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EXILES AND EXPATRIATES

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A QUARTERLY OF CRITICISM AND REVIEW

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA MEDAL FOR POPULAR BIOGRAPHY 1976

Biography has become one of the most important aspects of writing in Canada during the last decade, and no more strongly evidenced than over the past year. Publishers obviously feel that the reading public is enjoying biography more, and are producing books that appeal to almost every taste. The range and variety of biography, in both subject matter and style of presentation, becomes more impressive each year.

1976, also, was interesting for the number of autobiographies published, each of which merited serious consideration from the Selection's Committee. Among these were Ben Dunkelman's *Dual Allegiance*, engaging in many ways; Leslie McFarlane's *Ghost of the Hardy Boys*, amusing, diverting and revealing; Bruce Hutchison's *The Far Side of the Street*, well written, thoughtful and candid.

In order to recognize the quality of these autobiographies, the University of British Columbia Medal for Popular Biography, for 1976, goes to James M. Minifie's *Expatriate*, a major contribution to the art of autobiography. The book is written in language that all too few authors can master, filled with allusions to many subjects that all too few writers can make. This was a most enjoyable and colourful contribution, not only to the autobiographies, but also to the entire field. It is truly regrettable that the award is posthumous. Our congratulations go to Mrs. Minifie who helped with the final editorial revisions, and to Macmillan of Canada who published the book.

D.S.

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editorial

MASSEY'S HARVEST

I RETURNED TO CANADA from England in 1949, just in time to learn of the launching of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, otherwise known as the Massey Commission. Coming from literary London, which in the late 1940's was flourishing with an abandon that contrasted with the physical austerity of Cripps's still-rationed Britain, I could not help feeling that there was indeed need for some kind of stimulation of the arts in Canada.

The scene in 1949 was as bleak as a Winnipeg winter. The only literary magazines in evidence were Alan Crawley's *Contemporary Verse*, John Sutherland's *Northern Review*, and the apparently imperishable *Canadian Forum*, and the first two did not have long to live. In publishing it was the pre-McClelland era, the age of the Ryerson Chapbooks and, outside that slim venture, of an overwhelming caution. Art galleries and theatres barely survived in the largest towns, and the touring companies that visited Canada were almost always of the lower grade.

Only the CBC seemed a shining exception, and it had a devoted following in those days when radio was still unchallenged. Robert Weaver was already performing the role of one-man council of the arts which he has carried on so splendidly ever since. One heard regular plays and concerts, one could sell talks on a great variety of subjects, for listeners were then treated as intelligent adults, and at a time when hardly any periodical would publish a short story, Bob Weaver commissioned them for CBC readings and then persuaded publishers to issue them as anthologies. The CBC was not only in those days a patron and an activator of literature in Canada. One took pride in it when Americans south of the border talked of it with envy, for it supported drama and music as energetically as it did literature. Perhaps, even then, the BBC was better, but the BBC did not seem like the Thélon River running through the Barren Land, and the CBC did.

But that was not enough to make me as a writer decide that I wanted to stay in Canada, and when I went off on a Guggenheim to France and the U.S.A. in 1950, I was not at all sure I would really settle here. Some atavistic longing for the great spaces did draw me back, in the fall of 1951, just in time to read the Massey Report, which appeared then, and I was so impressed by this exhaustive and concerned enquiry into a nation's creative needs, with its ambitious recommendations, that I decided to stay and see what would develop. It was only one of the reasons why I stayed, for the physical beauty of British Columbia had woven its spell, but it was a decisive reason; scenery alone would never have been enough.

I remembered all this when I was invited last winter to take part in a symposium in Ottawa called by the Governor-General to celebrate the quarter-centenary of the Massey Report and to consider the direction to take from now on. Half-a-dozen artists and critics, a couple of cabinet ministers, a Tory shadow minister, a cosmopolitan Senator, and a clutch of cultural bureaucrats spent a weekend to Government House in which the intervals between luncheons, dinners and receptions in Ottawa style were devoted to considering the changing situation of the Canadian arts over the past quarter of a century; on the last morning we pulled our scattered thoughts together to make some tentative recommendations which, for all their visible effect on the powers-that-be, appear to have dropped into a deep well. But we were all conscious that in the Peacock-like atmosphere of that great-house gathering by no means everything had been said that might have been, and one of our last decisions was that afterthoughts in writing would be acceptable, particularly from literary types who talk best to God and their typewriters.

I found myself, indeed, with a great many afterthoughts (a selection of which were sent to Ottawa and went into the same deep well of oblivion as the symposium's recommendations), and some of these afterthoughts were about the Massey Report itself. I was astonished, on re-reading it, to realize that time had given it a positively classic character; written with a literary flair one does not associate with Royal Commission reports, it showed an extraordinary wisdom in its assessment of the great cultural lacks of Canada in the late 1940's and the scanty resources to meet them. What impressed me perhaps more than anything else was the way the Commission had created its own bow wave of interest, not only looking into needs but making people think of them, so that when the time came to implement the most important of all the recommendations, that regarding the foundation of the Canada Council, the idea was accepted virtually without protest.

I have often heard it said that Massey was an "elitist" and that the Report was an elitist document. And so, if you think in such barren terms, it was. But in the cultural desert of Canada at that time a group of men and women was needed

who could act the elitist role and decide what looked like being good for the arts and hence for the country. I wonder — I wonder greatly — if Pierre Trudeau would have the grudging courage St. Laurent showed in setting up a commission to enquire into such a minority interest, and, having set it up, to implement a fair proportion of its recommendations.

What the Massey Commission did, if we give it credit for the consequences of its recommendations, was to create an entirely new situation for the arts in Canada, and to change, in ways not entirely anticipated and not in every way good, the general attitude of Canadians towards the artist as creator and performer.

Really, one has to see the situation from two points of view, that of the artist and that of the audience. Artists have been offered opportunities of fulfilment during the past twenty years in Canada that were unimagined at the beginning of the 1950's. And appreciators of the arts have been offered such opportunities of enjoyment that recent statistics suggest attendances at cultural events (plays, concerts, the ballet, art shows, etc.) now exceed attendances at spectator sports.

In Canadian writing (and I suspect also in painting though I am not so sure about music) the most striking development has been the vast quantitative increase in creations and creators, among whom — as always — there is a high incidence of fool's gold, but also a surprisingly frequent appearance of the real thing, so that a library of good Canadian books assembled today would be a vastly richer collection than one assembled in 1949. In poetry the upsurge has been enormous; as I pointed out in a chapter of the new *Literary History of Canada*, no less than 600 poets published more than 1,100 collections of verse between 1960 and 1972. The short story has emerged from under Weaver's protective wing to become a flourishing genre. If the number of fiction titles published each year has not increased so dramatically as the number of books of verse, the annual total of *good* novels is certainly far higher than in pre-Massey years. Criticism has matured and proliferated, both in books and in periodicals, and literary journals of all kinds are not only numerous beyond all our dreams in 1949, but often durable into the bargain. And the appearance of new theatres of all kinds (professional, semi-professional and amateur) has presented dramatists with unprecedented opportunities to write for the stage which have partly compensated for the unfortunate recent shrinkage in the role of the CBC as a patron of drama.

How much all this is the result of the Massey Commission, with its direct offspring, the Canada Council, and its indirect creations, the provincial arts councils which support artists in varying degrees (stingily in British Columbia, generously in Ontario), is impossible to say. In my view, just as the Massey Commission sensed and activated an already existing hunger among Canadians for arts they could enjoy, so the first activities of the Canada Council and the provincial councils coincided with an upsurge in creativity linked with the general social restiveness of the 1960's. Artistically, Canada seemed to come of age in that

decade, and the Council was there to provide what the individual artist needed most in a country where payment for his work had always been scanty and intermittent: the gift of time. The complement to this was giving money for material expenses to performing arts groups, galleries, magazines and publishers so that, when writers or painters or musicians had made use of the gift of time, their efforts could be presented to the public. In these fields, the Canada Council's work has been excellent, and uninhibited by false fears of elitism. By removing financial anxieties from artists, it helped to assure that much good work which otherwise would have been aborted was completed and presented to the public.

But then the Council moved into more questionable areas than merely giving time to artists and expenses to performers and publishers. Some of its programmes seemed to negate its grants for creation by encouraging artists to occupy themselves with things outside their proper work; writers, for example, were funded to wander over the country reading their works in the cause of publicity, when they should have been at home doing what a writer does best — writing.

A major Canada Council project that has always disturbed me is the Art Bank, whose effect has been to make the state the principal patron of the visual arts, with the result that dealers tend to become state purchasing agents and painters to become increasingly dependent on governmental buying and hence on official taste. It is only a short step from that point to the idea that artists of all kinds should become state employees or at least state pensioners, and that the Canada Council's ultimate function is to be either a personnel office or a welfare agency.

The most recent Council move with regard to writers has very disquieting implications in this direction. It institutes the virtual beginnings of a "guaranteed income" programme. First, only two people will be chosen; they will have to present projects lasting for three years, and over these years their incomes will be sustained by Canada Council grants at the level of $16,000. No doubt the first two of these three-year grants, and perhaps many others, will enable writers to fulfil long, difficult and not very remunerative projects that are of real value. But it is the idea that writers should have a "guaranteed income" rather than specific grants for particular projects, that concerns me. The dialectic of struggle plays a real, though undetermined part in the process of artistic creation, and to make artists secure through continuing subsidies is more likely to produce plump capons than soaring eagles.

It is time to look carefully at the complexity of state aid to the arts and its possible effect if it becomes too intrusive or, for that matter, too solicitous towards the artist. Patronage of any kind is an ambivalent process, and we have already noted in these pages the occasional need to bite the hand that feeds. The ambivalence of aid to the arts has perhaps, however, most deplorably shown its darker side in contributing to the transformation of the CBC from something near to a dragon of the airwaves into a moribund dinosaur, for if the Canada Council has

on the whole kept up high standards, the CBC over the last decade at least has gone nowhere but down.

And here we come to question of the audience for the arts, how it has changed since the issuing of the Massey Report in 1951, and the effects of the changes in its manner of participation.

We have to bear in mind here that there are two ways of enjoying the arts, direct and indirect. Direct enjoyment occurs when we go to a play or a concert or an art gallery, when we listen to poetry being read, when we perform plays or music as amateurs. The indirect way is through the media; we read books instead of watching plays or hearing poets; we study paintings in fine colour reproductions; we listen to recorded music in our own houses. Also, we watch television or listen to radio, and here there is the difference that, while we control our reading or our listening to records, we are dependent for broadcast entertainment on the programmes offered by the various networks. For those interested in the arts in Canada this has in the past meant principally the CBC.

The significant change that has taken place in the habits of the arts audience is a shift towards participation as spectators or performers directly in arts events and towards choosing those mediations, such as reading books and listening to records, which allow the maximum personal choice. The amount of time such an audience now allots to radio and television has sharply decreased; they have opted out of MacLuhan's mass media utopia. This is partly because of the greater incidence of arts events in their communities, partly because of the vastly increased availability of paperback books, of records and tapes. Thanks to these changes, largely fostered in Canada through programmes deriving ultimately from the Massey Commission, the arts audience has become progressively less interested in what is offered by the broadcasting systems and particularly by the CBC.

This shift in attention is what has allowed the bureaucrats who control the CBC to debase their programming virtually at will, and with the illusion of public consent, since they have not been subjected to the kind of massive protest that would have occurred even as recently as the mid-1960's. In the high days of radio, when the CBC was the main source of dramatic production in Canada and the principal employer of actors, musicians and writers, listening was a habit among the vast numbers of people who now frequent arts events, and such people formed — and continued to form until very recently — the CBC's most faithful body of support, its Praetorian Guard. In those days anything produced by the CBC was a matter of interest and discussion among people concerned with the arts; the CBC was their lifeline in a society where the arts were badly served, and this feeling continued into the 1960's in radio and into the early years of television, when producers and programmers alike were still conscious that the new medium might be even better than the old as a means of reporting on the arts and extending their publics.

That time is ended. Almost a decade ago CBC television virtually ceased to serve the arts. CBC radio still pays lip service, and FM is not wholly lost, but AM is being ruined by inane experiments in presenting the arts through mindless chatter and absurdly fragmented programmes in which the pop and the classical are inextricably mixed. The people who concoct such programmes are not producers; they are communications technicians bedevilled by false ideas of democracy. They have failed to understand that democracy, in so far as such a concept can be taken out of politics and transferred to the arts, is not a matter of melding all tastes into a flavourless uniformity; it depends on pluralism, on people developing their own tastes independently, and in a situation where one network cannot possibly serve all tastes, it should serve tastes not otherwise provided for. There are plenty of stations to serve the pop audience; it does not need *and does not want* the CBC. Therefore let the Corporation go back to what it once did so well, conserving the nation's cultural heritage, and content itself with serving the great middlebrow audience, which likes its drama to be good, its experimental programming to be intelligent, and prefers its classics unadulterated.

But where is the audience? Lost already? It may well be, having — as I believe — abandoned the CBC in favour of more direct and dependable forms of satisfaction, such as live music and drama, quality pocket books and recordings. Yet that lost audience is the only true audience the CBC ever had, for the insane pursuit of ratings which the CBC now carries on is bound to fail, if only because the Corporation is inept in its commercial programming in comparison with the Americans. If the CBC is to recover any following it must recover its uniqueness, the quality that once made its arts programmes and its almost vanished talks programmes the envy of intelligent Americans.

The situation is urgent, for the road the CBC is now taking is the primrose path to 1984. To present programmes in which there is nothing for the listener's or viewer's mind to grasp as he is lulled into thoughtless complacency seems the aim of present-day CBC programmers. Certainly, if a dictator wished to use the media to lull the consciousness of the people (and one sometimes suspects the present government of such ambitions), CBC AM radio as it is being mis-shaped today would be his ready tool and CBC television has the same totalitarian potential. This is the dark side of the results of the Massey Report, which its framers never contemplated; we have gained vastly in direct participation in the arts, but we have done so at the cost of failing to notice the dangerous debasement of public broadcasting, ultimately the most potent of the mass media.

OBSERVANCE WITHOUT BELIEF

David Staines

BRIAN MOORE has the distinction of being a writer with two nationalities, Canadian and Irish, though he now lives in California.[1] While proud of his Canadian citizenship and his ten-year residence in Canada, where he wrote his first three novels, he acknowledges his primary debt to Ireland: "I'm an Irish writer in this way. I was brought up in Ireland, and Mauriac once said 'the door closes at twenty on a writer and that forms him.' So I am an Irish writer in that I was formed by Ireland, not by Canada." A crucial part of his Irish formation is the world of Irish Catholicism, a religion prominent throughout his fiction. "I'm interested in Catholicism in a non-religious way," he continues, "I'm interested in the traditions that it sets up, and the conflicts."[2]

Born in Belfast of Catholic parents, Moore received a Catholic education of narrow religiosity. Like Stephen Dedalus of Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist*, he attended Catholic schools that perpetuated a rigorous and bigoted training, and this schooling stands behind the indictment of Saint Michan's College in *The Feast of Lupercal* and later novels. Like Dedalus, Moore rejected the indoctrination of his Catholic education, though it did leave a powerful and lasting impression upon him and his fiction:

> I felt, and I still feel, bitterly against the school system I was brought up on. It was a system of beating and teaching by rote, and when I saw other children and how bright they were able to become under American methods, it was around that time that I started to write *Lupercal*. I still feel that it's a wonder I'm not a complete sadist or a masochist after the kind of upbringing we got.[3]

The seemingly blind adherence to religious doctrines, in particular the preoccupation with hell and damnation, represented to Moore outworn and useless values in the contemporary world. Yet his rejection of Catholicism was neither simple nor straightforward. Within its framework he did see a degree of solace for some people, though not for himself. He could sense, for example, religion's positive value for his own parents:

> I've always felt, too, that for most people any faith is better than no faith. It gives them something to live for and with. And while I disliked Catholicism and disliked my parents' religiosity, I think that they were both very honest people, and were people who, if they hadn't had their faith, would have been more dishonest and less admirable. Part of the admirable thing about my mother was that while she was sort of depressive, her faith kept her from being self-centered.[4]

"Something to live for and with" is a dominant theme in Moore's fiction; his characters, trapped in a post-Christian or godless universe, try desperately to create a set of new values both permanent and satisfying.

In all his novels, with the possible exception of *The Great Victorian Collection*, Moore juxtaposes the Catholic faith and the contemporary world where such faith seems no longer valid. Three of his early novels, *Judith Hearne*, *The Feast of Lupercal*, and *The Emperor of Ice Cream*, all set in Belfast, focus relentlessly on the personal damage Irish Catholicism can inflict on its unthinking adherents. Moore's other novels, whether set in Canada, the United States, or France, place Catholicism in the background, but its lasting force is still evident in the mental attitudes of the characters. And his novella, *Catholics*, is the crucial, perhaps definitive confrontation in his fiction between modern man and a godless universe.

Moore's characters represent various dimensions of religious belief or disbelief. The older ones, usually parental authorities, accept the tenets of Catholicism, though their belief may be battered by doubts they try not to acknowledge; such religion often degenerates into blind obedience to outmoded doctrines and practices. The middle-aged struggle valiantly to cling to the remnants of a faith which they often come to know as both invalid and useless, yet they hold to their illusions rather than create any other illusion. The young represent the contemporary world as it attempts to find illusions as sustaining and powerful as religion used to be.

A chronological survey of Moore's fiction reveals the consistency of his obsessive attitude to Catholicism and the development of his possible alternatives to religion. To reject the faith of one's parents and nation is a demanding challenge, but more frightening is the search for a substitute for religion, a search that only a few of Moore's protagonists successfully complete.

Judith Hearne (1955), Moore's first novel, is the incisive exploration of the mental deterioration of a lonely spinster. Trapped by the confining atmosphere of Mrs. Rice's boarding house, thirty-seven-year-old Judith Hearne fantasizes about a growing relationship with James Madden, the landlady's brother. When she realizes that Madden has no marital intentions, she resorts to an evening of alcohol. Because the other boarders object to her drunken singing, Mrs. Rice demands her departure.

Judith Hearne is the victim of a repressive family and a repressive religion. As the novel opens, two objects of importance dominate her room:

> The first thing Miss Judith Hearne unpacked in her new lodgings was the silver-framed photograph of her aunt. The place for her aunt, ever since the sad day of the funeral, was on the mantelpiece of whatever bed-sitting room Miss Hearne happened to be living in . . .
>
> After she had arranged the photograph so that her dear aunt could look at her from the exact centre of the mantelpiece, Miss Hearne unwrapped the white tissue paper which covered the coloured oleograph of the Sacred Heart. His place was at the head of the bed, His fingers raised in benediction, His eyes kindly yet accusing. He was old and the painted halo around His head was beginning to show little cracks. He had looked down on Miss Hearne for a long time, almost half her lifetime.

Like her aunt, Miss Hearne is the product of a narrow Catholic upbringing. At the Sacred Heart Convent she learned the prejudices that characterize Catholic schools in Moore's fiction. Religion is a comfort and a crutch, a comfort that assures her of her personal holiness and righteousness and a crutch that allows her to avoid any confrontation with reality. Her faith prevents her from living in the present; the world of the past is her home: "Miss Hearne's mind moved in a familiar spiral from present to past, made a journey which had become increasingly frequent since her dear aunt died. It was so much easier to go back now; going forward was so frightening." At the same time, however, Catholicism looks to the future, the realm of the afterlife, which should direct all human actions. Father Quigley admonishes his congregation: "And those young people, standing here in this church, standing there like a bunch of hooligans at the back, waiting their chance to run out at the Last Gospel, what will God say to them on that terrible day? What will He say?"

For Father Quigley and his parishioners, God inspires fear and terror, not love. Life is an obstacle course where God rewards the pains and sufferings of believers: "When she changed her digs and met Mr. Madden, she felt a sense of victory, a partial fulfillment, a blessing of God upon her for her sacrifices." The picture of the Sacred Heart is less a comfort than a warning: "He looked down, wise and stern and kindly, His fingers raised in warning."

The folly of Judith Hearne's fantastical affair with James Madden precipitates her eviction from the boarding house as well as her mental breakdown. Yet her deterioration is the direct consequence of her failure to find any meaning in her faith. Miss Hearne is desperate to find some consolation and understanding in religion, and her ultimate defeat is a commentary on the inadequacy of her Catholicism.

After her drunken evening Miss Hearne flees to her parish church: "The church was empty: cleared of its stock of rituals, invocations, prayers, a deserted spiritual warehouse waiting for new consignments." The rituals that sustained her now seem empty and hollow; she prays naively for some explicit sign of the validity of her faith:

> Surely some great design kept it all moving, some Presence made it meaningful. But what if the godless were right, what if it all started back aeons ago with fish crawling out of the sea to become men and women? What if not Adam and Eve, but apes, great monkeys, were our ancestors? In that world, what place had a God who cared for suffering?
>
> She began to walk. Supposing, just supposing, her heart cried, supposing nobody has listened to me all these years of prayers. Nobody at all up above me, watching over me. Then nothing is sinful. There is no sin. And I have been cheated, the crimson nights in that terrible book from Paris, the sin, permissible then. Nobody above. Nobody to care.

In her verbal exchange with Bernard, Mrs. Rice's son, she sees her own faith totter precariously. "God's ways aren't our ways," she tells him. "This life is a cross we have to bear in order to store up merit in the next. Don't you know your Catechism at all?" Bernard's rejection of his parents' faith makes his response the embodiment of the doubts she tried to suppress:

> You and your Sacred Heart. What the hell good has it done you? It's only an idealized picture of a minor prophet. It won't work miracles. You've got to make your own miracles in this world. Now, listen to me. I can help you, if you'll forget this nonsense and do what I say. You want a man. You can have Uncle James. But don't bore me with this nonsense, with these silly scruples. Your God is only a picture on the wall. He doesn't give a damn about you.[5]

Her subsequent confession to Father Quigley is her first explicit acknowledgement of her loss of faith: "I doubted my faith, Father. I need your advice because I had moments of doubt." His hollow response cannot hide his inability to offer her adequate reassurance: "Now, my child, we all have burdens put upon us in this life, crosses we have to bear, trials and tribulations we should offer up to Our Lord. And prayer is a great thing, my child, a great thing. We should never be lonely because we always have God to talk to." When she uttered these same sentiments to Bernard, he rejected them, and now she cannot accept their relevance.

Father Quigley, the first in a long series of clerical portraits in Moore's novels, cannot comfort Miss Hearne because he too has moments of doubt. His inability to assert that God does dwell in the tabernacle prompts her physical assault on the tabernacle door, an act of desperation symbolic of both her need for faith and her inability to accommodate herself to a world without belief. At Earncliffe Home, the sanatorium that becomes her final lodging, she rejects the opportunity to confess her sins. "In God's house I defied God. And nothing happened," she concludes, and now she no longer believes that the sacraments or the spiritual world itself have any significance.

Judith Hearne is a member of the older generation, the world of rigid and

stern Irish Catholicism, and she cannot forsake the observances and rituals that shaped her. Even though she no longer believes in God, she still attends Mass:

> She was feeling tired. Why, the Mass was very long. If you did not pray, if you did not take part, then it was very, very long. If you did not believe, then how many things would seem different. Everything: lives, hopes, devotions, thoughts. If you do not believe, you are alone. But I was of Ireland, among my people, a member of my faith. Now I have no — and if no faith, then no people. No, no, I have not given up. I cannot. For if I give up this, then I must give up all the rest. There is no right or wrong in this. I do not feel, I do not know. Why should I suffer this?
>
> O Lord, I do not believe, help my unbelief. O You — are You — ?

In the novel's final paragraph she clings to her picture of the Sacred Heart whereby "a new place becomes home." Convinced that religion is only a personal illusion, she confronts its vacuity, yet cannot abandon its meaningless practices. Her attendance at Mass is the first of many scenes in Moore's fiction that reveal the starkness of a godless universe where observance without belief is the only possible form of religious commitment.

DIARMUID DEVINE, the protagonist of Moore's second novel, *The Feast of Lupercal* (1957), complements Judith Hearne. A thirty-seven-year-old bachelor frightened of marriage or any human relationship, Devine is crippled by his Catholic upbringing. *Judith Hearne* refers frequently to its protagonist's education at the Sacred Heart Convent; *The Feast of Lupercal* offers a vivid and horrifying depiction of Catholic educational institutions. Devine is a schoolmaster at the college he once attended, Saint Michan's, which thrives on rumour, bigotry, fear, and caning. Just as Miss Hearne prides herself in her alma mater, so the faculty of Saint Michan's prides itself in the repression it has created and now sustains:

> Saint Michan's was not an English school, thank God, it was Irish and Catholic. There was therefore no nonsense about putting boys on their word of honour to own up to their own wrongdoings. Boys did wrong. To find out what they had done, you picked a former wrongdoer and threatened him. No boy would be foolish enough to suffer for another's crime. If the boy did not tell, you gave him what for. No boy, in Father McSwiney's experience, was stouter than a good cane.

Like Saint Michan's, Devine's life is confined and constricted: "He was like a flower that had never opened. He felt foolish when he thought of that, but it was true. Like a flower that had never opened. He had been afraid to open, afraid." With unflinching servility he adheres to the doctrines of his school and its religion. A combination of blind faith, personal fears, and unthinking obedience to all

authorities, his life is devoid of vitality, joy, and love. In his boarding-house room there are two pictures: one, *Ecce Homo*, a print of the seventeenth-century portrait of Christ dying for the sins of mankind; the other, a silent reminder of his family:

> the Divine Infant of Prague, His baby body robed in prelate's garb. Twenty years ago, an Irish Sweepstakes winner gave devotion to the Divine Infant of Prague as the cause of a Derby victory. Mrs. Devine, reading the story, sent out at once to purchase this picture and family prayers in the Devine household regularly implored a repetition of that good fortune. But the Infant never completed the double and one member of the household knew why. One member sinned by secret, lustful thoughts. That member, years later, took the picture with him to his new digs out of some vague need for penance.

The difference between the lives of Judith Hearne and Diarmuid Devine is the presence of choice for the latter. Miss Hearne does not find a release from her personal confinement; James Madden's love, a possible escape, is only a figment of her imagination. In Una Clarke, a young Protestant woman, Devine has a fleeting opportunity to love, yet his attachment to Saint Michan's cripples him. He knows that he will lose all chance of advancement if he marries a Protestant. Consequently, while realizing his victimized condition, he refuses to react against it: "It was all a clique, the city was made up of cliques, drama cliques, religious cliques, school cliques, and God knows what else. There was no use in a fellow's trying to fight them: it was a pure waste of time."

When false rumours about his involvement with Una spread, Devine refuses to acknowledge his own complicity; fear makes him unwilling to stand beside her or agree to a small lie to pacify her uncle's excessive wrath. The ultimate, indeed only goal of Devine's existence is continued acceptance at the College. When his questionable behaviour is forgiven by Father Keogh, the President of Saint Michan's,[6] he returns to his uncluttered, loveless life. He is a mental cripple paralyzed and permanently stultified by Catholicism.

Devine finds his personal peace in a life of selfishness where the social world around him has no relevance; the only realm of significance is the authoritarian religion of Saint Michan's, and he never dares to question his blind adherence to that faith. He becomes the personal embodiment of the Catholic system that educated Judith Hearne. In the end Saint Michan's continues to uphold its narrow authoritarianism, and the modern world fails to impinge upon its Catholic territory.

In *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* (1960) Moore abandons his Belfast setting for the new world of America. Belfast's rigid Catholicism disappears, for the new setting is the consequence of the characters' desire to escape their Catholic training. Ginger Coffey brings his wife Veronica and his daughter Paulie to Canada in an attempt to forge a prosperous career, yet "one of his secret reasons for

wanting to get away to the New World was that, in Ireland, church attendance was not a matter of choice. Bloody well go, or else, tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, you were made to suffer in a worldly sense. Here, he was free."

The Coffey family is the first portrait in Moore's fiction of Irish Catholics whose presence in the new world helps them to rebel against and reject their religious training. Both Ginger and Veronica are staunch Catholics who have abandoned their faith. In Ireland Father Delaney reprimanded Ginger for practicing birth control: "He [Ginger] said he was damned if any priest would dictate whether or not he'd have another child." But when Veronica later demands a divorce, Ginger takes refuge in his Catholic training that forbids divorce. Her response reflects the degree of religion that remains in these immigrants:

> Don't you preach religion at me, Ginger Coffey, you that haven't darkened a church door since you came out here. Don't you talk about Catholics. What's wrong with you is that you never *were* a Catholic; you were too selfish to give God or anyone else the time of day. Oh, you may think I'm like you now, and I am. I never pray. But once I did. Once I was very holy, do you remember? I cried, Ginger. I cried when Father Delaney said that unless we stopped practicing birth control he'd refuse us the sacraments. Do you remember that? No, you never think of that any more, do you? But I do. You changed me, Ginger. What I am now has a lot to do with what you made me. So don't you talk sin to me, don't you dare! Sins — Oh, let me tell you. Once your soul is dirty, then what difference in the shade of black?

Veronica's attempt to shift the blame to Ginger for her own irreligious behaviour is self-delusion. Like her husband she sets aside the religion of her parents, and at the end of the novel a new religion asserts itself in the form of selfless love. As George Woodcock notes, "Veronica has not changed. She is merely seeking a new set of values in a new world that will replace the old faith."[7] She learns to heed not the teachings of Catholicism but the demands of unselfish love. "You don't know what love is," she asserts. "Just remember this, Ginger. Love is unselfish, it's doing things for other people and not asking them to do things for you." This kind of love becomes the highest standard in the new world. It is not coincidental that Veronica's assertion makes Ginger think of Christ: "Was *that* true love? Would the greatest proof of his love for her be his willingness to sacrifice himself, the way Jesus had sacrificed himself for mankind? Jesus considered that the highest form of love, didn't he? Well, there you are, then." In the courtroom scene Ginger perjures himself by taking a false name so that his wife and daughter will not suffer, and in the novel's final scene Ginger and Veronica reach a new degree of mutual understanding and love.

The Coffeys abandon the ritualistic faith of their homeland. When Ginger

enters the basilica, his reaction parallels Judith Hearne's last visit to her parish church:

> He looked at the tabernacle. His large ruddy face set in a scowl as though someone had struck it. His lips shut tight under his ginger mustache. I never could abide a bully, he said to the tabernacle. Listen to me, now. I came in here to maybe say a prayer and I'll be the first to admit I had a hell of a nerve on me, seeing the way I've ignored you these long years. But now I cannot pray, because to pray to you, if you're punishing me, would be downright cowardly. If it's the cowards you want in heaven, then good luck to you. You're welcome.

Unlike Judith Hearne, however, he does find meaning and security in human relationships, and the novel shows his acceptance of another standard to replace the outworn faith of his homeland.

In *Survival*, her thematic guide to Canadian literature, Margaret Atwood studies *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* as a portrait of the reluctant immigrant and his failure in the new world: "He has learned Canada's lesson well. Endurance, survival, no victory."[8] Yet there is a personal victory since the Coffeys recognize a new set of values. Despite his commercial failure in Montreal Ginger does have luck in the most important area of his life; he does come to know love as the only significant value in a godless universe.

The ritualistic religion of Judith Hearne and Diarmuid Devine has been replaced by a new world where religion is a part of the past. Now man must strive to find values to replace the static Catholicism of Ireland. The new world seems to free man, to liberate him from the paralysis of the old, and to allow him, unimpeded by his Catholic upbringing, to accept new standards. At the same time, however, *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* never directly confronts the religion of the old world; set apart geographically from their ancestors, the Coffeys need not worry about the confining anxieties and pressures of Irish Catholicism.

THE DIRECT CONFRONTATION between the old world's religion and the new world's struggle for other standards is the theme of Moore's next novel, *An Answer from Limbo* (1962). Brendan Tierney, the book's protagonist, is a struggling young journalist in New York City. He invites his sixty-eight-year-old Irish mother to come to America and live with him, his wife Janet, and their two children. The presence of Mrs. Eileen Tierney will allow Jane to seek employment, which will in turn permit Brendan to pursue a full-time writing career.

Brendan's parents belong to the world of Judith Hearne and Diarmuid Devine. His father kept a picture of the Little Flower of Lisieux beside his bed; his mother would have her grandchildren "on their knees, saying rosaries for the souls of the deceased." Like the Coffeys, however, Brendan has abandoned his religion,

though his upbringing still haunts him; an American film director has offered to cast him as a Calvinist divine because of his "noble, guilt-ridden stare." Jane, moreover, represents the new world where she was born; not Irish, she shares none of Brendan's religious feelings or background. Even before his mother's arrival Brendan foresees a family struggle when she learns that her grandchildren have not been baptized.

Limbo, according to Mrs. Tierney, is "the place for children who have never been baptized." Conscious of her duty to insure her grandchildren's baptism, she consults a priest who recalls the authoritarian simplicity of Father Quigley and Saint Michan's:

> The priest she had seen in confession had been no use. He said she must make Brendan bring the children to church and have them baptized. As if Brendan would ever agree to the like of that. The priest had offered to call on Brendan and Jane. What good would that do? Priests live behind presbytery walls. They did not understand.

When she baptizes her grandchildren without their parents' knowledge, she finds herself estranged from her son and daughter-in-law. For Jane, the baptism represents the final imposition of her mother-in-law's foolish faith. For Brendan, the baptism is a vivid reminder of his past:

> In that moment I hated her. She was my past, with all its stubborn superstitions, its blind emotional faith. The rage we feel as children when Mummy knows best, the rage we know as adolescents when our parents deny us the conduct of our affairs, the frustration of all intercourse with the older generation.

Because of the baptism Mrs. Tierney is evicted by her son and forced to live alone until her return to Ireland; during this isolation she breaks her hip and dies. "If there is, as she believed, a heaven above us, will her God recompense her for our coldness and indifference?" Brendan wonders. Yet her death only increases his inner struggle with religion:

> The temporal life was, for her, a secondary thing. For me, it is all there is. Because of this difference in belief, a gate shut between us. Because of that gate, she died alone, trying to reach me. And yet, as I sat in that coffee shop, denying and despising my wife's tears, I asked myself if my beliefs are sounder than my mother's.

Brendan makes his projected novel his god and the art of writing his religion. At the end of *An Answer from Limbo*, however, he is a writer who "can't feel, he can only record." He is unable to answer his own depressing question: "Is my belief in my talent any less an act of superstitious faith than my mother's belief in the power of indulgences?"

An Answer from Limbo does not provide the comparatively easy solution of *The Luck of Ginger Coffey*, where unselfish love replaces religious faith. Brendan

makes a religion out of writing, but the novel closes with an ominous admission: "I have altered beyond all self-recognition. I have lost and sacrificed myself." The confrontation between the old world and the new world does not lead to simple resolutions. Despite the seemingly superstitious nature of Mrs. Tierney's faith, she does find that her belief sustains her, even as she lies dying on the floor of a vacant apartment. Catholicism comforts her, but it does not speak to the modern world of Brendan and Jane. Consequently, like Mrs. Tierney herself, religion seems destined to die alone and wasted in the new world.

The Emperor of Ice Cream (1965), Moore's fifth novel and the final member of the Belfast trio of novels, is his *bildungsroman*, the novel that reflects his own personal growth and maturing.[9] Gavin Burke, the seventeen-year-old protagonist, is a member of the Air Raid Precautions, a British World War II first-aid organization. A product of Saint Michan's College, he is struggling to assert himself amidst the bigotry and narrowness of 1939 Belfast. The *bildungsroman* is a morality debate between what Gavin names his White Guardian Angel and his Black Guardian Angel. Their frequent intrusions into the narrative reflect the interior moral crises confronting Gavin as he breaks away from the Catholicism of his family and his schooling.

The Emperor of Ice Cream opens with a description of the most significant object in Gavin's bedroom:

> The Divine Infant of Prague was only eleven inches tall yet heavy enough to break someone's toes if it fell off the dresser. Although he wore the coronation robes of a monarch, he was, in reality, a desperate little preacher whose aim in life was to catch Gavin Burke's eye.

As Gavin explores the Belfast beyond Saint Michan's, he encounters "a grown-up world, undreamed of in the Saint Michan's school philosophy." Each new experience makes him increasingly scornful of his family, their religion, and especially his girl friend Sally Shannon, "a repressed Child of Mary." Sally's religiosity confirms his understanding of the inadequacy of Catholicism in the modern world:

> Nothing would change. The care of this room would continue, as would the diurnal dirge of Masses all over the land, the endless litanies of evening devotions, the annual pilgrimage to holy shrines, the frozen ritual of Irish Catholicism perpetuating itself in *secula, seculorum.*

Gavin escapes this confining paralysis by a complete rejection of religion: "he vowed to deliver himself from the sham of church attendance, of pretending belief for his parents' sake, of the pretenses and compromises which had helped keep him becalmed in indecision between adolescence and adult life." The validity of his rejection of Catholicism is emphasized in the novel's final episode, Gavin's

reunion and reconciliation with his father. Gavin has outgrown his family and his religion, but his maturity allows him to confront his father as a human being for the first time:

> In the candlelight, he saw that his father was crying. He had never seen his father cry before. Did his father know that the house was condemned, did his father know that everything had changed, that things would never be the same again? A new voice, a cold grown-up voice within him said: "No." His father was the child now; his father's world was dead. He looked over at the wireless set, remembering his father, ear cocked for England's troubles, pleased at news of other, faraway disasters. Forget that, the grownup voice said. He heeded that voice, heeded it as he had never heeded the childish voices of his angels. Black Angel, White Angel: they had gone forever. His father was crying. The voice would tell him what to do. From now on, he would know these things.

