il en est ainsi de l'exalté de *l'Immortel*, qui se tire une balle dans la tête afin de devenir un dieu, et du pauvre ouvrier du *Bonheur*, qui n'a connu de moments heureux que ceux qu'il a passés "dans les oasis merveilleuses de l'illusion" pendant qu'il était hospitalisé. Ce bonheur ne saurait être trouvé dans la ville industrielle, laide, où l'on se sent étranger, ni dans la société bourgeoise, où dominent le paraître et les sentiments contrefaits, qui ne sont qu'une "fausse monnaie".

La nouvelle *Sept Jours* nous fait voir dans quel cadre une vie heureuse peut se dérouler. Dans un petit village, où "la paix des champs baigne les cinq rues bordées de maisons basses (. . .) les gens vivent une existence limpide, bonasse et parfois souriante." Là, il y a des fleurs, du soleil, une rivière, de l'air pur, des odeurs saines et un femme sensuelle qui se dore au soleil. Les petits drames que les habitants peuvent vivre se dissolvent avec "cette facilité heureuse propre aux enfants et aux simples." Un étranger, en vacances, qui a séjourné dans ce village dira: "pendant une semaine, je n'ai vu que des gens calmes, des visages amicaux et souriants. C'est un endroit heureux où il ne se passe rien, jamais rien."

L'atmosphère de ce village, on la retrouve à peu de choses près dans la dernière partie du *Poids du jour*. Le village, cette fois, est réduit à quelques habitations, avec au centre, une petite épicerie, lieu de rencontre des habitants. C'est dans ce hameau, qui n'a rien de commun avec la ville inhumaine ou le village des rentiers et des commères, que la vie est bonne à vivre. Là le monde du coeur peut s'exprimer en toute liberté et les rumeurs de la "grande société" (la "crise", la guerre) n'altèrent pas la saveur d'un quotidien sans histoire. Il n'est pas indifférent que ce hameau soit situé sur une montagne, car la montagne a une action bénéfique sur ceux qui y habitent. Elle agit même sur ceux qui viennent y séjourner quelques heures, comme les jeunes gens de *Fausse Monnaie*, qui ont sur la montagne un comportement autre que dans la plaine. Dans le *Poids du jour*, elle libère de la pesanteur (l'auteur dit des Garneau qu' "il leur semblait flotter magiquement audessus de la terre déployée, sans contact avec elle") et elle finira par libérer Garneau du poids de son passé. Puis, elle purifie aussi; à la pureté de l'air et de la nature correspond la pureté des sentiments.

C'est là, sur cette montagne, et en sa fille, dans une maison nommée le Nid, où règne une atmosphère de féminité, que le point d'appui sera trouvé. Grâce

à la tendre Jocelyne, en qui il retrouve les traits de sa mère, Garneau sera mis peu à peu en présence du passé qu'il s'acharnait à fuir. Il finira même par accepter que ses petits-enfants, par leur prénom, lui fassent revivre sa mère (Hélène) et l'enfant qu'il déteste en lui (Michel). Le salut n'aura donc été possible que par la Femme, et surtout par la Mère, qui, par l'intermédiaire de l'enfant, permet la réconciliation avec le passé. Le bonheur ne peut donc exister dans la fermeture au grand monde et dans l'intimité du cercle de l'éternel retour. Ringuet rejoint là, et sans doute à son insu, son cher dix-huitième siècle,[2] où chez Rousseau aussi bien que chez Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, on retrouve cette image du bonheur, possible seulement dans la fermeture du cercle.

Moisan ne pouvait vivre que dans le temps de la nature; Garneau ne peut vraiment vivre que dans le temps de la mère. Conjuguons ces deux temps et nous aurons l'image du bonheur chez Ringuet. Rythmée par la vie de la nature, l'existence de l'orphelin pourra se dérouler dans un temps sans histoire, qui est celui de la tendresse maternelle.

NOTES

[1] *Dictionnaire des symboles, mythes, rêves, coutumes, gestes, formes, figures, couleurs, nombres*, Paris, Laffont, 1969, p. 2.

[2] Dans son *Journal*, son admiration pour Voltaire et Anatole France, par exemple, manifeste son attachement à l'humanisme, à la tournure d'esprit et à l'écriture propres au siècle des Lumières. Egalement, dans un communiqué de Flammarion (éditeur de *Trente Arpents*), Ringuet déclare ne pas aimer le 17e et raffoler du 18e siècle (cité par Valdombre, dans *les Pamphlets de Valdombre*, fév. 1939, p. 118-119).

ATTITUDE

Anne Corkett

Cattle turn their horns
toward
the unused spaces
that appear
morning and night
between tree
trunk and leaf
and I
herdsman
on the routine track
mark my unknown portion
as though
my forehead bore
such improbable remnants.

OUTWARD BOUND

Sherill D. Grace

In 1927, aged eighteen, Malcolm Lowry travelled to the far East as a cabin boy aboard the *Pyrrhus*. Some time after his return to England six months later he began work on a novel, his first, which was to be called *Ultramarine*. With Conrad Aiken's *Blue Voyage* and Nordahl Grieg's *The Ship Sails On* as models, Lowry slowly put together his story of a young man's initiation into life aboard a cargo freighter. The young hero, Dana Hilliot, rejects the present realities of sea-life and a hostile crew by persistently escaping into memories of the past until events on board force him to choose between a continued destructive withdrawal into self and a dangerous but creative acceptance of life. This initiatory voyage came to represent the logical starting point in Lowry's projected *The Voyage That Never Ends* which was to comprise all of his inter-related and major works including *Under the Volcano*.

Ultramarine, however, partly due to its derivativeness and partly due to the overshadowing fact of *Under the Volcano*, has been consistently neglected by readers and critics alike. That the continued neglect of Lowry's first novel is unwarranted is the basic assumption of this study. George Woodcock, in his "Introduction" to *Malcolm Lowry: The Man and his Work*, emphasizes *Ultramarine*'s importance:

> [M]uch of the matter of his early novel finds its way, transformed, into *Under the Volcano,* and its experiments with time and memory, with the reality of the past making the present unreal, will be repeated in all the major novels. A reading of it is indispensable to a full understanding of Lowry.[1]

Ultramarine, originally published in 1933, was reprinted with some of Lowry's later revisions in 1963. According to Margerie Lowry's "Introductory Note," it was intended to be "in its rewritten form, the first volume in . . . *The Voyage That Never Ends.*"[2] With this purpose in view, Lowry changed the name of Dana's ship to the Oedipus Tyrannus and made other links with the *Volcano*. Although the book obviously remains a first novel and is certainly not of the stature of *Under the Volcano*, *Ultramarine* is seldom, if ever, given its due. For the most part, critics are content to point out the novel's debt to Aiken's *Blue*

Voyage and Grieg's *The Ship Sails On*.[3] Lowry himself was ashamed of the book.

In spite of weaknesses, the structure of the book illustrates the tremendous control which Lowry was developing over his materials. As with the *Volcano* and *Dark As the Grave*, in *Ultramarine* Lowry expands a short period of time, approximately forty-eight hours, into the months and years enfolded in Dana's consciousness. Nineteen years are contained within the small circle of two days passed in one place.

The structure of *Ultramarine* is circular. Beginning in Dana's mind, the narrative circles repeatedly from external action and dialogue back into Dana's consciousness until the final line of the book places the reader within the hero's mind once more. The book is crowded with images of circles and encircling — the engines, wheeling birds, eyes, Dana's lost compasses — even the ship, the harbour of Tsjang-Tsjang, and the sea, function as further layers of encircling reality.

Within the first four chapters, Lowry counterpoints two geographical and spiritual points along the circumference of the superimposed circles of the voyage and Dana's consciousness. The first geographical and spiritual point is the ship's departure for the East which Dana remembers as the book opens. It is essential to emphasize that *Ultramarine* begins as the Oedipus Tyrannus is nearing the port of Tsjang-Tsjang, the furthest point of her voyage. In Dana's mind, however, the ship is still preparing to leave Liverpool. During the course of the first four chapters, Dana moves deeper into his past before gradually circling his way back again, in Chapter IV, to the time of his departure from home. His memory transcribes an enormous circle until it catches itself up at the crucial moment of severance, the sailing of his ship. This point in time haunts him because it symbolizes severance from his youth and initiation to life. Furthermore, it is just this initiation or birth, this breaking out of the womb-like circle of his past, from which he shrinks in dread.

The second geographical and spiritual point of Dana's vicious circle is the furthest point of the voyage, the harbour of Tsjang-Tsjang and the abyss of the present self. While the ship is idle at dock, Dana, his mind and soul in an analogous static state, plumbs the very depths of his private hell. This hell, projected upon external reality by his distorted vision, results from his constant re-living of the past in the present and his persistent refusal to welcome life. Transfixed, like a "tinfoil Jesus", between these two points, Dana must first learn to recognize the self-inflicted hell for what it is and then to move out of his closed circle of time and space.

By the end of Chapter I with the boat docked and night falling, Dana, who has refused to enter life by going ashore, retreats to his bunk and his memories of the past. The visions which he has as he falls asleep highlight his spiritual crisis. Dana is so entirely enclosed in self that he cannot consciously articulate his

problem until the end of the book. The readers, drawn into the maelstrom of Dana's mind, experience the claustrophobic horror of a consciousness closed in upon itself. Believing that the ship "had a manifold security: she was his harbour; he would lie in the arms of the ship", Dana glides into a sleep immediately filled with wheeling screaming horror:

> Above, the moon soared and galloped through a dark, tempestuous sky. All at once, every lamp in the street exploded, their globes flew out, darted into the sky, and the street became alive with eyes; eyes greatly dilated, dripping dry scurf, or glued with viscid gum: eyes which held eternity in the fixedness of their stare: eyes which wavered, and spread, and, diminishing rapidly, were catapulted east and west; eyes that were the gutted windows of a cathedral, blackened, emptiness of the brain, through which bats and ravens wheeled enormously. . . .

Significantly, the vision is one of movement and the breaking of enclosing circles: lamps explode, their "globes" flying into the sky, eyes waver, and "diminishing" are "catapulted east and west"; even the enclosing glass of windows is shattered allowing bats and ravens to "wheel enormously" through their empty frames. This is a vision of the chaotic flux which Dana must accept. At this point in his voyage he is only capable of seeing this chaos as nightmarish horror. The closest he comes here to confronting his true position is suggested in the final sensation of the dream and the Chapter — without his compasses (to draw continual circles or to locate his own centre) he is "Lost. Lost. Lost."

In Chapter II, the ship static in the harbour parallels Dana's increasing withdrawal into an abyss of self. Dana escapes the reality of present time and space by dredging up time past and pre-voyage places until they form a hard shell of encrusted memory around his timorous psyche. The climax of his descent into self comes, when, with perception inverted and distorted, he envisions the *Oxenstjerna*, a symbol of movement, life, and a positive growing past, the ox-star "that shines above the lives of men", grounded and oozing death:

> It is the *Oxenstjerna* they are talking about, the *Oxenstjerna* that has gone aground. It is the *Oxenstjerna* which now turns over and sinks into the sand, while the oil spreads a mucous film over the Mersey; and now the white sea gulls . . . known by name to the dockers, are dying by the score.

With the virtuosity that characterizes *Under the Volcano*, Lowry forges here a most striking image of stasis and enveloping death which functions like a magnet within the heart of the book. In one brief passage he enfolds the cluster of motifs surrounding the Oxenstjerna with the various bird motifs in the novel and even with the haunting motif of eyes; "a mucous film" (like all the eye imagery, drawn from Lowry's personal sufferings) recalls the vision of eyes in Chapter I, and fuses with the general theme of Dana's spiritual blindness. Lowry's technique, in a miniature example such as this image of the Oxenstjerna, as well as in larger

structural units, is one of enfolding and encircling. The image is superficially quite simple, but it vibrates with a plenitude of centripetal meaning. In addition to embodying several motifs, motifs which can only be fully understood when viewed within the totality of the book, the Oxenstjerna passage symbolizes Dana's consciousness. Like the ship he has gone aground and "now turns over and sinks into the sand".

THE LOWEST POINT of Dana's descent occurs in Chapter III as he stumbles about Tsjang-Tsjang in a drunken nightmare. This lowest point, however, fully in keeping with Lowry's concept of the fusion of opposites, marks the beginning of his ascent; Dana grapples with the recognition and articulation of his position. His self-analysis is still typically exaggerated and maudlin but he at least admits to these aspects of his nature. Enclosed within the rhetoric of his self-portrait is the further realization that he alone creates his heaven or hell:

> Tinfoil Jesus, crucified homunculus (who is also the cross), spitted on the hook of an imaginary Galilee! Who is the crown of thorns dripping red blossoms and the red-blue nails, the flails and the bloody wounds. The tears, but also the lips cupped to embrace them as they fall; the whips, but also the flesh crawling to them. The net and the silver writhing in the mesh, and all the fish that swim in the sea. — The centre of the Charing Cross, ABCD, the Cambridge Circle, the Cambridge Circus, is Hilliot — but every night, unseen, he climbs down and returns to his hotel — while the two great shafts, the propeller shafts, the shafts of wit, laced with blood, AB, CD are the diameters.
>
> Now with his navel as centre and half CD as radius, describe a vicious circle!

Amidst a geometrician's paradise of circles, Dana sees himself as a cheap poseur, a Christ who climbs down from his self-inflicted cross to seek the shelter of his bed in a hotel room. The image of Dana as the centre of a circle with the four circumference points making a cross, ABCD, crystallizes his physical and spiritual dilemma; the points are fixed, the radius is given, the circle is closed, vicious.

Questioning his entire purpose for this voyage, Dana explains his failure in the very terms which will help him break out of his calcified circle of time and space. Challenging Janet's belief in him he cries,

> could you still believe in me, still believe in the notion that my voyage is something Columbian and magnificent? Still believe in my taking a self-inflicted penance; in this business of placing myself within impenetrable and terrible boundaries in order that a slow process of justification to yourself may go on. [sic]

Naming the names and saying the words is always magic with Lowry. Dana will soon break out the seemingly "impenetrable and terrible boundaries" of his

self-created hell. As centre to his circle he will move and in moving transcribe an ever new circumference.

By Chapter IV, Dana's agonized attempts to re-inhabit the past have brought him circling back to the point at which the book opened, the departure from England of the Oedipus Tryannus. In the retrospect of his return to Liverpool after the farewell with Janet, the Mersey strikes him as "like a vast camera film slowly and inexorably winding. Soon he will be entangled in her celluloid meshes, and wound out to the open sea." In a sense, Dana has encircled in memory his own position (much as he does later with Andy); he has come full circle. Now is the time to strike out anew. The challenge to Andy represents his first decisive action of the voyage. He does not grasp the profound truth, however, that this intense moment which gathers up all his anger and frustration is, in fact, a "punctum indifferens". Life cannot be seized and frozen in this way for it flows on, forever eluding the grasp. As the card players remark upon returning to their game after Dana's interruption, "— pass —" "— pass —" "— pass —".

The ship sails on or, at least in Chapter V, it prepares to leave port. Prior to the ship's departure, the culminating crisis of the book occurs. Norman's pet pigeon (with consequences that recall the Ancient Mariner's albatross) escapes from its cage and drowns. Dana and the crew stand by helplessly watching it die while a nearby motor boat "its occupant spinning the easy wheel while it circled around gaily . . . turned on itself and rolled in its own swell." The last moments of the ship's stasis at the dock parallels Dana's inability to save the bird. Suddenly, amidst rolling winches and coiling ropes, "the windlass clanking and racing around gladly" and the tiger "moulding its body to the shape of its cage", Dana remembers Norman's grief at the loss of his pet and sees the truth:

> No, such things couldn't happen really. But Norman's words made a sort of incantation in his brain. "Time! Of course there would have been time. Time wouldn't have mattered if you'd been a man."

This truth is useless, however, unless one knows how to use it, and Dana is still uncertain. With the renewed peace of the vessel under sail, he contemplates the roaring fires in the "pulsating and throbbing" engine room:

> Why was it his brain could not accept the dissonance as simply as a harmony, could not make order emerge from this chaos? . . . Chaos and disunion, then, he told himself, not law and order, were the principles of life which sustained all things, in the mind of man as well as on the ship.

Being unable to accept chaos as good is Dana's great sin. In his efforts to order and contain reality, he has only succeeded in stifling himself, and life, within a tightly sealed tomb of time and space.

Now that he has admitted the priority of chaos, he is ready to move on to a

reconciliation with Andy who symbolizes the forces of life into which Dana must be initiated. With the meaning of the maelstrom and "a reason for his voyages" clearly perceived, Dana looks down into the engine room once more. There he sees Nikolai, the fireman, serving the very source of energy and chaos:

> The iron tools blistered his hands, his chest heaved like a spent swimmer's, his eyes tingled in parched sockets, but still he worked on, he would never stop — this was what it was to exist —

Never to stop in the journey of life, this is Dana's discovery. Life is flux, chaos, energy, while death, like a ship gone aground, like a fixed, transcribed circle ABCD, is stasis. Paradoxically, life exists in the fiery abyss of the ship and Dana cherishes his discovery while "somewhere," as if warning that this point of rest is a "punctum indifferens," "a lantern clanged with eternal, pitiless movement."

Significantly, *Ultramarine* does not end on this pinnacle of insight. Although the narrative rhythm reaches completion by the end of Chapter V, the novel continues, mirroring in its structure what Dana has still to learn. In this sense *Ultramarine* was an ideal prologue for Lowry's intended voyage that never ends. Dana Hilliot, prefiguring the restless voyaging of subsequent Lowry heroes, realizes that he has "surrounded Andy's position" and must move on; life is a continual movement of centre and circumference:

> (There is . . . a stormflood within, as my heart beats with the beating of the engine, as I go out with the ship towards the eternal summers. A storm is thundering out there, there is the glow of tropical fire! Bad, or good, as it happens to be, that is what it is to exist! . . . It is as though I have been silent and fuddled with sleep all my life . . . I know now that at least it is better to go always towards the summer . . . Then at last again to be outward bound, always outward, always onward, to be fighting always for the dreamt-of-harbour . . . —)

Then, lest this solution of life's mystery appear too simple, Lowry charts the next stage in Dana's initiation. A fireman is ill and Dana is chosen to replace him; he must descend into the abyss of life which he earlier contemplated with acute insight. During his last moments on deck, a strange craft drifts through the night mist morseing her name: *Oxenstjerna*. Like a voice from his past this ship calls to him, reminding him that on the point of creating a new circle into the future he must take the past with him — as comfort and as threat. If he again makes the profound mistake of withdrawing into a hard shell of time and space, he will destroy his world. For life is perpetual activity "always outward, always onward".

Certainly *Ultramarine* is not an *Under the Volcano* but then few books are. That it is a worthwhile book in its own right is equally clear. In his first novel, Lowry explored the problems of time and space and of self-enclosed perception which distinguish his fiction. The structure of the book, prefiguring in its involu-

tions the structure of the *Volcano*, supports Lowry's vision of a mind so turned in upon itself, so obsessed with the past, that only a series of shocks can unroll it. For such an individual (for life itself Lowry would have us believe) the achievement of equilibrium is temporary; beyond one hurdle lies the next, a worse one; "that is what it is to exist." As a member of Lowry's *Voyage* cycle and precursor of *Under the Volcano* or as an independent novel, *Ultramarine* succeeds in its portrayal of initiation; the voyage is begun, the ship is outward bound.

NOTES

[1] *Malcolm Lowry: The Man and his Work* (University of British Columbia Press, 1971), p. 5.

[2] *Ultramarine* (Jonathan Cape, London, 1963), p. 7. All further references are to this edition and are included in the text.

[3] See, for example, the first two chapters of Richard Hauer Costa's *Malcolm Lowry* (Twayne Publishers, New York, 1972). By far the best discussion of *Ultramarine* to date is Chapter II of Tony Kilgallin's *Lowry* (Press Porcepic, 1973). Kilgallin reveals many further influences on or allusions in the novel.

ARTISTS AND OLD CHAIRS

Miriam Waddington

A puff of wind
a stretch of sky
a rush of air —
and Helen
who commands the stars
and planets
now commands
a chair.

Old and whiskered
its stuffings
thinning —
it wakes up
one morning
on the junkman's truck
alive and even
grinning.

Whoosh and thump!
It lands
in Helen's garden
with a mighty bump;
and there among

three birds two
squirrels five
marigolds an orange
cat and this
old friend,
the chair decides
that life's not over yet
it's not the end.

Helen's garden
is nice, the company
likewise: three
birds two squirrels
five marigolds
an orange cat and
this old friend
are quite enough
to make the chair
forget
the leaky huts and
muddy humps of
the world's worst
garbage dumps.

The chair
looks on benign
and sees
the scarlet runner
climb and
turn somersaults
on its own twisty vine;
sees also how
it tickles windows
here and there
and how
its curly tendrils
defy all gravity
to lean on
simply air.

That's why the chair
decides
that nothing dies
or ends,
it only changes,
especially
when artists bring
their loving looks

to rest upon old things
and there discover
in such unlikely places
as rocky earthbound faces
the eternal lineaments
of the transforming lover.

THE CONDITION OF THE WORKING CLASSES, SPRING 1975

Tom Wayman

i A man is being fired.
He does not know it yet, but another man
is hitting the keys of a typewriter to spell out
let's make this the last shift, okay?

The man works in an office.
But still, he is being let go.

ii A woman is accepted for employment.
The foreman introduces her to the others
and names one of them to show her what to do.

Everyone looks at the newcomer curiously
standing at their stations by the machines.

iii Another woman is slapped by her husband.

Her face has started to sting, tears
are filling her eyes. But whether these

are produced by the involuntary reaction
to any blow landing close to the eyes
or have an emotional cause is hard to say.

iv Men and women are also laughing.
I will not tell you what they are laughing at.

v Someone has mentioned that Wayman's poems are full of defeat.
There is nothing in them about
"what concrete aspirations are we developing
and working toward in the struggle for liberation."

I walked through the streets of my City all day.
I visited each place I have been employed
and many others where over the years I have applied.

I spoke with every friend I have kept
and remembered each I worked with before.

I did not find this struggle, or a victory.
Let us agree prizes were won in the past.
Let us allow the future might be something else.

But I am sorry.
I cannot crow if I cannot see the dawn.

OF GREEN STEPS AND LAUNDRY

Ralph Gustafson

The man will put a large-headed nail,
Shiny as silver, into the green step,
Straightening winter's bias and spring
Thaw and his hammer will knock it crooked,
The bird come obtrusively to the bough above,
And it will have to be done again, and that
Will be important; and she will hang
Blue and white shirts and a patched quilt
On the laundry line that runs from the kitchen
Step to the yard telephone pole and sheets
That smell of winter's cold, and the pulley
Each time the line is launched will squeak,
And that will be important; and neither
She nor the man pounding the clear air
Fixing the green step with another nail,
Will be aware of the importance, twenty
Years later thought of by him
Who drove nails and saw laundry,
Who thought little of cardinals and clothespins
And now loves life, loves life.

review articles

LIKE THE WIND MADE VISIBLE

Kathy Mezei

Complete Poems of Saint Denys Garneau, translated by John Glassco. Oberon Press.

In 1975 two brilliant translations by John Glassco appeared — *Lot's Wife* (*La Femme de Loth* by Monique Bosco) and the *Complete Poems of Saint Denys Garneau.*

> For some time we have been awaiting the appearance of the Creator, the poet who will give the French-Canadian people their own true image. He will no doubt appear in his own good time, when the substance of the people is strong enough, sufficiently distinguished from all others to inspire this awaited genius with sufficient cogency.

prophesies Saint-Denys-Garneau in his *Journal* in 1938. But, to the contrary, the pathways of a nation's literature are frequently carved out by unobtrusive and elusive figures. In his quiet, unassuming way, Glassco has greatly affected the course of Canadian literature. The mere presence of this whimsical and iconoclastic gentleman improves the temper of our culture. And Glassco's deliberate dilettantism countering our dreadful professionalism is a high achievement for this country.

His poetry presents a pensive, muted look at local landscapes and complex metaphysical spaces. His pornography mocks our puritanical anglo-saxon-sado-masochistical heritage. His journals *Memoirs of Montparnasse,* which are the reflections of a gay boulevardier in Paris during the '20's, and "A Season in Limbo" by Silas N. Gooch (*Tamarack Review*, no. 23, 1962), a wry account of Glassco's sojourn in a tb. sanatorium during the '50's, are sophisticated ventures into an interesting genre. In these journals, humour, despair and ironic introspection reveal more of the form of art than its content.

Pursuing the possibilities of this genre, Glassco published the translation of Garneau's journal in 1962 (*The Journal of Saint-Denys-Garneau*). For the first time a French-Canadian work of this kind, presenting an intimate account of an important artist's creative process, was made available to the English-Canadian reader. Another major step in the development of our literature occurred when Glassco brought out the much-needed *Poetry of French Canada in Translation* in 1970. This volume gathers together the best translations of poems from 1606 to the present.

Glassco's introductions to both the

anthology and the *Complete Poems* provide excellent insights into Quebec literature, and together with Anne Hébert and Frank Scott's *Dialogue sur la traduction à propos du Tombeau des rois* create the groundwork for a Canadian aesthetic on the translation of poetry. For if, as Garneau comments, "A people forms itself by acting, by creating — that is, by communicating. It finds itself through the act of communication", then the efforts of Glassco, F. R. Scott, the journal *Ellipse*, Sheila Fischman, Alan Brown, Joyce Marshall and Larry Shouldice, to name a few, are not only acts of creation and communication but acts of necessity.

What affinity has drawn Glassco to the hermetic work of Garneau, a poet tormented by the delicate balance between spirit and flesh, between aesthetics and asceticism, between silence and speech? Hector de Saint-Denys-Garneau's story is well-known. A scion of an old seignieurial family, he was born in 1912 and began to write and paint at an early age. His schooling took place in Montreal, but in 1928 he was afflicted with a heart injury and gave up his formal education. Garneau formed part of a group of intellectuals including Jean Le Moyne (cf. Philip Stratford's translation of his *Convergences*, Ryerson, 1966), Robert Elie, Claude Hurtubise who together founded *La Relève* in 1934. In 1935, after undergoing some sort of spiritual crisis, he began his journal in earnest and also started writing the poems that were published as *Regards et jeux dans l'espace* in 1937. Devastated by this public exposure of his soul, a soul whose sincerity and purity he continually doubted, Garneau retreated more and more into silence and solitude. He spent his last years at the family estate at Ste. Catherine-de-Fossambault. His end in 1943 was sudden and dramatic. He died of a heart attack while out canoeing. In its tragedy and early silencing, this life recalls the short careers of Rimbaud, Nelligan and Lampman.