Sally Shannon accosts Gavin with the taunt: "Don't be silly, you can't give it up, you were born a Catholic and you'll die one." Gavin, however, does escape his Catholic background, and *The Emperor of Ice Cream* is a young man's rejection of an outworn faith and acceptance of the modern world. It is also the novelist's catharsis, his most direct assault to date on the Catholic religion and his farewell to the stifling world of Belfast.

AFTER *The Emperor of Ice Cream* Moore's novels focus less explicitly on the hollowness of religion; perhaps his *bildungsroman* freed him from the constant explorations of faith that characterized his early novels. In subsequent works his characters usually accept the fragmentation of modern life and attempt to accommodate themselves. Both *I am Mary Dunne* (1968) and *Fergus* (1970) appear initially to ignore the problems of observance without belief, yet upon closer examination these novels become further extensions of the theme. Set in the United States, both focus relentlessly on their title figures. *I am Mary Dunne*, written entirely in the first person, explores the mind of a disturbed, thrice-married woman; *Fergus*, though not written in the first person, is a vivid portrait of the title character's mind and its hallucinations. *I am Mary Dunne* evokes the world of literary Manhattan, *Fergus* the literary colony of Malibu. Most importantly, for our purposes, both novels depict modern characters who have rejected their Catholic upbringing and are trying to forge their own place in society. Mary Dunne and Fergus Fadden join the younger generation of Ginger Coffey, Brendan Tierney, and Gavin Burke, who have abandoned their faith in order to establish a new set of personally satisfying values.

Mary Dunne is cut off, both figuratively and literally, from her Catholic mother. She lives in Manhattan, her mother lives in Nova Scotia; she is a more

intellectual Veronica Coffey, her mother is another version of Eileen Tierney. Mary Dunne's rejection of Catholicism creates a barrier in her relationship with her mother; whenever the name of Christ "comes up in our conversations, my mother and I become strangers in a darkness, far away from contact with each other, strangers on a long-distance wire." In moments of desperate need she finds herself calling upon God and invoking his name in prayers she learned as a child. When she fears that her mother may have cancer, she tries to pray, though she admits: "Prayers are charms, they are knocking on wood."

For Mary Dunne the substitute for religion is love. Her need for human relationships has led her into three marriages; her current husband, Terence Lavery, offers her the comfort she craves. The role of God in the lives of Mary's parents and their generation is now filled for Mary by her husband: "Terence is my saviour, I shall not want, he maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he restoreth my soul. Yes, that's right. He's my new religion. He's my life after death."

Thirty-nine-year-old Fergus Fadden, a moderately successful Belfast writer, now lives in Malibu with a twenty-two-year-old woman. With two novels and one wife behind him, he wakes up one morning to a series of hallucinations in which his family and other figures from his Irish upbringing appear; the plight of the young Catholic rejecting his parents' religion plays a dominant role. Fergus' father, who attended Saint Michan's, reminds his son that "nothing's more important that a person's religious duties." Fergus' sister Maeve scolds him:

> As a Catholic, you were brought up to believe in a life after death. But you can't believe in it. So you invent a substitute. You start worrying about your reputation outliving you. Your work becomes your chance to cheat the grave. That's a very attractive thought, particularly for ex-Catholics. That's why you care so much about your literary status.

Like Brendan Tierney Fergus substitutes literary reputation for religion. And Maeve is accurate in her assessment: "You have no laws, no rules, no spiritual life at all. You have to make up your own rules of conduct. You have to become your own wee ruler, and found your own wee religion. You are your own god."

The clerical figures who populate Fergus' hallucinations emphasize the importance of the afterlife, the necessity of regulating your earthly existence in order to obtain heavenly glory: "The Irish people know that it is not this world that counts. This life is but a preparation for eternity." But it is Fergus' family, especially his father, whom he must confront and reject. In the final episode of the hallucinations and of the novel, he presents the hollowness of religion to his father:

> All the things you taught me, the things you believed in, your prayers, going to Mass and Confession and Holy Communion, your devotion to Our Lady, the whole thing! Your obedience to the rules of the church, the ten commandments, mortal

> sins, plenary indulgences, the lot! Just think of it! A sham, a fraud, a complete waste of time!

Fergus raises his arm and dismisses the hallucinatory presence; not seeking the reconciliation with his father that Gavin Burke achieved with his father, Fergus turns his back on the old world in order to create his own standards in modern California.

In *Catholics* (1972) Moore turned to the bastion of Catholicism, an abbey of pious monks, to make his definitive statement on the validity of religious faith in the modern world. The novella depicts the final days of Muck Abbey, Kerry, Ireland in the closing decade of the twentieth century. The Abbey has achieved international fame as the only remaining stronghold of traditional religious practices; the Mass is still offered in Latin, Confession is still a private sacrament. At this period in human history the Church of Rome is concerned with social action, not prayer and religious observances; for the modern Catholic priest, the Church "exists today as the quintessential structure through which social revolution can be brought to certain areas of the globe." The embodiment of this new outlook is Father James Kinsella, a young priest sent from Rome by his Provincial General to the recalcitrant Abbot of Muck, sixty-nine-year-old Thomas o'Malley; the purpose of his mission is the termination of Muck Abbey's outdated religious practices.

Muck Abbey is the world of Judith Hearne and Diarmuid Devine without the masochistic brutality of Saint Michan's. The Abbey adheres to the rules of the traditional Church, the sacraments, and the prayers that Fergus Fadden and his generation have rejected. The fame of the Abbey reflects modern man's desperate need for some kind of certitude, some kind of faith: "People don't want truth or social justice, they don't want this ecumenical tolerance. They want certainties. The old parish priest promised that."

In the confrontation between Abbot o'Malley and Father Kinsella is the battle between the old world and the new world. When the young priest's helicopter lands on the island where the Abbey is located, the Abbot remarks: "Do you know, Father, that's the first flying machine of any description that has ever landed on Muck. You've brought us the symbol of the century. Just when I thought we'd be able to close the hundred years out, and say we missed our time." Cut off and isolated from the modern world, the inhabitants of the Abbey show no need or desire for the world beyond their island.

For Abbot o'Malley Rome's attitude to religion is strange; seeing his duty as the care of his people's faith, he cannot accept the new Catholicism: "I think I was born before my time. A man doesn't have to have such a big dose of faith any more, does he?" As Father Kinsella's short stay reaches its end, however, the Abbot begins to reveal his own loss of faith. He is unable to believe in the old

faith but willing to cling to its hollow observances. His life is a private hell: "the hell of those deprived of God. When it came upon him, he could not pray, prayers seemed false or without any meaning at all. Then his trembling began, that fear and trembling which was a sort of purgatory presaging the true hell to come, the hell of no feeling, that null, that void." Years ago the Abbot felt a certainty about his beliefs, but now he does not genuflect when he leaves the church, he does not say the Divine Office, he does not pray. While other monks cling to old beliefs, their superior is the clerical equivalent of Judith Hearne. Even the men of religion, the guardians of the faith, can no longer acknowledge or accept the tenets of Catholicism. For the younger priests, social revolution serves the same function that literary creation offers Brendan Tierney and Fergus Fadden; for the older priests, social revolution is not faith, yet there is no substitute. As the Abbot leads his monks in prayer at the end of the novella, he "entered null. He would never come back. In null."

Catholics is the climax of the treatment of religious belief in Moore's fiction. The tabernacle that Judith Hearne tried to open, the tabernacle that received Ginger Coffey's scoffing, this tabernacle is now empty. Only a miracle can make God present on the altar, and the new Catholicism of Rome, concerned only with man's social betterment, disregards the realm of the miraculous. The twentieth century has reached Muck Abbey, and mankind, including the monks, must find a substitute for religion.

Shortly before the publication of *Catholics*, Moore remarked: "When I wrote most of my novels I was interested — I'm not sure that I'm much interested now — in presenting the moment in a person's life, the crucial few weeks or months, when one suddenly confronts the reality or unreality of one's illusions, because that, to me, is what the drama of the novel is."[10] Moore's next novel, *The Great Victorian Collection* (1975), exemplifies this statement. During a stay in Carmel, California, Arthur Maloney, a young History professor at McGill University, dreams of a great Victorian collection. When he awakens he finds that his dream has become a reality. The novel follows the world's disbelief in the reality and the progressive mental deterioration of Maloney as he becomes a celebrity. Religious belief has no place in the novel, since belief now centres on the collection. Arthur Maloney does not believe in God: "God was, like Santa Claus, a word his mother used." And Christianity finds its only expression in the placard of the madman picketing the collection: "God Alone Can Create — Do Not Believe This Lie."

In his most recent novel, *The Doctor's Wife* (1976), Moore explores again "the crucial few weeks or months, when one suddenly confronts the reality or unreality of one's illusions." Sheila Redden has led a quiet life in Belfast; now, however, on a brief holiday in France she questions her way of life and rejects the dull security of her marriage to a Belfast physician; when we meet Sheila at the beginning of

the novel, she is in Paris, and we never see her in Ireland since she never returns to her old world.

Like earlier Moore heroines Sheila Redden was raised in the Catholic faith, but she no longer finds religious belief valid or feasible. In earlier years she was a devout Catholic: "Once, she had asked God's help in everything . . . It seemed like another life, that long-ago time of rules and rewards, when prayer and sin were real." When she visits Notre-Dame Cathedral, she finds a museum as hollow spiritually as Muck Abbey:

> Notre-Dame is a museum, its pieties are in the past. Once these aisles were filled with the power of faith, with prayer and pilgrimage, all heads bowed in reverence at the elevation of the Host. Once people knelt here, in God's house, offering the future conduct of their lives against a promise of heaven. But we no longer believe in promises.

Her love affair with Tom Lowry is her religion. This romantic attachment possesses her in the same way that her religion used to dominate her life: "These few days with Tom were her state of grace. She turned, went back to the bed, and lay down beside him, holding him in her arms, pressing against his warm body. She closed her eyes. I am in grace. In my state of grace."

In *The Doctor's Wife* as in much of Moore's fiction love becomes the substitute for religious faith in the modern world. The spiritual imagery that surrounds the love scenes indicates the new power and role of love. During his one evening with Una Clarke Diarmuid Devine "knelt once more, as though in genuflection before that altar of her body"; Una herself wants him to repeat his professions of love "over and over, as though, like prayer, repetition would buy grace for the thought." When Brendan and Jane Tierney quarrel, love becomes "the litany of atonement. They made their ejaculations and responses as devoutly as monk and nun, knowing all the extravagant declarations by heart, confident that they could pray back into their marriage its act of faith, its bond of submission, its vows of obedience and trust"; Brendan foresees a new version of hell where he may endlessly make love to his unresponsive wife. For Mary Dunne her husband Terence is the new Christ and hell is reserved for selfishness. And Sheila Redden finds her state of grace in the arms of her lover. In a godless universe love inherits from religion such spiritual imagery.

Educated in the most rigid form of Irish Catholicism, Brian Moore rejected its doctrines and practices. Yet his schooling helped to form him, both as a man and as a novelist, and his indoctrination has led to his continuing explorations of modern man's godless universe.

For Moore, as for his fictional characters, religion is a manmade illusion. Yet Moore admits that man needs illusions:

> A friend of mine once said that a depression is when the world is not at fault, but

> you're at fault. In a peculiar way, if you think about that, it sums up the reason why we all have illusions. We *have* to have illusions, because if you finally lose your illusions about yourself you lose the motive force or whatever it is that keeps us going.[11]

Like Fergus Fadden and Brendan Tierney, Moore regards writing as his illusion: "I know that writing *is* my illusion, and that it's as nonsensical as any other religion."[12] Another illusion, more common and more important, is love. So much of Moore's fiction is a celebration of this beautiful but precarious substitute for religion. Only *The Luck of Ginger Coffey* has an ending that suggests any degree of sustained happiness, and Moore's fiction is sceptical about the permanence of this illusion.

The characters of Moore's novels are confronted with a fragmented world where there is no possibility of religious certainty. In Belfast they are given the answers to life's problems by their religion, but these answers no longer satisfy; even Muck Abbey must move into the modern world. The old world of Irish Catholicism gives way to a new world where a personal substitute for faith must be found. From the clearly defined but outdated world of the Sacred Heart Convent and Saint Michan's College Moore leads us into a godless universe where men and women struggle to find some illusion that will give meaning to human existence.

NOTES

[1] The only two full-length studies of Brian Moore reflect his dual nationality. Hallvard Dahlie, *Brian Moore* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969) appears in the series, "Studies in Canadian Literature." Jeanne Flood, *Brian Moore* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 1974) appears in "The Irish Writers Series."

[2] "Robert Fulford Interviews Brian Moore," *The Tamarack Review*, 23 (Spring 1962), 13-14.

[3] "Brian Moore — An Interview Conducted by Hallvard Dahlie," *The Tamarack Review*, 46 (Winter 1968), 17-18.

[4] *Ibid.*, 20-21.

[5] Moore points out the parallel between Bernard's outlook and his own: "When I devised the character of Bernard Rice, I gave him some of my own opinions. The ideas about God's omniscience and omnipotence, for instance" (*ibid.*, 15).

[6] Father Keogh assumes the role of God as he metes out charity and forgiveness to his staff. "The headmaster, who many critics mistakenly took for a kind old man," Moore notes, "is to my mind the very spirit of authoritarianism and Catholicism at its worst. He is *Realpolitik* all the way. He doesn't give a damn for anything but the good of the school. He is the person I think one should be most frightened of" (*ibid.*, 18).

[7] George Woodcock, "Rounding Giotto's Circle: Brian Moore's Poor Bitches," *Odysseus Ever Returning: Essays on Canadian Writers and Writing* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1970), p. 46.

[8] Margaret Atwood, *Survival* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 158.

[9] Moore describes the novel: "Every first novel I'd read, by an Irish writer — well, Sean O'Faolain once said they're all about young men and the novel ends when the young hero gets on a boat and goes to England. I felt that was terribly true, and to write a better book than that you'd have to compete with *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. I felt that had been done. I did write the autobiographical *bildungsroman* type of novel, but I wrote it twenty-five years later, at a fair remove from my own young life. That was *The Emperor of Ice Cream*" (Donald Cameron, *Conversations with Canadian Novelists*, Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1973, II, pp. 69-70).

[10] *Ibid.*, II, p. 66.

[11] *Ibid.*, II, p. 79.

[12] *Ibid.*, II, p. 80.

DIALECT

Pier Giorgio di Cicco

There are wounds we will never touch
swimming through the bright lake of the body.
We near them, and our dreams stand up and
cry.
There are needs we shall never fill,
swimming through the bright lake of the body.
Like a fish, we imagine all sorts of fingers
reaching the light, when what we want is what we held
yesterday, however beautiful it was, we are ready to
forgive it,
and say we are coming, we have bare feet, we are afraid
of nothing; open your arms, son of man,
all five senses shut, and waiting for the screaming to begin.

GEORGE JONAS

Interviewed by Linda Sandler

SANDLER: It occurs to me that you're a distant cousin of someone like Sir Walter Raleigh — an adventurer and a man of the world who sometimes brought his intelligence and passion to the writing of poetry.

JONAS: I'm not acquainted with Raleigh, but it's true that my life is apart from poetry. Poetry is not my whole existence.

SANDLER: Is that Byron?

JONAS: Yes. *Love is a thing from man's life apart, it is woman's whole existence.* And insofar as Byron is right, and certainly in his period he was right, I am a poet in the way of a man, not in the way of a woman. You see, it's very curious. Poets bore me. I have no idea what moves them, or what their problems are. I like poetry, obviously, but I find that the preoccupations of most living poets are very alien to me.

I don't think that you could know your average poet for ten minutes without learning the fact that he is a poet. I don't care how superficial an acquaintance you are; you might be his greengrocer, and you would know he was a poet. There's no point in mentioning names, because this embraces nine tenths of the poetic community.

I belong to that other one tenth. A lot of people have known me for ten years; they have been in daily contact with me, and they have no idea that I write and publish poetry. And I could easily envisage spending a whole evening in conversation with you without necessarily raising the subject of poetry. But I would be distressed if somebody said to me, You're not a professional poet, *and that is the problem with your writing.*

SANDLER: People want their poets to be dedicated. Is that it?

JONAS: Do you know George Faludy? If you knew George Faludy you'd discover a person for whom very little matters in life besides art and history and philosophy. He is genuinely uninterested in the politics of literature — who publishes what and how to get readings. He couldn't care less about those things. He's very happy whenever he's invited to read, of course. You pay him two hun-

dred dollars and he's thrilled, he won't believe it. You're paying him for what he'd be doing anyway, reading and writing poems! And he writes poems of immense beauty and skill in Hungarian. I only wish one could do justice to him in English. Faludy's attitude and aptitude coincide absolutely, but I firmly believe that his greatness lies in the immensity of his *aptitude*. The intensity of his love for poetry is a mere coincidence.

The attitude of a man like Tolstoy, on the other hand, was decidedly anti-art. Tolstoy would never have regarded himself as an *artist*. He would have regarded himself as an *aristocrat* and a *moralist*. Count Leo Tolstoy had an obligation. He would spit on a writer. Writer! What is that? A clown? He had zilch respect for art, but of course an immense, divine aptitude. And this is why I think that the quality of a writer has very little to do with his reverence for art.

SANDLER: I remember that when Pat Annesley interviewed you for *The Telegram* in 1970, she was surprised by your aristocratic coolness. She said something about your being the most urbane and controlled adult Canadian male since Pierre Trudeau.

JONAS: That may have been a compliment. At that time Trudeau was well liked. But you see, there are all sorts of mystiques that people associate with me. There is the mystique of aristocracy, whereas in fact I'm middle class; there is the mystique of coolness, whereas in fact I'm passionate; there is the mystique of cynicism, whereas in fact I'm soft-hearted.

If anybody misleads people, it's me, so this is not a complaint. If I projected the image that Susan Musgrave projects, they'd probably accept that. I could walk around in the most languid fashion and be dreamy and vague and helpless. Chances are, people would accept that.

SANDLER: There's another mystique deriving from your early poems. In *The Absolute Smile* the poet comes across as being terribly bored by his sexual conquests.

JONAS: It is perfectly true that in my routine European way, I will verbally make a pass at absolutely every woman who moves, regardless of looks, age, and my intentions. I was raised in a culture where it would have been a positive offence not to do so. In Hungary you kiss a woman's hand; you indicate, by a combination of verbal and physical means, that unless you immediately have sexual relations with that woman, your life will be ruined. And you do that to your grandmother. It's meaningless. In Canada, since it is not routinely done, I have received a wide variety of responses ranging from astonishment to immediate acceptance.

SANDLER: Let's deal with the vexing question of your origins. It seems you're bored with being labelled "Hungarian," having lived in Canada for twenty years.

JONAS: I find it such a stumbling block when people try to approach my poetry in this way. It's worth noting that I was born in Hungary, but it's not worth

getting hung up on. Certainly, there are more important things to say about Joseph Conrad than that he was a Pole who wrote in English.

SANDLER: Hugh Hood once characterized Hungarian emigrés as "swashbuckling rogues who haunted grand hotels."

JONAS: Well, there's no reason why Hugh Hood should know anything about Hungarians. I know very little about Indonesians.

But if Hugh Hood is referring to the type of Hungarian *he* would be likely to meet in Canada, he's not altogether inaccurate. In this century a Hungarian might go to North America if he was part of a persecuted minority, or if he was a penniless peasant. If he was middle class, he was probably fleeing from the law. There was a standing joke about this. "He went to America" was the equivalent of saying, "He embezzled funds." At the time there was no extradition treaty between the two countries, so if you were in trouble you went to America or you went to jail. These were your choices. Some preferred jail, but some chose America. So you could conclude that middle class Hungarian emigrés are swashbuckling adventurers.

And then there are the political refugees, and they are often adventurers, inspired by the same love of excitement as the criminal. You have to have a certain temperament to enter the political or criminal world.

SANDLER: Would your poetry have been different if you'd never left Hungary?

JONAS: I have a feeling that poetry comes more from the inside than from the outside. I'm not a great believer in environmental determinism, beyond the obvious effects. I doubt if I would have been very different in the Middle Ages. Obviously, my idiom would have been different.

SANDLER: The idiom of your first book is the idiom of a exile, something like T. S. Eliot's.

JONAS: I think I would probably have expressed myself in that idiom even if I had not been geographically uprooted. Franz Kafka is an obvious example. This is a century of great migrations, not only of the body but also of the soul, and displacement is the common theme of many poets.

SANDLER: Can I retract that question and ask you this: what kind of audience would you have had in Hungary?

JONAS: That is altogether a different question. If I had remained in Hungary and sold out to the party, my audience would consist of party poets and bureaucrats. If I had remained in Hungary and not sold out to the party, I would have the whole country for my audience. My poems would be circulated in manuscript form, perhaps, but my audience would be far larger than the audience for Rod McKuen, say. I would be known to as many people as used to watch the CBC programme, "This Hour Has Seven Days."

The poet has a political role in a communist country. In Canada, poetry does

not substitute for political editorials or for underground newspapers, so that his audience consists mainly of poetry enthusiasts and apprentice poets.

SANDLER: Your Canadian audience has been quite wary of you. One *Telegram* reviewer was quite turned off by what he called your detachment from the vicissitudes of ordinary life.

JONAS: Yes. *The Telegram* had one half-wit reviewing my first book and another reviewing my second book. By the time my third book appeared, *The Telegram* was no longer in business. There is a current trend in literature that seems to regard stridency, indeed *sweatiness*, as evidence of good faith. Anything that is not wearing its heart on its sleeve, or that isn't earnestly obvious, is regarded as being too detached from suffering human existence. There's a reason for this cult of earnestness. Right now, people are disenchanted with the intellect. They feel that raw emotions might save us. And we have, in positions of literary power, people whose tastes are about as refined as an elephant's hide.

SANDLER: You once wrote to Michael Yates on the subject of your apparent cynicism, didn't you?

JONAS: Yes. You see, many people have the ability to equate their own desires with absolute morality. Everybody is acquainted with the type of person who will say that homosexuality is obviously wrong because it's disrupting the family or something like that. But can you imagine someone saying, *I want homosexuality to be outlawed because it makes me uncomfortable*? Nobody will say that. People want a moral backing for their opinions. And they are very comfortable with hypocrisy, but they are most uncomfortable when they encounter a lack of hypocrisy.

If I want something very badly, I'm capable of saying, simply, *I want it*. And if you say in print, as I have said, *I want such and such, but I've no idea whether it's good for mankind or not*, then people will say that you have a cynical bent of mind.

The syntax of "I want" — the statement without the justification — perhaps belonged to a more aristocratic mode of life. People can no longer make that grand demand. A relatively short time ago, the idea of going out and conquering was noble and good. People could say quite openly, *Let's go and conquer Madagascar*. It was just fine. People have not stopped conquering by a long chalk, they conquer left, right and centre. But now they call it "liberation". I have no patience with this. I don't endorse conquest, but I believe that conquest should be called by its right name. This is not cynicism, but realism.

SANDLER: Do you think that the current of opinion is changing? *Cities* is a realist's view of civilization and it was well received in 1973.

JONAS: In the late sixties, I was intensely unfashionable. It's not that I was swimming against the current, because I was swimming in an entirely different river . . . God knows I was not alone. Robertson Davies, who is probably the most

intelligent writer in Canada, was equally unfashionable. I'm not suggesting that my achievements are anything like his, but my approach to life is somewhat similar — in spite of the fact that he is old Ontario and Celtic Wasp.

I'm virtually certain that any critical acceptance of my work will be due, not to a cognition of its intrinsic merit, but to a change in fashion. This doesn't please me, but who am I to quarrel with fashion if it goes in my favour?

SANDLER: Critics have said that you brought an urban awareness to Canadian poetry. Do you have any idea why there's so little civil poetry here?

JONAS: I've often wondered about this — especially since the population of Canada, in common with the population of most Western countries, lives mainly in cities. It's very mysterious.

Look at young poets. They instinctively turn to the heavenly bodies for inspiration. When they are slightly more sophisticated, they will turn to nature; they get all rural, when in fact their experience is no more rural than mine. Even if they have never been north of Bloor Street, they will lapse into nature talk. Why? The only explanation that occurs to me is that the traditional imagery of poetry is rural, because social life has been rural for the most part of recorded history. And since most poets are not terribly original, they are quite content to work within a traditional poetic mode.

SANDLER: Someone compiled a recipe for Canadianism: mountains, three trees and a cow. Do you think city poetry is generally considered unCanadian?

JONAS: People argue that although Canada is now largely urban, nature looms large in the national psyche, and the city does not. Now I like nature as much as the next person. I can even imagine being inspired by a tree. A perfectly genuine inspiration can come from the heavenly bodies, even. But I personally believe that the exclusive concentration on nature is attributable to poverty of the imagination.

I think it's unfortunate that so many Canadian writers are preoccupied with discovering their identity, and with proving themselves. The mainstream is wherever you happen to be; your achievements are whatever you happen to achieve, and opening up the Canadian wilderness, I believe, equals all the glory of conquering and losing and reconquering Italy. So many Canadians waste time defending themselves against the snidest and most superficial and unworthy opinions of Europeans and of Americans. They produce "cause literature," which is really a waste product. Do you remember the famous persiflage in Richler's *Duddy Kravitz*, where the guy establishes a newspaper for epileptics? *Did you know that Julius Caesar was an epileptic*? CanLit has a tendency to descend to that level. *Did you know that Percy Faith was Canadian*? One can understand this obsession, but one can only call it a pathological condition. Who has time for things like that?

SANDLER: What are the questions that interest you as a poet? You often use religious terms to talk about civilization or even love.

JONAS: The poet's concern is often the same as the religious philosopher's concern. The poet attempts to ask what seems an essential question — one concerned with being and existence and all the rest. And it so happens that religion is the single human pre-occupation that concerns itself with essential questions.

SANDLER: You're not a poet who makes much use of your daily life, are you?

JONAS: No. And without belittling the poet who finds grist for his poetic mill in his daily life — God knows it's a free country — I can't see myself writing a poem about something I did yesterday. I've never felt that anything I've done was necessarily of poetic interest. Mind you, even if I did feel that, I couldn't make a poem out of it. Most of the things I've done, most of the places I've been, most of the things I've seen, would not inspire me. I don't sit down at my desk because it's Wednesday and it's eight o'clock and I still haven't written a poem. I write a poem when a poem demands to be written. And it's fairly rare.

SANDLER: What's involved in the process of writing?

JONAS: To some extent a poem writes itself. I feel almost as though I were the recorder of someone else's thoughts. I don't actually hallucinate, I don't hear a voice — nevertheless, somebody else is dictating the lines. Then it is done, and sometimes the whole thing dissipates; I can't do anything with it, and I tear it up. At other times the poem is there in rough form, and I rely on whatever inspiration I might have and whatever craft I might know to give it a more accurate form. Primarily, I'm after clarity. Obscurity is anathema to me. If you read my poem and you say, *That's kind of obscure* — then I have failed. What's the point of an obscure poem? My whole life is obscure. Everything is obscure. When I write a poem I want to make sense, to achieve some clarity; to capture a thought, a feeling, an impression, an indefinable sensation. Fishing in eternity and coming up with a fish — that's the whole point.

SANDLER: You have a series of poems set in taverns and cafés —

JONAS: That's very European. Poets usually wrote in cafés in Hungary — bars were almost unknown. You went to a nightclub for entertainment and you went to a café to write. I didn't frequent cocktail lounges until I came to Canada, actually.

SANDLER: Tell me about the cocktail waitress in "Te Deum on Yonge Street." Why did that poem demand to be written?

JONAS: I recall the making of that poem more than I recall the making of any other poem because the process was more conscious than usual. I was listening to Verdi's *Te Deum*, I think it was, and reading the words of the text. I was wondering if I could write a modern *Te Deum*, using the Latin text as the skeleton of

the poem. I recalled a cocktail waitress who had executed her job with special grace, in a way that seemed a hymn of praise, and it occurred to me that any living creature is capable of praising God in her own way, and I wrote this Toronto *Te Deum*.

Had I been a frequenter, not of cocktail lounges, but of Chinese laundries, it's quite possible that a Chinese laundress would have brought on this impulse to write a poem. And it's also possible that had I been a fan of Mick Jagger, instead of using the words of the *Te Deum* I would have used the words of "Sticky Fingers." Being the kind of person I am, I happened to hit on these two devices.

SANDLER: You've mentioned that you're also capable of writing a poem on command, so presumably craft is as important to you as inspiration.

JONAS: You can't call yourself a poet unless you can write a Petrarchan sonnet on the glories of the cow, if necessary. But that's an exercise, and it shouldn't be confused with poetry.

One of my quarrels with contemporary literature is that so many writers are obsessed with their tools. You have to master your tools, there's no question about it — but that is Step One. Once you learn how to play the piano you don't look at your fingers.

The European modernism of the twenties didn't hit North America until after the war and its reverberations (especially in Canada, where things reverberate for a hell of a long time) are still being felt. In Canada we have little secondary and tertiary waves emanating from the great Berlin storm, and we have Black Mountains and Yellow Mountains, and there is a whole generation of youthful innocents who are terribly preoccupied with technique. They are all looking at their fingers instead of playing the piano. And the audience quite wisely pays little attention to them, because the audience wants to hear music.

SANDLER: It's boring for you, having to talk about poetry, isn't it?

JONAS: It's very curious. I don't know how to put it. I can be bored by poetry in exactly the same way as a cartoon husband in *The New Yorker*, whose wife is dragging him to the opera, and the poor guy is out of his mind with tedium, the prospect of tedium is distending his pores . . . That is the extent to which I can be bored with poetry. On the other hand, nothing can give me the ecstasy that poetry can. I'm not a religious person, and not given to mysticism of any but a cerebral kind. For me, poetry comes closest to providing a transcendental experience.

SANDLER: Can we talk about politics? There's a poem in *The Absolute Smile* where you ask, *What do men die for?* It's about Christian Montpelier, Captain of the Guard.

JONAS: I'm trying to remember the impulses behind the poem . . . I was looking at a footnote in a book about the Napoleonic War, about a man of the people

who fought for Napoleon, and I was wondering whether the ostensible cause for which Montpelier died at Waterloo — the glory of Napoleon or of the French Empire — really had much to do with it. What was his real motive for fighting? And why did my contemporaries in Hungary surrender their lives? That is the question I was trying to answer — and indeed, I am still trying to answer it.

SANDLER: How did you get involved with the Young Communists?

JONAS: I guess I felt that the world was an imperfect place. As I understood it at the age of thirteen, the Marxist system was the perfect solution for an imperfect world. And since I wanted the world to be perfect, it seemed logical for me to join the Young Communists. It took me two or three years to realize that communism was not making the world better, it was making it worse.

SANDLER: What did Young Communists do?

JONAS: We did most of the things that the Hitler Jugend did. We had an endless series of parades and meetings, painting cultural halls and politicizing peasants — that was ninety per cent of it. But there were worse things. The slogan at that time was FIGHT CLERICAL REACTION, and as a child of fourteen I took part in the forcible evacuation of a nunnery. We descended on the nuns like a gaggle of geese, and we ranted and raved and cajoled — danced madly around a few Catholic nuns while they gathered up their possessions and left the building. It was a Red Guard type of activity — a mobbing action.

And there were related activities: I volunteered to assist in the deportation of persons, many of them elderly, who, I was told, were enemies of the people. I loaded trucks with their belongings and drove them to resettlement areas in the countryside. These things are horrible in retrospect, but I can't honestly say that they awakened me to the evils of communism. I was convinced that what I was doing was absolutely right. God knows, I was a mindless and disruptive barbarian, and my only excuse was my extreme youth.

SANDLER: And in 1956? What did you do in the Hungarian Revolution?

JONAS: Not a helluva lot. It was a general uprising and I did all the normal uprisy things, dashing around and so forth. I was by then no longer a Young Communist, but a young writer among other young writers. We talked a lot, attended meetings and drew up a programme of demands — the famous Eighteen Point Programme which was published in the *Literary Gazette*. We demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops, the abnegation of the Warsaw pact, the destruction of the personal file system, and so on — it's well documented. We demanded things that, in any Western country, would be considered the rock bottom requirements for social existence.

There was a very intense two week period of fullscale war — not nation-wide, but confined mainly to Budapest. The casualties were high — but not nearly as high as they would have been in Toronto in a similar situation, because the Hun-

garians are a war-wise people. There is, for example, an art to crossing a street which is under gunfire and the Hungarians are practiced in this art. It's a very simple art, perhaps, but if you don't have it you are liable to get shot.

And, you know, when you find yourself in that kind of situation, you do whatever seems right at the time. You fight whomever you need to fight, and you take whatever actions are necessary to preserve your life. Do you think that we had any quarrel with those Russian peasants who thought they had been sent to Cairo? We had no quarrel with them. There were people who tried very hard to convince some soldiers from the Second Division of the Ukrainian Army that they were in Budapest fighting Hungarian communists, and that this was the Blue Danube, not the Suez Canal. I didn't want to shoot those poor bastards. But I wanted even less to be shot by them; and when you see a tank coming down the road you have no time to be compassionate.

In 1956 I was not fighting, I was running. If I had thought for one minute that the Russians wanted to annihilate the Hungarian people, I might have felt it was my duty to die with them. But the Russians were not interested in genocide, only in imperialism. And I did not feel it was my duty to live under the system they imposed.

SANDLER: And so you came here. What kind of country were you expecting?

JONAS: I expected very little. You must remember that I came to Canada as a refugee. I did not, as so many European immigrants did, come to Canada expecting to find a perfect society or perfect happiness, or to make my fortune. I was looking for relative freedom, relative happiness, and a relatively civilized life. And I can certainly say that I have found these things.

SANDLER: In "Civil Elegy" you say that no city really exists until it has known war.

JONAS: I believe that completely. A city is forged by the experience of war. Indeed, urban existance originates in the need to create a defensive unit, a fortification. A nation too, arises from a warlike mentality, and I don't think that Canada would have to search for its roots if it had to fight for them. I'm not saying that war is a good thing, I do not endorse war. I simply make these observations.

Medical people have observed that in the concentration camps of Auschwitz there were few psychiatric problems or ulcers or suicides. No one in his right mind will conclude that Auschwitz was therefore of benefit to humanity. But one can nevertheless see that certain problems are caused by peace and prosperity. Strife is part of the human condition and it has certain values. I think that these things have to be faced and accepted. I don't believe that you can possibly improve the human condition if you're not willing to face it. This is the very opposite of cynicism.

SANDLER: I've heard you described as a political liberal and I must say I was surprised.

JONAS: I would describe myself as a liberal in the tradition of the eighteenth century *philosophes*. I'm very much in favour of all kinds of freedoms. I can hardly think of a freedom I might not be in favour of — with the exception of the freedom to disrupt somebody else's life, or the freedom to prescribe for someone else. But I tend to think of our society as something which might be improved, rather than something which ought to be destroyed. My initial bias is in favour of permanence, and I suppose I am conservative in this sense.

I don't believe in closing my mind to the evidence of history. I'm too empirical, too pragmatic, to be able to behave in an entirely ideological fashion; and quite simply, I do not see a better alternative to our present society. I see a large number of *worse* alternatives.

What intrigues me is that we should begin to question the values of our civilization precisely at the moment when it is in a position to do some good to mankind. Western liberalism has taken centuries to reach the point when it can begin to implement certain ideals of justice, certain humane values. But now we say that liberalism has lost its revolutionary fervour, that the mills of justice grind too slowly. We want to destroy the whole structure and go back to zero. Our civilization must always be in its childhood.

I have no doubt that in a few centuries Africa and Soviet Russia will have attained a level of civilization comparable to ours. But what we definitely know is that the first few centuries of every revolution in human history will be years of oppression and of total intellectual darkness.

If I wanted to improve on God's creation I would try to find some method of ensuring the continuity of human knowledge and experience. The wisdom of the first revolutionaries would be reincarnated in these youngsters who claim to care for human values, but who are always ready to plunge us back into darkness.

SANDLER: Does that imply a scepticism about social engineering?

JONAS: I am not sceptical about social reform. I am sceptical about total reform. You see, the best you can achieve in this world is fairness. The scales are somehow in balance in the middle and if you're trying to be better than fair, you will be worse. This is why I am not a socialist any longer, quite apart from what we've learned about Marxism in practice.

If you know any history at all, you must see that certain societies were more conducive to the expression of evil than other societies. And therefore it's nonsense to say that social engineering has no significance. But it's also nonsense to say that the minute you have your ideal society, all problems will disappear. How could they possibly disappear? If human nature were inclined towards perfection, the ideal society would have evolved long ago.

I have never believed that you should therefore go along with the worst injustices. You can most certainly feed a hungry child without upsetting the grand design of the universe, or you can strike for fair wages in the textile industry, or you can fight against Hitler. I'm not suggesting that because human attempts to change the world are futile, *Why fight against Hitler?* No. I have no trouble fighting against Hitler. But having done so, I don't try to make a perfect world. Because I will then make a world of Hitlers.

SANDLER: Going back to art: You once said that it has become so peripheral that it doesn't attract bright people any more. Can you still take the value of art for granted?

JONAS: I may have expressed myself inaccurately — I don't think that art is any more peripheral than it has ever been. The arts are simultaneously the most and the least important facets of society. On the one hand, they have always been frills because what matters in any given society is how much power you have, how much wealth. And the artist — well, he's just the guy who's going to write about the prince. He eats in the kitchen with the servants.

But when you think of a bygone age, you can only think of it in terms of its art. If you talk about the late eighteenth century, what flits through your mind is a melody by Mozart. The late eighteenth century is gone. Nothing besides art remains.

SANDLER: So what does art lack? Why do intelligent people gravitate away from it and towards law, science, or whatever?

JONAS: The arts are no longer the leading edge of our civilization and so the keenest minds in our society are unlikely to choose art as their discipline. Some time ago, if you were a really smart guy, you would occupy yourself with philosophy and art even if you went into the church. Art was probably the best medium for exercising your mind. You wouldn't go into law, because law was a set of arbitrary regulations imposed by the prince; science was haphazard, and mixed with superstition.

There's been a radical shift in the last one or two hundred years. Today, if I open *The Ontario Report* and I read a judgment on a constitutional or a criminal case I encounter considerable brilliance — a capacity for logic, a capacity for judgment that I just don't find in the arts. And I would find the same qualities in a biologist's research paper.

I don't regret that I write poetry, but I regret very much that I work in the arts. As an administrator of the arts, I find myself in the company of some of the dumbest people of my civilization.

SANDLER: What's the current value of art?

JONAS: Art is very powerful. What is its power? I can only express it in quasi-mystical terms, as some kind of transcendental experience. The only thing that

actually gives me a *high* is poetry or something akin to poetry — music, ideas, epigrams, a bit of well written history.

One of the problems is that people note the power of art and they assume that it can be used to instil morality in people. Art *does* have some kind of moral influence, but not so crudely and directly as people assume. You know? *If you play your kids Mozart and you talk to them about Dostoevsky, they will vote against the Spadina express way.* You don't ship wheat to India because you are given a steady diet of Thomas Mann, or even Camus. Art will not make people more peaceful, more altruistic, more compassionate. And the funny thing is, the same people who assume that art can work for the moral good would scream and rage at those who say that art can corrupt innocent minds. The very person who reads Tolstoy to his kids at bedtime for their moral edification will rage against the prosecutor who wants to ban pornography.

SANDLER: What about the failures of contemporary art? The experimental novel nobody reads, poems that are of no interest to anyone but the poet and his friends —

JONAS: We've heard about the failure of the novel on and off for many years. I know what people mean when they say that, but never before in the history of mankind has so much money been made by selling so many stories to so many readers.

Universal literacy and leisure have changed the market, that's all. In the not-so-remote past, your illiterate could not read and write. Today, your illiterate can — and very often will — read and write. You have an immense reading public which is not more advanced, emotionally and intellectually, than its great grandfather — except that its great grandfather would never have dreamed of picking up a book. He didn't have the time, he didn't have the money, it just wasn't done. He went to the country fair and gawked at the sword eaters. Nothing has changed since then, except that this man's descendants read books.

Literature gears itself to this market. A publisher is after all in the business of making money. If he knows that one book can sell in millions and another only in hundreds, why should he not concentrate on producing the first kind? For him, basically, a book is just ten thousand dollars worth of paper and ink.

SANDLER: Well . . . there are better ways to get rich — especially in Canada.

JONAS: Yes, there are. Although — I'll tell you something. Everybody wails about the economic hardships of the arts, but culture is big business. Very big business. For everybody except the artist who is the primary producer.

You are talking to me now in my role as one of the primary producers of art. As a poet, my income does not represent one tenth of the income I derive from being a secondary or tertiary dispenser of culture. I can make a good living being an administrator of culture, or an interpretive artist if I direct a play.

Let me emphasize that I am not complaining. I'm describing.

There is an immense amount of money available, generally out of the public purse, for so called high art. And of every million dollars which the public spends on high art in this country, nine hundred thousand goes for its administration, its promotion, its cataloguing, its popularization. Maybe one hundred thousand goes for its creation. And these proportions are wrong.

As for the artist: if, for any reason, an artist finds common ground with a large audience and pulls in millions of dollars — that's fair game. If he refuses to do that, he has only himself to blame. Or not to blame. He can proudly say, *I'm starving and I couldn't give my books away, let alone sell them!*

I don't believe that I am the greater poet or person because I have utterly failed to make contact with a wide public. That is a matter of complete indifference, as far as the quality of my work is concerned. Some of the greatest contemporary writers have a wide public and some of them have no public whatsoever. Conversely, some of the most ridiculous hacks have an enormous public and some of them have deservedly no public at all. If I could, without compromising anything, find a wide audience, I think I would deserve every penny and all the acclaim I might enjoy.

SANDLER: What about your poem, "The Television Producer's Vision," about how boring it is to work for a mass audience?

JONAS: I was a bit saddened by this common experience: here you have a young man with a vision, and he ends up painting advertising posters or inventing ads for Toronto Hydro. There is a great chasm between your first vision and your actual achievements within any artistic medium. And the more you get involved in art for mass consumption, the more you are haunted by the purity of your original vision.

I have little faith in television. The electronic media reward mediocrity, not quality and intelligence. If I, as a producer, were looking for a star host, I would cast someone like Patrick Watson before a woman of genius like the late Hannah Arendt, because Watson would look much smarter on the screen. If you put the two of them side by side on a platform in front of television cameras, nine tenths of the audience would conclude that Patrick Watson is the more intelligent of the two.

SANDLER: But she would rip him to shreds in a debate —

JONAS: No. Because the minute Watson felt out of his depth he would ask a very dumb, superficial journalistic question. He would ask, *Is it right for Israelis to bomb Palestinian refugee camps?* He would ask a sharp question which doesn't cut to the depth of a millimetre but leaves an obvious gash in the debate. And Hannah Arendt might throw up her hands in despair — she is talking about the

movement of ideas in Western civilization. What can she say to this question? And the audience would conclude that Watson had defeated Arendt.

SANDLER: Didn't you enjoy writing the TV libretto for "The Glove" — your comic opera — and seeing it performed on television?

JONAS: I enjoyed that a great deal — I like sophisticated light entertainment. What disillusions me is having to make a crude, stupid, earnest statement, or to oversimplify a complex issue so that it can fit into the television tube — which is a very, very narrow tube indeed.

One of the problems with television is that is specializes in sham magic. Confused thinking is not magic. Confused emotions and moral confusion are not magic. Stridency is not magic. The absence of thought is not magic, but dumbness. I loathe sham magic; I want my magic to be real. "The Glove," you see, is *real* magic. And it's perhaps the most civilized form of art, because it works on several levels; kids can enjoy it, but you have to know something about opera and poetry to appreciate it fully.

"The Glove" is a game — it's high camp. It has no metaphysical significance, perhaps — but God, it's a lovely game! Magic, whether it is complex or simple, is very powerful. That's what poetry is all about. And if you did shows like that all the time you would not be far from your original vision.

LEDA'S VERSION

James Harrison

A furtive blow, more like. There was I
Thinking that all he wanted was to take
Bread at my hand, not play ducks and drakes
With me and the course of history. Though why
He should feel that all that flapping would terrify
Me I can't imagine. Brute strength's one thing, fake
Webbed feet and wet feathers another. It makes
Me mad to think about it — lord of the sky
And in just as clumsy a rush as all the rest!
Sad that I could not, at the time, have known
How he knew all along the far-flung cost
Of his sudden whim. Contempt might then have grown
To pity for so incongruous a lust,
And the whole issue been too much to be borne.

DUNCAN'S PASSAGE TO INDIA

T. E. Tausky

IN THE COURSE of the world tour recorded in *A Social Departure*, Sara Jeannette Duncan and her travelling companion, Lily Lewis, arrived in Calcutta in the early months of 1889. Miss Duncan was quick to notice the particular atmosphere created by the absolute separation of rulers and ruled. Even granting her powers as an observer, the character of British rule must have been readily apparent, since she claims to have felt it as soon as she left the boat:

> We had arrived at the dignity of *memsahibs*. We felt this dignity the moment we walked across the gangway and stepped upon India — an odd slight conscious uplifting of the head and decision of the foot — the first touch of Anglo-Indianism.

Sara Jeannette Duncan was indeed destined to be a *memsahib*. In Calcutta she met a museum official named Everard Cotes. Within a few months, she married him and returned to India, which was to be her home for more than two decades.

Both Sara Jeannette Duncan and India changed greatly during those two decades. India moved from relative passivity to passionate and at times violent agitation for self-government; in the final years of Miss Duncan's stay, the authorities finally responded to Indian pressure by granting a measure of reform and removing some of the official and social barriers between "sahib" and "native". Sara Jeannette Duncan herself naturally first responded to India with the emotions of a tourist, dazzled by the colour and variety of the country. Later, her capacity for ironic detachment found its expression in a series of novels which took the British imperial aim seriously, but recorded the failures and frustrations of an idealistic theory forced to depend on "human souls of the human average"[1] for the fulfillment of its aims. Finally, when the Indian movement for independence took a violent form, Miss Duncan became a furious defender of British rule, damning the Indian radicals in a tense melodrama about an assassination attempt.

Her first and last Indian books, especially, are a fascinating record of a society and conception of life that seemed immutable and immortal when Sara Jeannette Duncan stepped ashore in Calcutta in 1889, and was already in an irretrievable decline when she left it.

When she matured into a veteran and somewhat cynical *memsahib,* Sara Jeannette Duncan may have regretted the gushings of the Indian section of *A Social Departure.* In most of the book, a fresh and lively viewpoint compensates for the absence of profound knowledge of the country under discussion. But in India, the British flag and British friends seem to have produced a screened and conventional impression of Indian life, very much like the accounts of other contemporary travellers. Representative Indian figures seem to be part of an exotic tapestry, as in the following description of Calcutta:

> A British city, for the British coat-of-arms shone here and the Union Jack floated there, but a British city with few Britons abroad in it — the throngs in the streets were nearly all Mahommedans, bearded and wearing little white embroidered caps on the sides of their heads, or smooth-faced Hindoos in turbans; all flapping nether draperies, all sleek of countenance and soft of eye. *Chuprassis* [messengers] in long red coats that reached to the knee, and from that to their toes in their own brown skins, hurried hither and thither solemnly with leather bags slung across their shoulders, much burdened by their own importance. *Baboos* [clerks] in flowing white went ceaselessly in and out of the swinging doors and up and down the broad stone steps of the great shipping and merchants' offices; and the streets swarmed with lower creatures.

The condescension evident in the foregoing paragraph makes itself felt wherever Indians are described — in contrast to Sara Jeannette Duncan's admiring view of the Japanese, among whom she lived on terms of greater equality. Indians are to be respected to the degree that they approach the English ideal, as in this remarkable and unironic account of an enlightened barrister and his wife:

> This lady and gentleman, whom we found charming, were as favourable specimens as we could have met of pure natives on the very crest of the wave of progress that is lifting their race to the plane where men struggle and hope and pray as we do — specimens of the class that appreciates and lives up to the advantages of British rule, and is received and liked by the sahib and the membership accordingly.

British society is rarely analyzed, although it is always present as a constricting influence on the narrator. An overawed summary of its virtues is provided in the description of a Viceroy's Evening Party:

> As to the humanity gathered there . . . for actual brilliancy . . . nothing like it could be found out of the capital of the Indian Empire in the whole world. The body of it was, of course, Anglo-Indian, full of the fascinating oddities of Anglo-Indian speech and intercourse, with just a *nuance* of rich, tropical, easy unconventionality, full of gay talk and laughter with a spice of recklessness in it, full of uniforms and

> personalities and names. Very charmingly indeed do the Anglo-Indian ladies costume themselves, and neither in their clothes nor in their curtseys does one find the stiffness — now the saints give me courage! — that is occasionally laid to the charge of British femininity — but thou shalt not say I did it. Their pallor lends them shadows about the eyes, and an interesting look of ideality; and perhaps it is the climate and the ubiquitous verandah chair that gives them such graceful reposeful ways. In fact, you delightful English people who stay at home haven't a conception of how much more delightful you sometimes become when you leave your leaky little island and get thoroughly warmed and dried abroad.

The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib (1893), Sara Jeannette Duncan's second Indian book, is an account of one of these delightful, fascinating creatures. The novel relates the story of a young English bride's first year in India, as observed by a middle-aged veteran resident about to return to England. This is Mrs. Perth Macintyre's final summation of her protegée:

> Nevertheless, Mrs. Browne has become a memsahib, graduated, qualified, sophisticated. That was inevitable. I have watched it come to pass with a sense that it could not be prevented. She has lost her pretty colour, that always goes first, and has gained a shadowy ring under each eye, that always comes afterwards. She is thinner than she was, and has acquired nerves and some petulance.... Her world is the personal world of Anglo-India, and outside of it.... I believe she does not think at all. She is growing dull to India, too, which is about as sad a thing as any.... She has acquired for the Aryan inhabitant a certain irritation, and she believes him to be nasty in all his ways. This will sum up her impressions of India as completely years hence as it does today. She is a memsahib like another.

One could hardly ask for a more astonishing volte-face within three years. The latter description doubtless contains more truth, just as in every way *The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib* is a wiser, better balanced account of India than *A Social Departure*. One memsahib at least did not have her powers of observation dulled by the Indian experience.

In structural terms, *The Simple Adventures* is a simple book. Sara Jeannette Duncan herself said many of the incidents were suggested by her own experience:

> "It was certainly our own house," Mrs. Cotes replied, "and the neighbours, yes — you remember I talked no scandal about them! — and the garden was like ours as nearly as I could describe it."[2]

The domestic experiences "were just what happens to everybody, modified to suit Mr. and Mrs. Browne."[3] There is an elaborate account of housekeeping and of the servants; chapters are devoted to a honeymoon trip, to a Viceroy's party, to the young couple's first dinner invitation, and so on. Each of these common experiences could be added on like beads to a string. But the string in this case is a thoughtful consideration of the nature of Anglo-Indian life, as it affects two

very different but strongly imagined characters: the norm (Mrs. Browne) and the introspective exception (the narrator, Mrs. Macintyre).

If Helen Browne turns out to be "a memsahib like another", she also begins as a respectable, middle-class, provincial young girl like any other. Her suitor is an equally unremarkable and representative young man, a clerk for a tea firm. The Brownes meet and become engaged in England; their courtship is carried on "in the most natural, simple, and unimpeded manner," although, of course, within the bounds of what a Victorian reader and writer would assume those adjectives might mean. Then Browne returns to Calcutta, leaving Helen with a year to accept contradictory advice from friends, speculate in ignorance about India, and accumulate a trousseau.

When she finally lands in India, Helen undergoes all the ritual experiences of the new arrival. In order to please her husband's friends, she gets married in a more formal ceremony than she would have wished. The young couple go off on a brief and Spartan honeymoon, and then have to face the difficulties of setting up housekeeping, and of becoming involved in the social life appropriate to their station. The rigid hierarchical structure of Anglo-Indian society is revealed in these chapters, in theoretical terms by the comments of the narrator, and in practice by the characters' conversation and actions. Government officials have far more prestige socially than merchants: George Browne can only resort to sarcasm as a means of defence, as in his opinion of *aides-de-camp*, offered when someone else remarks that they have so much to do:

> "Do!" remarked young Browne, with the peculiar contempt mercantile pursuits so often inspire for the army and the civil service in Calcutta. "They order dinner, I believe."

Within government service, minute distinctions of rank are scrupulously observed. The narrator imagines a special government department in charge of measuring prestige:

> [Government] affixes a tag to each man's work and person describing him and all that he does. There is probably an office for the manufacture of these, and its head is doubtless known as the Distributor-General of Imperial Tags to the Government of India.

Mr. Perth Macintyre, the narrator's husband, "has never had occasion to apply for a tag," and one feels in Mrs. Macintyre's remarks some of the resentment, more subtly phrased, that is displayed by George Browne. One of the Brownes' hosts at a dinner party is a senior civil servant with a most impressive tag. This manifests itself in apparent, but only apparent, humility:

> At first sight, Mr. Sayter was a little grey gentleman with a look of shrinking modesty and a pair of very bright eyes.... Custom, however, proved Mr. Sayter's

> modesty to be rather like that of the fretful porcupine, his humility to take amused superior standpoints of opinion, and his eyes to be cast down in search of clever jests that were just the least bit wicked. All of which, in Anglo-India, subtly denotes the tag.

Mr. Sayter takes delight in unnerving Mrs. Browne by hinting of British India's immoral past. In a later appearance, he is given a more important role, as an apologist for British rule. His opponent in this verbal dual is Mr. Jonas Batcham, M.P., a Utilitarian industrialist turned globetrotter. It is clear that Sara Jeannette Duncan shared the universal Anglo-Indian view that nothing but evil could come from uninformed Parliamentarians. Mr. Batcham comes to Calcutta determined to believe labourers are exploited and that Anglo-Indian society is indecent. He is not allowed to prove his assertions, and a whole chapter is inserted to show up his gullibility, and the pompousness and vanity of his character. In attacking Mr. Batcham's theories through his defective character, his inability to defend himself in verbal duels with wise Anglo-Indians, and through manipulation of the plot, Miss Duncan anticipates the methods she uses to assail the credibility of Vulcan Mills, a major character in *The Burnt Offering*, published seventeen years later.

As the novel proceeds, Mrs. Browne increasingly masters Anglo-Indian social customs, and the intricacies of dealing with servants. By the end, as we have already seen, she is a complete memsahib, with all the characteristics of that species:

> She has fallen into a way of crossing her knees in a low chair [the "reposeful ways" Miss Duncan so admired in *A Social Departure*] that would horrify her Aunt Plovtree, and a whole set of little feminine Anglo-Indian poses have come to her naturally. There is a shade of assertion about her chin that was not there in England.

Despite her ordinariness, Mrs. Browne has won the affections of the narrator, who remarks:

> If it is necessary to explain my interest in these young Brownes, which you, I regret to think, may find inexplicable, it lies, I dare say, as much in this departure of ours as in anything else. Their first chapter has been our last.

As *The Simple Adventures* unfolds, we come to see that it is as centrally concerned with the story of the Macintyres as it is with the Brownes. Not only is the reader's view of the Brownes constantly shaped by the amused, world-weary Mrs. Macintyre; the "last chapter" of the Macintyres, their disappearance into the oblivion of retirement and "the warmest south wall of Devonshire" becomes both a comment on the blithe and heedless contentment of the Brownes and a poignant event in its own right.

The importance of the narrator emerges only very gradually. For the first hun-

dred pages, we are aware of a distinctive narrative tone — concise, detached, inclined towards irony — but we know very little about the person behind the voice. Indeed, we do not even find out Mrs. Macintyre's name until p. 124. But then we do get to know her character and situation rather well. Her husband is a senior partner in a successful firm; nevertheless, he is not properly recognized by official society. She is thought to be "patronising and interfering" by some, but does go out of her way to help Helen Browne. Like her creator, she tends to see human character in terms of types, while maintaining a cool and partly sympathetic, partly ironic reserve. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that she is a projection of one aspect of her creator: her narration is nearly always crisp, laconic and amused, very rarely straying into the rhapsodic prose that marks Sara Jeannette Duncan's moments of emotional involvement with her characters.

The only emotion Mrs. Macintyre permits herself is an occasional tragic lament over the unnatural and unappreciated plight of the British in India.[4] Whole episodes are shaped to reflect this theme. The Browne's blundering effort to substitute a kerosene stove for the joys of a fireplace becomes, in the final paragraph of the chapter, a symbol for the alien nature of the British presence in India:

> The old kite that surveyed them always through the window from his perch in the sago palm beside the verandah said nothing, but if they had been intelligent they might have heard the jackals that nightly pillaged the city's rubbish heaps, howling derision at the foolishness of a sahib who tried to plant his hearth-stone in India.

At the moment of the Browne's greatest triumph (the night of their appearance at a Viceregal reception) Mrs. Macintyre draws a gloomy moral:

> How little more than illustrations the men and women have been, as one looks back, pictures in a magic lantern, shadows on the wall! . . . How gay they were and how luxurious, and how important in their little day! . . . And now — let me think! — some of them in Circular Road Cemetery — cholera, fever, heat — apoplexy; some of them under the Christian daisies of England — probably abscess of the liver; the rest grey-faced Cheltenham pensioners, dull and obscure, with uncertain tempers and an acquired detestation of the climate of Great Britain. And soon, very soon, long before the Brownes appear in print, the Perth Macintyres also will have gone over to the great majority who have forgotten their Hindustani and regret their khansamahs. Our brief day too will have died in a red sunset behind clustering palms, and all its little doings and graspings, and pushings, all its pretty scandals and surmises and sensations, will echo further and further back into the night.

If, as Mrs. Macintyre suggests in a passage I have already quoted, the Anglo-Indian experience can be metaphorically described as the pages of a book, the book itself makes no sense and has a tragic ending. The precariousness of life in a tropical climate and the futility of the British attempt to create a miniature parody

of their own civilization under unsuitable conditions has become an allegory of the unreality, purposelessness and tragic ending of human life itself. This theme emerges again in the moving final paragraphs of the novel, which link the fates of Mrs. Browne and Mrs. Macintyre in a lament for British life in India as an aspect of mutability:

> I hope she may not stay twenty-two years. Anglo-Indian tissues, material and spiritual, are apt to turn in twenty-two years to a substance somewhat resembling cork. And I hope she will not remember so many dead faces as I do when she goes away — dead faces and palm fronds grey with the powder of the wayside, and clamorous voices of the bazar crying, "Here iz! memsahib! Here iz!" . . .
>
> So let us go our several ways. This is a dusty world. We drop down the river with the tide to-night. We shall not see the red tulip blossoms of the silk cottons fall again.

MY DISCUSSION of *The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib* did not include any analysis of "native" characters simply because Indians do not exist in the world of the novel, except as picturesque or irritating underlings. In her next six books, Sara Jeannette Duncan remained content to cast Indians in minor roles, usually as loveably childish servants. Finally, in *Set in Authority* (1906), Miss Duncan created a major and relatively sympathetically presented Indian character: a Mahommedan magistrate placed in the difficult position of judging an interracial murder case. *The Burnt Offering* (1910), Sara Jeannette Duncan's final Indian novel, gives several Indian characters an unaccustomed place in the foreground of the novel. Sadly, a developing insight into Indian character is juxtaposed with Miss Duncan's most bitter and explicit repudiation of advanced Indian opinion.

The years separating the publication of Sara Jeannette Duncan's two final Indian novels have been described as "a watershed era":

> Constitutional reforms then fashioned and introduced mark the turning point between the frost of the old raj . . . and the gradual thaw of decentralization and devolution of British power toward the goal of parliamentary self-government for India. The era was one of revolutionary discontent as well as reform.[5]

The effect of these momentous changes on Sara Jeannette Duncan's work is startling. *The Burnt Offering*, like its predecessor, is based on actual events and uses historical figures for characters. But the moral balance and leisurely pace of the earlier novel is gone. *The Burnt Offering* is a quick-paced narrative whose main object seems to be to justify the conservative attitudes of the Anglo-Indian community in its encounter with strange new forces.

The novel is so closely tied to the mood and events of its period that some

understanding of the situation is necessary before any comments can be made on the novel itself. The two new elements in India at this time were the intensification of nationalist agitation (sometimes finding its outlet in violent incidents) and the presence in Whitehall of a Secretary of State for India, John Morley, who was far more sympathetic to the views of Indian leaders than any Viceroy or Secretary for decades. The rash of bombings and demonstrations in several parts of India led to an Anglo-Indian counter-reaction and to the imposition of press censorship and the arbitrary detention of prominent nationalists who were thought by the authorities to be dangerous agitators. A period of extreme tension between 1906 and 1909 was finally relieved by the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 which gave far greater powers to official and legislative bodies on which Indians were represented.

Following her method in *The Imperialist* and *Set in Authority*, Sara Jeannette Duncan selects and shapes current events for her moral purposes. There is no counterpart to Morley in her novel, and the reforms she rather hurriedly thrusts into her final pages are far less sweeping than the actual measures. Even more important is the absence of a moderate nationalist like G. K. Gokhale, a leader of the Indian Congress who exercised a considerable influence on Morley. *The Burnt Offering* therefore gives the impression that there is no middle way between the Indians who are totally integrated into the Anglo-Indian community, and the extreme nationalists.

The two characters in the novel modeled on historical figures represent viewpoints radical enough in Miss Duncan's opinion to deserve bitterly satiric handling. As a spokesman for British advanced thought, she chooses, instead of Morley, Keir Hardie, the pioneer Socialist politician who visited India in the fall of 1907. Her representative Indian nationalist is a character based on Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the advocate of extreme measures in the cause of Indian independence.

The plot shows the sinister influence of these two radicals. The central event is the attempted assassination of the Viceroy, an act strongly encouraged by Ganendra Thakore (Tilak). Just before the attempt is made, Thakore is jailed for sedition, and Vulcan Mills (Hardie) who attempts to speak at a protest meeting is whisked away and out of the country — thereby, in Miss Duncan's judgment, preventing a riot that would have ensued if Mills had been allowed to speak. Joan Mills, Vulcan's daughter, narrowly escapes marriage with Bepin Behari Dey, Thakore's disciple and the foiled assassin. Dey is shot by the police, but not before his bomb causes John Game, the Home Secretary and Joan's unsuccessful suitor, to be thrown out of the carriage carrying the Viceroy. Game, a stoical and heroic defender of the Anglo-Indian order, dies of his injuries within a week. Joan Mills takes a somewhat longer time to realize that her self-sacrifice to the cause of India is no longer welcomed by Dey's friends, who have been frightened into conservatism.

As my summary has indicated, the plot of *The Burnt Offering* is exceedingly melodramatic, more so than the events on which it is modeled. There was an attempt on the life of the Viceroy, Lord Minto, while he was on tour, though it did not result in any loss of life. There is no record, however, of any Viceroy crying out *"Bande Mataram"* (the Indian equivalent of *"Vive le Québec libre"*) and having his audience respond by singing "God Save the Queen". This is the touching sequel to the assassination attempt in *The Burnt Offering.*

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Sara Jeannette Duncan, in this novel, finally allows herself to accept, virtually completely, the attitudes and values of the Anglo-Indian official world. The mixture of sympathy and detachment that seems to characterize her view of the English community in her previous work is swept away by the fear of a fundamental and violent attack upon the principle of British rule.

In fairness, some qualifications need to be stated. Sara Jeannette Duncan was never capable of the hysteria some Anglo-Indians could attain; for example, the *Pioneer*, a prominent newspaper, suggested that "ten [terrorists] . . . be shot for every life sacrificed."[6] Within *The Burnt Offering*, one character, Mrs. Livingstone Hooper, represents the most unthinking reactionary Anglo-Indian position, and is consistently satirized. Also, Miss Duncan's manipulation of the plot is not always as absurd as it seems. By linking Bepin Dey with Thakore, she suggests that Tilak actively supported terrorism. Tilak did in fact recommend a young man named V. D. Savarkar for a scholarship to England, and Savarkar gratefully supplied Tilak with a manual on bomb production, paralleling Bepin Dey's foreign education and relationship with Thakore.[7]

If, however, Miss Duncan's depiction of Tilak is less fanciful than it may at first appear to be, she is certainly unfair to Keir Hardie, her chief satiric target. Tilak is at least treated with respect, as an inspiring and charming, if dangerous and unscrupulous, leader of men. Keir Hardie is shown to be a vain and officious gull. A comparison of *The Burnt Offering* with Hardie's own book, *India: Impressions and Suggestions* (1909) tends to dispel this view of him and reveals much about Sara Jeannette Duncan's own political views.

Hardie's book seems moderate, restrained, and, as far as one can tell, well informed. He seems to look forward to Dominion status for India, but in the short run calls for increasing participation by Indians in their own government, and pleads for "a very little statesmanship, inspired by a very little sympathetic appreciation of the situation" which could "easily set things to rights."

One clue suggests that Sara Jeannette Duncan read Hardie's book. *The Burnt Offering* begins with a striking scene in which Bepin Dey is denied admission to a first-class railway carriage by two abusive white planters, and is rescued by Joan and Vulcan Mills. Hardie describes three such incidents at some length in his book.[8]

If Sara Jeannette Duncan did read Hardie's book, she distorted his opinion and weakened his credibility in her portrait of Vulcan Mills. On pp. 92-94 of the novel, Joan Mills and John Game discuss a visit to the famine district Joan and her father had undertaken with Ganendra Thakore as their guide. It turns out that Ganendra, in his wily fashion, had assembled villagers from all over the countryside to exaggerate pathos and arouse Mills's misguided anger. Hardie was in fact taken to a famine district by Tikal.[9] He does not mention the identity of his guide, but his account is far more restrained than that of Joan Mills. Joan says:

> "One skeleton — I shall see him always! — tried to dig in the sand for the withered rice underneath. He found a little. And he was too weak to eat it, and died with it in his hand — I saw him die. Oh, what a witness!"
>
> "I hope to God you didn't photograph him," said Game, almost roughly.
>
> "I myself couldn't — couldn't. But Mr. Thakore had brought a photographer and told him to do it. And father approved."

Hardie says:

> They brought out for my inspection handfuls of boiled rice, which was being prepared for their one and only meal, and pieces of bread, some made thick like Scotch oatmeal bannocks, and others thin, like ordinary oatmeal cake.

Game patiently explains that the famine has been caused by crop failure. Joan does not know how to refute this argument, but Hardie does:

> If it be urged that I saw them at their worst, owing to the failure of last year's crop, then the reply is that it is only a question of degree, that in normal times they are starved, and that when scarcity comes they have no resources to fall back on.

The only good thing Sara Jeannette Duncan has to say for Mills is that he does not advocate violence. Mills's moderation is the subject of a conversation between Joan and Bepin Dey:

> "He believes there is no sedition" [Bepin says].
>
> "And there is," said Joan steadily. "Of course there is. How could it be otherwise?"
>
> Bepin gave her a look of reverence.
>
> "You are, I truly believe, the more advanced of the two," said he.

As this conversation indicates, Joan, with her greater extremism, is even more villainous than her father in Sara Jeannette Duncan's estimation. Her enthusiasm for all things Indian is seen as a grave defect, leading to the inevitable and unhappy fate of racial inter-marriage.

If Vulcan Mills, Joan, Ganendra Thakore and Bepin Dey are clearly villains,

there is no less certainty about the identity of Sara Jeannette Duncan's heroes: John Game and two other administrators, Michael Foley and Fred Beauchamp, among the Anglo-Indians, and Sir Kristodas Mukerji, a conservative magistrate, his daughter Janaki and his spiritual guide Swami Yadava among the Indians.

Game is a conscientious, idealistic official. It is his misfortune that his romantic feelings are aroused for the first time by Joan Mills, who is too blinded by her passion for Indian nationalism to recognize his human qualities. His vision of their future together contains, unconsciously, all the paternalism of the British administrator:

> "I will explain everything — you will understand everything. You will find a new focus for the affairs of this perplexing country — after all, we are doing our best. You will soon feel that it is your race and your husband who is, who are, doing their best."

As well as refusing Game, Joan twists the knife by informing him that she intends to marry Bepin Behari Dey — a Bengali:

> "You are going to marry a Bengali?" he said. "Which Bengali are you going to marry?"
>
> "Mr. Bepin Behari Dey," she answered.
>
> His mouth took the line with which it was accustomed to confront a new set of circumstances. He looked not so much aghast as alert and inflexible.
>
> "No," he said, "you must not do that."
>
> "Really?"
>
> "I must speak to your father. It is impossible."

The scene as a whole leaves no doubt that Sara Jeannette Duncan's sympathies are with Game, not Joan. Events prove him right, of course: Bepin turns out to have been previously married, to intend using the marriage for propaganda purposes, and finally, to be an assassin.

In one important respect, *The Burnt Offering* is much more daring than any of Sara Jeannette Duncan's previous novels: racial inter-marriage, never so much as whispered about before, here becomes central to the plot. It also appears in another context, Janaki Mukerji's unrequited love for John Game. Game regards Janaki as a valued friend but no more, partly because of his temperamental insusceptibility to love before Joan Mills's arrival, but partly also, one suspects, because of his horror of intermarriage. Joan's engagement does bring about a painful liberalization of his attitudes. Although he spurs on the police to stop the marriage ceremony between Joan and Dey, he also indulges in meditation:

> "If she wanted to marry an Indian," he reflected, "she might at least have chosen a decent fellow. There are plenty of them."

As a lover, Game is a figure of pathos, but after his death he is elevated to the

status of a tragic martyr. Sara Jeannette Duncan delivers what amounts to a funeral elegy, which also serves as a defence of British rule:

> To this official was accorded a funeral which was almost a demonstration of loyalty to the Raj whose servant he was. A thousand students accompanied it, with every sign of sorrow; and it was an extremist politician who called the meeting to discuss how most fittingly and feelingly the memory of his services should be perpetuated by the educated classes of the land which had now no other way of thanking him . . . I find myself lending an ear to the observation of Michael Foley, who said to his wife —
>
> "If it was expedient that one man should die for the people, I fancy, as things have turned out, old John was pleased enough that it should be he."

Michael Foley, the author of the clever comparison of Game to Christ, also serves a symbolic function. He and his wife Lucy represent the kind of bright, pleasant, affectionate, normal young couple who stand for sanity and the continued British presence in India, as opposed to the fanaticism and disloyal Anglophobia of a Joan Mills.

The remaining Anglo-Saxon character of any importance is Fred Beauchamp, the Commissioner of Police for Calcutta. If John Game and Michael Foley represent the wisdom and good will of British rule, Beauchamp stands for the force upon which British authority depends. He is acutely aware of the threat to Anglo-India posed by terrorism, even if the rest of Calcutta basks in complacency. His solution to the terrorist problem seems to be to suspend all civil liberties. He has "a policeman's view [sceptical] of Courts of Justice" and his first act in the novel is to urge, successfully, the suppression of Thakore's newspaper. He calls Vulcan Mills a "damned explosive gas-bag" and says "the Criminal Code isn't big enough to cover our friend." Beauchamp plays a key role in the detention of Mills, as well as in the thrilling cops-and-robbers chase that results in the prevention of the marriage of Joan and Bepin Dey. The tone of these episodes is sadly displayed in a description of Beauchamp's state of mind following his heroic arrest of a middle-aged British Member of Parliament:

> Nor was Beauchamp late for dinner at Government House. He bragged of that a little later, as was natural. . . . As they sat down to their soup the Private Secretary leaned a little forward and looked at Beauchamp across the lady who separated them.
>
> "Got him?" he asked, with just a point of anxiety.
>
> "Got him," replied Beauchamp, with joyous calm.

It is a relief to turn from Fred Beauchamp to a consideration of the three Indian loyalist characters, who reveal Sara Jeannette Duncan's widening human sympathies, rather than her increasing militancy. Sir Kristodas Mukerji is an Indian lawyer in government service whom circumstances place in an ethical quandary.

He is a former schoolmate of Ganendra Thakore, and, beneath his ultra-loyal surface, even has slight and secret sympathy with some of Thakore's views. Yet he has to try Thakore. He finds him guilty, and gives him a harsh sentence — ten years transportation (Tilak, in exactly identical circumstances, was given only six years). His internal conflict results in feelings of guilt after the trial, which manifest themselves as sickness and lassitude.

Sir Kristodas's address to Thakore before passing sentence perhaps admits more about the merits of the independence movement than Sara Jeannette Duncan knew she was conceding. He says that the British authorities have been insensitive to Indians and Indian religion. He admits that, divorced from politics, Thakore's religious emotion might appeal to himself, as well as to others. He can only save himself by insisting upon the ethical responsibility of submitting to authority, even if that authority is alien and contrary to the religious instincts of the people over which it rules.