It was out of the drama of his inner world, not his rather uneventful life, that Garneau span his poems. His innovative verse forms, introspective imaginings and symbolism (especially, trees, skeletons, the wind, flowers, barren winter landscapes, dead houses, the dance, the gaze) expressed the isolation and alienation of his generation, trapped by the institutions of church and state. Although a later generation, the engagé poets of the '60's, reacted against the self-abnegation of Garneau, Glassco has chosen this poet because he "initiates a new era of both sensibility and prosody, and invokes and announces the future" and because he "remains the one who seems worthiest of a translation into English of his entire mature poetic output".

The *Complete Poems*, based on *Poésies completes* edited by Robert Elie and Jean Le Moyne (1949), consists of "Regards et jeux dans l'espace" and "Les Solitudes", unpublished poems from 1935-38, collected and arranged by Le Moyne and Elie: Glassco has also consulted the definitive *Oeuvres* edited by Jacques Brault and Benoît Lacroix (1971), which contains about 13 additional poems plus juvenalia as well as the complete journal and correspondence.

Like Glassco, Garneau is a poet of ideas.

> Once I made poems
> That followed the whole radiant line
> From centre to circumference and beyond
> As if there were no circumference only a centre
> And as if I were the sun: all around me limitless space
>
> ("Autrefois")

The first poems are stronger because the abstract concepts and ambiguities are enclosed in concrete patterns and images whereas poems in the second part (and some of these are fragments) have not been brought into quite the order and

form both poets emphasize. One also becomes impatient with such an extreme self-consciousness.[1]

Like Glassco, Garneau is concerned with "making beautifully". His statement "Beauty. Quality of the work independent of the end pursued" (*Journal*) is echoed in the lines of Glassco's poem "The Last Word":

> The means are more important than the end,
> Ends being only an excuse for action,
> For adventures sought for their own sake alone.

Both poets seek to explore "Le terrain de l'esprit" and to reveal another "reality". For Garneau the body of the landscape, the landscape of the body and the contours of the house describe his inner anguish and division. For example,

> I think of the desolation of winter
> Through the long days of solitude
> In the dead house —
> For a house is dead when nothing in open—
> In the sealed house, ringed by woods
> ("A Sealed House")

Or, a poem called "Landscape in Two Colours on a Ground of Sky".

> Life and death on a pair of hills
> A pair of hills and four hillsides
> The wildflowers on two sides
> The wild shadow on two sides

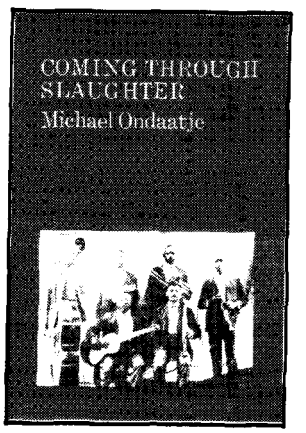
Garneau is conscious of "correspondances" and speaks of "the poet for whom all things, all life, is a sign. And he seeks for intelligible signs, signs formed to interpret the meaning he has found." (*Journal*)

> The willows flowing, the whole tree
> Nothing but silver all lustre all a wave
> All watery foaming flight
> Like the wind made visible
> ("Pines against the light")

COMING THROUGH SLAUGHTER

Michael Ondaatje

NEW from ANANSI



THE first full-length prose work by one of Canada's leading poets, COMING THROUGH SLAUGHTER is based on the strange life of Buddy Bolden: barber, newspaper editor, man about town, husband and father, and jazz pioneer in turn-of-the-century New Orleans. Drawing upon memoirs, reported conversations and historical data, Ondaatje has recreated the mood of the period, while shaping the actual details of Bolden's life into a fresh and unusual literary form.

THROUGH Buddy, Ondaatje explores the nature of the creative process, imagining the beauty and the violence of the creative vision which led Bolden to his place in jazz history. The story of Bolden's gradual creative disintegration is played out against a brilliantly realized background: the cribs and saloons of 'The District'; the studio of Bellocq, photographer of whores; the insane asylum where Bolden ends his days.

MICHAEL ONDAATJE is the author of four books and has won the Governor General's Award for THE COLLECTED WORKS OF BILLY THE KID.

$10.00 cl. / $4.95 pa.

He also despaired of both the power and the impotence of the word. In the section titled "Pouvoirs de la parole" (Glassco retains the French in the section titles) he explores the relationship of the poet to the word. The impotence and terror that pursued the poet into his religious and sexual life is here too — "each word a sucking mouth". Since words for Garneau are an incarnation of an absolute reality, "we have no right to play a verbal game with something that is not comprised in the depth of our substance." Poetry paradoxically feeds and drains him.

His is a divided landscape in which the gaze, the two-edged blade, must penetrate as far inwards as it does outwards. Thus much of Garneau's poetry is a movement between two elements seeking an equilibrium. Until he is received and saved by God, "It is there in suspension that I am at rest". His poems reflect this duality through a deliberately ambiguous syntax and meaning. Glassco's translations are not only eloquent and sensitive but frequently clarify some of the elusiveness of Garneau without (and this is by far the most difficult test of virtuosity) losing the grace and subtlety of the French.

For example, "The Picture of the dance" is a complex poem which tries, through the metaphor of the grace and measure of dance, to describe the relation between the poet's perception of the intangible and his attempt to communicate it. Here is the closing stanza:

Or la danse est paraphrase de la vision
Le chemin retrouvé qu'ont perdu les yeux dans le but
Un attardement arabesque à reconstruire
Depuis sa source l'enveloppement de la séduction.

This is F. R. Scott's rendering of these lines:

For a dance is a paraphrase of the vision
The rediscovery of the road the eyes had lost in the search
A statelier pace slowing to recapture
From its source an enveloping enchantment.[2]

Glassco is less literal but still careful to maintain the difficult syntax.

So the dance is a paraphrase of the vision
The road recovered that was lost by the searching eyes
A statelier measure slowing to recapture
The all-embracing magic of its beginning.

Occasionally puzzled by a phrase in these poems, I've returned to the French and have always been impressed by Glassco's solutions. Not only has he maintained the complexity of syntax and meaning but he has also captured the troubled sensuality of Garneau.

As a stream cools an island
And as the fluent wave curls around
That sun-dappled girl
("River of my eyes")

Glassco has said that his translations are faithful not literal. Scott who also has some fine versions of these poems is a more literal translator.[3] Yet Glassco takes few liberties with the form or phrasing of the originals (except in "Flute", which loses a line in the translation, or is this an error?). His art lies in slightly rearranging lines and modifiers so that the poem reads well in English. He is much more restrained here than in *Lot's Wife*.

I am irritated by critics who leap upon a translation and pull out certain lines and minutely examine their flaws. No translator can always find the perfect phrase. Not even in poetry. Glassco himself explains how he borrowed from Scott and others. Sometimes the translator is satisfied merely to create the sense of the original. Sometimes he even retains the awkwardness of the original. What really matters is the reader's sense of discovery and delight. As Garneau said, "Here is my box of toys / Full of words to make wonderful patterns". Translation is both play and art. And

Glassco has indeed made wonderful patterns from this disturbing box of toys.

NOTES

[1] John Glassco in a letter to A. J. M. Smith, August 24, 1961. "I know how you feel about Garneau's poetry. It sounds so rhetorical and inflated in English, but no less so in French. That whole last section in alexandrines [La Mort grandissante] would get a horse-laugh anywhere except in Québec. It's good but has the air of being declaimed by someone in a frock-coat, with gestures."

[2] *The Poetry of French-Canada in Translation* p. 107.

[3] *Saint-Denys-Garneau and Anne Hebert.* Vancouver: Klanak Press, 1962.

HEBERT IN ENGLISH

G. V. Downes

Poems by Anne Hébert, translated by Alan Brown. Musson Books, $8.95.

SPEAKING OF TRANSLATION in that mine of aesthetic lore *For Want of a Golden City*, Sacheverall Sitwell notes that "all who have attempted Baudelaire have made fools of themselves, and it is decidedly not fair to judge of Pushkin in translation." This is, like so many of his judgments, dead on centre, for the greater the poet, the more intensely personal his language, and the more complex, therefore, the hidden network of allusion and association in the poem. Even its creator may remain partly unaware of the intricacies involved in the final sound-sense pattern which satisfies him, he knows not why.

Yet translation has, since the beginnings of civilized intercourse, been with us, and it would be idle to deny the value to Western Europe of Dante, or the Odyssey, or the Aeneid merely because they have reached most of us as translations. To set up an absolute of aesthetic purity in the matter would shut off too many seminal influences from our minds and hearts. Prose, of course, suffers the least in the transition, although if the two languages involved are very far apart in the thinking processes which gave rise to the syntax, or even if they are at different stages of development historically, some curious results may be observed. French and English, if reasonably close in Malory's time, diverge considerably at different speeds after that (Florio's *Montaigne* is more ornate than the original) and it is not until the eighteenth century that the styles seem to come together again.

Poetry, in addition, suffers from the peculiar disadvantage of its double nature, for it is both sound and sense together, all the time, and neither can be divorced from the other without damage, any more than the tree can be separated from its sap. So what can the translator, with a respect for his material, do? All, actually, that he can hope for is to give the reader an equivalent experience in his own language with the least deformation possible of the poet's original intention. But it takes prayers, patience, alms *and* vows to wrestle successfully with the continual challenge offered by the work of any major poet. In the present instance, I don't think that Alan Brown has been patient enough to do justice to Anne Hébert's fine achievement, and looking at some of the expressions he finds suitable to use in his own language, I wonder whether even patience would have helped.

Yet the translator of Anne Hébert en-

joys a certain advantage today which may never occur again. It is true that English, in stress and vowel sounds, produces different effects from French. But time is on his side. For Anne Hébert is the legitimate heir of Symbolism and post-Symbolism in France, in her attitudes, her craft, and her personal vision. By legitimate, I mean that she absorbed directly the kind of French poetic examples which have influenced her ways of expression. But in this century are we not all, except for recent American (and, by seepage) Canadian poets, the children of Symbolism? Imagism, Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and particularly the critical work of the latter, have consciously or unconsciously become part of our accepted heritage. The translator writing today ought, therefore, to have at his disposal a tone, vocabulary and voice peculiarly suited, as a result of these influences, to the expression of French poetry which has come directly out of the same period. Some loss is inevitable. But there is no need to blur the poetry of the original by making elementary errors, by refusing to grapple with the difficult bits, by using clichés in English which destroy completely a delicate, precise, fixed yet undulating web of verse.

For example, in the line "Et regarde ses mains que colorent les jours", there is an inversion, common in prose, after the relative pronoun. Brown renders the line, however, as "and stares at her hands that colour all the days", which, apart from its apparent lack of comprehension and the addition of "all", makes nonsense of the next line which reads "Les jours sur ces mains". In another poem, the 1960 Paris edition has "Ni bêtes ni fleurs ni nuages" which becomes "No beasts or flowers or trees". Unless there has been a re-writing of this line in a later edition, why should "clouds", which is consistent with the cosmic imagery in the rest of the poem, become "trees"? In the poem "There is surely someone", the emphatic and elegant "parfait" has been replaced by "perfected" which, if it conveys an interesting nuance of meaning, stops the poetry dead. And in the same poem, "lost passion" is a very weak rendering of "passion perdue", when "waste" is one of the commonest meanings of "perdre" and when the theme of the poem is just that, wasted love.

Sometimes the translator, presumably in a hurry, simply bashes through a difficulty as thought it were not there. For example,

> La fureur vermeille jointe à côté
> *Bel arbre de capucines* dans un grès bleu.

Now this is an extremely precise image: not a bowl of separate nasturtium flowers with short stems, but a long branching frond from a climbing nasturtium which has been cut off from its root with leaves and flowers intact on the central stem. By translating this as the ineffective "Glow of yellow flowers", the translator not only misses the precision of the image (and its psychological correspondences) he destroys the effect of "vermeille" in the previous line, by adding the vague and sentimental "glow" and the non-existent "yellow". The flowers may have been yellow, but not in the poem.

An almost insoluble problem exists in the translation of abstract words which French uses liberally, precisely, and without any of the loss of force which so easily occurs in English. It is unfortunate, though, that the opening poem of the volume (which, like *La Jeune Parque*, is a celebration of the awakening of consciousness at dawn) should face the reader with the appallingly flat expression:

> O! spacious leisure . . .

Further on, one finds the same latinized abstractions which sit so badly in English "my accustomed unsurprising acts", and

in a later poem "marine vocation mirroring my gaze."

And why should "et" be translated as "or" between two adjectives? Some of the banalities shock, for there is nothing banal in Anne Hébert's language: "the frightful present", "fancy's heart", "the seasons four". In "A Small Despair" the French reads

> Mon coeur est rompu
> L'instant ne le porte plus

The translation "My heart is broken / The moment fails beneath it" ignores the meaning of "rompu" in this context, and shifts the emphasis from the heart which is fatigued, failing, to a "moment" which is too weak to bear its weight.

One must certainly grant justice to Mr. Brown for some felicities, such as "Watery Fisherman", and the last verse of "The Wooden Room". He has understood the nuance of meaning of "triste" in "The Small Towns" (which escaped a previous translator) and is actually at his most effective when dealing with the poems which are utterly straightforward, apparently plain, presentations of images such as "Our Hands in the Garden", and also in the prose which expresses Anne Hébert's poetic creed. He has found an interesting word "wig-wag" for a difficult passage in "A Small Dead Girl", but unfortunately it is jarringly out of harmony with the rest of the vocabulary of the poem.

Although readers who are quite unfamiliar with Anne Hébert's work will certainly gather some idea of its themes and general characteristics from this English version, they will certainly not understand why her reputation stands so high. The versions of Frank Scott of many of these poems, which were brought out first by Klanak Press of Vancouver, are more satisfactory. In particular "Le Tombeau des Rois" — surely one of the most extraordinary poems written in either official language — loses none of its strength or dignity in the Scott translation. One really cannot forgive Alan Brown for wrecking the first two lines by jamming in a participial construction and losing the effect of the full, plain, magnificent statement. It seems to me that the translator is simply not sensitive enough to the problems involved in the translation of highly complex poetry, and in Canada today, the second-rate is not good enough for the understanding we need of our major literary figures.

WORTHWHILE VISITATIONS

Ralph Gustafson

GEORGE WOODCOCK, *Notes on Visitations: Poems 1936-1975*. Anansi. $9.95.

I REMEMBER George Woodcock's appearance with a poem in that memorable periodical edited by Geoffrey Grigson, *New Verse*. I was at Oxford at the time. My submission of a poem had been rejected by Grigson as "static conventionality." I wondered what the contributors, especially the Canadians, George Woodcock and A. J. M. Smith, had that I hadn't. By the time I had got hold of Woodcock's *The Centre cannot hold*, I too had read Yeats, Eliot and Auden. Subsequent to the War, I was appearing with Woodcock in new and old periodicals, *Life and Letters, The New York Times, Saturday Review, Tomor-*

row. Ten years ago, I had George Woodcock's *Selected Poems*. Before that and ever since, of course, we all have had, in him, one of the most distinguished minds and editors in Canada. I think particularly of his direction of the periodical *Canadian Literature*.

Now comes a further retrospective volume, *Notes on Visitations: Poems 1936-1975*, an attractive book in outward appearance and, within, a presentation of modesty and integrity. Seventy-five poems are presented as the quotient of thirty-nine years of devotion to the art. The sanity and deflation of this are of wondrous contemplation in the face of the current establishments in Canada: *The Complete Works of* by Canadian poets of the age of twenty-two, the Canadian poet of twenty-five paying homage to the legend of the Canadian poet of twenty-six.

Tribute is to be paid to George Woodcock in several respects. Most new poetry in Canada constitutes not a structure but a continuum; a process of cognitions. Poetry is not a process; it is a product. In our comparatively recent self-awareness, the sufficiency of a poem is thought to be the evacuation of the sensitive, social Canadian soul. Tone-deaf, open-ended gestures dominate. The formal satisfaction of expectations is regarded as the property of the dead. Where it is not forgotten, it is deliberately denied that the poet first of all is neither savant nor sensitive plant. The man may be, but the poet first of all is not. The poet is artist, the maker of what is distinguished in itself, of what can stand alone without him; the golden bird on the golden bough that sings to drowsy emperors, as Yeats has it. A poem is not its content, not only; a poem is a verbal disposition that provides the inviolable meaning of the content. Poetry is crafty.

And so it is bracing to come on George Woodcock's approach to poetry, he knows all this; to open his book and be at once aware that we are offered what we are supposed to be offered by a book of poetry — structures, visitations that are more than processes without form; cogencies that don't exist on their own dramatized self-indulgence. The refreshment is also environmental: the visitations, although put together in British Columbia, miss the Americanization of west coast poetry and skip the piety of the hiccough school of rhythm.

We find out how this can be in Woodcock's judicious Preface and introductory pages to the six sections of his book. Al Purdy in familiar style also tells us the wherefores in his perceptive introduction.

The first poems in the book derive straight out of the socio-political scene of the 1930's. Spender, MacNeice, Day-Lewis, Auden were expressing this ambience in their poetry; so was George Woodcock — as he states in his Preface to the present collection. The depressing atmosphere with its apocalyptic dispersal is all re-presented in Woodcock's "Sunday on Hampstead Heath":

> the pipedreams of men in
> braces
> Reading in Sunday newspapers the end of
> faith and folly
> ... may rise as golden as
> Blake
> Knew in his winged dreams.

It is a shared closeness to the other more familiar poets of the time rather than an imitation on Woodcock's part; the proof is in his poem "Tree Felling" — as good a Thirties poem as Spender wrote.

Jerusalem's green and pleasant land never materialized as we depressingly know — in the Middle East or anywhere else. But at that time in the Thirties there seemed ways to the promised land that were possible — those pointed out by Trotsky, by the anarchists Bakunin and Emma Goldman, each of whom is duly celebrated in Woodcock's poems. The

lack in the social poetry of the Thirties is the absence of the individual. One senses physical presence in the poems of MacNeice, but only of the paradigm, the parable, in his contemporaries' work, Spender's abstract coward, Auden's unknown citizen, and Woodcock's "boys that are marked to die" ("Wartime Evening in Cambridge"). The world in general suffers and dies. So it does. But to stop at that distance is to be too far removed from the heartbeats in the wrist (the prosody chosen, its formal, conscious intrusion, compels too the withdrawal of the reader from the poem). The result of this abstracted stance, this all-inclusive tabulation, is that the drama is always threatening to be melodrama; the myth supersedes the human, "Niobe over her dead" as Woodcock's "The Ruins of London" invites us to remember. This is horror and despair by rote; the "ineffectual misery", to use a phrase of Woodcock's. In much of the social poetry of the Thirties one suffers an "Arctic Death"; is offered kleenex for tears. Even spring is corrupting. Is it? We have, not so much the disparagement of the particular, as the removing of emotion in parable. The end-result is an appeal to the head, not a movement toward the heart. I think of Van Gogh's potato eaters.

As if aware of this danger and threat, the sections of Woodcock's book move into personal mementos, into the area where despair finds its answer and where death is triumphed over by the very thing its recognition gives meaning and strength to: individual love. It is the absence of this love in the "land of mire and stone" that "withers all my green" ("Aigues Mortes"). Into Woodcock's "Insular Poem" comes love

> Till, exile and expatriate for you,
> Cut from all past by love's marooning flow,
> I am Selkirk standing on the only island
> Or last man on the last submerging strand.

A fine, structuring hand marks these poems. In the earlier poems the intellect is satisfied. This seems enough — until one wishes, once more, for that personal imperfection, that movement into the heart. What nonsense is George Orwell's remark that "a writer's literary personality has little or nothing to do with his private character." It is an unnecessary loss that Woodcock should agree with this. One seizes, he says, on the incidents and circumstances in one's life that can be transferred into myth, those which have "value precisely because of their exotic and unfamiliar nature." On the contrary, the village pump, one's own backyard is the place of poetry. The rag-and-bone shop of the human heart. Move that into myth, into universality if you will, but start elsewhere at grave poetic peril. Keats under his Hampstead tree; Hopkins with poor Felix Randal in Liverpool!

Surely is Woodcock's preference for the "exotic" denied by his "First Spring on the Island" (written, I see, in the Sixties), as immediate and personal a poem as D. H. Lawrence's "Snake" or W. W. E. Ross' "The Snake Trying" or Emily Dickinson's "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass" (Peripheral: what primordial tie have we to this fellow that he is always written about in such fashion? an ultimate love excusing Satan?). This is not the Audenesque mode of parable and personification but what Woodcock tells us in a Preface quote in *The Canadian Forum*: "The stress of deep and poetically liberating emotions."

But one cannot wish on to a poet what we'd like to hear; one must leave him to his own private temperament; in Woodcock's case, he tells us (rather contradictorily to that Orwellian adherence), to "a temperamental strain" that demands pessimism. Thus a late section of his book is not affirmation or love but "The End Man":

On that day skeletons from all cupboards
Emerged, shouting the past, pointing the
derogatory finger.
...
His lonely mind surveys a fragment realm
Of manless cities where the rats remain.
...
The silence deafened with fear
As I saw through earth the shifting eye of
the fuse.

It is a personal denial of Faulkner's personal man who prevails. It is the haunting eye of the Thirties that we follow again. Woodcock has learned much from Auden:

Love in this season, as unicorn fabulous
Feeds in countries far away.
Under the passionate heart and the
sedulous
Manner the heart is clay.
("Spoken in Love")

(Though that adjectival inversion for the sake of pararhyme Auden would have eschewed).

The latest section of the book shows a happy unloosening from the metrics, the stanzaic strictures and impersonal parable-mode. Such literary verbal tripwires as "involvulate", "pectoral" (though we still come up for air from "chthonian") have largely been superseded by a more demotic mode. In content, affirmation tends to take over from the "senile", the "sterile",

like the purple blossom
of soldanella
thawing its way
up through the radiant
snow.
("Prologue")

We come on "The Game Shop in Colmar", personal, immediate, and as vital as a heartbeat. We are moved; we have eloquence instead of elocution. All the inhumanity, irony, sardonics of all the earlier poems come, in this one poem, to full vitality and authenticity. Here is poetry at work; the closing of that exemplary, that paradigmatic gap to the personable immediate:

the power to change,
to grow in the
fluidity transforming
eternal dark to light.
("The Geomantic Dragon")

Despite his "Ballad for W. H. Auden", life is found not to be "an artifact."

Notes on Visitations is a valuable, honest book; an "unsilenceable voice."

Such visitations
possessed me at sixteen,
and at sixty
the gods
revisit.

May there be no departure.

I'S AND EYES

E. E. Greenglass

JOE ROSENBLATT, *Virgins & Vampires*. McClelland & Stewart. $4.50.
SEYMOUR MAYNE, *Name*. Press Porcepic. $3.50.
DAVID MC FADDEN, *A Knight In Dried Plums*. McClelland & Stewart. $3.95.

IN *Virgins & Vampires* Joe Rosenblatt tells us again and again that his brain or skull contains just about anything that we might assume to exist in the outside world. "Transparent gunmen/ walk into the vault/ of my skull," we hear, and we hear of "the shapeless road of my mind," that "there are virgins & vampires in the warm cushions of my brain," that "the fish of the brain fly," and "goldfish swim in the brain," while "cows moo in the frost of my brain," and

that "there are haunted houses & haunted heads," where "the sow of winter whitens the brain," though "there are recesses in the brain/ where the gray light clings desperately at the edges," and "profound brain tulips are manured." Also "there are those whose brains are pregnant with murder," presumably in "the brothel of the mind," in which "the paint of the mind is impermanent," and the woman has "snakes in her head," in which the "mental phone thrums." These are but a few of the things that are said to transpire in the head in this book. All the above quotations are opening premises of lyrical poems.

Well, they get boring. They suggest a formula for making a poem. In fact these poems give many other signs of being manufactured. I am reminded of Wallace Stevens' reason for not liking surrealism. He said that he thought poetry should step toward the unknown, while surrealism is a collage or shuffling of the familiar. After his opening premise Rosenblatt makes willed descriptions of a refracted world. Nearly every noun is provided an adjective. Usually the abstract nouns are given physical attributes: "greeny vision," or "hacking hunger," or "cannibal death." The phrases become even harder to take when the process is reversed, as in "hysterical moonlight." One has read that sort of thing in places one does not frequent any more.

And that sort of thing is not rare. Consider: "nature . . . devours / the tadpoles of existence/ in the white pond of being." I have always thought that existence is a latinate word for being, and I am not disapprized of that belief here.

Through all the abstract statements and willed descriptions, it is difficult to see how Rosenblatt feels about or in the world. Hearing most of the lyrics you don't often get to use your imagination, sympathetic or shaping. "In time all thought is reduced/ absolutely reduced," says the poem, suggesting that thought is an individual's contribution, and that it will eventually decompose. I prefer composition, the continuous creation principle, if you like, in which thought is something people share, a universe, a place for writer and reader to meet.

Seymour Mayne is a wilfully descriptive poet too, and proposes a world less flamboyant but as much fabricated as Rosenblatt's. *Name* gathers poems from some earlier chapbooks and general magazine publications. As he has done since his teenage days in Layton's Montreal, Mayne offers lyric after lyric in which we are asked to see how the poet can supply some fervid feeling and intensity to the things and people outside his mind. But one tires of those forced epithets and force-fed verbs. "Shriek" keeps showing up, and "groan." Pins in a game of bocce have to be "arrogant." The ocean, "like a playful and tamed Behemoth," has to "yawn." The writer is pleading for the poetical.

One feels a constant push here, coming from the other side of the poem; Mayne has always seemed a performer of the verses, striving without irony for striking similes, one after another. He does not appear to have a metamorphical relationship with the world, so he manufactures figures of speech. He seems to live, or the poems do, with no history, no philosophy, no cosmology, nothing larger than the eyes and tongue of the poem itself. We are aware of (the basically iambic) poem standing with face toward the world, not naming so much as signing its name. These lyrics are examples of Barth's literature of exhaustion, late pre-contemporary poems; one does not receive the sense that the language is doing anything to surprise the poet. Mayne is one of those who chose to go ahead without recourse to a muse.

Here is the first stanza of "Mount Royal":

Scared staccato and rootless
he had watched the others
behind the movements of their securities.
Up the mountain the snow shrieked
its name and a wind of fear
blew through his chest.