But if Sir Kristodas appears unsatisfactory as a philosopher, he is, nevertheless, a touching and convincing human figure. His love for his daughter, his contrary impulses toward traditional Indian religion and Western ways, his sad dignity are all sympathetically revealed. His relations with John Game, his closest British friend, are based on mutual respect and affection.

Janaki, Sir Kristodas's daughter, is even more complex in her motivations than her father. When Sir Kristodas was more of a traditionalist, he arranged her marriage in the orthodox fashion. Her "husband" died before the marriage was consummated, and her adolescence was devoted to the mourning ceremonies of a Hindu widow. When Sir Kristodas came to change his views, she was shipped off to Oxford and educated by ultra-liberal friends to be an enlightened Western woman. She returned to India, to fall in love with John Game, and also to contribute financially to the independence movement both Game and her father so bitterly oppose. Finally, when her childhood mentor, Swami Yadava, returns to the Mukerji household after several years abroad, she reverts to traditional ways and also, under Yadava's influence, becomes a spy for the authorities.

With such a variety of cultural influences at war within her, Janaki is, naturally enough, described as being in a state of continual self-doubt and torment. Yet we are also given clear indications that she possesses charm, wit and courage. Her emotions are appropriate to the situations she finds herself in, not hysterical or inexplicable. In short, Sara Jeannette Duncan has given to an Indian character the moral uncertainties and sensitive if not always successful responses to difficult situations that in previous works she had reserved for her most cherished English ladies. The distance from the concept of Indian character in *A Social Departure* is immense.

The final direction Janaki takes, along with her father and Yadava, the decision to abandon the world altogether in favour of wandering religious meditation, has

to its credit that it finally resolves the cultural confusion Janaki and Sir Kristodas both feel. But if the ending satisfies them, it does not satisfy the reader, because of the peculiar role played by Swami Yadava.

Yadava is forced to serve two totally incompatible functions in the novel. On the one hand, he is a seer who brings comfort to his disciples. On the other, he is a spy for the Government, a sort of Oriental Fred Beauchamp, who reports Mills's plans to the police and also keeps a close eye on Bepin Dey and his plots. The absurdity of this role needs no further explanation.

In his more serious aspect, Yadava is used to counter the ideological threat posed by Thakore's self-justification at his trial. Thakore provides a religious basis for Indian nationalism. Sir Kristodas attempts to reply by separating religion and politics. But this is not very convincing, and so Yadava is enlisted to make a religious argument *for* British rule:

> "England is the husband of India. We talk of the Mother as if we had but one parent." He smiled whimsically. "But we are the children of England also. Can we deny it?"

This is indeed whimsy, but Yadava is not through. It turns out that a "free fighting, kingly England" was responsible for taking India. Englishmen are the "white Kshattriyas [warrior caste] and under them the Brahmins could sit and rule and tell their tale of God." England has, however, degenerated under democracy:

> "But from a democraticized England what can we expect?" went on the priest scornfully. "Ideals of the pantry. A husband, I fear, grown indifferent."

It is, presumably, under the patronage of a revitalized and firm British government that the three mystics are able to "tell their tale of God" in the final pages.

Assassination plots, suppression of civil liberties, increasingly violent rhetoric emanating from both radicals and conservatives: it seems that Sara Jeannette Duncan did not have to live in Canada to undergo a Canadian experience. *The Burnt Offering* is interesting enough in itself as a vivid contemporary account of a crucial moment in Indian history; to a Canadian reader it is even more interesting in its anticipation of the emotions aroused by the FLQ crisis.

NOTES

[1] *Set in Authority* (1906), p. 116.

[2] G. B. Burgin, "A Chat with Sara Jeannette Duncan," *The Idler* VIII (August 1895), p. 117.

[3] Burgin, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

[4] This seems to have been a common theme in Anglo-Indian fiction. *Cf.* Susanne Howe, *Novels of Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949): "Novels about India . . . are among the unhappiest books in the language. . . . As in no other novels in the world, homesickness becomes a speciality. Nowhere in literature, one is tempted to believe, is Home spelt with a larger capital letter" (pp. 32, 34).

[5] Stanley A. Wolpert, *Morley and India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 1.

[6] Stanley A. Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), p. 219.

[7] *Tilak and Gokhale*, pp. 168-69.

[8] This similarity is also noticed by S. Nagarajan, in an article published by *Journal of Canadian Fiction* (Vol. III, No. 4) after the present article had been accepted for publication.

[9] *Tilak and Gokhale*, p. 228.

THE TWITTERING MACHINE

John Ditsky

The clockwork of dawn is the toy
of God. Time when illusion's

last bats are flitting, are all
that maintains the dead day's dream

to the sleepless eye and brain.
Already cats creep homeward,

footsore furry windup playthings;
and soon the sun will pop up

bubble-swift (the skirted lady
instead of the umbrellaed man).

Gadgets and toys: watch the key
winding (*you see the machinery work*),

the gears a-whirl. At times, the ill-
oiled system squeaks: is birds.

JOYCE CAROL OATES' FIRST NOVEL

Rose Marie Burwell

ALTHOUGH IT HAS TAKEN REVIEWERS and critics more than a decade to recognize that Joyce Carol Oates is not writing in the mode of the naturalist or the social realist,[1] her first novel introduces the search for self-realization that provides the narrative structure of all Oates' fiction. The true subject of *With Shuddering Fall* is not, as reviewers assumed it to be, madness or violence.[2] It is the complex drive of the human organism toward psychological wholeness which Jung terms individuation,[3] and here Oates holds in uneasy tension the entelechy of personal individuation and the psychologically entrenched power of those institutions which impede it.

Written while the novelist was an undergraduate, the first novel resembles, in many of the perceptions of the two major characters, "The Myth of Sisyphus" as it might be recreated by an autistic high school drop-out — exactly the developmental stage of protagonist Karen Herz. With her racing-car driver lover, Shar Rule, Karen participates in a dream suggesting the extremes to which existential recognition of self-responsibility leads. The structure of the tripartite novel originates in the psychic condition of Karen before, during and after her moral maturation. The short first section takes place in Eden County, the mythical territory in which the second novel and many of the early short stories are set.[4] It reveals Karen in a quiescent, but restless, moral state. The long middle section has as its background the racing circuit towns of Synderdale and Cherry River, presenting the emotional and physical violence with which, for Oates, the self is inevitably created. The brief final section returns to Eden County; leaving ambiguous, but achievable, a consolidation of the moral independence to which Karen aspires.

As the structure of the novel derives from Karen's moral states, so does the psychology of her character originate in a mnemonic pattern through which

reduplicated scenes force her to confront the emotional price of moral dependence. In much the way as the bit of tea-soaked madeleine evokes for Proust's Marcel elements of the past which create a new reality in the present, Karen re-experiences humiliation and suffering and is strengthened in her nascent desire to seize control of her life. Waking on the morning of what, unknown to her, is the day that she will leave Eden County, Karen forces herself up and out of the deep, protective slumber that has immured her since birth — giving to the life where her destiny is shaped by the family and its traditions a dream-like quality. The previous night she had listened to her father reading of the biblical patriarchs whose destinies were manipulated by God himself and had felt keenly the lure of such surety. Karen recalls the visit to a dying neighbour on which she recently accompanied her father. Even when she was a small child, the hermit, Old Rule, had inspired awe in her: she had feared touching the rock that was his seat by the creek. Now his impending death awakens in her a sense of both dread and anticipation. In his junk-filled sickroom, several days ago, Karen was seized with terror at the sight of a trap protruding from beneath his bed. She senses inchoately that he is linked with an unknown destiny that awaits her apart from her existence as the pampered youngest daughter of a back country patriarch.

Before the day ends, Rule's son, Shar, has given Karen a glimpse of that destiny. Shar is thirty; brutal and surly, he has been recalled by his dying father to the hills he fled fourteen years earlier. Accustomed to taking what he wants, and fascinated by the pale golden beauty of Karen who was three years old when he left Eden County, Shar deceives her into accompanying him on an errand. Though Shar has presupposed an innocence in Karen that will necessitate sexual coercion, he unknowingly becomes the tool, and ultimately the victim, of a force compared to which his carnal obsession is whimsy. Karen resists his advances, yet the idea of returning home creates hysteria in her. Seizing the steering wheel, she causes an auto crash that foreshadows, even in the imagery of its voluptuousness, the track smash-up in which Shar will die. The crash triggers a violent confrontation between Karen's father and Shar. As Old Rule's body burns in the cabin his son has ignited, the two battle before it — an encounter that for Karen quite literally ends the old rule and further awakens her from moral somnolence.

Since Karen's earliest memories Shar has symbolized a dark and forbidden world, unknowable to her as the protected daughter of the community's largest landowner:

> Now, a man of thirty, Shar belonged to neither world — not the dim, safe past or the static present . . . he had always been on the periphery of their lives — despised and admired by the children themselves. . . . he now revealed himself as a creature of another species, a stranger. Karen had felt watching her father and Shar at supper . . . a sense of warning, of something unavoidable they must — together — defeat.[5]

On the day he returned to Eden County, Shar had reminded Karen of "... a hawk, a bird of prey that circled the skies". Now, watching her father's futile efforts to force Shar backward into the burning cabin, as though he were driving a demon back into hell, Karen knows that her anticipated destiny is embodied in this struggle. She murmurs, "Never the same again!"

Even as she stands over her father, who has been knocked to the ground by Shar, and hears his command, "Karen — Get him. Don't come to me until you get him. Kill him. Kill him," Karen recognizes her complicity in the action:

> Karen felt that, deep inside, secretly ... she was able to think clearly and sanely. The fault did indeed lie in her, was of her doing: but it originated not in the decision to go with Shar but in her deliberately resisting sleep that morning. That was so — she had pushed against sleep, pushing herself up out of it as though she were moving slowly up through water to the clean air above ... Perhaps she had understood, without really being able to know, that the rejection of her child's bed would lead, after a series of insane, vivid scenes, to the picture of her father lying in the cold mud, bleeding ... how right he was to judge her, to find her guilty!

Although Karen accepts the fact that in willing herself to awake from the dream of childhood she is guilty of her father's injury, and although she pursues Shar as her father commands, finally dictating his death, the recognition of Oates' use of incrementally important memories reveals that Karen's actions derive not from her father's command, but from a force toward self-determination that is hers alone.

The scene before the burning cabin takes place in a context that seems unreal to Karen, like a dream or a nightmare. But as she begins to pursue Shar, her head is clear. These are images of a dichotomy incrementally associated with the struggle to free existence from chance that is the novel's thematic centre. What happens as the result of unthinking acceptance of the cycles established by family, church or nature occurs in the state of dream, fog, insanity or nightmare and is *accident* to the individual who has not reflected and chosen. What happens as the result of sanity or clarity of vision or choice is *freedom*. Karen, significantly, integrates the content of the unconscious, making it a conscious choice when she gives herself to Shar. Following him through the woods, while her father lies unconscious, she ponders, "... if this was not a dream it was closely related to a dream — surely she had dreamed of a man in this wood, a man in any of the woods, awaiting her".

Mnemonic motivation continues as Karen pursues Shar across the frozen terrain of Eden County: the memory which overpowers her is of an incident from her childhood in which she made a moral choice at great cost. She had shocked and offended a male teacher who pruriently sought the details of what boys had done to her on the playground:

> "Tell me what he does," the teacher said.
> "He does this!" Karen said impatiently. She pulled the skirt of her dress up and stared at the teacher's alarmed look. "I'm not ashamed of anything," she said, letting the skirt fall back . . . "Now you leave me alone too!" Even in the face of the knowledge that she would be completely alone at school after this, she could not help but feel a sense of bitter joy . . . In spite of her anger she knew somehow that she had done right, and that the teacher, shaken and ashamed, recognized it.

Now, pleading silently for the forgiveness of her father, whose rule she has abandoned in order to further forge her own moral universe, Karen follows Shar into the rat-infested barn where they make love. On the penultimate page of the novel, Karen, who has suffered a psychic collapse after Shar's death, analyzes the alternatives now open to her in what doctors call her "self-cured" state. She realizes that in this initiation lay the germ of Shar's death:

> I can accuse him [her father] of my own crime and guilt and with enough hysteria I can convince myself that I had no part in what I did — that the filthy way that strange man made love to me the first time had nothing to do with that man's death. . . .

Together Karen and Shar leave Eden County. Shar, who denies any responsibility for the confrontation with Herz, asserting, ". . . it isn't the end of anything . . . It's only now begun." When the mid-section of the novel opens, two and one-half months later, Shar has just begun to comprehend the meaning of his own disclaimer. Gradually he is being forced out of the moral passivity from which Karen arose on the morning of the day he struck her father. Here, in the racing-circuit towns of Synderdale and Cherry River, the two undergo the violent moral maturation that assigns to Shar the fulfillment of the novel's strange title and creates in Karen a consciousness which will ultimately transcend the knowledge that is its content. The title comes from Meredith's "Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn," suggesting in its rhetorical context the positive and consummative nature of Shar's death:

> Death shall I shrink from, loving thee?
> Into the breast that gives the rose,
> Shall I with shuddering fall?

In Synderdale Oates introduces Max, Shar's sponsor, a bloated, voyeuristic entrepreneur who would be psychopomp to Karen and Shar though his own existence exemplifies a moral stance diametrically opposite theirs. Max, whose name, given its German pronunciation — mocks — indicates his moral callousness, insists he is arbiter of ethical responsibility while insulating himself from accountability by self-deception, over-indulgence, hypochondria and pseudo-piety. Impotent, Max has vicariously shared Shar's willingly recounted sexual exploits

for fourteen years — inhibiting moral awareness in the younger man to nourish his own lust for omnipotence and omniscience. Like the gods whom Sisyphus affronted, Max has robbed Shar (and would rob Karen) of his dignity by assuming responsibility for his actions. When Shar realizes that in leaving Eden County he had not escaped one mode of life for another, but merely traded his legal father for Max, he recognizes Max as an aspect of that imago in which Karen had perceived Old Rule — as a rock protruding from a creek. Such figures always create obstacles around which the life of the individual, if it is not to be dammed or diverted, must cut its own channel. The image also reflects, albeit unconsciously, the authority of the Church — the rock which, for Karen, (and socio-historically) is inextricably linked to the authority of the father. But as the gods under-estimated Sisyphus, so is Max wrong in his assessment of Karen and Shar. He speaks of them as innocent, incapable of sin, brutal, clever children, full of life and destined for a long life — asserting that for them all things are accidents. However, when Shar forces an opponent into a flaming crash which Max calls an accident, Karen insists in cold anger, "Not all things are accidents." On the evening of the track "accident," Max sits in a country tavern with Shar, Karen and other racing circuit people. In a scene infused with perverse sexuality, he re-lives Shar's violent triumph:

> . . . Max sat with his back to the wall so that he could see everything that went on in the crowded place. He ate melons luxuriously: pale green melons, smooth as skin, that the waiter — a boy of about seventeen — kept bringing him. Seeds had spilled out onto the table and on the front of his shirt, though he did not seem to notice. He waved the big glistening knife at them as he spoke . . . "A woman's love is a beautiful thing to see," Max went on, licking at a sudden rivulet of juice that ran down his chin. "She is transformed by it, absolutely transformed. That has never been part of my experience" . . . With a flourish Max finished his melon and took a deep breath and called for the waiter. "Another one of these," he said, sighing helplessly. The table was wet with juice and scattered seeds that the boy — a rushed, alarmed-looking country boy with long hair — did not offer to wipe up, "You must tell me how the race was for you," Max said, laying a damp hand on Shar's arm.

As Max leaves the tavern with Karen (Shar remains behind with another woman), he recoils in fear from a small boy holding a snake. The reptile incorporates for Max the universal principal of evil which he would deny, and in its phallic signification, the humiliation of his own impotence.[5]

Max posits for Karen an innocence that protects her from suffering and urges her to abandon any hope of finding meaning in existence: "Your life is not a metaphor for anything else," he coaxes; "it ends when you do". In his self-deception, Max, whom Karen once speculates might have devoured Shar, fails to understand that it is exactly the certainty of death which impels the individual

to search for meaning in life, and failing to find it in traditional forms and institutions, to create it within the confines of free will. As Karen's attraction to Shar grows, she begins to sense the threat it poses to her freedom: waiting in a shabby room for him to come to her, she contemplates the possibility that the passive resistance which has defined her intactness thus far may not be enough. Against the force of such passion, it may eventually have to yield to an act of violence.

Because Max considers himself alone capable of moral contemplation, his miscalculations are immense. In his blind omniscience he pontificates that Shar functions not consciously, but viscerally: Shar from the stomach and Karen (because it seems more delicate to him) from the heart. Ironically, Karen, whose last name means heart in German, has earlier made the bitter decision to harden her heart, to render herself pitiless. On the night of the melon-eating incident Karen had lain in a hotel room, knowing as the hours passed that Shar was with another woman, and had resolved to resist "... a universe that contrived her life in order that she might be here tonight in this dirty hotel room alone, waiting." Staring at the shape of a giant cockroach formed by a water stain on the ceiling, Karen concludes:

> If some men supposed themselves free it was only because they did not understand that they were imprisoned, bars could be made of any dreamy loss of light.

Max's doctor offers her sleeping pills, but Karen refuses, "If there was pain, she would feel it; it was hers." Falling asleep, she dreams of a child who has been growing inside a dusty closet where bright summer dresses hang — a child with plastic veins and a plastic heart. And she resolves not to cry for the death of that child, not to project meaning or seek comfort where none exists:

> Better to look into an empty drawer, stare into an empty hole, than to discover oneself looking into a darkness filled with shape.

Although Karen's dream, in incorporating her assent to the death of a child, foreshadows her desire for the miscarriage that will free her of Shar's baby, it is more significant in the narrative as a miniaturization of the dilemma in which she is enmeshed. Childhood is essentially a stultifying and confining condition, no matter how diverting and beautiful. Emergence involves, by definition, giving up the protection of the closet, the brightness of the summer dresses. Karen's resolution not to mourn the death of the child is a recognition and an acceptance of the pain inherent in the personal transformation toward which she moves. Significantly, the material from the unconscious, revealed in the dream, is incorporated in her deliberate actions later in the same way that in giving herself to Shar the first time she chose what she had earlier dreamed. On the day that she sends Shar to his death, Karen's memory of her suffering this night, and the hardening of heart to which it led her, is triggered by another cockroach shape on a wall.

Because Shar has become habituated to avoiding responsibility, his moral maturation must inevitably be more violent than Karen's. As the words *dream, fog, nightmare,* and *insanity* are associated with Karen when her destiny is out of her own control, so the words *victim, desperate, blind, trapped* and *possessed* now characterize Shar. Unlike Karen, who assumes the existence of a universal force she must resist, Shar believes his birth to have been an accident. On the racing circuit, where all his adult life has been spent, Shar has never needed to commit himself beyond the physical act — on the track or in bed. This fact has heretofore been a source of pride to him: now, with Karen, who withholds herself even in union, he feels trapped. Reading the newspapers over and over, he hopes that Karen's father will come for her, relieving him of the choice. Like Max, Shar at first deceives himself: he thinks that he controls Karen, that she echoes his statements and has no existence apart from him. At the same time he suffers from the knowledge of his own loss of control. Shar's last name seems, like Karen's, to function signally and ironically, for he struggles fatally to attain rule or control of his own destiny.

SHAR'S FIRST STEP toward the moral premeditation which produces the Nietzschean self-overcoming of the novel's epigraph ("What is done out of love always takes place beyond good and evil") is his imperfect awareness that in relation to Karen he feels "enchanted, desperate and incomplete". He is bewildered because, for the racer — the role in which he has until now found his identity — danger comes not from giving in to the inside, but from being drawn off centre by centrifugal force. Since he has dealt with Karen only as an extension of himself, Shar, who hungers for a communion with her and with the crowd that comes to see him race, does not yet know that for the individual whose existence is deliberate, the centre of being controls *all* actions. Only thus does one achieve the limited communion possible for man in the exile that is existence. It is in the condition of calculated action, which finally replaces accident in his life, that Shar embraces death as a transcendence — fulfilling the novel's title. Karen calls Shar's creation of his own death his manhood.

Neither brutality nor indifference can accomplish Shar's desired mastery over Karen. Their lovemaking becomes a battle of wills: in a terrible coupling where Shar takes her by force in a cemetery, Karen dominates — putting their actions into the realm of a dream, absolving herself, by an act of will, from any need to control what is happening to her body. At the instant of consummation, Karen looks — clear-eyed — into Shar's face. He is impaled, furious; even as the orgasm seizes him, he slaps her, sobbing:

> "Look at me like that, you little bitch!" . . . His face was white. . . . "I'd like to set you on fire like I did to *him*," he said, "take a match and set you on fire — burn everything — your clothes catching on and burning — you screaming for help, you little bitch! And all burning up, hair and insides, so you could see inside and see things burning there, melting away, burning — ".

In his desire to burn Karen, Shar reveals that the love/hate bond between them, which for Karen is the result of a nascent urge toward moral maturation, is as yet not different to him than his previous relationships — on the race track and in bed. In response to Karen's resistance Shar would like to invoke his habitual mode of violence as he had done in forcing his racing opponent into the flaming crash. Karen's response is diametrically opposite: She contracts herself into a "tiny pebble-like thing, safe in her brain". In his research in strivings toward psychic wholeness and in his analysis of mandala symbolism Jung found that a conflict rendered into images of stone is a positive human attitude toward the process of transformation.[6] For the person undergoing the individuation the unity of the imagined stone is a projection of the unified self toward which he strives. For Shar this defeat-in-victory of the deathly union in the cemetery provides the energy for his first step toward moral maturation: when Karen awakens the following morning he is gone. She is incredulous, for she had thought him "trapped, incapable of playing the game, unaware of its rules".

Tired, sick with the child that (unknown to Shar) is growing inside her, Karen is tempted to abandon the pursuit of a deliberate existence which must now, because she is obsessed with him, include Shar's death. She considers Max's offer of an abortion arrangement and $1000 in return for her going home, but such a bargain would leave Shar alive and the terrible attraction that threatens her freedom still viable. Contemplating this, Karen cries, "I am lost, I am lost," and once again the necessity of creating whatever meaning her life is to have is strengthened mnemonically as she re-experiences a childhood agony:

> She found herself thinking, inexplicably, as she sometimes did when Shar made love to her, of scenes of her childhood . . . she had not thought of for years. The proud pony one of the boys had ridden to school that time — why did she remember it now . . . How she had wanted a pony like that! How she had cried for it, crawling about her father's knees! "But why didn't he ever get it for me?" . . . She was struck by her father's queer injustice. She felt she could not forgive him that.

Karen's memory is of an injustice, a betrayal. Significantly, betrayal is also the emotion Karen associates with being swept up in passion for Shar. Now she resists the temptation to return to a life in which happiness can be withheld by another. Following Shar to Cherry River, she materializes before him as out of a dream.

Leaving Karen in Synderdale was Shar's first step in personal transformation,

and like Sisyphus discovering the absurd he experiences happiness in his heightened awareness of the limitations to which his existence is subject. The seed of knowledge that he now shares with Karen — that the individual must create his own destiny with an existence bounded by death — begins to expand within him. He tells his relief driver, "For them [the cars' owners] it's money and for me, waiting to die." And, as the sea and the sun take on great value for Sisyphus when he is commanded to return to the underworld, misanthropic Shar experiences a strange joy in his surroundings, "A damn good world! I can't get close enough to it — " he mutters. With this glimpse of joy inherent in his own freedom (and its attendant responsibility) Shar's life takes on a new complexity: he can no longer love and hate simply and immediately. Like Karen, he has left behind, in the world of his moral childhood, such clear distinctions. His life, like hers, will never again be the same. Now he contemplates the symbiotic relationship with Max which has relieved him of moral accountability — and moral freedom — his entire adult life. Like Karen who had rejected Max's settlement and returning to Eden County with "I am lost, I am lost," Shar thinks of Max and feels, for an instant, as if he were lost. And, just as Karen had done on the days immediately before leaving home, Shar surveys the world around him and wonders if he is insane. Karen, who survives Shar, will conclude that it *is* insane to look for meaning in existence — *and insane not to.*

The two women with whom Shar passes time in Cherry River occupy moral positions which contrast with that taken several months ago by Karen and now tentatively, reluctantly, embraced by the awakening Shar. Miriam, a big, slack Italian girl, contemplates the horror of rape/mutilation murders and freak shows with a morbid, unquestioning curiosity, "calmly and without much interest". She is both a foil for Karen and a facet of Shar's former self, insensitive and unspeculative. After a night together they both have ". . . white, brutal faces, pleased with each other". Miriam's passive acceptance of existence is conveyed powerfully by her reaction to a carnival freak show. She delights in the grotesque novelty of the Siamese twins suspended in alcohol and insists on watching a race among the armless, legless freaks. The carnival barker cries:

> Bo, Terry, Little Jo — here they are, just as they were born. They don't want your sympathy folks . . . they take their fate as it is, they accept their condition. They don't question the ways of our Maker and so why should we?

But Shar has begun to question. He cannot bear the sight: "Let's get the hell out of here," he moans. Miriam stays.

The second girl, a hostess whom Max sends to distract Shar before the race, is significantly nameless. She takes on an identity to please whatever man she is with and speaks of herself in passive voice, ". . . it was thought best for me . . .

I was told . . . it was decided". Shar quickly recognizes that Max has chosen her because she is ". . . a pale, bloodless parody of Karen".

Shar can neither return to the state in which Max absolves him of moral responsibility nor establish a relationship with the girls contrasted to Karen. Karen cannot accept the payoff Max offers and return home. For each a resumption of the old way would mean loss of the awakening self. And so they pursue the collision course which must result in the death of one. Karen uses the money Max gives her not for an abortion, but to follow Shar. Encountering her on the street, Shar leads Karen directly to his shabby room where he takes her with a simple violence that he believes will purge the emotion which overpowers him — "He did not know if it was anger or lust or joy," expecting from it a communion that will release him. He finds instead, betrayal. The pregnancy, unknown to Shar until Karen begins to miscarry, further disarms him. It has been a mock communion, but through it Shar realizes that, bad as existence is, *he* makes the choices that determine it: " 'A hell of a world,' Shar said suddenly and self-consciously, 'but at least it's my own fault' ". Moved as he has never been before, Shar begs Karen to stay, to marry him. Although it is a plea she has longed to hear, although she has just acknowledged her love for him, in the centre of Karen's consciousness remains the knowledge that capitulation would again put her destiny in the hands of another. Again memory intervenes — this time in the form of a delirious dream which links Shar with her father and the distress of childhood dependency:

> While Shar sat by the window and watched her, Karen was having a dream. She was running through grass, up the slope before her home to join her father; his face when he embraced her was always rough . . . She was going to cry to him that it was done, everything was finished, clean, she had come home, but when he gripped her she shrank suddenly in size and the air turned hot and humid . . . She was seized by him — how young she was! — and she realized then that someone else had held her, . . . Shar — it must have been Shar . . . But when she turned, the dream ended; she saw nothing. She grated her teeth in anger and dismay.

Once again incorporating the content of the unconscious which has come forward in the dream, Karen makes the extreme existential decision — that there is no fate which cannot be overcome by contempt. She says, in the calm, ordinary voice she had so despised in her sister, "You make me sick".

Once again Shar's reaction is rendered in terms aligning him with Sisyphus: Both exert their whole being and accomplish nothing. For Shar, as for Sisyphus, the lucidity that constitutes the torture also crowns the victory. Going directly from Karen's sickbed to the track, he experiences a surge of joy and love for the world, for Mitch his black assistant and for the crowd who he knows comes to see him die. In recognizing that the communion of violence the crowd seeks in

the race, like the communion of sexual possession he sought with Karen, is a mockery, Shar knows that he has been transformed:

> Shar's heart pounded with the excitement that he finally transcended the fragments of his anonymity. He wanted to get out and run back to Mitchie, or to Max, and explain to him: he knew who he was, he knew exactly what he was doing, and why; he was guilty — completely guilty — and his guilt, like his love, had pulled him together.

Karen has always known who she is; now Shar is also certain of his identity and in the transcendence made possible by choice, he accepts death: he hates the helmet, the fire-proofs suit he must wear — they are shock absorbers that disguise his humanity, devices invented for safety's sake — "as if there were any possible protection against mortality." This realization *is* Shar's psychic synthesis, his individuation. Pushing the traction limit of his racer to the invisible point at which control turns to chaos, he embraces death.

Karen has made a choice which will plunge her into a less final death — the madness that Oates calls the suicide of cowards.[7] As Shar leaves her room, Karen masters a powerful urge to call him back:

> She wanted him back, she did not care what he had done — She struggled out of bed ... Her blood pounding so furiously that she could not see ... Her vision cleared. She was staring across the corridor at something — it drew her gaze like a magnet. A fat cockroach crawling precariously up the wall ... Her mind was emptied ... She did not call after Shar. After a minute she realized she was listening to nothing, that he had left.

Memory has again kept Karen on the course of self-determination, for the cockroach she sees here, with terrible clarity of vision, conjures up the cockroach-shaped stain on the ceiling of the room in Synderdale and with it, the bitter suffering inherent in a state where happiness can be withheld by another. The hardness of heart Karen had resolved to maintain serves her well: she does not call Shar back.

The short final segment of the novel traces the five months of Karen's breakdown and recovery. She has known the extremes of abandonment of the self to the family and to religious ecstasy and she has known the self-containment which makes even love a threat to be met with violent resistance. Now she reaches a balance between hope and despair. Her physician calls her "self-cured." Returning to her father's house in early December, Karen enters again the morally somnolent world where the cycles of nature and the liturgical calendar inure one to unquestioning acceptance of the moral absolutes they symbolize. Parishioners who observe Karen at mass with her family interpret her pain-marked countenance as proofs of the justice of their universe, unable to comprehend that she has

suffered only because either way amounts to the same thing — it is insane to try to make sense of existence, and insane not to.

Karen knows, as Shar knew at the moment of his death, that no real communion is possible in life, a knowledge that allows her to choose the conformity that will unite her — as much as she can ever be united — with those who do not try to make sense of existence. She resolves to receive the sacrament with them the following week, but to protect herself from the thin splendour of church ritual which stands eternally ready to absolve her of individuality. She retains the terrible clarity of vision that impelled her to leave Eden County, to reject Shar and now to return home: Kneeling slowly, "Karen . . . forced her mind to stay clear." Of the alternatives now open to her, none is threatening for she concludes that whatever she becomes will be of her own doing.

Karen's final evaluation of her circumstances can be seen in the reordering of her vision of nature in Eden County. As the sense of an independent destiny grew within her last April she thought:

> In the worst days of winter the snow looked like an incredible sifting of earth and heaven, blotting out both earth and heaven, reducing them to an insane struggle of white that struck at human faces like knives. Summers reeked with heat and heaven pressed downward . . . There would be holocausts of fire in the woods . . . The brutality of the land somehow evoked joy in Karen.

Now she takes her father's arm as they leave the church. When she opens the door, ". . . the swirling snow . . . turned white and cold and innocent, like the disorder of her brain". Only in the implications of Karen's changed perceptions of the weather (the savage extremities that had once lured her are now harmless) and in her determination to retain clarity of mind can we make even a tenuous judgment of the degree to which her individuation will be consolidated and retained. She turns lovingly to the now feeble patriarch who would have taught her to murder. She agrees to re-enter the life of the family and to participate in the ritual of the church, but to guard her self-created state. She seems to know not only that there is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn, but also that — if *she* chooses — there is no fate that cannot be borne with patience, endurance and love. Her knowledge has been dearly bought: Karen is a misfit and an alien, victim of her own stubborn integrity as surely as Shar has become the ultimate victim of his.

Jung points out that the task of creating a self can be accomplished only by the resolution of the conflict between the conscious and the unconscious through experience, never by understanding alone.[8] The integration of the unconscious in which we observe Karen Herz tends to induce panic in civilized people because of its relation to insanity — a fact of which Karen is keenly aware when she concludes that it is insane to look for meaning in existence and insane not to.

Further, the traditional and conservative spirit of society which is inimical to the acceptance of the unconscious still wears the earthly garment of the church and the father — most obdurately so in a rural and orthodox area such as Oates' Eden County. Therefore, in acknowledging the reality of the unconscious, that awakening force which moves her out of Eden County, and in attempting to make that darker side of the self which Jung calls the shadow,[9] a co-determining ethical factor in her life, Karen offends against the spirit of convention which for centuries has regulated the psychic life of the individual by means of the church and the family — the institutions against which she revolts.

Speaking of the inadequacy of what is legally, morally and socially approved to encourage — or even permit — the creation of a tenable sense of self, Jung says:

> Man's great task is the adaptation of himself to reality and the recognition of himself as an instrument for the expression of life according to his individual possibilities. It is in his privilege as self-creator that his highest purpose is found.[10]

and:

> The bringing together of the conscious and the unconscious is a task facing not only individuals, but whole civilizations. The political and social isms of our day preach every conceivable kind of ideal, but, under this mask, they pursue the goal of inhibiting the possibilities of individual development ... This problem cannot be solved collectively, because the masses are not changed unless the individual changes ... The bettering of a general ill begins with the individual, and then only when he makes himself and not others responsible.[11]

In *With Shuddering Fall* Oates has created a complex paradigm of the tension which exists between the entelechy of personal individuation and the societal forces resistant to it.

NOTES

[1] *With Shuddering Fall* was called "... a hysterically incoherent back country excursion into the world of madness" (K. G. Jackson, *Harpers*, Nov., 1964). Stanley Kaufmann considered the plot diluted Faulkner, an attempt to raise grade B movie material to epic level (*New York Review*, Dec. 17, 1964). John Knowles assumed the theme of the novel to be violence and the racing car Shar drives its symbol (NYTBR, Oct. 25, 1964). The four novels that followed (*A Garden of Earthly Delights*, 1966; *Expensive People*, 1968; *Them*, 1969 and *Wonderland*, 1971) were similarly received: James Doyle (of *The Critic*) referred to Oates as "Cather in the Raw" and praised her for taking up Frank Norris' imperative of understanding the plain people. Although here and there a reviewer suggested that the discarding of circumstantiality which flawed her apparent realism might indicate that Oates was working in another mode, not until the sixth novel (*Do With Me What You Will*, 1973) did a major review recognize that "Oates is a potent myth-maker in the drab guise of a social naturalist" (Calvin Bedient in NYTBR, Oct. 14, 1973).

[2] K. G. Jackson, John Knowles.

[3] Jung speaks of the personality as existing in a plural stage, i.e., not able to experience wholeness outside the community of the family or tribe, passive and unwilling or unable to assert its will, incapable of moral judgment *before* individuation. Individuation is the process of synthesis by which the personality brings into the consciousness those phenomena which are hidden from the ego but which, because they are a significant element in the psyche's content, must be acknowledged. Moral self-responsibility is attainable only through individuation.

[4] Many of the short stories in *By the North Gate* (1963) and *Upon the Sweeping Flood* (1966) have Eden County settings. The territory is topographically identifiable as the area of upstate New York where the author was raised.

[5] C. G. Jung, *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), pp. 316-17, 322.

[6] C. G. Jung, *Aion*, (Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 170.

[7] "Pastoral Blood," in *By the North Gate* is a paradigm for this novel: The protagonist, Grace, courts a violent consummation as a means of defining herself, expecting the union to end in her own death. But she does not die, and regaining consciousness, she scorns the ease of insanity as "the bloodless suicide for cowards."

[8] C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), p. 51.

[9] The shadow is, according to Jung, that archetype which lies closest to the surface of the unconscious, the acceptance of which is the first step in the individuation process. Inherent in the dark aspects of the personality signified by the shadow are sexuality and self-determination (Jung, *Archetypes* . . . , p. 58 and *Aion*, p. 8).

[10] Jung, *Psychology* . . . , p. xlii.

[11] Jung, *Archetypes* . . . , p. 275.

ROBERT HAYMAN'S "QUODLIBETS"

Robin Endres

ROBERT HAYMAN'S *Quodlibets* — the first English poetry written in Canada — is part of a tiny but significant corpus of literature written in and about six colonial settlements which flourished and died in Newfoundland between 1610 and 1628. An understanding of the meaning and significance of Hayman's work can first be attempted through an examination of the history of these settlements.[1]

In the early 1600's, English colonial expansion in Virginia, New England and Newfoundland began in earnest. The era of the Renaissance courtier-adventurer, of explorers like Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh, was rapidly being superseded by the era of the bougeois-merchant, of the colonial "Company". The individual explorer, seeking adventure and discovery in unknown lands under Queen Elizabeth, gave way to the practical economics of groups of merchants seeking trade monopolies under James and Charles. One such group, consisting of 48 businessmen — 10 from Bristol and 24 from London — raised enough subscriptions to convince the Privy Council to grant its seal, and the Newfoundland Company was incorporated in 1610.