That is just bad at so many points. The rhymes are obviously finagled ("scared staccato"?), abstractions qualify abstractions and music dies, purple passages are called upon to work up excitement, there is a trying for melodrama without the affective image that would give it a chance to be interesting. Furthermore, I cannot imagine anyone, much less that somehow ascending white stuff, shrieking the name "snow."

Similar problems abound throughout the book. I would like to draw to the attentions of writer and reader these words from George Oppen: "It is impossible to make a mistake without knowing it, impossible not to know that one has just smashed something. Unearned words are, in that context, simply ridiculous — though it is possible to be carried astray little by little, to find oneself, quite simply, trying to deceive people, to be 'making a poem' . . . And the poem is NOT built out of words, one cannot make a poem by sticking words into it, it is the poem which makes the words and controls their meaning."

David McFadden attests to that belief always. He is a true post-modern poet. Though the poems present a self (and family) regularly, that self is proferred as phenomenon, not as interpreter of the world outside. He will present stories fabulous and domestic, but caution the reader that he is not to be a passive consumer of the exhibition. "Pretend/ for a moment I'm omniscient," he will say, reversing the modern poet's trick. He will tell a story of manipulating a seance, then expose his fake magician tricks. Why? Because the spirits use fake magician tricks to speak to us who no longer believe in magic. Who no longer believe in the willing suspension of disbelief in poetry. Coleridge probably told us recently to drop that.

McFadden associates his fancy more with that of William Blake. In fact he is the first poet since Blake to see fairies in his back yard. Prior to *A Knight in Dried Plums*, readers familiar with McFadden's work will have in mind songs of innocence. Now the poems of experience are here, and still, properly, songs. All at once we hear what we never had heard, the admission of pain, anger, envy, and meaner feelings; but still the full dream-like lucidity of the usual McFadden voice. Check the dream poem in which he tricks a brat into being shot in the head.

McFadden walked many years ago through Souster's street scene; Souster is an atheist poet such as Wordsworth, with the signs of Christian humanism and ethics remaining. McFadden says that nature is not supreme — you can become part of nature by remaining blind, repressed and boring, by dying, in short. McFadden the spiritual is still looking further for wonder, for humour. Nature never laughs.

Beyond the poem, too. We are told often that what we are reading is fragile, that the fragility is part of it. The knight was a California fruitgrowers' statue at a world's fair, standing in contrast to "massive marble sculptures/ in classical form that were meant to last forever," as well as military and technological boastings. But dried plums, scattered as they may be, still have pits in them.

So there is a lot of death in this book of experience, but the main message is that the awareness that death is in the offing should make one more sensitive to life, as in Oppen's terms. As usual, we are told charming stories of real life in Hamilton, Ontario. All or any larger thoughts should be limned, said Blake, in

the human form, if not divine at least more divine than anything else here.

Perhaps the last lines of McFadden's book will satisfactorily rhyme and answer the title of Mayne's:

what I am looking for: fame
that will outshine Christ,
so that someone 1,000 years from now
will lose a tough pot at poker
and mutter David McFadden!

GROVE AS CORRESPONDENT

Margaret Stobie

The Letters of Frederick Philip Grove, edited by Desmond Pacey. University of Toronto Press. $25.00.

WE HAVE ONLY FAIRLY recently become concerned about our lack of familiar records of many of our writers, and about the need to retrieve and preserve them because of the light they throw on a writer's work and the world he lived in. Desmond Pacey had felt the importance of filling this gap in our literary history when, in *Canadian Literature* Winter 1962, he announced his intention to publish a collection of Grove's letters. The volume which has now emerged does add to our view of Grove, though on the whole the letters are meagre in content, for Grove was not a compulsive letter writer, like Yeats for instance, needing to share his thoughts and experiences; rather, he was a man in a mask, constantly on guard, and not likely to be lavish of confidences. As a result, the letters reveal much about the man but rather less about his work.

The student hoping for insight into Grove's development as a novelist will be baffled by his persistent obfuscation of time, both about his life — "the 53 years of my stay in this country" — and about his writing. For instance, he says that *Consider Her Ways* "was finished during the winter 1920/21" though the manuscripts in the Grove Collection show that, except for the introduction, it was completely rewritten in 1933, and the introduction was probably written in 1925. Nor will the student fare better with Grove's evaluations of his own work, for they depend sometimes on his mood and sometimes on the person he is writing to. Rereading *Fruits of the Earth* he says, "so far I don't like it overly well," but six days later, "no matter what anybody else says, that's a great book."

What the collection does outline is the shape of Grove's career in Canada: from the teacher-naturalist of 1913 to the rising novelist of the twenties, coming to the apex of his move to Ottawa at the turn of the decade, and then sloping down during the thirties after his withdrawal to Simcoe as teacher-farmer-writer faced with growing publishing and financial worries, alleviated by a flurry of publications and honours during the forties, and moving to his death of grievous illness in August 1948. Within this pattern are three main groups of letters: those to his wife during the triumphal tours of 1928-29, those to his publishers, and those to friends who lent him books.

The first of these groups and the largest — over 150 letters — comes almost exactly in the middle of the thirty-six year span of Grove's known life in Canada, and at the pinnacle of his career. During the three tours, arranged by the Association of Canadian Clubs following the publication of *A Search for America*, Grove travelled from southern Ontario to

the Peace River country, from Victoria to Sydney, giving two addresses, "Nationhood" and "Assimilation", both of which he later published. Everywhere he was acclaimed, by the intelligentsia of the University of Toronto as by the townsfolk of Moosomin, and everywhere he castigated the people for their materialism. The letters are often mere notes — "the promised daily letter" — and often about homely details of train schedules, his laundry, and family finances. Principally, however, they are about his new experiences as a lecturer, the reaction of audiences, the sales of his books, and the important people he was meeting. In this aspect, he shows himself to be gullible, insolent, and overwhelmed by money. At a luncheon in Ottawa, "over *100 Million Dollars* were sitting at the board." Invited for a weekend to the country house of "a multi-millionaire," he cannot resist, even to his wife, the pathetic boasting so characteristic of him, "I have almost got used again to having 3 foot-men spring for my cane, etc. when I enter a house."

By the end of the tours, his devious dealings with publishers were well under way: he had offered one manuscript to three of them, he had had his first quarrel with Macmillan's, and he had so embroiled the other two that they were "sueing each other through me. Bad news." The whole record of Grove's dealings with publishers is a disheartening one, amply illustrated in this volume by the sixty-odd letters to Lorne Pierce of Ryerson's. As Pacey said in his introduction, Grove was "at his most unattractive in his letters to publishers. The tone ... runs from arrogant bullying to self-pitying whining."

It is the third group, thank-you letters for books lent him, that is possibly the most informative, as it is the most agreeable to read. Grove was no buyer of books, and his personal library, for one who purported to be a man of letters, was astonishingly small, but he was fortunate in finding generous book-lenders, Watson Kirkconnell at Wesley College in Manitoba during the twenties, and Richard Crouch, chief librarian for the city of London, in Ontario during the thirties.

Grove's comments to Kirkconnell about books on French and German literature contain nothing unusual for one who had recently taken university courses in those subjects, but those on authors to whom Kirkconnell introduced him, including Anatole France, Saintsbury, Croce, Dean Inge, Aldous Huxley, and Bergson (some rather surprising), are often relevant to his writing. Reflecting on Abercrombie's *Idea of Great Poetry*, Grove expounds his own notion of tragedy, "To be a hero is to be tragic", because of the evanescence of perfection, a theme that permeates his novels of those years. Bergson troubles him, "As for the idea of *creativeness* in evolution, I fail to grasp it," for it runs counter to his conviction that human evolution stopped "the moment invention began," a thesis that persists into *The Master of the Mill*. Similarly, among some thirty letters to Richard Crouch, one returning Franz Werfel's *Forty Days of Musa Dagh* and Robert Briffault's *Europa* gives a glimpse into Grove's mind at about the time when he was writing *Two Generations*: "Both are great and magnificent works.... Both books are exceedingly instructive to me," but because of their passive pessimism, "I find them ultimately unsatisfying.... For whether revolt is successful or not, whether it is even sensible or not, it remains an attribute of the human spirit as such: it is necessary and fundamentally human."

Other letters may turn up from time to time, but it is unlikely that they would be of sufficient weight to warrant a further edition. It is therefore the more regrettable that this heavily subsidized project has resulted in a book that lacks

competent editorial direction. In his last years, of course, Desmond Pacey, overburdened by administrative duties and suffering from cancer, unfortunately had to leave much of this work to assistants. But whatever the unhappy cause, the book is irritating to read. The letters bristle with square brackets devoted to expanding common abbreviations that Grove used — yr., hr., Sat., Vol. — thus destroying part of the quality of Grove's familiar writing. As for the footnotes, it is my guess that if the officious, the repetitive and the fatuous had been deleted — there is even a footnote, complete with translation, on *D.V.* — the size and the cost of this book could have been cut by at least a third. But at any rate, through the initiative of Desmond Pacey, the letters themselves are now available as part of the total record of Grove in Canada.

There is an appendix concerned with Felix Paul Greve. As I reread Grove's letters, I had increasing misgivings about identifying him with a man who had belonged to the literary world of Europe, even if only to its outer circles. Because of my misgivings I asked two registered handwriting specialists, living in different cities, to examine the two letters reproduced in facsimile in the appendix, one by Greve, dated Berlin, April 15, 1907, the other by Grove, dated Winkler, Manitoba, September 4, 1913. Each examiner gave it as his opinion that the letters were written by two different persons. For this reason I am not commenting on Pacey's remarks about the Grove/Greve identification, nor on the Greve letters included here.

ZEST FOR THE BATTLE

Sandra Djwa

By Great Waters: A Newfoundland and Labrador Anthology, edited by Peter Neary and Patrick O'Flaherty. University of Toronto Press.

By Great Waters: A Newfoundland and Labrador Anthology, edited by Peter Neary and Patrick O'Flaherty, is a useful addition to the Social History of Canada Series. Like several of its predecessors, *The Wretched of Canada: Letters to R. B. Bennett 1930-1935* edited by L. M. Grayson and Michael Bliss, and *The Social Criticism of Stephen Leacock* edited by Alan Bowker, the book is meant to fill a gap in Canada's social history. Neary and O'Flaherty aim "to offer readers a selection of Newfoundland writing which would illuminate the unfolding of the province's history and culture, and at the same time merit attention as literature." To a large extent, they have succeeded in bringing together material that covers the whole span of Newfoundland's history. Other than successive editions of Joseph R. Smallwood's *The Book of Newfoundland* (1937), there has been no comprehensive anthology of writings relating to Newfoundland and Labrador.

To read through *By Great Waters* is to recognize the difficulty of merely surviving in Newfoundland. The accounts of freezing weather, storms at sea, isolation, marauding French and Indians, fire, disease and poverty make grim reading. If we are to judge from this book, the effect on Newfoundlanders has not been give-up-and-give-in but a certain zest for the battle. Smallwood, in an excerpt from *The Book of Newfoundland*, declares "Newfoundlanders are great battlers":

> Battling for the opportunity of getting a berth on one of the West-Coast English fishing-vessels coming on a summer voyage

> to Newfoundland in the early days of the Island's discovery; battling for an opportunity to desert the vessel before she returned to England with her cargo of codfish in the autumn of the year; then battling to hew a humble home out of the virgin forest that grew to the salt water's edge in some small cove far along the coast out of sight or knowledge of the English fishing-vessels coming to our coast each summer in those early years; battling against Nature and the elements to wrest a living from the sea and the forest while they were building homesteads; battling against the dreaded surprise attacks of pirates, English men-o'-war, 'Fishing Admirals'; battling against the merciless, ruthlessly determined efforts of the early fish-merchants to amass fortunes out of the toil of the Newfoundland fishermen: against official stupidity and private greed: against betrayal, treachery, double-dealing and downright theft.

Undeniably this is rhetoric but it is rhetoric informed by a sound historical sense. Smallwood knows and explicates Newfoundland's progression from fishing station to Canadian province and he carries the reader along with him. Unfortunately, it is precisely this contextual framework which the editors fail to provide for the book as a whole.

Unlike the earlier volumes in the series where editors have selected a manageable area and provided the necessary guidance of an introduction, Neary and O'Flaherty have adopted instead the device of providing brief, biographical notes identifying authors who are classified chronologically under five sections: Part 1) Discovery and Early Exploration, Part 2) Transatlantic Outpost, Part 3) The Colonial Era, Part 4) North Atlantic Dominion and Part 5) Breakers Ahead. This presents a real problem. Because the scope of this anthology is so large, spanning approximately a thousand years, it is almost impossible for the reader to fit together the pieces of the Newfoundland political and cultural mosaic. And the biographical notes are not always helpful. The heading to an excerpt from Sir William Vaughan's *The Newlander's Cure,* for example, is "Vaughan's 'Golden Island' Reconsidered (1630)." But the notes do not indicate that the "Golden Island" is an allusion to Vaughan's earlier work, *The Golden Fleece* (1626), a fantastic book of propaganda advocating the settlement of Newfoundland. Literary historians now speculate that *The Newlander's Cure* was a further attempt at propaganda and that Vaughan, despite the apparent first-hand knowledge displayed in his various cures for scurvy, actually never visited the island. Information of this sort, indispensable for an understanding of the text cited, should have been included in full introductory notes or in a substantial introduction.

As a result, I find myself reading this anthology with pleasure, nostalgia and disappointment: pleasure that a book of this kind, greatly needed, has at last been published; nostalgia because many of the selections anthologized bring back memories of Newfoundland (and perhaps this is the best test for genuine social history); and disappointment because the book suffers from a lack of critical editing. The excerpted selections from Guy, Mason and Hayman were all a pleasure to read and it was good to see that the editor's catholicity of taste extended from the early Vinland sagas to the important union ballad, "Forty Thousand Strong":

> By Merchants and By Governments too long
> we've been misruled,
> We're determined now in future and no
> longer we'll be fooled,
> We'll be brothers all and freemen and we'll
> rightify each wrong,
> We are coming Mr. Coaker and we're
> forty thousand strong.

Also anthologized is that charming description by Sir Richard Whitbourne of his encounter in St. John's harbour with "a maremaid or a mareman":

> a strange creature which I saw there in the year 1610 in a morning early . . . which very

> swiftly came swimming towards me, looking cheerfully on my face as it had been a woman — by the face, eyes, nose, mouth, chin, ears, neck and forehead, it seemed to be so beautiful & in those parts so well proportioned . . . How it was in the forepart from the neck and shoulders I could not discern.

The report by the Anglican divine, Julian Moreton, of the singular Biblical names to be encountered in a Newfoundland outport, (he cites, among others, Lo Ruhamah and Jerusha) brought to mind my grandfather's experience at the turn of the century when he was obliged to christen a child Nebuchadnezzar. There is a certain shrewd wit in Newfoundland outport life, a wit which E. J. Pratt catches in his description of the old Salt in *Newfoundland Verse* and which Moreton recognizes when he recounts the story of an aged parishioner who, when told that the martyr Cranmer might have saved his life had he only signed a piece of paper, replied, "Why, he must have been a proper fool!"

Editorial problems encountered in this anthology relate to the selection of texts, the reproduction of texts and biographical notes descriptive of authors. From the historical perspective, it would have been helpful to have explicit reference made to the notorious Star Chamber Rules which forbade settlement in Newfoundland. Similarly, the French presence in Newfoundland is not clearly delineated. The excerpt from Abbé Baudoin's journal gives none of the context of the establishment of a French colony at Placentia. Here the editors might have cited D. W. Prowse's *History of Newfoundland.* Although they do acknowledge that this is the most comprehensive history of the province, curiously they do not quote from it, offering instead one of Prowse's occasional remarks about the building of the railroad. There is a similar gap in relation to the description of education in Newfoundland. Were it not for a stray comment, again from Smallwood's *The Book of Newfoundland,* we would not be aware that Newfoundland did not get its first school until barely one hundred years earlier. As a consequence, much of the early written literature was weak while the oral ballads flourished.

On the literary side, we are given too much of the sophisticated observer viewing the native inhabitants along with the rest of the flora and fauna in much the same fashion as one would eye odd specimens at a zoo. This might have been remedied by some digging for additional material written by Newfoundlanders. In particular, further selections from *The Newfoundland Quarterly* are indicated. The editors might have also drawn on the various books of verse published after 1839. To be sure, many consist of eulogies to "Terra Nova" and laments for "The Passing of the Beothuck" but they do provide interesting examples of the application by Newfoundlanders of imported Victorian modes to the native scene: one of my own favourites is an apostrophe to "Ye fishy children of a chilly sea." And why not more of the popular ballads? Especially, why not the enormously popular songs of Johnny Burke as contained in *The People's Songster, Buyer's Guide and Gems of Poetry and Prose* (1900) which is dedicated "to the bone and sinew of the country, the Fisherman of Newfoundland." A selection from one of Burke's farces, such as the parody of *The Mikado* found in *The Topsail Geisha: A Story of the Wash House* (1900), especially the song of "The Amorous Tom Cod", would do more to explain to other Canadians one aspect of the ways of Newfoundlanders than all the Robert Lowells and the Margaret Duleys in the world.

The allotment of space to individual authors is, in some cases, disproportionate. Nine pages are alloted to a nineteenth-century novelist, Robert Lowell,

whose work is characterized by a patronizing eye and laboured attempts at humour. In one exchange, a magistrate inquires:

> "Have you any alias, Mr. Barbury?"
>
> "No, sir; I drinkt a morsel of tay — Izik Maffen an' me, sir, afore we comed!" answered Jesse, mistaking the magistrate's technicality.

Margaret Duley is allotted eleven pages for a description of Mageila Michelet from an outport called "Feather-the-Nest". Mageila is described as "the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, with healing in her hands and infinite silence on her lips." According to the biographical notes, Duley's novels "rank among the most sensitive of imaginative recreations of Newfoundland life." One Edwin Pratt on the other hand, is given three pages of text and is dismissed with lip service as "an established literary figure and an eminent academic at the University of Toronto." We might suspect that there is a certain amount of cultural chauvinism operative here. Duley who remained in Newfoundland is considered a better interpreter of outport life than Pratt who absconded (with his heritage) to Toronto. This is a pity because a selection from *The Roosevelt and the Antinoe*, descriptive of the battle against the sea, or an excerpt from "The Titanic", especially that fine passage which introduces the iceberg (a passage, incidentally, which builds upon Pratt's childhood experiences in Newfoundland) would go a long way to provide some of the modern "literature" which the anthology lacks. In the modern period, most impressive were the descriptions of nature to be found in excerpts from the work of Harold Horwood and Franklin Russell. Russell's description of a trip to the Funk Islands was particularly gripping.

As the earlier reference to Edwin Pratt might indicate, there is a certain arbitrariness in the assigning of christian names, even to writers like D. W. Prowse or E. J. Pratt or Joseph R. Smallwood who regularly use initials. Editorial *faux pas* of this and a similar nature and the repetition of the same biographical details for authors whose work appears in more than one section of the text, suggests that this anthology is yet to receive a good critical editing. For this the University of Toronto Press must take some responsibility.

However, the editors are responsible for the transcription of the text. The text of John Guy's meeting with the Beothuck Indians is particularly unsatisfactory. The editors use as their authority the rendition given by J. P. Howley in *The Beothucks or Red Indians* (1915). But as Howley points out, his citation is from a handwritten transcription from *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. Unfortunately, Howley did not understand some of the Elizabethan terms used by Guy and he modernized

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the text haphazardly. Consequently the version of the text which we are now given compounds his errors. The process works something like this: a reference to the ship "Indeavour" and her "Shallop" or dinghy capitalized by Purchas is reproduced as the 'Indeavour' and the 'Shallop' by Howley. The present editors, modernizing what they presume to be a reference to two ships, provide Guy with the *Indeavour* and the *Shallop*. Other discrepancies in spelling and punctuation although not desirable are not serious matters. But changes such as the example cited and others including the omission of a clause cited by Howley but absent in the present text are more serious because they relate to the sense of the passage. Such discrepancies imply that the editors have not edited as carefully as they might have done.

These cavils are made simply because I do consider this anthology an important one. It will be indispensible for Newfoundland studies for some time into the future. As such, it is too important a work to be used without some consideration of its strengths and possible weaknesses. For this attempt to introduce Newfoundland's social and literary history, Neary and O'Flaherty deserve great credit. And the fact that this has proved to be a difficult task reflects the absence of a body of earlier scholarship in the area. One hopes this anthology will encourage a new interest in Newfoundland cultural history.

IN DISPRAISE OF GREAT HAPPENINGS

Ralph Gustafson

Birdsong and the midge drinking needfully:
Otherwise happenings of summer afternoons.
Such great fountains tumble water
At d'Este. I at the spring unwanted
At the corner of the patio, my foot in it
Unobserved, pull weeds. The choice
Between weedy violet and potential
Ground-phlox massed in May and red
And white and to be propagated, is Troy
Fallen or not, a thing of moment
And momentous choice whether the midge succeed
In swallowing smaller than itself or,
Should birdsong cease? Let Helen
Waddle down the street and be beautiful.
I shall go to bed far later on
And pull the sheet up over time.
Now I watch the cataclysmic gulp
By midges made and conjugate
What question lies in oriole song
Oblivious of Agamemnon and a thousand ships.

books in review

ASSORTED CATCH

ROBIN SKELTON, *Time Light*. McClelland and Stewart, $6.95.

MIKE DOYLE, *Preparing for the Arc*. Weed Flower Press.

MATT COHEN, *Peach Melba*. Coach House Press.

THE REVIEWER'S NET often brings in an oddly assorted catch, and this is true in the case of the three books of poetry presented here. Their conjunction is somewhat unfortunate for Matt Cohen and Mike Doyle, for Robin Skelton's *Time Light* is a truly impressive collection: complex, personal, powerful and moving in a way that is bound to dominate the reader's attention. Skelton would prefer one to refer to *Time Light* as a "sequence" of poems rather than a "collection"; he speaks in his Preface of his attempt to "create a whole that is more than the sum of its parts", and of his arrangement of the poems in "a particular sequence".

The sequence emerges as a form of self-exploration, and a quest for many things: a sense of personal harmony, acceptance of one's ageing, and what one has become, and for a harmony between the symbols which rise up in the imagination and in dreams, and the more formal symbols of myth and art. The central section, third of seven in the book, is "Travelling Time", and there the quest of the book's theme becomes united with a literal journey to Europe undertaken by Skelton in 1969-70. The themes of *Time Light* are marvellously interwoven here, in what was for me the most absorbing part of the book. This poem on Mallorca, for example, concerns a very real geographical location:

> Through the Caves of Drach
> above the Middle Sea clear water brims
> the mirror imagery of hanging swords
> and staligmitic heroes that, half-born,
> part man, part muscling clay, transfixed as stone,
> hint epics of the upper world.

But the caves assume the mythic dimensions of antechambers between the eternity which precedes our birth, and the bewildering material world into which we are born. Here is Mr. Skelton's portrayal of his emergence from the caves:

> Boats await. The man
> beside the oar, a shifting shape of black,
> drives us toward our landing. Memory wakes
> blurred voice, blind vision, and the daylit dark.

If one senses a personal unease there, it is because the poem is more than a literary tourist piece; its extra dimension lies in the attempt to emerge from a personal "ante-room" in the middle years of life, to read the dreams which loom out of sleep's darkness, to lay hold of some firm sense of self to face the years ahead. For the first poem in *Time Light* opens with a half-awake night piece: a jumble of half-grasped memories and the lived-in body which obeys its own secret compulsions:

> Listen. This is
> desperate. Listen.
> I am the nervous
> start in the dark
> before sleeping,
> the knee jerking,
> the twitch of the lip
> at a dreamed kiss, . . .

and the book ends 112 pages later in the long title-poem with words which resolve the theme of the journey in search of harmony:

finding in age
a new spring
of clearer water,
another knowledge
turning my face
into the light.

The various themes of *Time Light*: the children, the responsibilities of domestic life, the dark dreams, the self-doubt and fear of self, the resonance of personal possessions, the effect of art upon one's ways of living and seeing, connect from poem to poem in such a way as to make the book grow in one's imagination with successive re-readings. From certain quotations, as well as from the total pattern, one gathers that Mr. Skelton admires Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and had Eliot's exploration of time in mind when he planned the present work. Did that impressive model have any effect upon the final long poem, "Time Light", which seeks to resolve the entire sequence? "It is a time for change", this poem begins, and I felt a little sense of strain here, a willed desire to draw the book together, to come through and find (or impose) the harmony he sought. The language is duller and less urgent:

So in this place
I spell out
the soul's need
to find wholeness
in carved symbol
or open door
facing the changing
of the light . . .

I preferred the less willed resolution of the earlier, briefer piece, "Burning Sticks, Mallorca" — one of the many poems in which Robin Skelton lives up to his lines in praise of Robert Graves: "Poetry is studying/ how the spirit soars/ on learned as on simple/ ignorant things."

After *Time Light*, the early poems in *Preparing for the Arc* are small beer. "arms in my head/ grow long three thousand miles", for example, has a page to itself — page eight; and other poems here depend on an emaciated whimsy of that kind. On the other hand, it has to be said that the sequence of forty-six poems headed "Noah" represents a very good idea. The biblical story of the Ark is made the basis of a series of reflections, analogies, quotations and imaginings. The story is treated realistically, to test its amazing psychological implications: "Responsibility: to choose the right animals/ the apropriate species/ the inevitable individuals"; the symbolic levels of the story of the Flood are suggested by a quotation from Yeats: "All things fall and are built again/ And those that build them are gay"; analogies are put forward: "Body as sea/ *mare nostrum*/ soul as ark/ afloat upon it".

But *Preparing for the Arc* makes rather disappointing use of this unusual structure and theme, and the final effect is limp; not only in the one-page poems like "Even the windowpanes/ wept", but also in the more elaborate and allusive pieces, where neither the language nor the approach is vigorous and varied enough to support the wide-ranging and demanding form.

Matt Cohen's *Peach Melba*, in its chaste and attractive format from the admirable Coach House Press, is a disconcerting set of prose poems; forced by the chances of review into a place on the bookshelf between *Time Light* and *Preparing for the Arc*, it proved more puzzling at first than either of its companions. I came to see it as a surrealistic account of a love affair, with the surprising "comparison of objects as remote in character as possible" which the surrealist André Breton claimed as "the highest task to which poetry can aspire". The woman in the affair is a singer, has a husband, a lover (the writer), and a grandfather (from the Southern States). In one of the poems we learn that the grandfather had a lover too, one "who was in films. Her roles were always brief. She would

drift in from the wings and faint." In *Peach Melba* the most extraordinary statements are made with a serenity which gives the poems a drem-like logic:

> You are lying in bed with your husband,
> wearing peach melba.
> You are thinking of me. I am thinking of
> you. In the
> distance we hear old temples crashing over
> the mountains
> . . . . . .
> Our bodies can't remember anything.
> They are frantically
> turning themselves into liquids and soon the
> whole landscape
> will be covered with their spotted sign.