The aims of the Company members were twofold: personal profit and the furthering of England's imperialist power. Specifically, they wanted to secure a monopoly of the fishing trade, which had previously been controlled by individual ships from the West Country in England as well as French, Spanish and Portuguese fishermen who fished off the Grand Banks and returned annually. The Newfoundland Company hoped to achieve its goal by establishing permanent and self-sufficient settlements on the island.

Governor John Guy's arrival with 39 colonizers was carefully timed — late in the summer of 1610, just as the independent fishing vessels were leaving. Cupid's Cove, the sight chosen for the settlement, was the most fertile and best protected

spot on the island; the initial settlers were carefully selected artisans rather than unskilled gentlemen; friendly and tactful contacts with both natives and independent fishermen were strongly advised. The settlers were extremely industrious, and this, coupled with a mild first winter, enabled them to build houses, a warehouse, a forge, a mill and a palisade, as well as sowing crops and collecting ore specimens, cutting timber for export and of course, fishing.

But this prosperous beginning was soon marred by a host of insurmountable problems, some foreseen, others not. The independent fishermen, who had been assured, on paper at least, of their rights, grew increasingly hostile when it became apparent that the Company was in fact attempting to monopolize the trade. They retaliated by damaging the colonists' mills and other property. Any profits made from fishing were immediately swallowed up by the colonists' need for provisions; the hoped-for iron deposits never materialized; the fur trade was almost nonexistent; crops failed. Finally, squabbles and jealousies erupted among the members of the Company, both in Newfoundland and in England. John Guy went home in disgust in 1613, claiming that he had not received his promised grant of land from the Company, and that his men's wages had not been paid.

In 1615 Guy was succeeded as governor by Captain John Mason. Mason was responsible for one of the four works of literature produced during this period, *A Briefe Discourse of the New-found-land* (1620). The *Discourse* belongs to the genre of colonial pamphlets written to encourage settlement in the new world. It differs, however, from the standard works of this type (as do the works of two others of the four Newfoundland writers, Richard Whitbourne and Robert Hayman) in that it attempts to give a realistic picture of the advantages and disadvantages of life in the colonies, without the usual overly optimistic and sometimes fantastic claims made for the new world. With Mason's departure to New England in 1621, the Company remained in existence in name only, although the settlement continued in the hands of a small group of families.

In order to supplement its diminishing capital, the Newfoundland Company was forced to sell tracts of land, and between 1616 and 1621, five purchases were made, four by individuals, a fifth by another group of merchants. The four individuals who attempted settlement had ideological as well as economic motives. Henry Cary, later Lord Falkland, failed in his efforts to establish an Irish colony. Sir William Alexander purchased a large tract of land from the Company in 1621, intending to found New Scotland. However, the same year James gave him a grant of land between the Gaspé Peninsula and Maine, and New Scotland was thereby destined for the mainland. Sir George Calvert, later Lord Baltimore, had still another motive for settling in Newfoundland — he wanted to create a haven for his family and their fellow Catholics. Not to be outdone, William Vaughan, a gentleman scholar and poet, envisaged the area around Caplin Bay as a mythological "New Wales" — a new Cambriol, which would relieve Wales of her over-

populated poor and provide a golden world for all future generations of Welshmen.

To this end, he wrote *The Golden Fleece* (using the pseudonym "Orpheus Junior"), a work in prose and verse heavily influenced in style by Sidney's *Arcadia.*

> *The Golden Fleece* opens with a dialogue on the question of how best to employ the muses in the service of Newfoundland . . . His fiction for the remainder of the book . . . is a court or assizes presided over by Apollos, . . . it is only in the last third of *The Golden Fleece* that Vaughan comes to the subject of the island itself. There he makes Apollo deliver a verdict in favour of its colonization, following the testimony of a number of explorers and colonizers.[2]

Vaughan's work was published in 1626, and some scholars — Anthony à Wood in the seventeenth century and D. L. Thomas in *The Dictionary of National Biography* — give him credit for the first original creative writing in English in North America. However, recent critics and historians, with the exception of Thomas, agree that Vaughan never saw Newfoundland, and that all his information derives from hearsay and written sources. The best proof of this perhaps is Hayman's own poem addressed to Vaughan:

> It joy'd my heart, when I did understand
> That your selfe would your Colonie command;
> It greev'd me much, when as I heard it told,
> Sicknes had layd on you an unkind hold.
> Beleeve me, Sir, your Colches Cambrioll
> Is a sweet, Pleasant, wholesome, gaineful soyle.
> (Book II, 86)

Vaughan sent colonizers to Renewse in 1617, and in 1618 appointed Richard Whitbourne, an experienced sea captain, as his governor. Whitbourne discovered on his arrival that the settlers had spent the previous winter in fishermen's summer shacks; he sent all but six home and apparently made a serious attempt to settle. However, he was back in England in 1620 where he published his *Discourse and Discovery of Newfoundland.* This prose work is similar in intent and design to Mason's, based as it is on personal experience in the colony, and dealing with practical matters (a list of the supplies necessary for outfitting a ship of colonists, for example), but without the literary design of the work of Vaughan and Hayman.

The fifth, and last, purchase of land from the Newfoundland Company was made by a group of merchants from Bristol, many of whom were probably initial investors of the Company who had become disillusioned with their fellow merchants in London. The land was on Conception Bay, and included Harbour Grace, the principal settlement (alternatively called Bristol's Hope). The colony

was one of the most successful, perhaps because the people involved had learned from their experiences with the Newfoundland Company, and were more practical than the idealists Vaughan, Falkland and Baltimore. It was here that Robert Hayman came as governor in 1618 and returned each summer for ten years, and it was here that he wrote Canada's first poetry.[3]

KNOWLEDGE of the life of Robert Hayman, especially that part of his life spent in Harbour Grace, is slim indeed. He was baptized in 1575, the son of Nicholas Hayman and Alice Gaverocke, both from prosperous landowning families. Nicholas Hayman was prominent in civic affairs in Totnes, where he was mayor in 1589, and later in Dartmouth, where he was a member of the parliament in 1592-3. He was a friend of Sir Francis Drake, and once contributed 25 pounds sterling to two of his vessels.

Robert Hayman was educated at Totnes Grammar School and Exeter College, Oxford. He studied law at Lincoln's Inn and later spent some time at the University of Poitiers. He was married in 1604 to Grace Spicer, the daughter of an Exeter merchant. Hayman was acquainted with numerous writers, divines, lawyers, physicians and merchants of the day. At Oxford, according to Anthony à Wood, he was "noted for his ingenuity and pregnant parts" and was "valued by several persons who were afterwards eminent". Later, at Lincoln's Inn, "his geny being well known to be poetical, (he) fell into acquaintance with, and received encouragement to proceed in his studies from Michael Drayton, Ben Johnson, John Owen . . . George Withers . . . John Vicars . . ."[4] These literary acquaintances are addressed at the end of Book IV. William Vaughan, George Withers and John Vicars all wrote commendatory verses for *Quodlibets*; apart from these, the only acknowledgement for Hayman and his work occurs in the dedication to *Cupid's Whirligig* (1607), a play by his Oxford contemporary Edward Sharpham:

> To his much honoured, beloved, respected, and judiciall friend, Master Robert Hayman. . . . since our travailes I have bene pregnant with desire to bring foorth something whereunto you may be witnesse . . .[5]

Of the time Hayman spent in Newfoundland — one fifteen month stretch and ten successive summers — there are no records. The information we have derives entirely from *Quodlibets*, and from a letter sent by Hayman to King Charles, in 1628. The letter is an almost desperate plea to the King to save the dying colonies of Newfoundland. It advances the usual arguments for colonization — securing of the fishing trade, enlarging of the empire, relieving of overpopulation, potential mineral resources, timber and furs, and gives a convincing justification for

supporting the lowly cod rather than the glamorous products of the West Indies and Africa:

> I confesse that the Commodities as yett brought from thence are in their particulers base, and meane: yet they honestly imploye many people, and make more seamen, then all our sea-trades eld, . . . and I dare averr and prove that this trade hath furnished England for these many yeares, with more money, then all our forraigne trades els, and it hath brought from Spaine, silver, and gold, more cheaply, and conveniently, then the Spaniards have had it, from their Indies.[6]

He also proposes that Charles establish a city, Carolinople, as a free market for fish, and that he rename the whole island Britaniola.

The letter had no effect, if in fact it ever reached Charles. At any rate the royal treasury did not have enough funds even for domestic expenses. Hayman must have finally abandoned his dreams of Britaniola, but not of colonization in general, for the following year (1629) he formed a small company with 26 shares for the purpose of setting up a colony in Guyana. In November of the year, he was overcome by a fever during an exploration of the Oyapock (then Wyapoko) River, and died in the canoe. A few Indian guides who had accompanied him buried him beside the river. He was 54 years old.

HAYMAN'S *Quodlibets* (or "what you will", "whatever you like") is a collection of satiric, didactic and commendatory verses in four books, prefaced with a dedication to King Charles, four poems by William Vaughan, Richard Spicer, George Wither and John Vicars, and an anagram by Hayman. At the end of the four books, Hayman includes his translations of John Owen's epigrams from the Latin, dedicated "To the far admired, admirably faire, vertuous, and witty Beauties of England" and prefaced by "A Praemonition to all kinds of readers". The Owen translations are followed by an anagram on Owen's Latin name Johannes Andoenus, "Severall Sententious Epigrams, and witty sayings out of sundry Authors both Ancient and Moderne Translated into English at Harbor-Grace . . . " and finally, translations of two letters by Rabelais.[7]

In the dedicatory letter to King Charles, Hayman compares his verses to some unripe ears of corn which he also brought back with him from Newfoundland. The analogy is used to stress that the major function of the poems is to encourage younger and better "wits" to settle in Newfoundland in order that better poetry might be produced.

> . . . [His verses are] hoping of the like successe, that some unripe eares of corne, brought by me from the cold Country of Newfound-land, received from some honest, well-minded lovers of that action when they saw them: who with much-

> affected joy often beholding them, tooke much comfort in what they saw: but more, when they suppos'd it might be better'd, by industry, care and honestie. These few bad unripe Rimes of mine (coming from thence) are in all humility presented with the like intendiment to your Majestie, to testifie that the Aire there is not so dull, or malevolent, but that if better wits were transplanted thither, neither the Summers heat would dilate them, nor the Winters cold benumme them, but that they might in full vigour flourish to good purpose. For if I now growne dull and aged, could doe somewhat, what will not sharper, younger, freer inventions performe there? They would not walke as I here doe, with short turnes, leaning sometimes on others inventions, skipping weakly from bough to bough; but with large walkes, with long, and strong flights.

The passage is interesting for several reasons. First, Hayman has clearly grasped the connection between a flourishing economy and the establishment of a literary culture which Wilfrid Eggleston discusses in *The Front and Canadian Letters.* Hayman's pleas for support for the dying colonies in his other letter to Charles takes on new significance when we realize that his optimistic vision of Britaniola includes a profound faith in the future of a new artistic culture. Second, his conception of this new culture which will be the product of the combination of youthful, energetic talent and the multifarious possibilities of the new world, places his work in the tradition of the "poetry of anticipation" which John Matthews discusses in relation to Australian poetry.[8]

This is the genre of new world poetry which does not look backward and base itself on the ancient myths of the mother culture (as William Vaughan's *Golden Fleece* does), but which rather looks forward to a new Eden of the future — symbolized by the potential of the unripe ears of corn. Hayman, who emphasizes elsewhere in the dedicatory letter that these poems are the first in English to be written in the colonies ("... some of them were borne, and the rest did first speake English, in that Land whereof your gracious Majestie is the ... King ... and being the first fruits of this kind, that ever visited this Land, out of that Dominion of yours ..."), seems to have profound awareness of his unique position in the literature of what was to become Canada. Finally, the tone of this passage is indicative of Hayman's attitude to himself and his work throughout *Quodlibets*; quick to praise others, with never a hint of envy of those who are superior to him; aware at all times of his own limitations; humble without false modesty or servility.

I have divided the main section of *Quodlibets*, Books I-IV, consisting of 351 verses, into six categories. First, there is a small group of epigrams (23) about the nature and purpose of epigrams. The largest group (102 verses) consists of didactic and satiric epigrams dealing with secular matters. The second largest is the group of 95 epigrams dealing with religious subjects, and of these, 46 are specifically anti-Catholic epigrams. There are 29 epigrams about women. At the

end of each book there are a number of poems about or addressed to specific individuals, and these total 81. Finally, there are 21 miscellaneous epigrams.

The epigrams written on the subject of epigrams provide some insights as to Hayman's purpose in choosing this form. For Hayman, the didactic or moral aspect of the epigram is more important than its style. As always, he is modest about his abilities, but in these verses he usually infers that there is something more to the epigram than the dainty turn of words he is unable to achieve:

> Though my best lines no dainty thing affords,
> My worst have in them some thing else then words.
> (Book I, 1)

The true job of the epigrammatist is not only to descry evil where it appears but also to praise whatever is commendable. In fact, the function of the epigram is more that of sermon than satire:

> Sermons and Epigrams have a like end,
> To improve, to reprove, and to amend;
> Some passed without this use, 'cause they are witty'
> And so doe many Sermons, more's the pitty.
> (Book IV, 1)

The large group of epigrams on secular subjects range freely over a wide variety of topics — the meaning of the various virtues and vices — pride, lechery, miserliness, charity, generosity, kindness; satires on the legal and medical professions; messages to anonymous friends; the proper and improper gain and use of money; brief homilies of one kind or another.

Closely related to these secular epigrams are the 95 verses which deal with religious themes. This group includes satires on preachers, meditations on the nature of man and God, concern with the afterlife and salvation, faith and good works. Some of the best of these poems are Hayman's simple, sincere prayers:

> *A Meditation for such simple innocent people as I am.*
>
> Since thou All-wise hast made me not so wise,
> With subtle Serpents for to Subtilize;
> Accept my plainenesse, and my good intent,
> That with thy Dove I may be Innocent;
> From subtle guard my simplicitie,
> And make me simple in subtility.
> (Book II, 19)

Almost one seventh of the total number of epigrams rail against Papists, idolatry, Latin services and Catholic holidays. The level of vitriol is consistent:

Papisticall cruelty.

Were there no other argument but this,
It proves our faith, then yours the better is.
We are not cruell, bloody, envious.
(Though your late-lying Legends slander us)
We meekely seeke but your Conversion,
Weepe at your fought for Execution:
You bloody, slanderous, and inexorable
At all times, every where, where you are able;
Witness Maries short Raigne, French Massacre,
Which in red letters, your lewd minds declare.
Our God, though Just, his mercy's over all,
A blood-sucker, Satan was from his fall.
(Book III, 26)

In his satirical epigrams concerning women, Hayman expresses the conventional attitudes of the day. His first object of scorn (and alarm) is the type of the nagging shrew:

To all the Shrewd Wives that are, or shall be planted in Newfound-land.

If mad-men, Drunkards, Children, or a Foole,
Wrong sober, discreet men with tongue or toole,
We say, Such things are to be borne withall.
We say so too, if Women fight or brawle.
(Book II, 74)

Other poems satirize feminine vanity and castigate unchasteness. If women in general are seen negatively, individual women are praised in Hayman's series of commendatory verses to the wives and daughters of his friends, at the end of Book III. In these commendatory verses, Hayman reveals himself as a rather kindly paternal gentleman, fond of mildly flattering young ladies.

The connecting links in an otherwise more or less miscellaneous compendium of epigrams are the poems addressed to specific individuals which appear at the end of each book. At the end of the first book, Hayman devotes his encomia to his former friends and acquaintances of Oxford, London and Bristol, all of whom have led highly successful lives in the old world as physicians, lawyers, reverends and merchants. Hayman offers all of them sincere and generous praise, yet a note of melancholy underlies these verses. Perhaps he felt somewhat alienated from the centres of culture and economics where these men were most active, if only because of his frequent absences. Perhaps too, there is a feeling that he was not quite as successful as his compatriots and peers. This feeling gains expression at the very end of the book:

A little of my unworthy Selfe.

Many of these were my familiars,
Much good, and goods hath fal'n unto their shares,
They have gone fairely on in their affaires:
Good God, why have I not so much good lent!
It is thy will, I am obedient!
What thou hast, what thou wilt, I am content,
Only this breeds in me much heavines,
My love to this Land I cannot expresse,
Lord grant me power unto my willingnesse.
(Book I, 116)

At the end of the second book, Hayman turns from his friends in the old world to acknowledge those in the new. Almost all of the men who were involved in the six Newfoundland colonies are addressed — Captain John Mason and Mrs. Mason, John Slany (the treasurer of the Newfoundland Company), Richard Whitbourne, William Vaughan and Anne Vaughan, Lord Falkland, Lord Buckingham, Sir William Alexander, and various lesser-known planters. He praises those who have persevered, and encourages those who have failed to try again. It is here that Hayman indicates the selflessness of his interest in the Newfoundland colonies — he even transcends his religious prejudices in praising Lord Baltimore. For one who has tried unsuccessfully to obtain aid from the King, there is not a shade of envy when he commends the enormous grant given to Sir William Alexander.

It is clear that the melancholic tone of Book I is absent. As the last poem of this book indicates, Hayman has begun to resolve the problem of looking backward to the old centres of culture by focussing his attention and praise on the new:

I knew the Court well in the old Queenes dayes;
I then knew Worthies worthy of great praise:
But now I am there such a stranger growne,
That none doe know me there, there I know none.
Those few I here observe with commendation,
Are Famous Starres in our New Constellation.
(Book II, 106)

The development which Hayman undergoes from Book I to Book II is the first step which any individual immigrant to the new world must take, and in fact the first step which the culture as a whole must take if it is to create a new, indigenous literature.

The verses at the end of Book III, all addressed to female relatives and wives and daughters of friends, have already been discussed. The verses at the end of

Book IV are, generally, addressed to those men who have had the greatest influence on Hayman. He begins with a tribute to Sir Francis Drake, whom he met as a child:

> This man when I was little, I did meete,
> As he was walking up Totnes long Street,
> He asked me whose I was? I answer'd him.
> He ask'd me if his good friend were within?
> A faire red Orange in his hand he had,
> He gave it me, whereof I was right glad,
> Takes and kist me, and prayes, God blesse my boy:
> Which I record with comfort to this day. . . .
> (Book IV, 7)

Six of the remaining twelve poems are addressed to writers, all of whom (except John Donne) Hayman knew personally. Once again, his praise is generous and sincere, and his modesty reflects the knowledge of his own limitations as a writer.

> *To Master Benjamin Johnson, Witty Epigrammatist,*
> *and most excellent poet.*
>
> My epigrams come after yours in time;
> So doe they in conceipt, in forme, in Ryme;
> My wit's in fault, the fault is none of mine:
> For if my will could have inspir'd my wit,
> There never had beene better Verses writ,
> As good as yours, could I have ruled it.
> (Book IV, 18)

As his praise of others' works increases, so does his own sense of shortcoming, until it is almost obsessive:

> *To a Friend, who asked me why I doe not compose*
> *some particular Epigrams to our most gracious King . . .*
>
> Thou ask'st, Why I doe not spinne out my wit,
> In silken threads, and fine, smooth, neat lines fit,
> In speciall epigrams to our wise King?
> All these my selfe I dedicate to him.
> Its all too coorse, what my wit can weave forth,
> To wrap the little finger of his worth.
> (Book IV, 27)

Hayman ends this book, and *Quodlibets*, with a note to the reader:

> If these faile in worth, blame me, but consider
> from whence they came; from a place of no helps.

NOTES

[1] The source for most of the information in this section is Gillian T. Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland, 1577-1660*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1969.

[2] Allan Pritchard, "From These Uncouth Shores: Seventeenth Century Literature of Newfoundland", *Canadian Literature*, XIV (1962), pp. 10-11.

[3] Galloway, David, "Robert Hayman (1575-1629): Some Materials for the Life of a Colonial Governor and First 'Canadian' Author", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, XXIV (1967). Galloway hints at the possibility that Hayman was not in fact governor of the settlement, since the only indication of this is on the title page of *Quodlibets*.

[4] Quoted in Galloway, "Robert Hayman (1575-1629): Some Materials ...", pp. 79 and 83.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[6] G. C. Moore Smith, "Robert Hayman and the Plantation of Newfoundland", *English Historical Review*, XXXIII (1918), p. 32.

[7] "Sixteen quarto copies of *Quodlibets* are known to be extant. There are two in the British Museum ..., two in the Bodleian ..., and two in the New York Public Library. The following libraries have one copy each: Folger Shakespeare Library; Huntington Library; Watkinson Library, Hartford, Conn.; Library of Congress; Houghton Library, Harvard University; Garrett Library, Johns Hopkins University; William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan; John Carter Brown Library, Brown University; Boston Athenaeum; Free Library of Philadelphia". Source: Galloway, *op. cit.* There is a photocopy in the Massey College Library, University of Toronto.

[8] John Pengwerne Matthews, *Tradition in Exile*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1962.

NEPHEW

Cyril Dabydeen

Alone in the street
his five-year old
wanders, his belly
hanging out like a placard.
The village women
do not notice his slogan;
they merely laugh.
Watching him now
I'm convinced
he's nothing more
than a fanatic.

INSITE
Place d'Armes

Peter Brigg

SCOTT SYMONS' *Place d'Armes* is an experimental novel whose typographical variety, maps and diary format reflect a McLuhanesque aesthetic sense of the specialized use of the word in its physical context. Yet beneath the word game the novel demonstrates a unity of purpose expressed in structural pattern and multi-layered metaphor. A probe of the pattern and metaphors reveals that Symons has set out to clarify his conception of Canada and the Canadian.

Hugh Anderson, the central character in the novel, seeks identity on several levels at once: Canadian identity, personal identity and sexual identity. The structural scheme of the novel combines these aspects into a single tour that Anderson begins in Toronto and completes at the centre of Place d'Armes. Anderson's particular perception of buildings, places and objects provides rich metaphors for the search and there is a clear relationship between the objects and the structure of the narrative.

Anderson's movement spirals into the maze of old Montreal and his private self in an ascending fashion as he comes closer to a breakthrough combining understanding and feeling that will clarify his personality and end his search for Canada. At the same time he discovers that he must free himself from the limits of monogamy and accept his "homosapient" self. The complete opening up of self involves body as well as mind. This leads to the passages of near blasphemy when Hugh stresses the relationship between Body and Blood in the mass, homosexual surrender and the surrender of the mind needed to understand the Canadian nation. He describes his homosexual surrender to André on Day Twenty in terms of a tour of La Place and surrounding area.

Symons' solution to the problem of keeping the quest active is to set up a number of different points of view. These are arranged so that they fit inside one an-

other like zones in a maze. Like a maze they hold false trails as the personalities of Hugh Anderson and Hugh's creation Andrew Harrison become confused and finally merge.

The external point of view is the omniscient narrative printed in six point type. Within this frame (which is not symmetrical but occurs on various occasions in the novel) the next level is Hugh Anderson's Combat Journal that begins on Day Two and is printed in twelve point type. The Journal book was bought by Anderson six years before the trip described in *Place d'Armes* and had been left empty while he lived in Toronto. The third level of narrative is provided by Anderson's notebooks and is printed in twelve point italic type. The notebook refers to Andrew Harrison in the third person ("I'll call him Andrew — Andrew what? Just Andrew for now."[1]) as Hugh speculates on the novel he will write based upon the notebooks. The twelve point type also serves as Andrew's notebooks when it occurs in passages surrounded by the twelve point bold-face type of the novel which Hugh is writing about Andrew. This situation occurs on Days Thirteen and Fourteen but Symons blends the two notebooks into one as he moves to blur the separate points of view in the closing days of the quest. Andrew begins to write the diary on Day Twenty-One but towards the end of the entry it has become Hugh's musing on the problem of the novelette he is writing about Andrew.

> (and as I type this diary now I realize that my novelette is in fact some deeper assault on reality than I cared to admit.) (pp. 265-66.)

The existence of these various levels of narrative adds a good deal of variety to the potentially static situation of contemplating objects so that they reveal their meaning. (Symons has since done a more extensive formal study of the meaning of *objets d'art* in his fine book on Canadiana, *Heritage.*)

Anderson's autobiography reveals his sensitivity to the Canadian past as it is evinced in art:

> ... author of *Essays in Canadian Taste: a Study in the Relationship of the Arts and Politics from 1812 to 1914.* (p. 18.)

The emphasis on places, *objects d'art* and buildings is natural in a man with a highly developed aesthetic sense and makes a most suitable basis for the perceptions that Anderson himself tells his friend Luc (poet, cineaste, Separatist ... French Canadian!) are far more than cold criticism.

> "It is a matter of eye eating site — I call it eyesite: it is carnivorous. Omnivorous. Sometimes you choke. You're eaten by what you eat."
>
> .....
>
> "You eat the site till it is inside you, then you are inside it, and your relationship

> is no longer one of juxtaposition ... but an unending series of internalities." (p. 68.)

> Each Building was a style and each Style was an Era: and all of them was a Person — a Real Presence. (p. 120.)

Anderson's aesthetic sense helps to reveal his struggles for identity. Three of the locations which the novel treats: the antique shop Anderson calls the Flesh Market, the old Bank of Montreal and the Church of Notre Dame, will serve as illustrations of his perceptions.

Anderson's first experience in the Flesh Market occurs on Day Four of his twenty-two day search for himself and his country. As he watches the customers come and go he sits in a rocking chair that yields the security he needs when challenged by the presence of English Canadians.

> I hubnub the rocker turnings — quick Canadian chaplet — protection against this infidel. (p. 57.)

From this vantage point he sees several groups of English Canadian shoppers come and go. He realizes that they are stiff and lifeless and discovers, as one of the men touches a diamond point armoire, that they are drawing sustenance from the French furniture. This leads Hugh to think of the mass and label the shop the Flesh Market because of the B&B, body and blood, that it provides to the English. The act of communion holds in combination the elements of the French-English dichotomy, the idea of French Canadian sacrifice and the impotence which contact with things Canadien can cure. The description is overtly sexual:

> Till now I see his hand run amok, running down the front of a diamondface, fondling it in a mutual moan from both of them as they are abruptly in touch with armoire us and all the shop ignites about them conjugal. (p. 61.)

The antique shop is a near-perfect metaphor for the Canadian predicament, the English coming to take the beauty and vitality of the French in an act which is close to the buying of flesh. In the shop as much as in the rest of the novel Anderson tries to be outside the English tradition but cannot become wholly a member of the French culture. He is fiercely critical of the English Cubes (the three dimensional versions of the American square) who come into the shop. He describes the gentleman from Toronto in terms of the landmarks of the province.

> I know it because the gentleman in the blue waistcoat is the Toronto Parliament Buildings, the City Hall (old and new!), the armouries ... is a mutation of Premier Robarts and of the Ontario Flag (Red Ensign Canadian) — (p. 63.)

Yet Hugh has a grudging respect for the High Tory Canadian, his own class:

> No — these Cubes may be constipated: but they are redeemable. They may simply be Squares full of shit . . . but it is a Holy Shit then, and thus the Canadian remains a Square-plus-Something which is better than the square-root-of-fuck-all. (p. 65.)

All the elements of Anderson's search are present in the Flesh Market. There are sexual overtones to the passage about the armoire and in Hugh's brief contact with the shop girl. There is a personal and religious context in the mention of the mass and the taking of sustenance as the English take from French Canada, using their financial power to commit cultural rape. Hugh feels that he does not fully belong on either side of the French-English dichotomy for his background and his sympathies lie on opposite sides in the conflict.

THE Old Bank of Montreal Building and the Church of Notre Dame face each other across Place d'Armes. Hugh sees the Bank as the ponderous mother of Canada, a description which is confirmed pictorially by the breast-like dome of the building. He always sees relationships between forms and their meaning and he trusts his perceptions implicitly.

> Always trust the object . . . objects *never* lie — never. And objects always personify the people they master. (p. 151.)

When he catalogues the buildings in the area he reveals the sequence of thought which leads to his opinion of the Bank.

> Bank of Montreal — Merchantman's Neo-Classic — British North America — Responsible Governor. (p. 121.)

He sees the history of the collaboration between the conservative elements of Quebec and English capital in the stolid building which rules one side of the Place at the heart of Canada.

> They [Montreal 'habitants'] were the rag-tag ends of the old peasant-Church axis that had sustained Duplessis' dictatorial power for nearly two decades. Behind them the Bank of Montreal rose significantly. The Bank had helped Duplessis too. (p. 125.)

Although he dislikes the English Canadian Businessman he sees in the Bank at the carol-singing, Anderson recognizes the Bank as one facet of the Canadian whole in a remarkable passage which blends sexual experience with his discovery of Canada.

while Mommy Bank remains implacably complicit . . .
I've been had I've been had I start
to hue and
cry, but stop in full halleluia — the Church,
the Church . . . I've just
penetrated my Church and it is
La Place d'Armes! (p. 205.)

On the final day of the Combat Journal Anderson sees in the stonework detail on the Bank the perfect emblem for English Canada.

> And so aptly, atop the crest of Montreal itself . . . the beaver — the Complete Canadian Cube . . . the symbol of the state — substantial, diligent, sure, sobre, comestible (but only by the tail) . . . and, of course, it could be fleeced — the Canadian Golden Fleece. (p. 277.)

In the final action of the novel Hugh bursts out of Notre Dame and runs to the centre of the square. At this moment he envisions even the beaver as active, participating in the Canadian experience. This is in perfect accord with the premise that objects never lie, for the Mommy Bank is in Place d'Armes just as the English fact is in Canada. Hugh does not deny this at any point even if he feels that the bank represents the "Cubes" of English Canada.

The most important building in *Place d'Armes* is the Church of Notre Dame. For Anderson it represents the French presence in Quebec both in terms of history and the present time. He relates the Church to Bartlett's 1835 print of the interior, pointing out that the print reduced the interior by leaving out its baroque characteristic of multiple foci.

> Bartlett had failed to insite the Church . . . While in Bartlett's church I feel cameo constraint. (p. 111.)

> That it [Notre Dame] was simply a cubicle, thoroughly overdecorated. A distanced cubicle. One that conveniently took place out of him [Hugh]. (p. 125.)

Notre Dame comes to life for Hugh when his sensitivity is open and the church then becomes the central building in the process of understanding Place d'Armes in his various contexts. On the nineteenth day of his search Hugh is first brought into the close communion with the building, an experience which he describes in quasi-sexual fashion.

> . . . And then he realized it was no longer in objective relationship with it [relation of object-Church with Object-intent,] . . . it had penetrated him, and at the same time, it projected from him, infinitely. (p. 210.)

Towards the close of the novel the experience of Notre Dame becomes an even greater revelation to Anderson.

> This Church, this nave, this *is* the Body of the Habitant ... of the Habitant-Seigneur-Cardinal-Canadien ... Baroque Habitant ... Ecce Homo ... they couldn't finally hide that, even under the Cubicularity. This Church is the Canadien ... my missing Man. My other Présence ... Moi-même. (p. 266.)

For Anderson Notre Dame is the source of sustenance, symbolized by the Body and Blood of the mass. It is the personification of the French tradition in Canada. It expresses the openness Hugh finds once he gets past the "cubicle" aspect which Bartlett captured.

> ... the essential experience of the nave insofar as it is cubicular at all, is one of vertical upthrust. But even more important, the experience I feel more and more with it is one of warm liberation. (p. 111.)

Anderson's discovery in the novel closely resembles a religious surrender in which body and soul must be given completely in order to be regained anew. Thus when he stands in the centre of the Place in the final passage of the novel he is giving himself as the Host and describes himself as bleeding. It is only through this giving that he is made whole by being existentially open to all of the objects and people who surround him.

The achievement of *Place d'Armes* is its ability to hold the attention of the reader despite its aggressively blatant vulgar language, its repetitiousness and its singularly unlikeable principal character. Its success lies in the careful structural pattern which is created by the metaphors of place, buildings and other objects. I have shown how these metaphors are explained in unusual detail in the novel. Symons does not leave our observations to chance and a good deal of the strength of the work comes from the way that objects are shown in depth to reveal the historical dilemma of Canada and of Hugh Anderson's personal identity. Each station of Anderson's private Calvary is marked on the map provided at the front of the book. He moves in ever decreasing circles until he is in the centre of the Place at the final moment of understanding. His route is as much a maze as a set of decreasing circles because he often advances only to find himself rebuffed by a temporarily unattainable part of his goal. When this happens he can actually walk through the Place or into the buildings on his route without any effective emotional contact. He finds himself baulked as one would be in a maze when a false trail ran out.

> The veil has come down in me, over my eyes. I am shut off — cannot see, nor hear, nor touch. Look again at the Place — no, it's just a postcard there now, ... (p. 33.)

Symons is quite deliberate in making all of the narrators who seek to walk into Place d'Armes sound similar so that the book ultimately speaks with a single voice. Because Hugh Anderson eventually absorbs Andrew Harrison it is legiti-

mate to speculate that Scott Symons ("A Personal Narrative by Scott Symons" [title page]) absorbs both Hugh and Andrew, particularly in light of the strong sense of intimacy and personal passion conveyed by the difficulty of the search and the close correspondence between Symons' biography and those of his characters. Symons comes from an Ontario High Tory family, spent time in Montreal as a journalist sympathetic to French aspirations and is an expert on Canadian furniture, art and architecture. The novel has an inward spiralling pattern in terms of physical locations but it moves in the opposite direction in terms of the attention paid to the figures in it. Thus Andrew Harrison is the least detailed study while we know considerably more about Hugh Anderson and by implication all the points of view reflect outwards to Symons standing behind the omniscient narrator.

Place d'Armes is an intricately unified novel despite the presence of two central "characters" in Hugh Anderson and Andrew Harrison and by implication the presence of Symons behind the omnicient narrator. It is clear that all three are concerned with the same dilemmas and that they conduct the same search through old Montreal. Unity is promoted by the blending of metaphors so that the Body and Blood of the Antique Shop become the Body and Blood of the mass at Notre Dame and are intertwined with the sexual surrender of Hugh and Andrew. The novel moves towards a vanishing point in the centre of *Place d'Armes* and it is at that point where the details of the searches for sexual, personal and political identity coalesce into a geographical, personal and political whole for Andrew, Hugh and, by implication, Scott Symons. The highly poetic and metaphoric structure of the novel makes it one of the most complex investigations of Canadian identity yet undertaken by a novelist. Symons knows that identity is a quality of the whole man: sexual, aesthetic, intellectual and emotional. He has put the national search into all of these perceptive modes in a single novel.

NOTES

[1] Scott Symons, *Place d'Armes*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1967, p. 71. All succeeding quotations are from this volume.

AVE IMPERATOR

Al Purdy

A 19th century English painting
hung outside the first class staterooms
presented to M.V. Bonavista
at her launching in 1956
by Lady Margaret Bowater
— foreground parkland of England's
green and pleasant et cetera
boy and woman watching two swans
for background a majestic castle
complete with baronial hall
and doubtless a Lord & Lady Fitzsomething

An odd place to find that painting
among the tough crew of Newfoundlanders
for instance 300-pound Captain Devlin
who fell between two converging ships
and escaped with ribs just slightly sore
or "Hullo me old dear" Harold Murn
trappers and fishermen of cold Labrador
Eskimos and Indians from Nain and Hopedale
swigging beer in the men's crapper
joyriding the icefloes for ring seal
off the coast of Jacques Cartier's country
(who called it "The land God gave to Cain"
expecting maybe dancing girls?)
— to them the painting is probably invisible

One wonders a little about Lady Bowater
did she think that painting high culture
and believe England's green and pleasant et cetera
could be recreated in Labrador ice
nor realize swans would die of envy
watching hawk and falcon riding the updrafts?
Or did she imagine a phantom Englishman
art-appreciator and tailored bon vivant
stalking the deck oblivious to commoners
shouldering nobly the white man's burden
complete with monocle and walking stick?
— a phantom Englishman
caricature of all Englishmen
who followed Wellington to die at Waterloo
and choked in the mud of Mons and The Somme
resurrected briefly by Lady B

Nain, Labrador

CARNIVAL

R. G. Everson

Now that the pyracantha berries are ripening
robins come to peck at them
The robins are fluttering and hopping
all through the jungle for far as I can see
There could be a million of these brute creations along this coastline
On only one palmetto, I slowly confusedly
count about a hundred birds
They have flown here from Venezuela
on the way to their nesting homes in Canada
This jungle is seething

A robin flies down from a berry bush
to drink at a small rainpool of water
The bird is Emily Dickinson. He is slowly hopping
toward me. Even on my Montréal lawn
next Summer, few robins will be so brash
as this one. The bird is staggering
Now I see that there are many bewildered robins
These sly creatures have come to the pyracantha berries
for something better than food. This is their Mardi gras

The robin leans against my left foot
I reach down, pick him up. He is cross-eyed
Carrying the slim weight, I walk over to a pyracantha bush
I pick a berry and gingerly nibble it
An acrid taste but not so dreadful as bourbon
(perhaps stronger, however). I try a handful
Presently I lie down, staining my shirt with fallen berries
I place the robin on the jungle floor beside me
His cross-eyes behold me hazily as I him, at six inches
I am Aristophanes the divine humorist

or maybe I am not, but like the bard I feel good happenings
come to humans on the wings of birds
This cute redbreast has brought me the notion
of trying fermented pyracantha berries
So we start this conversation (Aristophanes and St. Francis
chatted with fowl, according to them). The bird and I mount
up above the jungle to where glistening ocean
is in full view. The robin shakily advises:
Follow North two thousand miles along that coastline
We are both programmed for the Atlantic Flyway

MOTION

Anne Corkett

The air is so taut
and still I hear
hills massing
by the shore
where the lake
lies waiting
the first thin
line of trees.
The sun
is stretched
so fine I see
the long forced
marches of the pines
halted by the lake's
formation.

These are no lawless
marches and though
the signal birches'
flashing warns
of farther
forests moving
on another shore yet
still my eye would mark
detente and so disarm
the sentencing of time
that ranks my single
point of view, a private
disarray.

review articles

NOVELS FROM NEAR & FAR

George Woodcock

JACK HODGINS, *The Invention of the World.* Macmillan. $10.95.
JANE RULE, *The Young in One Another's Arms.* Doubleday. $6.95.
LEOPOLD VON SACHER-MASOCH, *Venus in Furs,* translated by John Glassco. Blackfish Press.
FREDERICK PHILIP GROVE. *The Master Mason's House,* translated by Paul P. Gubbins. $15.00.
RESHARD GOOL, *Price.* Square Deal Publications. Hardcover $9.95, paper $4.95.

VANCOUVER ISLAND is a strange combination of the pristine and the decadent, of frontier roughness and lingering English manners, with inlays of sheer Canadian myth and a rather sickening varnish of commercialized tourism. Almost thirty years ago I lived there for three uneasy years, in a remote community on the southwest coast, where the Juan de Fuca Strait opens out to the Pacific. It was a ravaged area of rough second growth forest and stump farms, fringed by startlingly beautiful coastal vistas of the snowy Olympics over the Strait and backed by the rocky, mossy, arbutus-tufted Sooke Hills.

It was a place of loggers and fishermen and cougar hunters; a contingent of British remittance men provided what frail claims it had to civilization, and among the mild eccentrics who had gathered there my wife and I hardly seemed out of place in our wrong-headed effort to achieve the Tolstoyan ideal of combining manual and physical work on a piece of land which everyone else knew (but did not tell) was barren for the very reason that made it seem so fertile to us; the broom which we cleared with such labour grew to a height of twenty feet only because the soil was useless for other crops.

Along the rough road in the hills behind us lived an even more formidable tribe than our own village loggers; they were people dwelling mostly in shacks on land once given to World War I veterans. Some of the veterans were still there, buried in time; a few gay couples had found refuge in the total permissiveness of the environment, but the great majority of these bush folk, as we called them, were loggers of the wilder kind, poverty-stricken marginal farmers whose holdings have since been eaten up by the forest, or mere drifters. Between them bitter feuds over wells and boundaries persisted for decades and were periodically celebrated with rifle duels through the trees or fertilized with the blood of beer parlour brawls.

My favourite place in this backhill community was the abandoned Anglican church, which for a time had been run as a brothel by two enterprising Vancouver whores, later became the local bootlegging depot, and when we reached the area was inhabited by a large family of undetermined origin living in complex

and public incest. Nothing had been of greater interest to the local scandalmongers since the failure a decade or so before of the religious community (I believe they were called the Star Brethren) whose decaying buildings were still visible in the bush a mile or so west of our village, and whose leader ran away with the funds he had collected from the innocent mid-Westerners who sold up their farms to follow his promise of easy salvation.

I intended, for years, to write the not-so-plain Tales of the Sooke Hills, but while I lived there the rigours of manual work left me no energy even to keep a proper diary, and in the years immediately after leaving the village other interests and travels supervened; gradually the memories lost their sharpness, until no more remains than will fill a short passage of an autobiography. But I always believed that this strange combination of people, washed up on that far shore of Canada by the tide of westering which made it the last of our frontiers, needed its chronicler, even if I had failed my memories, and I am happy to have seen that chronicler at last appear in the person of Jack Hodgins.

Hodgins, whose novel *The Invention of the World* succeeds a collection of short stories, *Spit Delaney's Island*, actually writes about the opposite side of Vancouver Island from the site of my own experiences. The town that is the focal point of his massive folk epic is a fairly literal portrait of Nanaimo, and the greater part of the action — apart from interludes in western Ireland — is set northward from there, at the site of the Revelations Colony of Truth on the edge of the town, and then upisland in remote logging camps and decaying tidewater settlements and valleys where the counter-culture has taken over the marginal farms and contributed a new element of oddity to the mad old frontier mix.

I read *The Invention of the World* with part of my mind wandering through the world that had seemed so strange to me when I entered it half a life ago — the world of the loggers and their whores and the stump farmers and the Anglo-Irish eccentrics and millenarian communities, and I was delighted with the felicity of observation that had enabled Hodgins to catch so well the look and mood of the wild sea-forest-and-mountain landscape, and the speech and mannerisms of its inhabitants. These aspects satisfied my nostalgia and at the same time pleased me with the thought that such a strange and undoubtedly transient world had not gone uncelebrated.

At the same time, I developed reservations about the fictional structure of the book. In the central strand of the plot — the career of Maggie Kyle from logger's moll to proprietor of a trailer park on the site of the Revelations Colony and eventually, after a desperate search for impossible salvations, to marriage with her hollow man of a cousin, Wade Powers, I found nothing to criticize; I have known such a loud, leggy blonde from northern Vancouver Island whose career and character were not much different from Maggie's. Around this main plot the minor fates of island oddities like Madmother Thomas, Julius Champney, Danny Holland and Becker (who in his curiosity over human motives becomes the narrator of much of the book) weave their appropriate patterns, and even the material side of the remembered history of the Revelations Colony — a group of bog Irish led away from home by a conjuring messiah named Keneally — is part of the authentic island experience.

It is when Hodgins turns Keneally into a semi-supernatural being of malign and magical powers that the novel weakens. For what he is doing is to juxtapose true myth with fabricated myth. The strange life of the Vancouver Island communi-

ties is one of those natural gifts to the novelist — truth grown so much stranger than fiction that in memory it is already myth, even before it is set down on paper. To add further convolutions is to transfer it into the world of fictional invention, and to lose it as mythic truth. The founders of the West Coast religious communities were strange and sinister enough beings in their own human right. There was no need to make them demonic.

If Jack Hodgins weakens *The Invention of the World* with an excess of the diabolic, Jane Rule spoils another west coast novel, *The Young in One Another's Arms*, with an excess of the angelic. It is the tale of a boarding-house which one-armed Ruth Wheeler runs in Vancouver and in which, herself a casualty from life, she shelters the misfits and dropouts of society. The little community is threatened by urban development, by police action when one member is picked up and illegally shipped over the border and another killed in a shootup, but it stays together and all is eventually well when the members re-establish their little collectivity on Galiano Island, where they run a restaurant and Ruth's estranged husband providentially dies just in time for them to buy the house from which they are about to be evicted. This is the kind of optimistic book which good writers are sometimes inclined to write in spite of themselves in times of social malaise and threatened crisis; I was often reminded in reading it of Priestley's *Good Companions*. *The Young in One Another's Arms* is written in too satisfying a plain prose to be just a failure, but its imaginative vision is not convincing. It is not merely that such accumulations of goodness are rare indeed in real life; it is even more that a novel in which everything always seems to turn to the good leaves too bland an impression on the mind to be remembered as more than an escapist exercise. We may long for paradise regained, but the human condition is a paradise lost.

The three remaining books on my list come all, in various ways, from outside. The farthest outsider of all is the celebrated Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*, and this classic exercise by an Austrian novelist in the psychopathology of love concerns us only because it is translated by John Glassco and very elegantly printed by the Blackfish Press of Vancouver. It is appropriate that such a classic of the whip should have been rendered — and well rendered — into English by the author of *The Fatal Woman* and *Harriet Marwood, Governess*, but the main result of comparing the three books is the conclusion that John Glassco deals far more interestingly with the theme than the unfortunate Sacher-Masoch, whose main claim to our attention will continue to be that Kraft-Ebbing appropriated his name to define a sexual aberration.

One steps a little nearer with *The Master Mason's House*, for that was first published in German in 1906 under the title *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* with the name of Felix Paul Greve attached to it; now it appears in English, translated by Paul H. Gubbins, and under the name of Frederick Philip Grove, whom we all believe to have been Greve's Canadian *alter ego*. *The Master Mason's House* is indeed a recognizable example of Groveian juvenilia. Readers of the Canadian novels will immediately recognize as familiar the central situation of the coarse-grained contractor who drives his wife to madness and then himself becomes the victim of a domineering woman of doubtful antecedents. Greve's intent to push his characters into the arms of destiny is perhaps not so powerful as it became in the later Grove, and the young girl Susie — whose growth towards independence is another strand of *The Master Mason's House*, is far too shallow in herself and

in her relations with her age peers that occupy so much of the book. Perhaps the surest of all the signs of Grove's hand lies in the very evocative description of the Baltic countryside — Grove's own countryside — which for luminosity and particularity of observation closely resembles the landscape pasages of *Over Prairie Trails*. The translation is spotty. Mr. Gubbins writes a good narrative prose, but his dialogue is clumsy, and his attempts to render the juvenile chatter of another time and place into modern Canadian teenage cant or to find a Canadian equivalent for Low German dialect speech disastrously mar the book.

The last novel on my list lies farther off in its locale than the Central Europe of Greve and Sacher-Masoch. Réshard Gool's *Price* is set in South Africa — in Cape Town during the period before *apartheid* was introduced. Unlike the novels of Margaret Laurence, Dave Godfrey and Audrey Thomas, it does not establish the familiar pattern of African experiences seen from a Canadian starting point. Gool knew South Africa before, by many leaps across the world, he eventually settled in Prince Edward Island, where he is the editor of Square Deal Publications. And *Price*, the story of an East Indian lawyer, his tragic infatuation for a beautiful and promiscuous Cape Coloured woman, and his eventual death from political violence, is not merely a tragically moving study of human obsessions and their effects, but also a revelation of an aspect of South African life with which few outsiders can be familiar. For the aspect Gool chooses is that penetrated only by a few whites, the world of Asians and Cape Coloureds, many of them highly sophisticated people, and the struggles for power within that world, even at a time when it was threatened by the tide of Nationalism. The factional battles between Stalinists, Trotskyists, Syndicalists and communal political bosses are displayed with a sharply pessimistic eye, and the way in which the non-European and at the same time non-African communities are corrupted by the perils and opportunities of their situation is exemplified by the sinister Sheikh-Moosa, the wealthy Malay racketeer who in the end, to protect his speculations, is prepared to co-operate with the Afrikaner Nationalists. *Price* is an unusual and strongly written book; it is not exactly a new one, since it was published in a limited edition as *Price of Admission* in 1970, but it appears to have been revised and this is the first time it has been offered to the general reading public.

THE GOOD JAZZ

Roy MacSkimming

MICHAEL ONDAATJE, *Coming Through Slaughter*. Anansi, $10 cloth, $4.95 paperback.

IF IT SEEMED ODD at first glance that a gifted Canadian poet should devote an entire book to an American pop-culture hero, as Michael Ondaatje did six years ago in *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, Ondaatje's choice of subject for his latest work may seem even odder. The protagonist of *Coming Through Slaughter* is Buddy Bolden, known chiefly to jazz aficionados as a pioneering musician in turn-of-the-century New Orleans. Bolden is a hazy, semi-mythological figure at the dawning of jazz — from the days before recordings

or big money or national and international acceptance of Black music. His instinctual genius was recognized by his contemporaries — "He began the good jazz," one of them is quoted as saying — but all that remains of his career are a few reminiscences, one dim photograph of Bolden and his band, and a record of musician Buck Johnson whistling the way he remembers Bolden playing.

From these fragments and an acquaintanceship with New Orleans and its history, Ondaatje has fashioned a prose work (his first) that is part documentary, part fiction and essentially a spiritual exegesis of a tragic personality. Upon finishing it, one no longer asks why Ondaatje chose Bolden as his principal character. He has journeyed so far into the world and mind of Bolden — or someone he imagines Bolden to have been — that *Coming Through Slaughter* represents an imaginative feat of a high order: a transcending of cultural and racial and historical barriers into a state of nearly total identification, on both the author's and reader's part, with the subject.

The pattern of Bolden's life is a familiar one in Black musical history, a precursor of those talents that have self-destructed in despair and heroin. Bolden's music was a search for both ecstasy and oblivion: he lived at top speed, becoming celebrated young, drinking vast quantities of alcohol, doing violence to himself and occasionally those around him, going over the edge into madness at 31. Bolden spent the last 24 years of his life in a Louisiana mental institution. It was his way of committing suicide.

All this comes very close to the romanticized image of the dissolute artist, but Ondaatje isn't interested in that cliche. He wants to burrow under it and chart the subterranean rivers in this man, the subtle and elusive but finally identifiable moments when the decision to go mad is made, rejected, made again.

The process is all the more mysterious because Bolden did not appear outwardly to be a deeply disturbed person. He could usually control the effects of his drinking, was a loving husband and father, an irrepressible raconteur. For a living he cut hair at N. Joseph's Shaving Parlour, snipping and shaving with an increasingly drunken flamboyance as the day wore on: "Humming loud he would crouch over his sweating victim and cut and cut, offering visions of new styles to the tilted man. He persuaded men out of ten-year moustaches and simultaneously offered raw steaming scandal that brought up erections in the midst of their fear." He even edited *The Cricket*, a raunchy broadsheet packed with local sensation and rumour. At night he played cornet in front of the dancing crowds and on holidays there were the festive jazz parades down Canal Street.

Through an aggregation of brief incidents, scraps of documentation, and monologues in various voices, not strictly chronological but generating a powerful sense of momentum, we become aware of Bolden's secret self — infuriated by his "slavery" in the barber shop, appalled by the onrush of his own existence, "governed by fears of certainty," i.e. of death. He constantly had dreams of his children dying. This terror of mortality helps to explain Bolden's sudden, unexpected desertion of his family and his music — "wiping out his past again in a casual gesture, contemptuous. Landscape suicide," as his old friend Webb puts it.

Webb is a police detective (Ondaatje doesn't say if he ever existed) who takes it on himself to search for Bolden and restore him to his former place in the world. In a nice paradox, this structurally unconventional narrative acquires a detective-story suspense in the course of Webb's investigation. Piece by piece the

psychological clues pile up until Webb walks triumphantly in on Bolden, who is taking a bath in the apartment where he lives with his new love, Robin, and her uncomplaining husband.

In confessional passages Bolden tries to make Webb understand what he has done: that he was driven into a negation of his talent by the very adulation it brought him. There was his unlikely friend Bellocq, the hydrocephalic photographer (who did exist), who placed no value whatever on Bolden's music and made him mistrust his fame, feel its mocking emptiness. There was Bolden's burgeoning paranoia over his wife, Nora, whom he imagined as being in love with the king pimp of the Storyville district. There seemed no sane way out. Even Bolden's escape into Robin's arms was a "swimming toward the sound of madness."

Nevertheless Webb, well-meaning agent of the rational world, succeeds in bringing Bolden home. In five days Bolden finds the answer he wants: he literally blows his lungs out in a New Orleans parade, playing incomprehensible sounds. He has achieved his oblivion. At this point, after being excruciatingly immediate for most of its length, *Coming Through Slaughter* subsides into a neutral, scholarly, archival mode. Hospital records are produced, along with taped reminiscences of survivors of the period. It is as if, having tasted a dead man's sweat and blood, we are once again looking at him down the dusty tunnel of history.

Ondaatje doesn't belabour the facts of poverty and social oppression as sources of Bolden's agony — they are implicit in the pungent historical asides, "the Black whores and musicians shipped in (to Storyville) and the Black customers refused." More importantly, Ondaatje succeeds in giving us a sense of how Bolden actually played — "showing all the possibilities in the middle of the story." The texture of the book itself has that fertile, driving, improvisational quality, rich with its own pleasure in language and human complexity. Its considerable drama is marred only when the author shows himself too self-conscious about literary architecture; there is an archly obscure epitaph about the sounds that dolphins make, and bits of poetry are inserted now and then, as if to remind us of the author's other avocation. But it is undoubtedly Ondaatje's experience as a poet which has liberated him from the tired conventions of the novel and helped him to produce a fictional work of such uncompromising existential power. One of Bolden's numbers was titled, "Don't shake, don't get no cake." Bolden the quiet lunatic is given the last word, from the asylum: "There are no prizes."

THE SEVERED SKULL

Wayne Grady

GRETL FISHER, *In Search of Jerusalem*: Religion and Ethics in the Writings of A. M. Klein. McGill-Queen's University Press. $14.00.

"IT IS PERHAPS SIGNIFICANT," Tom Marshall has remarked, "that the most perceptive reviews of *The Second Scroll* in 1951 were more convinced of its cultural importance than of its merits as a novel." Significantly, perhaps, but also alarming. And it is at least alarming that most of the recent studies of A. M. Klein's poetry have concerned themselves not so much with Klein the poet as with

Klein the bibliophagist, Klein the learned, Klein who out-Bubers Buber and then out-Eliots Eliot. This is true of Sidney J. Stephen's study of "Portrait of the Poet as Landscape" (*Dalhousie Review* 51), and of Tom Middlebro's "Yet Another Gloss" on *The Second Scroll* (*Journal of Canadian Fiction* IV:3). It is only slightly less true of Miriam Waddington's *A. M. Klein* (1970), and it is true to the nth degree of Gretl Klaus Fischer's newly-published doctoral dissertation, *In Search of Jerusalem.*

To give Miss Fischer her due, she recognizes, and in part conveys, the value of objective scholarship. She does not suppose that once we have established that Klein read Spinoza's *Theologico-Politicus*, that Klein's view of redemption was shared by the 16th-century Cabbalist Isaac Luria of Safed, that it was Moses de Leon and not Rabbi Simon ben Yochai who wrote the *Zohar*, then we have learned all we need to about Klein's writings, and his book may be closed. Although Fischer carefully scrutinizes Klein's every obscurity, she is only occasionally condescending ("One may distinguish between three elements of Cabala: the first is one of systematization of numbers which are to yield esoteric knowledge; its principles and method cannot seriously appeal to the modern mind ..." — her attention ought to be drawn to Perle Epstein's study of *Under the Volcano,*) and does seem to be aware that scholarly exegesis carries us only part (or at most, most) of the way to a fuller appreciation of a poet's lifework.

It is not the fact of scholars that alarms, but the imbalance of them, of those versed solely in exantlation and delineation, for whom poetry is uninteresting except as a code to be deciphered. Miss Fischer seems genuinely interested in Klein's "moral purpose", in the extent to which his development was "the archetypal quest of a human being who emerges from the shelter of orthodox certainty and struggles towards a redeeming philosophy and intellectual peace." It is the mapping of that struggle that we find in *In Search of Jerusalem*: Klein's subtle shifts from orthodox Judaism, through Spinozan pantheism, *via* Chassidic optimism, to apocalyptic oecumenism. Whether or not Klein ever found his redemption and peace, whether or not he ever managed "to say the word that would become sixth sense", it now seems to be certain that his "quest" for it was "archetypal".

There is no doubt that much of Klein's imagery is difficult, and requires explanation. Fischer quotes Earle Birney's exasperated question: Who but a Talmudic scholar can enjoy a poem made up of references like:

> The smiling Kahana; Shammai in a mope;
> Hillel instructing an obtuse Ethiope ...

and it is doubtful that even a Talmudic scholar would enjoy these lines *as poetry.* The point is that Klein was not writing for Talmudic scholars, any more than Cavafy or Kazantzakis wrote for classical scholars. Although Fischer is good at tracing Klein's obscure or undetected references, the sparks thus engendered cry out for weightier wood. Her chapter on Klein's early writing, and her discussion of golem, Rabbi Nachman the Bratzlaver, and Klein's "Ballad of the Dancing Bear" are excellent. She is quite convincing when she sees in the latter poem Klein's completion of an untold tale from Nachman's *The Seven Beggars,* and we are inclined to agree with her conclusion that this in part suggests "Klein's persistent allegiance to Cabalist and Chassidic ideas". But where do we go from there?

The rest is not Miss Fischer's concern. She is an annotator, a compiler of footnotes, and not always a very thorough one at that. She is content to note, for example, that in Poem V of the early

sequence "Out of the Pulver and Polished Lens", Klein "abandons all ostentation of poetic technique" by setting up the poem "in the form of two short prose paragraphs", retaining, however, "iambic pentameter . . ., rime, and metaphor". In fact, the poem is a Petrarchan sonnet, complete with octet, sestet, pentameter (though not iambic) and ABBACDDC-EFFEGG, written in prose. What does this mean? Is this an abandonment of all ostentatious poetic technique? Or is it rather a concealment of it, in the way Klein might have sensed a divine order concealed in the world's labyrinth? Whatever Klein's intention, surely it was more than to lend the lines "the peculiar dignity of an understatement", as Miss Fischer would have us believe.

Similarly, in her discussion of "Yehuda Halevi — His Pilgrimage" (1941), "a poem of 42 stanzas, most of them Spenserian," she notes that

> Klein tells us how Halevi, the poet, physician, and philosopher, spent his youth in security and happiness, renowned for his pious songs and his jousting with the wittiest of his contemporaries, until, one night, a dream began to trouble him. He sees an imprisoned lady whose home has been taken by enemies, and unable to forget this dream, leaves Toledo . . . to find her. After various adventures he reaches Jerusalem, where it becomes clear to him that the city itself is the princess for whom he has been searching. With his beautiful ode . . . he can only pour out his love. He cannot free the city. He is murdered, and only the memory of his song remains . . .

That anyone familiar with Klein's life and work can read these lines, let alone write them, without seeing in the fate of Halevi a parallel with not only that of Melech Davidson in *The Second Scroll*, but also with Klein's own tormented and, finally, tragic life, is remarkable. It is all there: Klein's orthodox childhood, his early disillusionment, his vision of Jerusalem, his final, lacunar silence. And yet, without so much as pausing to catch her breath, Miss Fischer rushes on to tell us that although "few modern readers can find pleasure in the Spenserian vocabulary," it is nonetheless "fitting that Klein should have chosen to remind us of *The Fairie Queene* . . ."

Perhaps the real problem with the book is simply that it was not intended to be a book at all. In one of her Acknowledgements, Miss Fischer thanks Louis Dudek, who directed her doctoral thesis, "on which this book is based." A glance at that thesis, presented just before Klein's death in 1972, reveals that the present book is, except for the appendices and a few minor editorial changes, a *verbatim* reprinting of the original disseration.

Now, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with publishing a four-year-old thesis, provided some accounting has been taken of subsequent developments in the field. But no mention is made in the book of the Klein Symposium held in Ottawa in May 1974, and only a brief, bibliographical note is made of the appearance in the same year of Miriam Waddington's monumental *Collected Poems of A. M. Klein*, an appearance which ought to have occasioned some major revisions in Fischer's text. Waddington has unearthed some 63 poems, for example, published by Klein between 1927 and 1937, of which only 25 are listed in the Chronology appended to Fischer's thesis. The Chronology has been deleted from the book, and no mention is made anywhere of the 38 new-found poems, many of which ("Koheleth" for example) are extremely relevant. The Chronology also listed 6 poems of that period which are not found in Waddington, and which are not mentioned again in the book.

The image of Klein that emerges from these pages is that of poet laureate for North American Jewry, a role that he no doubt took upon himself out of his own natural inclination to praise, but one that ultimately must have clashed with his

growing sense of existence as Godless and evil, with his increasing inability to find anything praiseworthy in the universe. This twin-mindedness is evident in his socialist, anti-war poetry written, as Fischer remarks, more from a sense of duty than from any deeply-felt passion, a kind of inverted Masefield describing the evacuation of Dunquerque. And it is especially evident in *The Hitleriad*, which Fischer supposes fails because Klein knew too little about his subject. It may be that Klein, synthesist of history, myth and poetry, knew too much. He could not with sincerity attribute Hitler's rise to mere stupidity and indifference in the German electorate: for Klein, Hitler was human nature incarnate. Not an accident, but an historical inevitability.

Miss Fischer decapitates Klein, murders to dissect him. And yet, "instance this much-desired case," Klein wrote in 1943: "the skull/ though severed from unbleeding shoulders, lives."

THE USES OF BIBLIOGRAPHY

Michael E. Darling

KAROL W. J. WENEK, *Louis Dudek: A Check-list.* The Golden Dog Press. $3.00.
MICHAEL GNAROWSKI, *Theses and Dissertations in Canadian Literature (English): a preliminary check list.* The Golden Dog Press. $3.50.
GLENN CLEVER, *Revised and Updated Index to the Periodical Canadian Literature Nos. 1-62.* The Golden Dog Press. $8.00.

WHILE the larger presses have been falling over each other in the race to produce more superfluous thematic studies of Canadian Literature, the Golden Dog Press has been quietly building up a reputation in an area far less glamorous but ultimately much more vital to scholarship. Under the direction of Michael Gnarowski, the Golden Dog has published indexes to important literary magazines like *First Statement* and *Canadian Literature*, reprints and carefully edited texts of nineteenth-century poems, and now a check-list of a major Canadian poet.

Karol Wenek's check-list reveals, as no critical study has to date, the enormous range of Dudek's talents. Here we see not only Dudek the poet and critic, but Dudek the editor, translator, philosopher, artist and playwright as well. In attempting to list nearly all published and unpublished works by and about Dudek, Wenek has turned up some very interesting items. These include two unpublished television plays by Layton and Dudek in the Concordia University Archives, drafts of early poems in the library of the State University of New York at Buffalo, a mass of correspondence with Layton, Souster, Birney, Livesay, John Sutherland and others, and scores of reviews and literary notes that appeared in the *McGill Daily*, *Culture*, the *Montreal Gazette*, and the *Montreal Star* over a period of thirty-five years. Adding Dudek's regular contributions to *Delta*, *First Statement* and *CIV/n*, his ten books of poetry plus nine other works authored or edited, exclusive of *Delta* and the McGill Poetry Series, and well over a hundred uncollected poems, makes a body of work exceeded by few Canadian writers. And yet Wenek has still missed a few of the more obvious items: five reviews that Dudek contributed to *Canadian Literature* between 1959 and 1967, and an article entitled "Exotic Reference in the Cantos of Ezra Pound", first published in the *Antigonish Review*

in 1972. These oversights suggest that there may be other items of comparable importance overlooked by Wenek, but he does not, in any case, pretend to have compiled a definitive bibliography.

What is pleasing to note is the high standard of accuracy in the recording of bibliographical data. Checking a reference to Wynne Francis's *Canadian Literature* article on Dudek against the same reference in Gnarowski's *Concise Bibliography of English-Canadian Literature* and Frank Davey's *From There to Here* reveals that only Wenek has correctly recorded the title of the article. Errors that do occur are relatively minor: "Reflecting on Pain" (p. 11) should read "Reflections on Pain", and the date of Dennis Lee's *Books in Canada* review of *Collected Poetry* is October 1971 rather than 1972, but on the whole the checklist can be recommended for its accuracy.

Unfortunately, one cannot say as much for the *Revised and Updated Index to Canadian Literature*. The index has been updated to include the issues of 1973 and 1974, and the printing and binding of the new edition certainly make it a handsomer book than its predecessor. Nevertheless, the index is rife with misprints and inconsistencies, spelling mistakes and faulty cross-referencing. The following are representative: Margaret Laurence becomes Lawrence (p. 2), Kirkconnell becomes Kirkonnell (p. 87), Hemingway is spelled Hemmingway (p. 23), Thomas McCulloch is altered to McCullough (p. 113), Hémon becomes Hémons (p. 72), etc. Misprints can creep into any printed text, of course, but one shudders to find the names of Earle Birney, Malcolm Lowry, and Farley Mowat consistently misspelled. What are we to make of such a horror as "A Bibliography of Works by and about Malcom Lowry, prepared by Earl Birney"? Incidentally, Malcolm Ross and Malcolm Miller suffer the same fate. All of these errors are reproduced from the first edition of the index, but new ones have been introduced in the "revised" text. Donald Stephens, for some reason, becomes David Stephens (p. 113). A reference to issue no. 19, Winter 1964, is altered to 19 W 74 (p. 35). The annotation to Douglas Barbour's review of Alec Lucas's *Hugh MacLennan* disappears entirely (p. 103).

More grievous than these errors, however, are the inconsistencies in the recording of articles and notes, and the cross-referencing of these items. Theoretically, one would expect to find short notes indexed alphabetically by author, as is done with articles. But this policy is not followed steadily. Thus, one finds the anomaly that Desmond Pacey's enquiry about Roberts's letters is indexed under Pacey, but R. E. Watters's enquiry on Canadiana cannot be found. Similarly, Louis Dudek's reply to an article by A. J. M. Smith can be found under the headings of Dudek and of Smith, whereas Nathan Cohen's reply to John Robert Colombo may be found only under Colombo's name. More serious omissions occur in the cross-referencing of articles. For instance, articles by Robert Gibbs and Nancy Bjerring on Brewster and Davies respectively may be found under their author headings, but not under subject headings; conversely, articles by L. A. A. Harding and Esther James on Haliburton and Ludwig may be found under subject headings only and not under their respective authors. Another annoying habit found only in the indexing of articles from Nos. 55 to 62 of the journal is that of cross-referencing *ad infinitum*. D. G. Jones's article, "Myth, Frye and Canadian Writers" (No. 55, Winter 1973), refers to about forty authors, most of whom are mentioned only in passing. Yet Jones's article is cross-referenced under the names of each one of those writers. A student wishing to read criticism of the works of Birney,

Callaghan, MacLennan, Pratt, Reaney, Souster, Wiseman, and many others, would search in vain to find any discussion of the writers in question. In contrast to this rather ludicrous attempt at repletion, Wynne Francis's "Montreal Poets of the Forties" (No. 14, Autumn 1962), contains interesting biographical information on Dudek, Layton, Page, John Sutherland and others, but no reference to Francis's article can be found under the headings of any of these authors. The same faults on a slightly less exaggerated scale are discernible if one compares Isobel McKenna's "Women in Canadian Literature" (No. 62, Autumn 1974) with Clara Thomas's "Happily Ever After: Canadian Women in Fiction and Fact" (No. 34, Autumn 1967). Again, the recent article, which gives sketchier treatment to each writer, is extensively cross-referenced, while the earlier one is not.

A final quibble is in the matter of annotation. Many of the articles in *Canadian Literature* sport titles which give no clue to the contents of the piece. To know that Louis Dudek wrote an article entitled "A Problem of Meaning" is fine, but how is a reader to know that the article discusses the plays of James Reaney? Occasionally, annotations are supplied, but why not include them for every article? This is just another example of the slipshod way in which the index has been compiled. Readers of *Canadian Literature* who must pay $8.00 for this "revised" edition have a right to an index that has been organized, edited and proofread carefully and consistently. They don't have such a work as yet.

Michael Gnarowski's check-list of theses in English-Canadian Literature is timely and certain to be of use to students, although one might rightly ask whether it is a significant improvement on Klinck,

Watters and Bell, *Canadiana*, or Naaman's *Guide bibliographique des thèses littéraires canadiennes*. Both Klinck's and Naaman's lists include theses in progress, and since many of these were abandoned or altered, none of these listings can be considered accurate. Gnarowski rightly omits theses in progress, and includes many rather obscure writers not found in Naaman, including Henry Alline, Jacob Bailey, Jonathan Odell, and other Maritime loyalists. Gnarowski also includes dissertations written at American and foreign universities, but not comprehensively. *Dissertation Abstracts* lists a Ph.D. thesis on the novels of Morley Callaghan completed at Florida State in 1966, which Gnarowski also could have found in Lawrence F. McNamee's *Dissertations in English and American Literature*.

A revised edition of the check-list ought to clarify a couple of uncertainties: in a number of cases, Gnarowski seems unsure of whether a particular thesis is a master's or doctoral. Generally, these are cases in which Watters and Bell have indicated only "thesis". A further problem is that the check-list, although published in 1975, only includes theses up to 1972, and not comprehensively for the later years. As Gnarowski says in his Foreword, this is only "a tentative compilation," but it does seem unusual that a check-list of this kind should be three years out of date at the time of publication, and that it should omit theses from major universities that fall well within the limits of the list. I am thinking here of Stanley Dragland's "Forms of Imaginative Perception in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott" (Ph.D. Queen's, 1971), Robert Gibb's "Aspects of Irony in the Poetry of E. J. Pratt" (Ph.D. New Brunswick, 1970), and Edward B. Davies's "The Alien Mind: A Study of the Poetry of Archibald Lampman" (Ph.D. New Brunswick, 1970). A revised edition should make certain of dates as well. This is a very confusing area, as even library catalogues and archives occasionally list dates for the completion of theses which are different from the dates on the title-pages of the theses themselves. But there seem to be too many uncertainties on the whole in the present compilation. Hopefully, a revised edition will also include an author index.

The Golden Dog Press deserves one and a half out of three for its efforts in bibliography and indexing. The Dudek check-list is definitely an important contribution to scholarship, and hopefully other check-lists and perhaps full-scale analytical bibliographies of major Canadian authors will soon be undertaken. Students of Canadian Literature should be grateful to this small press for its efforts in this direction, even if the achievements occasionally fall short of its ambitions.

THE MYTHMAKERS

Tom Marshall

GWENDOLYN MACEWEN, *The Fire-Eaters*. Oberon Press.
STEPHEN SCOBIE, *The Rooms We Are*. Sono Nis Press.
WAYNE CLIFFORD, *Glass/ Passages*. Oberon Press.

GWENDOLYN MACEWEN has always been a singer, one who sings forcefully of things exotic and mysterious. Readers and reviewers of ten or twelve years ago responded immediately to her urgent and exuberant utterance even when — in some of the early poems — it approached incoherency. Indeed, a love

of sheer sound, encouraged by her poetic idols Hart Crane and Dylan Thomas, sometimes ran away with the poem. But a myth was being unfolded in brief, sharp bursts of sound and imagery. One finds, for instance, from the beginning a desire for escape to other times and worlds (as in the poems of Michael Ondaatje) but also a passionate longing for the integration of opposites or pairs — light and dark, male and female, Canada and the arcane mysteries, past and future. Hers is the alchemical search for the divine in the mundane; magic and myth abound but are expressed in terms of human emotion and an attractively colloquial and flexible voice.

The cosmos the poet explores is within as well as without:

> by eating the world you may enclose it.
>
> seek simplicities; the fingerprints of the sun only
> and the fingernail of the moon duplicating you in your body,
>
> the cosmos fits your measure; has no ending . . .
>
> (The Breakfast")

For MacEwen the individual discovery of the universe is also the creation of the universe. The swimmer, the astronaut, the dancer, the magician recur as images of the poet whose activity is mythmaking, the construction from experience of meaningful patterns, and thus of the larger self, the larger consciousness (a process that assumes overtly nationalist and feminist significances in the work of Margaret Atwood). In *A Breakfast For Barbarians*, MacEwen's first mature collection, the poet is by turns winemaker or magician or an escape artist who finds his way to a new heaven and earth. The poet's "intake" or swallowing of the world in metaphor makes a unity of self and world. This theme persists even through the deepening and darkening of MacEwen's vision that occurs in *The Shadow-Maker* and afterwards.

The dangers of this stance and of MacEwen's markedly personal style were always evident, and they are evident in her new small collection *The Fire-Eaters*. MacEwen began, like Leonard Cohen, as a romantic adolescent prodigy and has continued as a more or less "natural" writer — she was decidedly not a slow learner like, say, Al Purdy (or myself). Consequently, her poems have truly marvellous ease and energy but sometimes lack over-all shape. Again, one wonders if there is not something of an imbalance in the direction of inner experience here, an evasion of the overwhelming external challenge of Canadian space and society. On a vaster plane, one wonders (sometimes) if MacEwen has always been sufficiently aware of the trickiness, the humour, the *irony* of the God whom she engages.

To be fair, just such tensions and questions are at the heart of her best work; this is part of the reason for its dramatic effectiveness. In "The Discovery" and "Dark Pines Under Water" she sees (as she does in the prose piece "Kingsmere") that Canada itself must be approached as exotic mystery. And she remarks early in her career:

> O baby, what Hell to be Greek in this country —
> without wings, but burning anyway
>
> ("Poem Improvised Around a First Line")

In *The Fire-Eaters* the poet still burns, but it would seem with the fires of perplexity. The book reads like a diary in which the reflections of the day (and the night) are set down. The speaker is coming to terms with the intractable realities of the world, expressing bemusement, horror, humour.

> The clouds, the birds and the wind have no answer
> even though no question has been posed.