If one submits oneself to this logic, and enters this world, there are delights to be had along the way, as in this difference of opinion between the writer and the lady:

> I tell you that my grandparents were Russian. You imagine them seated on huge black horses, wrapped in bearskins, crossing the steppes of Asia on a sunny white day. I imagine them huddled in villages, retelling old jokes, tapping their teeth to see if they are hollow.

On the other hand, the surrealistic images in *Peach Melba* ("You're already/ dressed in black/ smashing your hair/ with a gavel") might irritate some readers with their apparent inconsequentiality, and I was surprised to find that they were not irritating me. In fact, the more I read the book, the more imaginatively accurate they seemed to be. Nothing could be further from the learned and searching poems in Robin Skelton's *Time Light*, yet *Peach Melba* is nonetheless an absorbing collection. But were I forced to choose, I know which book I would rather own, read, and go back to in years to come.

CHRISTOPHER RINGROSE

A BETTER HARD CENTRE

SYLVIA FRASER, *The Candy Factory*. McClelland & Stewart, $8.95.

CANDY FACTORIES can be ambivalent places. The manufacture of candies can be as mundane and pointless as the process in any factory — even more so as their product is useless from a practical point of view. Yet this uselessness allows for the possibility of play. Who could devote his entire life to producing a better hard centre? So in Sylvia Fraser's latest novel the candy factory becomes a suitable metaphor for our contemporary society. Pointless work alternates with other activity which acquires various levels of meaning as the characters struggle to achieve or maintain an uneasy truce with the world around them.

This novel is much more ambitious in its scope than her remarkable first novel *Pandora*. Eleven different characters are explored in depth, while a number of others revolve on the fringes. This scope helps create a rich texture to the novel, although the tendency is for the characters to become stereotyped, each representing a different type of person in society. Fraser tries to avoid this through a detailed exploration of the background of each character, but even at their best they do not stick in the imagination.

At the top of the novel's structure, both imaginatively and physically (she occupies a loft over the candy factory), is Mary Moon. The records she has been keeping of life at the candy factory in her "Special Accounts Ledger" form the greater part of the book. Throughout the novel Mary Moon is never far away, manipulating the characters into situations in which they are led to a greater understanding of themselves and, one hopes, greater happiness. The rose per-

tume she wears suffuses the novel, providing assurance that in this haphazard world there is, after all, someone who knows what she is doing.

Charles X. Hunter, at the top of the administrative structure of the candy factory, carries on the family tradition of making and selling chocolates. Other characters occupy various positions in the echelons of candy production. Beau Whitehead is an industrial researcher who lives only in his head; Morgan Jones a black who lives only in his senses; Danny Steele the stud about town who believes the revealed word lies between the covers of *Playboy*; Daphne his well-meaning but confused girl-friend; Sam Ryan the not-so-young man on his way down; Charles Hunter's secretaries Brigitte and Eve; and Celeste, his wife, who eventually assumes control over the company. All the characters are crippled in their understanding of life, but not hopelessly so. The book is suffused with hope that the narrowness of each character can be broadened. In the opening chapters Mary Moon, the eternal optimist, confronts a Tramp, the ultimate cynic. Optimism wins out. As Mary Moon says:

> "Look in my Special Accounts Book! I have it all worked out — a program of modest miracles, *human* miracles, the very thing you have soured on!"

Human miracles, as the book demonstrates, are at least conceivable.

Ms. Fraser's prose style is as vivid as in *Pandora*, her first novel, although there are parts, especially in her description of the Tramp, which are over-written. The repetitive rhythm and occasionally the phrasing appear to owe something to early Beckett. At its best her style has the stark penetration of Beckett's work, although too often she becomes involved in long sociological dissertations, at best mildly interesting, and at worst boring.

In spite of its readability, the novel is less successful than *Pandora*. The brilliant style often threatens to overwhelm the characters. What is lacking is the impression that her work is as deeply felt as it is keenly perceived. In *The Candy Factory* the novelist is too much the manipulator of the action, and not sufficiently the creator of a convincing fictional world.

FRANCIS MANSBRIDGE

THE GREAT BEAR

MARIAN ENGEL, *Bear*. McClelland & Stewart, $7.95.

AS WE ALL KNOW, the animal story has had an honourable past in Canada, and — always — an essential ambiguity. On one side lay the temptation to anthropomorphize the animal in the British manner, to make him a human being in fur or feathers, hero or victim. On the opposite side (in the American manner) the animal was irrevocably the Other, emanation of the hostile wilderness and at the same time of the irrational forces within himself that nineteenth-century man feared as much as he feared those of the natural world. Even Frye's garrison image really placed the matter on too sophisticated a level; this was pre-garrison, man versus beast, and Cain versus Abel, the cultivated life in the literal sense of tilled fields in opposition to the uncultivated life in the sense of the life of the forest and nomad pasture.

For hunters and nomad grazers did not share the settled man's sense of being separate from the animal world. Recognizing his physical dependence on wild bear or tamed bull, preagrarian man killed his victim with ceremony and reverence — as Spaniards still slay the bull — and acknowledged kinship to him (which was the origin of totemism) and even at times spiritual dependence on him, for animals

were not in his view inferior to man and might be superior. They were different in appearance and habits, and yet a common life united them, symbolized in such notions as the Coast Indian belief that salmon and other creatures normally spent their lives, either above or under the sea, in bodies like those of men, and only put on like garments, their animal attributes when they came to offer their flesh for the survival of human beings.

Canadian writers are turning back, in theme and symbol, towards the concept of man as part of the natural world and not as that Other whose separateness animals intuitively feel when they flee from human scent. In this way they become imaginative spokesmen for the whole ecological movement, whose burden is the need for man to recognize his place within the natural world, his kinship with the animal creation. Recognizing that world and creating instead of combating them, man recognizes also the power of his unconscious, which is animal and spiritual; Canadian man as a local strain of the species at the same time gives depth to his history by — in animal-oriented writing — identifying with his land's prehistory.

In recent novels like Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* and in much of the work by younger poets, this awakening to the enigmatic links between man and his animal fellows with their delicately balanced world of relationships has been expressed with increasing firmness, but perhaps the most striking example yet is Marian Engel's new and fabulist novel *Bear*.

Bear is the tale of a woman archivist — whose emotional life has narrowed to a weekly desktop copulation among the maps with the Director of her Institute — and who is given the opportunity to catalogue the contents of the house of a certain Colonel Cary, acquaintance of Byron, who received as his grant of land in Upper Canada an island where he built an octagonal house, lived an alienated British life which he transmitted to his descendants (the last of them a virile lady christened "Colonel" to meet the conditions of the original Cary will), and made his terms with the new land by becoming fascinated with bears to the extent of making their lore the subject of desultory lifelong research and of acquiring the first of a succession of pet bears.

The last of the pet bears is there when the archivist Lou arrives and the plot of *Bear* is Lou's growing erotic obsession with this ageing and strong-smelling plantigrade. She swims with the bear, eats with him, caresses him, and in one intoxicating moment witnesses his magnificent erection but, on turning herself in animal-fashion towards him, is merely slashed reproachfully across the back with his needle-sharp claws. It is Homer, the neighbouring resort owner, who enters her with his long and serviceable prick; it is Bear she loves.

An absurd tale, on the face of it, but Marian Engel is too skilful to allow such immediate judgments to prevail. She has always been good at the kind of credible, Defoesque prose which makes everything, as Margaret Atwood curiously remarks in her blurb, "plausible as kitchens". The descriptive urge that ran wild in *Monodromos* is tamed into an obedient servant of the plot. And poor Lou, used by a succession of men, rises through clouds of pathos into the self-integration of those who have pushed themselves to the margins of human possibility and survived. At the end:

> She went up the river slowly. She felt tender, serene. She remembered evenings of sitting by the fire with the bear's head in her lap. She remembered the night the stars fell on her body and burned and burned. She remembered guilt, and a dream she had had where her mother made her write letters of apology to the Indians for having to do with a bear, and she remembered the

claw that had healed guilt. She felt strong
and pure.

But pure, one feels inclined to emphasize, because of the rejecting claw that maintained the proper distances in an ordered ecology. A prosaic person, Marian Engel, in the sense of knowing just what prose can do, so that in her books the earthy and the fantastic dance in proper harmony.

There were two bits of writing that compellingly came to my mind throughout my reading of *Bear*. One — the more obvious — was *Surfacing*. After all, it is also an island in the Cambrian Shield that Margaret Atwood's narrator has her confrontation with the wilderness; that island also is divided between house and wilderness, and the narrator becomes aware of the wildness within her and is reconciled. But there, perhaps, is the operative element of difference. The wilderness is *within* Atwood's narrator; it is a matter of coming to terms with oneself and hence with the natural world. In *Bear* it is different — a matter of coming to terms with the natural world and hence with oneself. The difference is crucial and represented formally in the fact that *Surfacing* is told in the first person and hence is avowedly subjective, and *Bear* is told in the third person and has the curiously transparent objectivity of a fable. But this does not prevent the two novels from complementing each other and forming a composite paradigm for humanity as an endangered species.

The other work that occurred to me was Earle Birney's "The Bear on the Delhi Road". And here I could not help sensing an advance — by both Atwood and Engel — out of the simplism of another generation. For with Birney it is really a matter of alternatives. Either the bear is left in his own world, away from man and his culture, to follow:

the tranced
wish forever to stay
only an ambling bear
four-footed in berries . . .

or he is subjected to human demands, as his teachers

. . . rear this fellow up
to lurch lurch with them
in the tranced dancing of men

For an Ainu or a Haida there would be no such division; no bear would be "only an ambling bear", and the alternative to exploiting him would not be merely to ignore him. To recognize kinship is the essential thing, for Marian Engel and also — to take sides — for this reviewer.

ANTHONY APPENZELL

READING FOR THE MOMENT

E. G. PERRAULT, *Spoil*. Doubleday, $7.95.

E. G. PERRAULT'S *The Twelfth Mile* (1972) was a well told tale of conflict between Canadians and Russians in the Pacific waters off the west coast of Vancouver Island. The principal "characters" were a Canadian tug boat, a massive offshore oil rig, a Russian spy ship, and a violent storm and tidal wave. Described as "a novel of adventure and espionage at sea," it had its moments of fine drama, powerfully handled.

In *Spoil* Perrault returns to the theme of oil exploration but this time he centres his action in the far north. For background material (and here he is close to another oil-impregnated novel, Richard Rohmer's *Ultimatum*, published some three years ago) he does introduce meetings of an American President's energy commission; a debate in the House of Commons and a broadcast by the Prime Minister; gatherings of the management committees of rival oil companies; and protest gatherings by an anti-pollution

group known as RAPE (the Resistance Association for the Protection of the Environment). But these are somewhat stilted incidental sections and are used principally to indicate the tensions — national and international — contained within the unceasing struggle for the development of the earth's hidden reserves of energy. The major portions of the novel all focus on the site, B16 of the High Arctic Enterprise's mighty oil rig on Friday Island, five hundred miles from the Pole, twenty-seven hundred miles north of Calgary, and not far from Ellesmere Island, where Panarctic has actually been successful in finding great reserves of natural gas.

For the most part the action takes place in the darkness of the twenty-four hour night that shrouds the bleak landscape, with the temperature at 50° F. below. The drill is at the nine thousand foot level and all indications are that High Arctic is on the verge of a rich discovery. But tragic confusion comes (and it's the climax of the story) when a blowout occurs; the rig is destroyed and the rich mixture of gas and oil breaks into flames. Death comes to some of the crew; bodily damage to others, and traumatic effects are felt by all survivors. But with the passage of days emergency equipment is rushed to the site by massive cargo planes, and the spill is contained. A major ecological disaster has been averted.

Most of the characters are superficially sketched — parka-clothed men moving in darkness, or slick business men in the offices, on the streets, and in the bars of the great oil town, Calgary. Only three characters are portrayed in any depth — Ian Danelock, a geological engineer around whom the action revolves; Joanne, a poor, ill-educated, but a sensitive and beautiful woman who brings some consolation to the confused Danelock; and Matthew Utak, an uneducated and aging Eskimo who works as a kitchen hand and a garbage disposal man at the site of the rig. But Perrault writes with considerable knowledge and authority about his subject and he is seriously interested in the impact of oil exploration on the environment and on people. As a result of his long periods of absence and ever-increasing pressures, Danelock's family life disintegrates and he himself comes close to mental and physical collapse; and the pathetic Utak, caught up in the breakdown of his own way of life, is driven to multiple murder and eventual death on the arctic ice as he tries to flee from the pursuit of white man's law. Though he moves on the edges of the main theme (the well's blowout), Utak is a genuinely tragic figure, perhaps the only truly memorable figure in the book.

By and large the work is solidly written, with the pages devoted to the blowout and the subsequent disasters being especially convincing. But by the very nature of its being, the book as a whole is almost certainly doomed to a short life expectancy. The problems it probes are contemporary and they will either disappear or will soon be accepted as commonplace; readers will then turn elsewhere for something new in the ever-shifting aspects of our uncertain civilization.