("The Clouds, the Birds and the Wind")

That which we took so much for granted
— Holy poetry of water and of fire —
Is suddenly debatable.

("Everyone Knows")

It is, of course, always debatable, as we all know. A change in outlook seems to be indicated here — perhaps it points in the direction of zen or the uncertainty principle. This book is (it must be said) slighter than MacEwen's earlier collections, though it bears on every page the unmistakeable stamp of her highly distinctive tone, but it suggests a transitional phase. It will be interesting to see where Canada's mystery-singer finds herself next.

Stephen Scobie's poetic personality is "elusive" in a sense that could never be applied to the decidedly "present" Gwendolyn MacEwen. One is conscious in *The Rooms We Are* of intelligence, skill and sensibility, of clever ideas and exercises, even of well-realized poems — but without a very high definition or a very strong sense of individual character. Instead one hears, though only at times, faint echoes of Cohen, Atwood and others. Scobie remarks in his nicely lyrical piece on the jacket that the poet must separate himself from his past work, even reject it; noting that these poems were written in 1970-71 and that the book was apparently published in 1974, though it has reached me two years later, I wonder if he cares by now what I think of them. Moreover, I have the impression that I've read much stronger and larger poems by him in the last year or two. Oh well. Many of these pieces are brief if shapely enough "thoughts" and jottings, often in very short lines like those employed by Dorothy Livesay in recent times. But they lack the punch that Livesay packs into much of *Ice Age*; they don't remain in the mind. One poem, the rather delightful "Stesichoros to Helen", is an exception to everything I say, though: it is sardonic, witty and wise in a fashion that surely reveals the real Stephen Scobie.

Movement's the hoard I live in
swarmed with connection,

writes Wayne Clifford, thereby suggesting the flow of a sensibility and consciousness as powerful as those of MacEwen. Something of a publishing drop-out after his first book (and theirs) was done by Coach House Press in 1965, Clifford now returns with a large collection made up of three sequences and the long poem "Passages". These display the intricate music, wordplay and syllabic patterning of sound that give his work its extraordinary texture. There is even a kind of subtext of puns e.g. "A gape" reveals itself as *agape*, and "wane" refers to the poet's own waning self. More important though (for me) than this verbal playfulness is a mastery of the rhythmic phrase that recalls Pound.

The three poem-sequences are "Kriti" (Crete), made up of travel poems, "Blood Suite", which deals with the conjunction of the birth of a daughter and a brother's death, and "The Map", a quite remarkable expression of the strains of marriage: all create a powerful psychological atmosphere through very nimble and flexible rhythmic effects. The three tend to flow together, since there is a certain overlapping of subject-matter; they also provide a (relatively) easy access (or "passage") to the more difficult "Passages".

"Passages" itself is not only difficult but original, intricate and brilliant. It unfolds images and rhythmic intimations of birth, diving, mortality, the body's changes, entropy. The opening fable of Coyote and Duck is an effective — and somewhat humorous — expression of the search for the solid in a world of flux. It is also a creation myth along Indian lines, involving as it does the parting of the waters to make land (an event that

occurs in many other cultures as well, signifying the creation of self and world). Throughout the poem the body is seen in terms of earth and water. The poem's subject is life in the body, how it imprisons us and constantly reminds us of death. ("Now there are no bonds except the flesh," wrote MacEwen once.) This is an interior journey, and one assumes that Clifford will move out from the centre of himself in the work that follows. In this book man reaches out through his senses to communicate with the world but always feels trapped and limited (and in Clifford's case angry about it). Still there are moments of transcendence, especially in the act of writing. One such occurs in a marvellous passage linking man, room, radio, orchestra, Sibelius and Finland, and another in a meditation on a woman's photograph. Life, consciousness is "passage" or a series of passages. In the moving conclusion the speaker accepts and embraces Coyote Dungflesh who is a symbolic expression of this earthly sphere. Union and communion involve an acceptance of the world in all its horror and glory (this is a theme prominent in MacEwen's work too), The poem resolves itself into a kind of prayer:

> Flowering Corruptor, whose two-edged joke
> is this exquisite diagram of *am* traced
>
> thru the dumb and burdened meat, I break
> up from the page . . .
>
> Unbroken Impact, I meet you as
>
> a man sees his face
> leap up to the water's surface
>
> to welcome to be welcomed to be one.

Clifford's subject-matter is universal and thus not new, but his way with language is the most genuinely exploratory I have encountered in some time, and is highly recommended for that reason.

CRAWFORD'S STORIES

Dorothy Livesay

Selected Stories of Isabella Valancy Crawford: Edited with an introduction by Penny Petrone. University of Ottawa Press.

THIS BOOK will not enhance Crawford's reputation as a poet but, for the diligent student, it may help to cast new light upon her narrative poetry and to explain her life and times. It presents, through Miss Petrone's introduction and brief biography, the very human problem of how an artist survives in a pioneer and colonial atmosphere.

Isabella Valancy Crawford has been compared to Emily Carr as a creative artist of genius whose first years were fought through without public recognition or communication with her peers. But Emily Carr, born in 1871, lived to be 74. By the time she was 37 (the age at which Crawford died) Carr had been to England and Paris, had encountered the French Impressionists and returned to Canada to paint West Coast Indian life in a re-vitalized modern style. True, because of lack of recognition she gave up painting for 15 years; and only through the great good fortune of meeting with the Group of Seven was she released once more into full creative activity.

In the literary field there was to be no such Phoenix-like revival for Isabella Crawford. Born in Anglo-Irish Dublin in 1850, she was brought to the wilds of Northern Ontario at the age of 8, to become a part of the Scotch-Irish pioneer

settlement in the Saugeen River valley. For the greater part of her short life she remained on the fringe of Canadian cultural society, never at its centre. Probably as a girl in her teens living in Douro County on the Otonobee River she would have met and admired Susanna Moodie and her naturalist sister, Catherine Parr Traill. They had an island cottage near the Stoney Indian Reserve and from the internal evidence of her writings it seems very likely that canoe trips with visits to Indian encampments were a part of her summer activities.

Thus in the sense that Crawford lived close to the forest wilderness, her experiences would have been close to those of Carr. But when her physician father, Stephen Crawford — a pecunious alcoholic, from all accounts — moved his practice to Peterborough, there would have been scant literary stimulus for the young girl, except for that to be found in the Mechanic's Institute. Doubtless she could read the Ontario newspapers, *Frank Leslie's Magazine* from New York, Dickens' *Fireside Weekly*; and the instalments of novels by Dickens, Thackeray, Bret Hart as well as by many lesser writers, men and women, with three names to their signature.

In her introduction to this collection Penny Petrone hints at the struggle that must have been going on between the passionate, primitive spirit of Isabella Valancy Crawford, the poet, and her practical need to earn pocket money and perhaps fame and fortune through publishing stories. In the hope of enticing editors she must have begun early to imitate popular styles and genres. Ms. Petrone makes it clear that "all of the subjects were of the extravagant type dearly loved by readers of newspaper *feuilletons*, as they used to be called, and the style was almost always prolix since the contributors were paid by the length of their stories." Miss Petrone has painstakingly searched libraries, newspaper "morgues", archives and the very scrappy collection of manuscripts saved by Mr. and Mrs. John Garvin, the editors of Crawford's *Collected Poems*, to establish that the body of Crawford's prose work is unfinished and uneven, a promise rather than an achievement. The young apprentice was trying to teach herself by practising from a variety of models.

For this reason the editor has chosen to limit her selections to examples of the various prose styles employed by the poet: "a sentimental romance . . . a fairy tale, an essay, an extract from an historical romance, an excerpt from a boy's story, an unfinished regional idyll, and two local colour stories." By the latter I would assume that Miss Petrone means the selections "Tudor Tramp" and "Extradited" — two pieces that show that Crawford was feeling her way towards writing the modern realistic short story or *conte*. She was developing characters faced with the pioneer situation reminiscent of Moodie's *Roughing It In The Bush*, and at the same time making a valid attempt to weave these characters into a careful plot structure. Popular potboilers these might superficially be called, yet in reading them today one is impressed by the lively sense of individual idiosyncracy, humour, dialect. Miss Petrone judges that Crawford, at her best "achieves an epigrammatic restraint, as in the following pithy expressions of homespun wisdom . . . 'caterpillars deform the comeliest vines', 'wives are not good bridles in the mouths of wild asses'."

In this first publication ever of Isabella Valancy Crawford's prose in book form the editor has succeeded in giving us clues as to the kinds of writing the versatile Crawford was capable of. This is a useful beginning, but what would have been more fascinating is an appraisal of the relationship of the prose to the narrative poetry. Miss Petrone has not attempted

an analysis of the mythical symbolic themes which recur consistently in the prose as they do in long poems like "Malcolm's Katie", "The Hunters Twain" and "Gisli". Here there are always two men linked, as darkness is with light. Catherine Ross, another graduate student in Canadian Studies has made this the strong point of her thesis, giving evidence that:

> Crawford uses the device of the twinship of dark and bright brothers to distinguish opposites and then bring them into alignment.

Mrs. Ross points to the recurring pairs of identical twins that Crawford uses in so many of her prose stories.

> Typically, in these prose romances, one twin is raised at home in a loving wealthy family that nurtures his health and spiritual development; the other, often disinherited or stolen away as a child, has been physically broken and sometimes spiritually imbruted by a life of poverty, drunkenness or crime. In the novel, *Pillows of Stone*, Florian Dutrom, who has just come back to New York from school in England, is, like Gisli, spectacularly vigorous and healthy. Clyffe, his elder by fifteen minutes, has been tutored in New York's dissipation and is now, we are told, "a ghost, a vain shadow, a mocking phantom of what might have been of manliness, beauty and strength." One character compares Clyffe with Florian and is moved by the contrast to exclaim, "Oh Father! . . . Clyffe might have been like this nature who, made in Thy image, is not yet defaced by sin."

In other prose works (as in the documentary poems) twin figures "interconnect the world of the gentleman with the life of the convict and hulks, the expensive boy's school with the frightful city prisons and loathsome city lairs which Crawford describes in "The Hunters Twain."

To conclude I would say that in the light of the research done by both Penny Petrone in this collection, and Catherine Ross in her unpublished thesis, the University of Ottawa Press has made a valuable contribution to Canadiana in bringing Isabella Valancy Crawford's prose to light. It is unfortunate that in appearance and print the present paperback is unattractive, with a bibliography that has not been edited with excessive care. For example, the manuscript of Crawford's novel *Helen's Rock* (with its theme of Andromeda) is printed here as *Helen's Frock!* And another novel, *From Yule to Yule* is listed twice, with different word counts. Nonetheless we should be grateful that a start has been made in exploring the wide universe of Isabella Vallancy Crawford who, like Emily Carr in Wilfred Watson's poem:

> And down the valley . . . looked and saw . . .
> every bush an apocalypse of leaf

FOR EVERY TASTE

Russell M. Brown

DAVID WATMOUGH, *Love and the Waiting Game.* Oberon, $7.95 cloth, $3.95 paper.
DON BAILEY, *Replay.* Oberon, $6.95 cloth, $3.95 paper.
75: New Canadian Stories, edited by David Helwig and Joan Harcourt. Oberon, $8.95 cloth, $3.95 paper.

AMONG CANADIAN publishing houses, Oberon has distinguished itself not only by giving us fine anthologies of new stories each year since 1971, but also by providing us with collections by writers such as Hugh Hood, Beth Harvor, W. D. Valgardson, and George Bowering. Now here are three new books added to their list, with promise of more to come.

In *My Life as a Man,* Philip Roth

opens his narrative with two short stories, purportedly written by his fictional protagonist and presented to the reader under the rubric "Useful Fictions"; the remainder of the novel is in the form of an "autobiographical" narrative written by this same fictional author. This juxtaposition serves to illustrate the way a writer may become fixed on certain events, certain aspects of his life — and may work these into fiction, transform, rework them, and then return to them yet again. In reading the collections of short stories by Watmough and by Bailey, I had the sense that I was encountering *their* useful fictions, for each of their stories is very nearly the same story, often with the same cast of characters, but also with enough small alterations, enough inconsistencies to keep the individual stories from cohering into a larger whole. Indeed, as in Clark Blaise's fiction, there is no attempt to make a whole of these parts; they are rather ways of dealing with different facets and different possibilities of some part of a life, of some one event on which that life has turned.

Watmough, who is the more engaging writer of the two, writes of his Cornish childhood, stories which are built out of a pervasive nostalgia. As the narrator says at one point, "I talk from hindsight." All that is needed is, as in the closing story, "a small twist, a nudge of distortion," and we find ourselves "following an avenue of memory which leads to a specific Cornish lane."

At times Watmough's re-examinations of the past lead him into a kind of Proustian meditation on the sources of memory. "That's the connection," his narrator discovers:

> Primrose stalks, bruised vegetation. A lifetime later, eight thousand miles from where Grandma Bryant yielded her body to the life of the churchyard, I take the cup of my hand that is holding a sprig of salal, a leaf of salmonberry, again to my nose. And it is the simple vegetable matter that blends with my own scent to ring bells of memory.

But if this passage does not provide a novel discovery about the way the past may unexpectedly arise and confront us, it is still nicely drawn and, within the context of the story, entirely convincing. Moreover, behind this recollecting of the past lies an important question, one characteristic of the expatriate experience out of which Watmough writes: "How much is one where one *is*? And how much is one where one *was*?"

The central event which Watmough seeks to deal with as he carries his narrator, Davey, through these shaded lanes of memory is that of a homosexual encounter. His cousin Jan, and their early childhood intimacy which seems to have led to this, is the source of several stories; Jan is in turn replaced by other ambiguous (and not-so-ambiguous) male figures which give form to various accounts of Davey's maturation and his initiation into adulthood. But as the stories approach and shy away from, and occasionally explicitly treat, the issue of homoeroticism, they also provide moments of insight into universal human situations, feelingly told.

In *Replay*, a book which reprints stories from two earlier collections and adds one new one, Don Bailey seems similarly to be dealing with a single event: each of his narratives treats the after effects of incarceration, the return to society or the inability to make that return; they provide obsessive re-examinations of people who are "not used to having so much space to move around in." Sometimes this experience belongs to the narrator who is meeting a strange woman in a bar on a "nice April day ... the first one I've spent outside prison walls in six years" or who returns to his family on parole wondering if he can make it on his own; sometimes it is rather that of the girl that he's picked up and who turns out to be on a furlough from a mental hospital.

In any case, these freed prisoners repeatedly find that they are not free at all; they are trapped in miserable lives in which they take no fruitful action that might provide them some genuine escape; they return to the conditions which led them to their original acts of desperation, there to accept and even perpetuate an all-encompassing poverty which is not so much physical as emotional. When they can, they do escape this prisonhouse of the world, but their flights are into fantasy, into drugs, into frantic moments of trying to make things seem better than they are.

> Louder and louder they sang and me too, our voices raised in some last desperate hymn. The choir at Trinity Church on Bloor Street performing Handel's *Messiah* never sang that loud or that joyfully either. Maybe it was the pills. The booze? We were all smiling like giddy fools in some fool's paradise. The kid too, her rotten teeth flashing in the dark. But the song ended and the silence returned as abruptly as it had left.

The fantasy ends, the intoxication passes, and the silence seems always to return. Eventually the truth has to be faced: these are not people down on their luck, these are people down on themselves. "We never would have made it on our own. Mostly because we were the type that didn't even have the guts to try. You know what I mean?" It is no wonder that prison often seems the most positive choice, a more attractive alternative than the life that waits outside: "Shit, I thought, at the very worst I'd only be 35 when I got out. And in the meantime I was safe."

It is ultimately hard to like these stories because it is so very hard to like the people within them. These are glimpses into lonely lives of people taught to hide their emotions and not to care about those of others around them. There are passages of good writing here and the concluding story, in particular, carries impact and poignancy. But, unfortunately, as readers we too at last learn the lesson of a psychic environment dominated by fear and the imminence of death, by the loss of identity and the lack of self-esteem, by isolation, loneliness, and self-contempt — that it is best not to care.

Bailey's fiction also appears in *75*, with a story that is only a little different in mood from those of *Replay*, but which reads better for its tighter writing and its ironic playing-off of a narrator who comes from the world of the psychic losers of *Replay* against characters with a different set of values. Moreover it is much easier to read a writer like Bailey when he is only one voice, his only one perspective, in what turns out to be a rich selection of voices and perspectives.

75 is, in fact, another solid annual collection of interesting short fiction. It opens with a comic tale by Leo Simpson — which in itself would have been enough to convince me to buy the book. (I'll buy any collection with a new Leo Simpson story.) It also contains a nicely-executed piece of metafiction by Timothy Findley that sent me looking for more of his work, and memorable stories by H. R. Percy, by Jane Rule, and by Margaret Gibson Gilboord. In fact all of the stories in this collection are solid and, along with the books by Watmough and by Bailey, there is, as they say, something here for every taste.

MANDEL

Ron Miles

extends an arm, produces
concepts
like a magician's
coins.
Where was air,
substance finds his
substantial hands, crooked
fingers catch
the form and flow
of what we thought
(we know).

Or it is water
flows around our separate
boxes, through the chains
and locks
so carefully arranged
that none expected
keys and openings,
none had hoped emersion
once immersed.

If words are tricks
they trick us out
of explanations.
We are a deck
of single cards
awaiting summons.
I am the sceptic
volunteer
who almost drowned.

books in review

A GOOD MINOR POET

NEIL TRACY, *Collected Poems.* Borealis Press.

The Collected Poems of Neil Tracy not only puts before the public all the poems that he wishes to preserve but enables the reader to trace the changes which he has made since his poems appeared in previous volumes. I have checked these poems carefully against *Shapes of Clay* (1967) and *Voice Line* (1970) — two volumes which I published and which were evidently inadvertently unacknowledged in this book — and have accumulated the following data. Of the seventeen poems in *Shapes of Clay*, two sonnets ("Bernadette" and "Twenty Years After") have been omitted. Two other poems are printed without change. The remaining thirteen poems have been altered. All of the thirty-eight poems in *Voice Line* appear in this volume, but only five are in their original published form. No doubt had I access to Neil Tracy's first volume, *The Rain It Raineth* (1938), I would have a similar report to make.

An analysis of these revisions would make a fruitful article in itself. They range from mere punctuation and line differences to differences in form, and their effect is varied. In practically every free verse poem, the line divisions are altered to make the line-unit correspond more closely to the sensory unit it contains; as a result, the aesthetic appearance of the poems has been vastly improved. In the sonnet-changes there are both losses and gains. Few of the revised sonnets any more than their original forms contain that felicitous union of thought, image, and rhythm that make such sonnets that were not changed as "Eden" and "Retribution" so totally satisfying.

Forty-seven of the ninety-four poems in this volume are sonnets, and at least ten others, while not proper sonnets, resemble the sonnet sufficiently in line-length and logical structure to indicate that they were once sonnets as originally attempted. The remaining poems are written either in jungly couplets, ballad stanzas, or imagist free verse of a texture recalling that of Raymond Knister's. Neil Tracy's diction is the result of painstaking intelligence rather than of intuition. Tracy knows both how to use clichés deliberately for effect and how to avoid them. If anything is "given" in these sonnets, it is his often very fine first and last lines. It seems to me, too, that his visual gifts — despite his blindness — are greater than his aural ones. "Eden" is a good example of his capacity as a sonneteer:

> I see the long green challenge of the hill
> Crowned with old maples, lusty yet and stout,
> The broken wall, where snakes slide in and out
> To view our Fall with hooded eyes and chill.
> Dead gods in motley walked there through the thrill
> Of frosty evenings, casting tares about,
> And bitter-hearted apples, fair without,
> The fruit you proffered which I savour still.
>
> One time I kissed and tears gleamed on her face,
> The sickle fell between, and Eve was gone.
> Then Lilith kissed and straight in that dark place
> The hard hot apples of enchantment shone.
> We closed until the seed of her embrace
> Lay in her body like a witch's stone.

Some poems are personal reminiscences; others are dramatic monologues or descriptions of personages in the literary, biblical, and historical past; still

others are comments upon modernity. But whatever the theme or the form, a common unity infuses these poems. None of them look to the future, and all regard the present as a fall from a more ideal past. Neil Tracy loves the peaks of our cultural heritage and believes in the essential worth of our religious and moral tradition. His criticism is reserved for departure from that tradition, too narrow an interpretation of it, and outright hypocrisy.

It is difficult to determine a man's outlook from inference. I feel, however, that Neil Tracy's blindness, occurring as it did in his early twenties, contributed to a habit of turning from the non-visual present to the visual world of memory; from current books, which were not normally available in Braille, to the works of the great masters, which were; and from the present, where his vision relative to that of others was handicapped, to a past where his inner eye put him on more than even terms with other explorers of the same regions. Be that as it may, there is in his work a blend of traditional form, traditional theme, and traditional sensibility to a degree seldom matched by a Canadian poet writing in this generation.

Collected Poems is a book by a man who knows his limits and does not try to transcend them. Within this compass he is a craftsman who does his work carefully and well. Neil Tracy is a good minor poet. Though his poems do not in any way enlarge our awareness of the possibilities of thought, feeling, or form, they are good poems and remind us of much that is worthwhile in our heritage which we might too easily otherwise forget. Because they do this, they are valuable and deserve more attention than the work of many more spectacular poets writing more original work that is not balanced by a corresponding craftsmanship.

FRED COGSWELL

WORDS AND IMAGES

ROBERTSON DAVIES, *Question Time.* Macmillan of Canada.
BEVERLEY SIMONS, *Preparing.* Talonbooks.

THE APPEARANCE of a play in print inevitably raises the question, what *is* a play? Literature or theatre? What portion of its significance derives from its words and what portion from its images? The publication of Robertson Davies' *Question Time* and Beverly Simons' *Preparing* raises the old question with unusual urgency. These two major figures in contemporary Canadian theatre are as different as east and west, the eastern Davies firmly in the western European tradition and the western Simons looking to the orient for new forms.

The introductions to the two volumes neatly imply their differences. Simons has written a "Prologue", not a discursive introduction, for her collection of one-acters. Three people, two women and one man, are revealed standing on an empty stage; in short sentences, phrases, single words, they conduct a witty dialogue that distances them from their author, that tells us a little about her, and that strongly establishes the sense of theatre — stage, audience, actors, and invisible author. Davies, on the other hand, provides an imaginary interview in which he answers at length the typical questions people have posed to him: "Do you take characters and situations from life?" "Do you re-write much?" "What do you think your play is about?" To this final question, he replies, "It is about the relationship of the Canadian people to their soil, and about the relationship of man to his soul. We neglect both at our peril." Both playwrights inform, editorialize, introduce. But, significantly, one chooses to do so in short lines put into the mouths of anonymous actors, while the other speaks in his own voice, and in paragraphs.

Simons is not anti-verbal, but her com-

mitment to language varies. "Green Lawn Rest Home," the earliest (1962) of the four plays in *Preparing*, predates her visit to the Orient in 1968 but not her interest in Artaud, Claudel, and Genet. The most powerful image in the play is the lawn itself, composed of small stones painted green. The three characters (she likes threes) sit on the porch of the home, two old inmates attempting to get acquainted with a newcomer. Their conversation, naturalistic for the most part, is not overtly about the pathos of age and the myopia forced upon old people by their removal from the realities of life. But the play shows these things, through their inability to see the large glasses hanging on the bosom of the newcomer, by their fear of going through the rocky garden to reach the road, and by various other visual and symbolic devices. It's a good play, with a strong ending in which one character dies and is removed to the cemetery, just across the street, that we have not been permitted to see before. The visual and the verbal are held in good balance.

"Preparing" (1972) is a monologue spoken by a woman as she moves from girlhood, with reminiscences of babyhood, to old age and death. Heavily dependent on a box full of props — a wig, make-up, a mirror, a whiskey bottle — the actress must convey a sense of life as simultaneously waiting and preparing — for what? Only for the end of life. A good actress with considerable vocal and manual dexterity could make this monologue powerfully moving. The other two plays, "Triangle" and "The Crusader" (both 1972), are less successful. Allegorical geometrical, visual in the extreme, they present the ideologies and moral corruptions of man in a manner sometimes crudely obvious, sometimes obscure.

In "The Crusader" we meet for the first time the Helper, the figure from eastern drama who, anonymous and clad in black, manipulates the props and produces the sound effects. The Helper appears again in *Leela Means to Play*, Simons' most recent play published in the *Canadian Theatre Review* (Winter 1976), along with articles on her other work and a long interview about the writing of *Leela*. Here Simons has moved farther east, farther into images and the forms of dance, and away from language as sequential thought. "I have broken the limits of space and time," she says in the interview.

To a certain extent, Davies, in *Question Time*, has tried to do just that. His play takes place in the wandering mind of the Prime Minister as, in a state of shock from an airplane crash in the far north, he seeks to know his own soul under the ministrations of an arctic shaman with an Edinburgh M.D. The play makes much use of visual effects. As the nation waits for news of the PM, Lloyd Robertson appears as himself on TV to report the lack of news; the PM's wife is interviewed on TV and is tormented into a scathing denunciation of the "squalid art" of such interviewing. These episodes are done on film. The first act is set in Les Montagnes de Glace, haunted by "the Arctic sound" and by the occasional flickering presence of La Sorcière, where the PM wanders, sometimes tuning in to what is being said at home, sometimes confronting the shaman, or his totem animal, or himself. The second act superimposes the image of the House of Commons on the Arctic mountain, as the PM seeks a familiar setting in which to justify himself. The shaman acts as Speaker and La Sorcière becomes the Queen. Here, in a disruptively satirical episode, the Beaver is presented as Canada's totem animal (Davies says in the Introduction that he would prefer the Lynx for that position). The Beaver sings the praises of industry and the Honest Broker, but the Herald confronts him with the fact of his cow-

ardice, his mediocrity. The Herald then tells the legend of how a beaver, seeing that he is about to be overcome in battle with another animal, rolls over, bites off his own testicles, and offers them to his enemy. Protesting, the Beaver soon loses his argument with the Herald, offers a large pair of scissors to his opponents, and assumes "an obliging position" as he is dragged from the House.

When the play was reviewed in the *Globe and Mail*, the headline read, "*Question Time* complex and glittering," but the review was equivocal. The actors were complimented but said to have done "some hard slogging"; the highest praise went to the designer for his ice forms and to the stage effects of the production in general. The reviewer never says just what is wrong with the play but does indicate unease about it. My own sense of the wrongness comes from the mixture of verbal and visual, of word and image. Davies is a master word-man. The play sparkles with his wit, his irony, his elegant vocabulary. Even the most visual of his effects is tied firmly to the word: the TV films are of "talking heads"; the fantastically costumed shaman has a Scots accent; La Sorcière's lines echo the ends of the PM's lines (until her final appearance reverses the trick); and the Herald anatomizes the Beaver with Shavian pointedness. The play attempts to break through space and time into the mental space and mental time of the central character, but it does so in the kind of language that expresses sequential thought. But even though the central character is a parliamentarian, the language of the play is not right for the purpose. The episode of the Beaver, for example, could easily drift into a wandering mind but the speech of the play is anything but wandering, hence the sense of incongruous interruption. The play is weakened by this central illogicality.

All this is not to say that a strongly verbal play cannot make good use of "non-verbals," or that a theatre piece can afford to ignore words. It is, rather, to indicate that the relationship between the two needs the dramatist's utmost care.

ANN P. MESSENGER

DECISIVE INTERVENTIONS

ROBERTSON DAVIES, *World of Wonders*. Macmillan of Canada. $10.95.

WHEN *Fifth Business* appeared in 1971 it was hailed as an extraordinary achievement. And indeed it was, not only in the field of Canadian literature, but also in the light of the author's previous works. While there had been no lack of wit or cleverness in the Salterton novels or in the plays, it seemed apparent that with the publication of *Fifth Business* Davies was moving into fields which were psychologically and stylistically far more richly textured. Both critics and public clamoured for more — more of the wit, the elegant prose, and the quasi-profound theological and psychological theorizing. But that was not what they got. When *The Manticore* (the second book in the trilogy) appeared in 1972 it was one of the most eagerly awaited novels of the year, but it did not meet with the kind of enthusiasm that had welcomed the first book. Critics were unable to conceal their disappointment; and the public seemed divided: those who had not been introduced to Jung and his psychological theories before found the book "fascinating", but those who were more familiar with that old "fantastical duke of dark corners" were less impressed. It seemed that Davies had simply created David Staunton and Dr. Jo von Haller as props (and very wooden ones at that) on which to hang a few rags and tatters of Jungian

psychology; and even the grand finale, David's descent with Liesl into the bear cave, seemed to be an after-thought — something that was added on to leave the reader with a good taste in his mouth — rather like a glass of fine brandy after a dinner of warmed-over hash. It was only to be hoped that the final book would be more impressive. And it is. Although Ramsay is again the narrator, *World of Wonders* is less concerned with the distinguished hagiographer than it is with his friend Magnus Eisengrim who has reached what Liesl calls "the confessional moment in his life" and has decided to "spill the beans". But even Liesl, marvellously intuitive though she is, does not realize that Eisengrim's confessional urges are prompted more by vengeance than they are by self-revelation. Roland Ingestree, a member of the crew which has come to Sorgenfrei (Leisl's home) to make a film about the French illusionist, Robert-Houdin, is Magnus' unsuspecting "victim".

Like *Fifth Business*, *World of Wonders* is marvellously credible, urbane, and provocative. It is concerned, as is the first book, with God and the Devil, man's place in the universe, and the consequences that can follow on a single action: if Ramsay's life is shaped by the fact that he ducked to avoid a snowball thrown at him by Percy Boyd Staunton, Paul Dempster's is shaped by the smile that he beams back at Willard when the latter slips "his hand down the back of [his] pants". Life, in both books, is a "succession of decisive interventions", and part of man's task is to decide which of "those Two" (God or the Devil) is doing the intervening.

Magnus' autobiography begins dramatically enough on August 30, 1918: "That was the day I descended into hell, and did not rise again for seven years." In a sense Paul Dempster made a Faustian pact with the Devil when he smiled, however innocently, at Willard's (Mephistopheles') sexual advance. But the Devil, as Ramsay points out, demands a very high rate of interest, and "the interest is charged on the whole of the principal, right up to the last payment, however much you think you have paid off in the meantime." Pondering these words Eisengrim wonders if he may have underestimated the length of his sentence. "That's what I mean", Ramsay replies suggestively, and the reader is left to wonder if Magnus has paid off his demonic adversary even yet. The book is rich in ambiguity; but not all of it is as tightly controlled as this particular example would suggest.

In *The Manticore* Liesl tells David Staunton that the fathers a man chooses for himself are the most significant ones. Most men have two fathers, but Paul Dempster, alias Cass Fletcher, alias Jules LeGrand, alias Mungo Fetch, alias Magnus Eisengrim, has three: his biological father is Amasa Dempster, the "father" who chooses him is Willard the Wizard, and the "father" whom he chooses is Sir John Tresize. One of the most fascinating aspects of the book is the way in which Magnus' relationship with Sir John mirrors his former relationship with Willard. When he first meets Willard, Magnus is "very green" and his soul longs for the Wizard as the "hart pants after the water brooks"; similarly, he describes himself as being "green as grass" in his early relationship with Sir John, and he yearns for Sir John's lifestyle "as the hart pants for the water brooks". With both "fathers" Magnus travels across Canada by train and with both troops he is a "nobody": he is not listed as one of the performers with Wanless's World of Wonders, nor does he have any place on the cast lists of Sir John's company. If Willard forces himself on Magnus sexually, Magnus forces himself on Sir John spiritually: and although Magnus' rape

of Sir John's soul appears to be quite different from Willard's rape of Paul Dempster's body, Magnus realizes that he is destined to play the role of slave in both relationships. "Experience never repeats itself", he says, and yet in travelling with Sir John he sees that he is "beginning another servitude, much more dangerous and potentially ruinous" than his relationship with Willard. In both relationships, however, it is Eisengrim, the wolf, who eventually triumphs: he cares for the "confused old wreck" that Willard becomes because, as Magnus gloats, that makes him "utterly mine; he [is] my thing"; nor are his desires to devour Sir John ever far from the surface: "I loved him and served him faithfully ... but in my inmost self I wanted to eat him, to possess him, to make him mine."

World of Wonders is clever, complex, and far more original in its basic conception than *The Manticore*, but it is still less successful than *Fifth Business*. Part of the problem lies with the style — while it never sinks to the lead-footed prose that was all too frequent in *The Manticore*, it seldom soars to that compressed, witty, elegance that was so much a part of the first book ("To live in Bowles Corners we felt, was to be rustic beyond redemption"; "Our privy set the sanitary tone of the village"; "The Stauntons rarely escaped cliché in any of the essential matters of life"). But the novel's central problem has to do with tone or voice. Since each of the novels depends primarily on first-person narration, one would expect the three narrators (Ramsay, David Staunton, and Eisengrim) to be easily distinguishable not only by what they say, but by how they say it. But they are not. When David's and Eisengrim's voices sound most "alive", they both sound remarkably like Dunstan Ramsay who in turn (I suspect) sounds remarkably like Robertson Davies.

World of Wonders is not a great character study in the way that *Fifth Business* is, but it is a fascinating book, full of sophisticated conversation, enormously entertaining vignettes about circus life, and, for those who still want to know who killed Boy Staunton, a few ingenious surprises.

MARILYN BAXTER

NATURALIZATION OF MODERNISM

JOAN MCCULLAGH, *Alan Crawley and Contemporary Verse*. University of British Columbia Press. $11.00.

FOR THE MOST PART Canadian literary historians and critics suggest that the main thrust to Canadian poetry in the 1940's came from the poets in Montreal, in particular from the groups of writers associated with the two magazines, *Preview* and *First Statement*, and their joint successor, *Northern Review*. However, recently we have had articles in this journal promoting Alan Crawley and his magazine *Contemporary Verse* as an equally important figure and magazine in the development of Canadian poetry at the same time. Both Dorothy Livesay (who contributes a Foreword to this volume under review) and P. K. Page have testified to the enthusiasm of Crawley for poetry and the genuine help he gave editorially to poets.

This book by Joan McCullagh is a welcome documentation of Crawley's role in that poetic renaissance of the 1940's. In a way it sets the record straight, but though it gives some emphasis to the way poets were responding to literary movements and cultural background in the 1930's, it still presents the 1940's, as Desmond Pacey tended to do in his *Creative Writing In Canada*, as a miraculous burgeoning with almost no previous history. McCullagh gives a fair

picture of the poetic scene in modern Canada before the 1940's, but she still repeats the cliché that the 1930's in Canada was a bleak period for poetry, whereas in fact most of the important poets of the 40's had already begun to write from the late 20's on: Smith, Scott, Pratt, Klein, Livesay, Birney, and lesser figures like Ross, Finch, Kennedy, all these were certainly writing consistently before their poetry was collected in book form in the 1940's. Of course there were relatively few outlets in magazines for their poetry at that time, but it is a mistake to see lack of publications as evidence that Canadian poetry was moribund in the 1930's. The Montreal magazines and *Contemporary Verse* became the necessary nuclei around which this poetic activity could cohere — and they brought into light new poets as well.

No one will deny the extreme importance of these events of the 1940's but it is also important to set them in proper perspective. Joan McCullagh's version is certainly clearer and more definite but it still is not as emphatic as it might be about the role of the poets in the 1930's. In fact, Crawley's interest in poetry spread through the 1930's and found some real focus when Dorothy Livesay moved to Vancouver in 1937, for together they started some poetry programmes for radio at the end of that decade. Crawley also undertook several reading tours, perhaps pioneering this element in Canada (for the modern poets at least), as very few of the newer poets were giving public readings of their poems.

Joan McCullagh's book places Crawley very firmly in the native/cosmopolitan controversy of the 1940's, though he himself never became polemical about these two strains as Sutherland and Smith both did. Crawley was very eclectic in his choices and never really espoused either side, though he tended to be more cosmopolitan in outlook. However, McCullagh neatly summarizes the effect of Crawley's selections for *Contemporary Verse* as being an effect of naturalizing modernism.

The book also emphasizes the very particular help Crawley gave to new poets of the 1940's. It is especially good to be reminded that Crawley was instrumental in aiding the development of such new poets as P. K. Page, Jay Macpherson, Anne Wilkinson, James Reaney and Daryl Hine. His eleven years of editing certainly reflected the growth of Canadian poetry in the period, for he found room not only for the new poets he fostered but also the more established poets and the Montreal poets as well. Indeed, one of the most useful sections of this volume is the full bibliographical index to all the issues of *Contemporary Verse*, an index which expresses clearly Crawley's eclecticism.

There was a flowering from the magazine's early years when Crawley complained that too much "churchmonthly stuff" was submitted to him, through the heady middle and late years of the 1940's, to the running-down process that led to his disillusion and his decision to stop *Contemporary Verse*. By then the newer American poets (such as Cid Corman and Robert Creeley) were to be introduced by such a magazine as *Contact*, signalling the beginning of a very different modernism that among other influences we can still see affecting contemporary Canadian poetry.

So *Contemporary Verse* was an important magazine and Joan McCullagh's book is an interesting addition to the history of Canadian poetry. But the book also raises the question as to how Crawley's influence will be felt in the long run. Those poets whom he particularly helped, with the exception of P. K. Page, have added little to their output after their first books: Jay Macpherson has written little since *The Boatman*, James Reaney

is now more concerned with drama than with poetry, Anne Wilkinson's Metaphysical streak has rarely been taken up, and Daryl Hine is outside the Canadian literary scene. Perhaps Crawley's sympathies were with a more literary-articulated poetry, and it may be we will return to that style but in reading this book one wonders whether Crawley would have given his energies to the new verse emerging in the late 1950's and whether his sympathies would have been encompassing enough to allow him to edit a magazine at that time. He was a man seemingly in the right place at the right time, and Canadian poetry has much to be thankful for in his persistence in establishing and maintaining *Contemporary Verse*. Some of his other plans for modern Canadian poetry never came to fruition: For instance, twice he tried to promote anthologies of Canadian poetry. In a recent editorial in this journal, George Woodcock suggested that the issues of *Contemporary Verse* itself "have the containment of an anthology, a selection by a brilliant connoisseur and critic."

His disillusion at the end in 1951 sounds a little petulant, as if he is disappointed that Canadian poetry was moving into directions he was out of sympathy with. Nonetheless, Joan McCullagh's book (though astonishingly overpriced) is a sincere tribute to an important editor and critic, giving a clear portrait of the man and his magazine, a definite expression of the regard in which he was held by practicing poets, an indication of his ideas about modern poetry and its context in Canada (though the book still does not give the description required for a full understanding of the development of modernism in Canadian poetry). With its extremely useful index to *Contemporary Verse* and its sound bibliography Joan McCullagh's study is a very interesting addition to the literary history of Canada.

PETER STEVENS

PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST

MORLEY CALLAGHAN, *A Fine and Private Place*. Macmillan, $9.95.

SEVENTEEN YEARS ago, Irving Layton wrote his poetical obituary in an introduction to his first *Collected Poems*, covering the period between 1942 and 1958. The author responsible for them, he declared, "is now dead." Unwittingly, Morley Callaghan has written a similar introduction to his own body of work, spanning more than fifty years, and ironically this introduction takes the form of another novel — Callaghan's first in fourteen years.

A Fine and Private Place embarks still further on what Victor Hoar once described as a style of "literary diction". Hoar claims in his *Morley Callaghan*, a volume in the Studies of Canadian Literature series, that Callaghan put aside his habitual way of telling stories plainly and simple to assume, in *Passion in Rome*, a "literary diction" that to a great extent explains that book's failure. Hoar nails this failure down to the loss of the "figurative language" of the earlier Callaghan novels; he suggests that what characterized the symbolism of *A Passion In Rome* was not so much its rejection of the author's previously established literary principles as a drastic turning of the attention to issues too large, general and obvious to discuss within the structure of a novel. In other words, if a writer wishes to discuss art directly, there are other and more appropriate forms for the task.

In an interview last year, following the publication of his coffee table volume, *Winter*, Callaghan described his newest novel as "like nothing I've ever written". This is not in fact the case. In *A Fine and Private Place* Callaghan again resorts to the "literary diction", but he inter-

sperses it with other manners, with a kind of plausible basic dialogue, with hard, cool and realistic delineations of relationships. Yet these are only the trappings of a wider theme which no reviewer I've yet read had recognized, so that one feels that this time at least Callaghan has been able to disguise his discussion of artistic purpose.

For the real intent of *A Fine and Private Place* is to coerce the reader into an appreciation of Callaghan's writing by depersonalizing the character of Callaghan himself. In a sense, the novel is intended as a vehicle for discussing how a novel is put together, for talking about writing, about the techniques, failures and frustrations of composing stories. It is a kind of literary narcissism, purging the personality of the writer, salvaging what makes him tick. His style. His writing.

To accomplish this, Callaghan moulds a trinity of characters: Eugene Shore, a well-known novelist in a country that has neglected him; an ambitious and cocky young academic in the person of Al Delaney; the vibrant and moving personality of Lisa. All three represent Callaghan. The dialectical manner in which they are employed is nothing new; it originates as far back as his early novel, *Strange Fugitive.* It allows Callaghan to shift about the personalities, quirks and moods of the three characters in a way as confused and magical as that of the con-artist, who challenges a street audience to guess which of three tumblers moved about on the table hides the pea.

The main point is to make us aware of Callaghan's writing. Edmund Wilson's dictum that he is "the most unjustly neglected novelist in the English-speaking world" has embarrassed Callaghan. In fact, more attention has been paid to his moral objectives, to his characters envisaged as real people, and even to his own personality, than to the fictional essence of his work, and this is the heart of his criticism of the Canadian literary world when he calls for an emphasis on "excellence" rather than on "Canadianism." Though some literary periodicals are exceptions, Canadian reviewers — especially in the widely circulating magazines and newspapers — do in fact make no serious attempt to criticize a book in terms of its writing and its inherent mysteries.

In *A Fine and Private Place* Callaghan sets out to force readers into a discussion of the principles, skills and mysteries of story telling and, by implication, of storytellers. He does this through the figure of Shore, an established writer like Callaghan himself. A critic (obviously echoing Ethel Wilson) declares in an essay in the *New York Review of Books* that Shore is a master who ought to be read wherever the English language was spoken. Callaghan deliberately masks his character by allowing neither the other figures in the novel nor the reader to glimpse the man within Shore, at least in appearance, though in reality one recognizes his traits quite clearly in both Lisa and Al. (Callaghan hinted at this in my interview with him when he said he was still procrastinating about a title for the novel. Then he wanted to call it either *The Light and The Dark of Lisa* or *The Light and the Dark of Eugene Shore.*)

The overt story line deals with an ambitious writer named Al Delaney who is in love with Lisa Tolen. Al is struggling to finish a book on Norman Mailer but finds himself confronting the mystery of Shore. One realizes that the "fine and private place" extends symbolically to include not only the personality of Shore "and what makes him tick", but also the undiscovered (or unrealized) weaknesses of Al and the mysteries of writing itself.

Al secures an advance from a publisher to do a book on Shore. The fact that he cannot complete the profile (and this

appears to be his curse) is the basis on which *A Fine and Private Place* operates. Shore's character — "his mystery" — baffles Al, and until the older writer is removed the study of his life cannot be finished. There is a suggestion that Al in some sense might be responsible for the traffic accident which claims Shore's life. Once he is dead, the book is easily completed.

The point is clearly to divert the reader from analysing the author as man to the direct study of his writing. Too much study of writing patterns itself unfairly on the writer himself, his motives and habits. Callaghan enjoys the writer's "mystery", and thus he keeps the figure of Shore clouded and unpredictable. The dialectic in the novel is between Al's impatience with mysteries ("All his training made him reject mysteries") and Lisa's and Shore's attraction to shadows and the inaccessible — as Al admits when he defines Lisa and Shore as "outlaws . . . in some fine and private place." They are inaccessible and out of reach.

While Al draws near to a recognition of Shore, Lisa becomes alienated. Al feels frustrated by Shore's inaccessibility; it is the older man's "mystery" that stands in his way. This is what, in an aborted sexual scene, Lisa describes as the "ego" of that distinguished man-of-letters. Shore despises himself for ever approaching Lisa, and Lisa is humiliated. She tells Shore: "Al was wrong about one thing. He said you had no egotism. You're all ego, aren't you?" This conclusively points the novel's direction. Al's inability to complete his book on Shore is due to the latter's "ego".

How to remove this "ego" is the task. It is done not simply by implicating Al slightly in the traffic accident that removes Shore's physical presence from the novel, but also by admitting within the structure of the book that Al's work is in fact Callaghan's. The book is about himself, and it is no mere coincidence that when Al's study is completed, so is *A Fine and Private Place*. Callaghan has removed himself as well as Shore.

The book which Al finally writes is nothing like that on Mailer which he never finished. The presence of a living author in a way that dominates the entire scope of a study prevents an accurate account of both the man and his writing. Once this "ego" is removed, the book falls into shape and can deal with the mysteries of an author, his styles and techniques, provided the attention is unacademic — practical and personal.

Mystery comes with death, especially that of an author. From the collected data of his life one can only guess what he thought. His books and interviews are the only real testimony. All else after death becomes speculation, and it is into this that Callaghan is forcing the reader — back into mystery, into writing. For that reason, Shore's death makes sense.

A Fine and Private Place serves as an obituary to the style of writing Callaghan once perfected, because in this novel he has moved in another direction; he has attempted to destroy the writer of that past day in order to become himself. That is essentially what he meant when he said that he had never written a book like it before. One could even define *A Fine and Private Place* as a portrait of the artist — before and after. *A Fine and Private Place* is by no means Callaghan's best book, but in one sense, it is a primer to all his works.

MARTY GERVAIS

DESIGNING POET

STAN DRAGLAND, comp., *Wilson MacDonald's Western Tour, 1923-24*, Coach House.

IT IS PROBABLY NOT difficult to understand why Wilson MacDonald enjoyed the reputation he did. He espoused ac-

ceptable causes; he showed recurrent righteous indignation; he balanced his satires with romances, and his free verse declarations with poems whose rhythm and rhyme were clearly marked and whose "meaning" was markedly clear. "The droning scholars far too long," he wrote in "A Gypsy Song", "Have ruled the rhymes of men/ Bring back the wayward flights of song/ And errant bards again." Rejecting Carman's success, MacDonald nonetheless strove to outdo it, and remained constantly in Carman's shadow. The speaking tour he undertook in 1923, from North Bay to Victoria, grew out of his early success, and was an attempt to further his reputation. Lorne Pierce and Ryerson Press undertook to establish relationships with local poetry societies for him; the CPR provided a rail pass; but as he autographed his way across the country, the poet's temperament repeatedly revealed itself. By assembling the private letters of that time (which are held by the Douglas Library in Kingston), together with the newspaper reviews, brochures, itineraries, and programmes that lay behind them, Stan Dragland's *Wilson MacDonald's Western Tour* handsomely recaptures both the idiosyncrasies of the man and the tensions between poet and publisher which made themselves only peripherally known to the poet's public.

It would be easy to caricature both MacDonald and the MacDonald coterie. The enigmatic observation of William Archer ("Dean of English critics") is open to interpretation:

> Wilson MacDonald interested me more than anything else in America.

Newspaper reviews often lend themselves to parodic distortion:

> POET ONCE HORSE'S VALET DELIGHTS CANADIAN CLUB WITH CHARMING ADDRESS ...
>
> the remarks of Mr. MacDonald were merely strings upon which he threaded the real pearls of wit and wisdom culled from the volume of his poems.
>
> Another selection which he read ... was his "Niagara".... The poet went to the falls twenty times before he was able to express the grandeur and the awe which were in his soul.
>
> His journey to England in a horse boat is told in one of his poems containing more than 200 verses, but the poet recited about 20, and added many personal touches as he proceeded, which increased the interest in the poem.

A little quoting out of context produces this observation from Lorne Pierce to the Regina journalist Irene Moore:

> I envy your ability to empty
> yourself ... and place yourself at his feet.

And this apparently serious (and complete) outline of the first chapter of a projected novel epitomizes much that is vintage MacDonald himself:

> The homecoming of Bondie Gray. Bondie Gray is elected May Queen. The demonstration against Bondie Gray when Fanks, a dwarf, announces that she is of illegitimate birth. Another May Queen is chosen.

There is a good deal of humour in the book, much unintentional, though MacDonald's poems are never of the inspired awfulness that characterizes James McIntyre's work. But to focus on the humour would be to miss much of the significance of MacDonald's Western Tour.

In the exchange of letters between Pierce and people along the tour we come closer to the situation. Pierce had written to assorted people in a form letter: "In closing I should like to say, quite personally and confidentially, that I have chosen you as the one most likely to encourage public interest in talent and genius, and as the one most likely to see that your community gives him a welcome", promising 10% of the gross proceeds as an incentive. Dr. Ernest Fewster, of the Vancouver Poetry Society, with cultural enthusiasm and honest suspicion,

replied: "remembering Shelly, Keats, Tennyson, Bailey, Noyes, Whitman, Carman & a host of others, shall I proclaim here as one as great if not greater than these?" Pierce replied in ambivalent terms: "You were not the only one who has been surprised by 'What the Critics Say'." After the event, Fewster wrote again: "In Vancouver he has aroused so much antagonism that it would be very unwise to attempt more public appearances in the near future.... This is principally on account of... his insistence both in public & private, on the idea that his poetry cannot be equalled." MacDonald had his admirers, too, and also people like Irene Moore, who were willing to suffer "celestial irrationality" in a poet. Egocentricity there was in plenty. What complicated it for others was the fact that MacDonald's ego was tied to money even possibly more than it was to Art. He saw himself as a Celebrity, treated himself that way, and railed those who dared to react differently.

MacDonald did stay at the best hotels and apparently reject restraint during his tour. In light of the quality of his work, it would be easy to charge him now with pretentiousness, and to see Ryerson, Pierce, and the Poetry Societies as the victims of an harrassment with which they scarcely knew how to contend. But in large part MacDonald was the victim — of his own ego first of all, of inflated notions about Art and National Culture, of the copyright laws which even then were being condemned as an "almost insurmountable barrier to the Canadian who wishes to remain in this country", and of a publisher who failed either to answer his queries or to distribute his books adequately. There are contemporary parallels.

Wilson MacDonald's Western Tour is not a message book. Beautifully put together, in Coach House's best tradition, it incorporates some of MacDonald's own designs to good effect, brings archives to life, and entertainingly illuminates one of the smaller corners of Canadian cultural history. But the message is there, nonetheless, for readers, writers, and publishers alike.

W. H. NEW

CALM SENSE ON PRISONS

ANDREAS SCHROEDER, *Shaking It Rough.* Doubleday. $9.95.

IF THERE IS one subject that requires the balm of quiet thought rather than raucously expressed feelings, and which suffers grotesque distortion through the electronic media, in the press, and via such entertainment agencies as books, plays, TV drama and feature movies, it is surely our Canadian prisons.

In recent months across Canada the public has been subjected to a plethora of prison reporting: columns of irate words, yard upon yard of film-footage — all witnessing to the inadequacy of our penal institutions, and to the ire of the convicted or the frustrations of professional custodians. And most of this coverage has been to an incessant accompanying chorus from opposing radicals and conservatives seeking either a reshaping of penal institutions or a stiffening of control over our giant community of the incarcerated.

Historically, it is not too difficult, I think, to see how all this has come about. From the Middle Ages to the beginnings of the 19th Century and the momentum of the industrial revolution, our towns and cities were communities, our values basically shared ones and, just as importantly, *public* ones. What society did with its offenders it did corporately and it did it for everyone to see. Executions were largely public, with the gibbet a

familiar sight. While lesser punishments for criminal offenses were often enacted in a strictly social context: i.e. with the public stocks and other punitive devices serving as cautionary witness for the populace at large whose co-operation was actively encouraged to pour scorn and ridicule upon the offender.

However, with the rise of the middle class and the emphasis upon individuality, upon individual values, there came also the corollary of a vigorous affirmation of privacy. Privacy became (as, indeed it remains today) the most eloquent testament to personal prosperity.

The cost behind this shift from communal to individual action is a significant one. We are all only too aware of social fragmentation, of the isolation of the aged, of mental disturbance exacerbated by loneliness. Well, our prisons, which are largely nineteenth century brainchilds, often even in their physical structure, also reflect that profound transfer in the nature and composition of our society from a communally oriented one where the individual was frankly subordinate, to a bourgeois-dominated one where the greatest price society can extract from its criminals is to remove them from the market place (where the stocks used to sit) and place them in a large complex of buildings, surrounded usually by an immensely high wall where sentences can be carried out beyond the day-to-day notice of the public gaze.

I am not a sociologist, nor am I a penologist, but it seems highly plausible to me that with the loss of confidence in today's social structures, and the ability of media technology to peep over penitentiary walls, the confusing clamour over our prisons, their structures, and even their raison d'être, should be a direct result.

Particularly welcome then, are those calmer and quieter efforts beyond brute statistics and beyond emotional stances, which shed light upon the prison experience, *per se*. Such an effort, I think, is encompassed in *Shaking It Rough*, subtitled "A Prison Memoir", by Andreas Schroeder.

Mr. Schroeder is best known to us as a poet, and a somewhat romantic one at that. But there is certainly no whiff of romanticism amid the pages of *Shaking It Rough*. Indeed, somewhat surprisingly for a poet, the prose employed here is generally flat and leaves the impression that the author has tended to bend backwards *not* to sound sensational or give the slightest flavour of histrionics. And the route Mr. Schroeder has taken in order to convey an honesty of depiction and fidelity to observation, is one that generally works well for him.

Using the nomenclature "fragment" rather than "chapter" what he gives us is a personal account of the eight months he spent in the B.C. correctional system. Sometimes these fragments describe incidents, sometimes they invoke reflections. It is in the latter, I think, that the book achieves its fullest potential. Here, for example, is the beginning of Fragment 20 where attitudes for survival while serving time, are eloquently expressed.

> Part of the strain of being in prison is the continual fear of feeling bad, the constant sitting under that trembling drop of poison which, if shaken loose, will spread slowly but inexorably like a stain on wet paper through your life, unstoppable, disastrous. Because you know you *have* to stay healthy in this place. The only defense against the undertow that keeps people here half their lives is never to forget that you *want* to get out, that the present is transitory, and must be kept in transit, that it is therefore necessary to resist the urge to take offense, to escape, to revolt or fight back, which would simple subtract what you've already put behind you and start the wheel rolling from the beginning again.

As someone who has also done time — though only in weeks compared to Schroeder's months — and who has also

had experience of visiting inmates, from Pentonville and Wandsworth prisons in England, Sing Sing and San Quentin in the U.S., to both Oakalla and Haney, (where the author did part of his sentence), I can personally attest to the accuracy of those quoted words of his. And the burden of the book is in comparable vein.

But I think the most attractive strength of *Shaking It Rough* is its fairness. Without being aloof, without the arrogance of the insider, and certainly without the taint of self-pity, this memoir reveals one man's experience and even spiritual growth during his incarceration while at the same time revealing the frustrating plight of both inmates and custodians. I have never read a book on this subject — and the literature is by now prodigious — which succeeds so persuasively in rendering a balanced picture of prison life as *Shaking It Rough*.

Balanced picture, yes. Comprehensive? No. Then if Mr. Schroeder had wished to provide an encyclopedic compendium of Canadian penal institutions he would, perforce, have had to step outside his own experience. He was given two years minus a day (for possession of hashish for the purpose of trafficking) and served eight months. Most of that time he spent in works camps with minimum security regulations. Obviously such an experience is not going to reflect the kind of forlorn ugliness we have come to associate with such structures as the federal penitentiary in New Westminster.

All the more credit, then, to Andreas Schroeder for working so admirably within the limitations of experience and for coming up with a balanced, eminently readable account of what he saw with his eyes as well as what developed in his own soul.

DAVID WATMOUGH

MARGINAL LAMPMAN

Lampman's Kate: Late Love Poems of Archibald Lampman, edited and with an introduction by Margaret Coulby Whitridge. Borealis Press. $3.95.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO in a thesis on Lampman I relegated many of these poems and Katherine Waddell to an appendix. A re-reading confirms my earlier diagnosis; an appendix is of little organic value and if it does not need cutting out it is best forgotten. What always impressed me about these poems, if looked at from the standpoint of Lampman's work as a whole, was their uncharacteristic and peripheral nature. Perhaps Katherine Waddell did inspire deep feeling in Lampman; what is surer is that she inspired his worst, most marginal poetry. The poems evince a marked absence of the physical and the concrete and lack thematic and rhythmic variety. Exclamatory reminders of worked up (not worked on) emotion cannot disguise metaphorical poverty, archaisms and ancillary poeticalities:

> Ah, couldst thou know this and destroy
> The sorrow and the dull despair,
> Wouldst thou but smile and pass me by
> Or wouldst thou care?

In this particular area of his work then one wishes that Lampman had taken his own advice in his poem "Silence!" and had not undertaken another version of the story of O!

Lampman's outer life was not an eventful one and further research is unlikely to alter our view of it. I hope that future energy expended in biographical research will stress his emotional and intellectual development; tell us more of what he read, speculate less about his bed. Lampman was neither Byron nor F.P.G.

The present introduction reflects an uncertainty of purpose, has little direction or

order and mixes obvious fact with unsupported speculation. Katherine Waddell did exist and Lampman may have had a sexual relationship with her; and a covert relationship of any kind probably caused him some pain. However, the anguish, isolation, deracination and alienation which are to be found in Lampman's writing were surely not attributable merely to Miss Waddell. In a number of articles on Lampman I have tried to account for the dominant tones of his writing and have yet to change my view that this writer's sensibility becomes available only through such a scrutiny.

We are told, on the one hand, that "Lampman seldom referred directly to Kate Waddell in his correspondence"; on the other hand, that from his "manuscripts and letters it is clear that he went through a terrible period of crisis between 1895 and 1896." Of course Lampman experienced crisis, but not only at this time, and in my own work I have tried to account for the crises. In the bits of letters quoted here there is no evidence to suggest that Kate Waddell was responsible for Lampman's unhappiness, and I would go so far as to say that the entire correspondence between Lampman and Thomson sheds no light on "his friendship with 'my lady' in Ottawa".

Perhaps a closer scrutiny of one paragraph of the introduction will sharpen my argument:

> The anguish that the poet suffered was very real and it lasted for years. He, who had sought advancement eagerly, refused Edward Thomson's offer of an editorship on the "Youth's Companion" in Boston at a considerable increase in salary. He, who had longed for academic recognition and an ivory-tower way of life, spurned the offer of a job at Cornell University when it was finally offered, because, "To tell the truth I am too deeply embedded here ..." Perhaps, the choice of the word "embedded" has Freudian connotations itself. There are many side-long expressions like that in Lampman's correspondence but it is impossible, at this length of time, to say definitely whether they indicate desire or achievement. It seems obvious that he twice refused better positions in the United States because his wife refused him the divorce he wanted and his "lady" refused to share permanently a scandalous liaison.

Lampman turned down Thomson's offer because as he wrote on March 8, 1893:

> I doubt whether it would be well for me to go to the "Youth's Companion". I fear my friend that it would merely mean passing from one frying pan into another and perhaps hotter one. Here the drudgery I do — and it is I must confess not very heavy — is a thing apart from my literary faculty and does not directly injure it. While I am at my desk the literary side of me is simply in abeyance. In the Youth's Companion office my literary powers would be brought into actual employment upon a petty and colourless kind of work in which I could have no real interest and the performance of which would require a distinct abnegation of all that is original in my bent of mind. A sort of employment like that persisted in for any length of time would be ten times more deadly than anything I do now.

There was a vague possibility of a professorship at Cornell. Did Lampman spurn it? His letter to Thomson dated September 16, 1891 shows that he would have left the Civil Service, Ottawa, and Canada with alacrity (and with his wife) if the possibility had materialized:

> My wife was immensely pleased with the Professorial castle in the air and with the joyous instincts of the zealous housewife proceeded forthwith to map out the details of a transfer from Ottawa to Ithaca. I hope that it may indeed be.
>
> Those observations of Mr. Chamberlain's in the Transcript must have got copied somewhere, for when I got back here various persons informed me that they had heard that I was going to desert my native country. I told them I was not going to abandon the soil just yet, but that I had it in mind to do so at as early a date as possible. We talk a great deal about "Canada for the Canadians", and yet Canadians find it hardest to get on in Canada than anywhere else ...

What Lampman did eventually turn down was another unrealized possibility of a job in the library at Cornell and for the same reasons that he rejected Thomson's offer. The "obvious" conclusion and "Freudian connotations" drawn from Lampman's refusals are obviously without foundation.

The darker moments in Lampman's work and his best poetry had little to do with Katherine Waddell. As I have demonstrated elsewhere Lampman felt contemporary society to be inimical to the values of the imaginative life. He protested constantly against an enroaching materialism which encouraged a defective, fragmented sensibility at the the expense of vitality, intelligence, and spirit. Such a life was not in "abeyance" (as Lampman sometimes feared) and compels fascinated attention because it was frequently anguished, and rightly so.

BARRIE DAVIES

EARLY SOUSTER

RAYMOND SOUSTER, *Rain-check*. Oberon Press, Ottawa. $7.95.

RAYMOND SOUSTER'S latest is remarkable less for the poetry it presents than for the critical questions it provokes. Of these the foremost is, should the book have been published at all? For the dust-cover to term it "a gathering for collectors and friends of 105 early poems, all first issued in small editions and all long since out of print", seems to forestall or at least inhibit criticism. Is this really supposed to be a publication or is its appearance not rather an act of piety of the kind usually reserved for definitive collected editions? However admirable it may be in human terms for a poet to accede in this way to his friends' wishes, critically the book's existence forces us to ask more insistently than we might otherwise have done why these poems were not reprinted in earlier collections. Too often the answer is not hard to find: many of the poems are peripheral and slight. Presented in bulk, their slightness becomes embarrassing.

What should one do, then? Ignore the book? or damn it with faint praise? No, Souster deserves better than that. Along with Dudek and Layton he performed a valuable service to Canadian poetry in the forties by attacking the too-neat, too genteel, neo-Colonial poetry then current and replacing it with a poetry that displayed a new frankness both of language and subject matter. But just as the main political party in Mexico boasts the paradoxical name of the Party of the Institutionalized Revolution, so something of the same phenomenon often occurs with literary revolutions: the *First Statement* group's revolution is now long behind us and since the sixties what Souster's Introduction terms "our kind of poetry", encouraged no doubt by the influence of Williams, the Beat poets and the Black Mountaineers, has become the dominant orthodoxy. Thus, though less useful for such purposes than a selected or collected edition, the present volume does enable one to reassess some elements of that revolution at least on terms of Souster's own contribution to it.

For all his moderate leftish sympathies with the underdog, Souster's clearest commitment seems to be a kind of vitalism that is located especially in the everyday urban or suburban world. Souster's attitudes and subject matter constantly suggest parallels with such major poets as Williams, Hart Crane or Philip Larkin, although in fact one need not go outside Canadian poetry, for Earle Birney, Alden Nowlan and John Newlove have all, in their very different ways, provided more impressive and incisive evocation of modern city life. Two possible reasons for this emerge from the present volume:

romanticism and a sort of rhetorical didacticism.

A disturbingly romantic absoluteness permeates Souster's vision: whether he is writing of "Times Square" 's "acres of neon", the "stone-iron hearts who own you", and its traffic's "mad nowhere dashes with cargoes of nothing", its "brighter, emptier faces", or whether he is evoking "Montreal after dark" where we allegedly find "all the bars filled/ . . . all the bands frantic/ all the taxis taken/ all the rooms occupied/ all the women beautiful" or someplace else where "that face will always be there/ that hand will always be waving . . . ", there is a surrender to sensation for its own sake accompanied by a wilful failure to distinguish and discriminate, to suggest any sort of distancing. Characteristically Souster's tactic is to submerge, to present himself as one of the crowd, to accept everything with a sad, wry shrug (perhaps symbolized typographically by his fondness for suspension marks), and to take on the protective colouring of the average little guy who likes his beer and his ballgame.

The reverse side of this is the rhetorical over-assurance of his didacticism. But here the colours become too strident, like pop-art without any hint of controlling irony. Nothing is done, for instance, with "your East River cesspool" to make the last term more than externally applied comment, while poems like "Bournemouth" or "The Luxury" choke on excess words, mostly used one-dimensionally and with very little sense of cadence or semantic nuance, and on cumbersome sentence structures. Where this is avoided, as in "The Essentials," the effect is one of crude didacticism:

> When your baby's ready/ for his very first words/ don't waste his time/ teaching *momma* or *papa*/ but get right down/ to those few words he'll need/ all the rest of his life/ *steal/ lie/ destroy.*

Why should we believe this? It may be true but nothing in Souster's statement of it is memorable enough to make it seem so. It is a jotting rather than a poem.

Indeed, for Souster almost the only alternative in this volume seems to be in terms of vignettes, snapshots of everyday events in themselves so minimal, or at least not placed in any illuminating context, as scarcely to exist, uncommunicated epiphanies. And is post-Layton male poetry obliged to celebrate every pair of lovely legs, every "Lady crossing Queen Street" of "the Unbelievable/ the Incomparable Buttocks"? Is this what John Sutherland meant by "the embodiment of the common man, completing in poetic terms what the average Canadian thinks and feels"? Where are these "poetic terms"? For me at least the barroom angle on sex objects has grown tediously voyeuristic. Perhaps Canada needs its own Erica Jong to set the sexual balance straight.

In terms of language too the book is disappointing: many of the adjectives seem curiously inert and predictable while his use of slang is undiscriminating, more concerned perhaps to stress democratic solidarity with his readers than to restore the vitality of the spoken word. Nonetheless, there are of course some memorable images: in the first section of "Three Ways of Looking at New York", for instance, we are shown "before the Central Park hotels one long/ parade of limousines disgorging tails and furs". Nor could one deny that there are a number of strong, attractive whole poems, such as "The Attack" or "Why", that stand out by reason of their greater sense of purpose and cohesion. Likewise, within its small limits, a short poem such as "After the necessary adjustments", about the "happy useful lives" the blind can lead, is very successful. It ends:

> For example/ this one here —/ sitting out in the sun/ up near the corner/ of Yonge and Bloor/ cup and pencils ready/ watching the darkness flash by.

Where, as in "Recruiting Poster", the point depends solely upon an ironic juxtaposition, in this case "adventure/ travel/ sports/ companionship/ good pay/ pension plan and free/ artificial/ arms/ legs", Souster may be relied upon to drive the message home, but he rarely provides original camera angles and though his genuinely wide sympathies can take him far they cannot take him the whole way. Most of the major Victorian poets wrote far too much. In his introduction Souster says "write 75 to 100 poems a year and you're in trouble — that is, if you'd like to have the majority of them published." True, and his own case shows why: he spreads himself too thin, his methods are too flat, deadpan, even garrulous, to make such a desire feasible. This volume does Souster's reputation a disservice: although attractively produced, as we have come to expect from Oberon, a whole new book was not necessary for the sake of four or five well-turned, incisive poems.

CHRISTOPHER LEVENSON

THE CANADIAN THIRTIES

New Provinces, which appeared in 1936, was the Canadian equivalent of the English anthology, *New Signatures*, which marked the public appearance of the celebrated Thirties poets, looking more like an organized movement than they actually were. *New Provinces* was in some ways an imitation of *New Signatures*, and fulfilled the same purpose of a modest trumpet blast, announcing the arrival of modernism in Canadian poetry. Not that every poet appearing in the collection could really be called a "modernist"; Robert Finch certainly was not, nor was E. J. Pratt, and Leo Kennedy was a borderline case. But Klein, Scott and Smith, the McGill men, certainly were in the modern lineage and it was their contributions which gave the collection its special value and turned *New Provinces* into a kind of manifesto in verse.

The present reprint, *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors*, ($4.95 paper, $12.50 cloth) in the University of Toronto Press Literature of Canada series, comes with an informative introduction by Michael Gnarowski, setting out the historical background, and with the "Rejected Preface" which A. J. Smith wrote at the time, but which did not accompany the anthology, and indeed was not published until 1965, when it appeared in *Canadian Literature* for the first time, a fact which, unfortunately, is not noted by the editor of the reprint.

G.W.

FILM TIPS

THE SITUATION has at long last been reached when Canadian writers can expect to be approached by Canadian film-makers to acquire the rights of their books for making into feature films; the same writers may even, if they are astute, be contracted to write the film scripts for their own books. Such possibilities, though they do not offer the legendary awards of Hollywood acceptance, nevertheless could make an appreciable difference to the very marginal incomes of most writers in this country, and for this reason we call attention to a most serviceable book on the business and legal practicalities of the situation. It is Garth H. Drabinsky's *Motion Pictures and the Arts in Canada* (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, $14.95). The title is misleading; there is nothing about the aesthetics of film, but a great deal about the law and the profits. We recommend it as a sound business handbook for writers, producers and actors.

L.T.C.

opinions and notes

SEPARATION'S HIDDEN COST

WE ARE TOLD by the supporters of the Parti Québecois, and by the theoreticians of separatism in general, that francophone culture is at a disadvantage under the present situation, and that once the domination of the anglais is eliminated there will be a finer flowering than ever before of the life of the intellect and arts in Quebec. But can we take it for granted?

Look at the Irish example. During the centuries of Ireland's absorption into the British political structure, literature flourished in Ireland, and Irish writers became recognized as champions in the whole English-writing world. One has only to list the main figures to get an idea of the vast contribution of the Irish from 1700 to about 1920; Swift, Congreve, Goldsmith, Sheridan, Shaw, Wilde, Yeats, Joyce, Synge, O'Casey, O'Flaherty! Half the great names in English writing during that period were Irish, and there was an extraordinary symbiosis between Irish authors, who usually had to come to London to earn a living, and the Saxon readers who loved them and paid well to be entertained and chided by them. Out of that symbiosis emerged almost all the works that give Irish literature a right to be considered of world importance.

With such a beginning in servitude, nobody imagined that in a setting of political liberty Irish literature could do anything but rise to heights unheard-of before! There would — there must be — a whole generation of super-Wildes and super-Joyces! What actually happened was quite different. Deprived of the tensions of the great Anglo-Irish love-hate syndrome, Irish culture sank down to a level of dull complacency, no new writer of notable strength or originality came forward, and since Yeats died in 1939 there has been no really great poet in Eire. In fact the lack of literary creativity became so obvious that during the 1960's the Irish government began to offer freedom from income tax to any English-speaking writer who would settle among them; the takers were few, and most of those left sooner or later, so sterile had the literary world of liberated Dublin become.

The situation between Québec and English Canada is not strictly analogous to that between England and Ireland since — unlike Erse in Ireland — French has remained the living literary language of the province, and for this reason Québec writers have not been accepted in Toronto and Vancouver as fully as Irish writers were once accepted in London. Yet in recent years they have been read increasingly outside the borders of their province, to such an extent that it is now hard anywhere in Canada to neglect Québecois like Gabrielle Roy, Anne Hébert, Hubert Aquin, and a whole group of younger writers. Translation may still not be sufficient, but it is increasing year by year. And there is the vital thing in common between pre-1920 Irish writing in English and pre-1977 French writing in Québec — that they have flourished and come of age in an exhilarating atmosphere of political tension and sometimes of strife.

Now, looking ahead, dare we prophecy that the fate of writing in Québec will be any different, after separation, from the fate of Irish writing? Once separation has taken place, once the beloved enemy has departed, will life have the same creative tension, the same zest of conflict that in recent years have been so productive of fine work? Will separation mean that the

first generation of really vital Québecois writers — those whose works we now enjoy — will also be the last? It is a fearsome possibility. And it is another reason for thinking hard before we willingly consent to Canada's splitting apart, though it does not take away from the argument that without some return to regional autonomy Canada *will* split apart in any case out of sheer frustration at the growing weight of centralization, the incubus of excessive government.

L. T. CORNELIUS

SAVING THE RADIO PLAYS

Time and again, in editorials, *Canadian Literature* has pointed to the appalling inadequacy of archival arrangements in the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and to the fact that radio plays, by far the largest body of drama written and produced in Canada, tend to be aired once or twice and then forgotten. Rarely are radio plays published — the ratio seems to be about 1 in 35 — and if there are no adequate arrangements for keeping this material and making it available to scholars, this important sector of Canadian literary and dramatic creativity is likely to be lost to posterity. Up to now the Canada Council has been secretive about its storage facilities, but occasionally disquieting news has surfaced of the loss of scripts or tapes; the mass destruction of tapes in Vancouver reported in one of our earlier issues was a case in point.

Now, at last, what scripts survive have been salvaged, thanks to the efforts of Howard Fink of Concordia University, who has persuaded the CBC to hand over the remnants to be stored there and indexed under the Radio Drama Project. Much, indeed, seems to have vanished; the writer of the present note, on receiving a list of the holdings under his name, found only half of the titles he had written for CBC recorded, which means that the losses of material must have been great. Professor Fink has a large task ahead before he comes to the point of publishing a bibliography of CBC drama and the five volumes of selected scripts which are planned in collaboration with the University of Toronto Press.

But, though the task is far from completed, what has been done is greatly welcome, and we can hope that, when all the missing scripts have been gathered together, something like justice can be done to at least the best of the thousands of plays by which writers, actors and producers kept drama alive in Canada during the theatrical doldrums of the forties and fifties, and, in the sixties, moved into experimental directions that were aborted by the commercialization of broadcasting under recent CBC administrations.

G.W.