Yet, for the moment, *Spoil* is good reading.

S. E. READ

ALIEN WORLD

DARYL HINE, *Resident Alien*. Atheneum, $6.95.

Resident Alien, Daryl Hine's sixth and most important volume of poems, is at once fascinating and disturbing. As in his previous collections, Hine's extraordinary verbal energy and technical virtuosity are again evident everywhere in these twenty-five poems that vary aston-

ishingly in genesis, subject matter, tone, metrical pattern, and strophic form. One cannot help but be aware of Hine as a superb poetic craftsman and of his poems as brilliant epideictic displays of linguistic and intellectual wit. Hine is, to be sure, a "geographer of the word"; his world is a world of words. It is not, however, a "rhetorical" world; for many, if not all, of Hine's poems appear to be — at least, on first glance — masturbatory literary performances with the poet himself as the principal audience. For Hine, poetry would seem to be a self-indulging, élitist art, and the poem less a referential verbal structure than a mere verbal artifact. This self-insulating quality and the prominent sense of artifice in Hine's poems point to what I believe is an underlying anxiety in his work, a tension which is difficult to define but which is nevertheless discernible.

Reading successively through Hine's five previous volumes, one can perceive a movement away from the explicitly mythopoeic and the self-consciously formal, away from the deliberate obscurity and anonymity of the voice in the earlier poems, and away from a subtle or ambiguous syntax towards a more open poetic mode, a more personal and colloquial speaking voice, and a more "facile and articulate" syntactical structure. There is plenty of evidence in *Minutes*, Hine's last volume of poems, of a desire to speak plainly and of a sense of relaxation of form. There is also more of a sense of a personality and more of a feeling of particular place in *Minutes* than in the earlier volumes, and Hine's tendency to adopt pure fictional *personae* (usually from classical mythology or literature), which in his work suggests a desire for anonymity, has waned considerably. In such poems as "A Visit" and "A Nap", for instance, the speaking voice is more assured, more convincing as a human voice — an individual man speaking — and more immediate than in the earlier poems. Yet, despite the personal, meditative qualities of such poems, Hine insistently controls the utterance by the austere and ordering effects of technique — rhyme, metre, strophes, and decorum of diction. One, in short, is overwhelmingly aware of these poems as poems — more as artistic artifacts and less as mimetic human utterances.

This movement towards a more meditative and open mode continues in *Resident Alien*, but any sense of security that may have been present in *Minutes* has disappeared to be replaced by an anxiety that is reflected in the metaphorical dimensions of the title of the book. We are all resident aliens in this world — and therefore our condition is perpetually uneasy and unnatural — but Hine's stylistic predicament in the world of poetry is also one of being a resident alien. Such poems as "Commonplaces", "A. B. C. Diary", "Second Thoughts", "Linear A", "Letter to Shadow", and the powerful "Vowel Movements" all manifest a tense concern about the disintegration and decorum of language and the erosion of literature, and they reveal the implicit fear involved in moving towards an open poetic form, a direction that represents for Hine a movement towards the chaos of life. Hine is forever pausing

> For breath on the very brink of the absurd,
> The future of the line and of the word
> Threatened by fundamental incoherence.

He must fall back on to traditional poetic conventions — metre, rhyme, stanzas — and erudite language because they are his only weapons against time, fragmentation, and the essentially vulnerable position of the self. His need to distance life through his art — the self-insulating quality of so many of Hine's poems — is even more urgent here than in the earlier poems. And he will not allow his poems to go beyond themselves because they are

his fundamental defense against the basic absurdity of life with its disorder, moral vagaries, vulgarity —

> . . . only the most récherché style, the most affected
> Can sustain the weight of time and tears and truth —

and ever-present possibility of death: "Every breathless sentence says not yet to death."

This constant tension between closed and open poetic modes, utterance and artifact, anonymity and personality, tradition and contemporaneousness, and art and life energizes all of Hine's poems and makes *Resident Alien*, paradoxically, a profound expression of the life that Hine seems to want so anxiously to control.

BARRY CAMERON

COHEN AND HIS CRITICS

Leonard Cohen: The Artist and his Critics, edited by Michael Gnarowski, is the latest volume in the Critical Views on Canadian Writers series of reprinted articles. It is a very balanced collection, presenting adequately all the facets of Cohen's art and most of the shades of opinion regarding his achievement. The first section consists of the best reviews of each of his books. The second consists of five studies of Cohen as Pop Artist. The third discusses "Cohen as Literary Phenomenon", and this group of more substantial studies contains pieces by Stephen Scobie, Frank Davey, Patricia Morley, Douglas Barbour, and Sandra Djwa, and ranges in tone from the soft-edged enthusiasm of Desmond Pacey's "The Phenomenon of Leonard Cohen" to George Woodcock's rigorously analytical judgment, "The Song of the Sirens: Reflections on Leonard Cohen." All of major significance that has been written on Cohen is here, and also some items without much lasting meaning. For "the verdict of print — as one critic in this volume remarks — judges more harshly than the juvenile ear."

A.A.

FROM THE BULGARIAN

EVEN IF THEY TAKE one into areas outside the obvious concerns of Canadian Literature, competent translations from the more exotic literary traditions are rare enough in our country to make them worthy of notice. *The Balkan Range* (Hounslow Press, $9.95) is described as a Bulgarian Reader; it has been compiled and its contents translated by Nikola Rousanoff, who does not write English poetry, and John Robert Colombo, who does not speak Bulgarian but has refused to be deterred by such a small consideration. (After all, Pound's Chinese was notoriously meagre!) The whole range of Bulgarian literature is represented, starting with Orpheus, daringly claimed because of his Thracian wanderings, and ending with writers active in contemporary Communist Bulgaria. To discuss *The Balkan Range* adequately would demand an essay on Bulgarian writing of a length hardly appropriate to this journal, but the book can and must be recommended as a sensitively Englished introduction to a literature with which few Canadians are likely to be even remotely familiar.

G.W.

opinions and notes

ANOTHER VIEW OF THE HUNTERS TWAIN

IN THE WINTER, 1973, issue of *Canadian Literature*, No. 55, Dr. Dorothy Livesay brought to light a long, incomplete narrative poem by Isabella Valancy Crawford, which she titled *The Hunters Twain*. The poem, in MS on foolscap paper, written on both sides, is in the Lorne Pierce Collection in the Douglas Library of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. When, some years ago, I obtained a photostatic copy of it, Mr. E. C. Beer, then Assistant Archivist, had attached to two pages a note which reads as follows: "N.B. These two pages, (on one leaf) were found with 'She had the full, fell frankness' but do they belong to that poem? It is a loose leaf, whereas the other leaves of the poem are stitched together. E.C.B." When Dr. Livesay saw them, however, the sheets were no longer stitched together, so that there was no indication of where the poem was intended to begin. There were twenty-five pages in the bound set, of which 12, 19, 20, 22, 24, 26, and 27 (the last) are numbered; the loose leaf bears no number that I can see in my photostats, but if it is inserted after the fourth page of the original order, it becomes evident that the leaf was accidentally omitted from the stitching.

I am concerned here with briefly setting out a reading of the poem as it appeared in the bound pages of the MS, with a few comments on assignment of speeches.

The first line in the bound pages is "She had the full, fell frankness of her kind"; in her customary manner, Crawford begins a tale with a dialogue, this time between a young woman and a suitor whom she is dismissing is favour of a wealthy businessman. After telling him a fable of a man bound to an imaginary cross, she contemptuously bids him:

> "Leap from thy phantom little cross of love.
> .....
> Love is the deep dense darkness of the Soul.
> . . . Away with love, away!"
> "And give us up Barabbas," said the man.

The dialogue continues, the young woman declaring that she is blind to Love, who invariably turns to Hate. The man, later named Ion, likens her to a falcon, deliberately hooding herself and crying "Blame not the blind." He leaves her.

Then follow the description of the sunset which Dr. Livesay takes as the beginning of the work, and another of the cold, desolate city by the lake, where despair is a natural growth. On the next page come the lines quoted by Dr. Livesay on page 78 as "another poem, . . . concerned with the loss of love." She finds this part of the poem obscure and erratic, chaotic, "as if written by someone in a disoriented state, . . ." but if the pages are read in their original order it becomes an integral part of the narrative, representing the sorrow felt by Ion. As he meditates on his despair, a prostitute accosts him, but he ignores her and she passes on: "The sharp dust caught and veiled her, and she passed." It seems to Ion that the sounds of the city reiterate the cry, "Loose us Barabbas!"

In the next section there is a change in tone from the self-pity of Ion to the "fierce, tender wonder" of Hugh, who pities Man. He longs to rescue the starving slum-dwellers, and take them to the fresh and teeming world outside the city. Hugh, as Dr. Livesay puts it, "goes through a traumatic struggle with his soul"; the strong soul, at first contemptuous of the despairing body, and trying to break free of it, finally realizes that body

and soul must work together, and Hugh leaves the town for the forest, where he camps with Ion. When spring returns, Hugh is refreshed, body and soul, and determines to return to the city, where he will "shout such gospel of the woods and plains" as will draw the slum-dwellers out and away to the country; "Yes — even while they howl about the streets/ 'Loose us Barabbas . . .' I'll have them out!"

It may be objected that the reference to Barabbas indicates that the unhappy lover is Hugh, but later lines echoing the "falcon" image suggest that he is Ion. The passage may have been designed as a link between Ion, cast off in favour of a wealthy man, and Hugh, determined to rescue the oppressed from the wealthy. Nowhere is there any suggestion that Hugh has been disappointed in love. The songs that Ion sings are in sharp contrast with Hugh's about the tent — almost a gay burlesque of "The Lily Bed" in its praise of such things as stains in the tent wall. Ion is, temporarily, it is suggested, a soured romantic, cynical in his outlook on the world; Hugh is a practical idealist, conquering his own fears in preparation for his work for mankind.

Near the end of the poem, the two young men renew their previous debate about Hope and Despair that Dr. Livesay discusses. Hugh voices his belief that the earth is, "God's moulding place, . . . full of riot, roar of furnaces / Smoke, violence and strife — but ever tends / The storm to music, and the strife to peace."

Again I must disagree with Dr. Livesay, this time over the assigning of the speeches on MS page 24, (quoted in *Canadian Literature* 55, p. 93). Her version, set out in dramatic form, runs as follows:

Ion: Hope is your creed! . . . You cling
To rainbows, like the elves in picture books!
You ride the moth, and clasp the trembling reed!
Ion *I* worship — sets my soul that way.
And Hope is Pythia to the God I know,
Utters His will; and looks along His Hand
Stretched through the Coming Ages shaping them.
Hugh: Shall I pass sentence and condemn myself
To present Hell, and consort with damned souls?
. . . God is God, and Hope
His chiefest prophet!
Ion: Prove that! I'll be your pupil then.

Where I differ is in the first speech, which I divide as follows, copying the narrative, not dramatizing it:

"Hope is your creed!" said Ion, "and you cling
"To rainbows, like the elves in picture books!"
"You ride the moth, and clasp the trembling reed!"

It is important to note that in the MS the third line is preceded by a X; I assume that Crawford intended to drop it, and continue with Hugh's reply, which originally began with the words, "Well, I must," but these are crossed out and "Ion I" inserted above. The insertion of a comma after "Ion" turns it into a vocative — "Ion, I worship — sets my soul that way. . . ." Later in the speech Ion is again addressed, though the name is crossed out to regulate the scansion. The rest of the speech is completely in keeping with Hugh's philosophy of Hope, and contrary to Ion's cynicism, so that I must believe that Hugh utters the whole passage to "God is God. . . . prophet." The punctuation throughout this dialogue in the MS is uncertain and misleading.

One further note: "The Dark Stag" was sung by Ion, who says at the end of his speech on page 16 of the MS, "Meanwhile, I'll sing the dawn I love," and proceeds to do so.

MARY F. MARTIN

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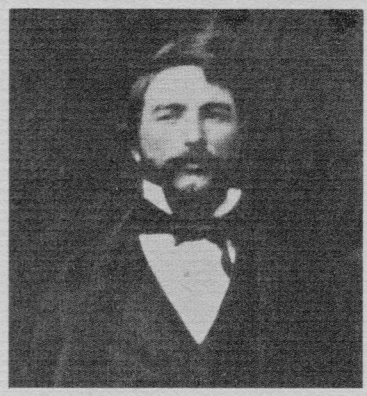

John Sebastian Helmcken, 1865. Photo courtesy of the Provincial Archives of B.C.

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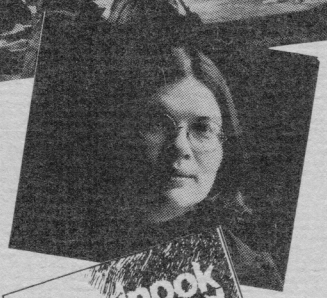

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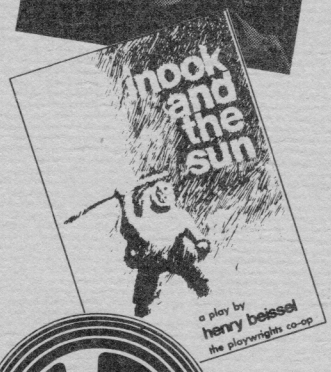

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